

Government seeks feedback on draft DAP 2026, pushes 'owned by India' and speedier buys

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a push to rewire the defence capital procurement system for faster acquisitions and technology sovereignty, the defence ministry on Tuesday released the draft Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026 to seek suggestions from stakeholders and the public. The DAP governs the capital procurement of military equipment, platforms and systems under the Capital head of expenditure. It lays down the processes for planning, evaluation, contracting and approvals, covering everything from design and domestic manufacture to foreign sourcing. The draft DAP 2026 which will replace the DAP 2020, introduces an "Owned by India" approach rather than the conventional "Made in India" model.



Under this approach, India will not only manufacture weapons domestically but also own the underlying technologies and intellectual property (IP), including source codes, system architecture and upgrade pathways. This codification of IP sovereignty marks a departure from DAP 2020, which prioritised indigenous content (IC) thresholds and manufacturing but did not formally mandate ownership of digital and system architecture layers. The draft revises the definition of indigenous design, requiring ownership of 'technical artefacts, source codes, hardware layout and system architecture,' along with the ability to upgrade systems

and manage obsolescence. It further tightens restrictions on foreign ownership, mandating Indian control over vendors in key acquisition categories, even as defence FDI norms have been eased to encourage foreign investment and technology transfer.

Incidentally, Aerospace systems are not part of the draft's immediate scope. According to the document, "Procedure for Acquisition of Aerospace Systems is being developed separately in consultation with stakeholders and will be included in DAP 2026 subsequently." India's defence procurement process has long been criticised for its sluggishness, with projects often stretching over decades. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh has earlier called the system "broken", insisting it requires a fundamental overhaul. Singh has also said that the defence ministry is working to reduce weapon-buying timelines from about six years to two, arguing that procedural bottlenecks, rather than

funding shortages, are the primary cause of delays.

Subsequently, as pledged by the Defence Secretary, the draft of the updated procedure seeks to cut through red tape, accelerate decision-making and promote fair competition, while opening the doors wider to private companies, MSMEs and startups in defence acquisitions.

It outlines measures to speed up the acquisition of capital equipment, emphasising simplification, delegation of powers and elimination of redundant processes.

The draft also proposes greater financial and procurement authority for the Services and lower-level acquisition bodies, while allowing technical and commercial stages to run in parallel.

Punjab Govt To Explore All Legal Options On Issue Of Gram Nyayalayas In State: CM Mann

The Sikh Times

CHANDIGARH, 11th February: Drawing a clear line against the Centre's push for Gram Nyayalayas, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Wednesday signalled that his government is prepared to move decisively on the issue in the state, arguing that it is impractical and contrary to the interests of the legal fraternity. The Chief Minister announced the formation of a committee of legal luminaries to examine the matter in detail and said he would take it up with the Union Government at the appropriate level. Declaring the issue as one of institutional integrity and public trust, the Punjab CM asserted that the rule of law and ethical standards in the judiciary must remain paramount, while reiterating that his government would leave no stone unturned to protect the interests of lawyers. Interacting with representatives of 65 bar associations at the Municipal Bhawan, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "The entire state has access to courts within a 20-kilometre radius due to which this concept is not practically applicable in Punjab. The lawyers are already up in arms against this move of the Centre as it causes a lot of inconvenience to them. As per the wishes of the legal fraternity, the state government will explore all ways and means to discontinue this concept in Punjab." The Chief Minister announced, "The Punjab government will constitute a



firmly committed to secure the interests of the legal fraternity and no stone will be left unturned for this noble cause." Highlighting the contribution of bar associations, the Chief Minister said, "Bar Associations have always played a pivotal role in contributing effectively to the development of the legal system in the country and have worked for the betterment of society at large. India is a Sovereign Socialist Democratic Republic with a parliamentary system of government and it has the honour to be the largest democratic setup in the world. Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are the four features that are being protected for every citizen through our

Constitution." Emphasising the importance of the legal system, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann noted, "The Rule of Law is the foundation on which a modern democratic society is founded. A legal system committed to values, integrity and excellence in judiciary is an extremely important component and ingredient of a vibrant and just society which we seek. Lawyers and jurists are instrumental in ensuring justice and protection of one's fundamental rights. I understand and respect the hardships lawyers face for succeeding in their careers." Drawing a comparison between public life and the legal profession, the Chief Minister said, "Political leaders and lawyers enjoy the same pattern of public trust and both must work to maintain and uphold this trust by every means. Maintaining the trust of the people and rule of law is the utmost responsibility of lawyers for which they must make concerted efforts." He further noted, "Justice is costly these days, just like other things," and mooted the idea that lawyers should establish NGOs to provide free legal aid to marginalised and deprived sections of society. Stressing the need for ethics, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann urged, "Cases may be lost or won, but rule of law should always prevail." He added, "Every demand of the lawyers, including the Lawyers Protection Act and converting commercial electricity connections of chambers into domestic ones, are genuine and will be thoroughly examined. I myself am an advocate of the people and fully committed to the well-being of every section of society." Contd.....page 3

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said a crucial probe by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is underway into the plane crash that killed Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, and urged that conclusions be drawn only after the investigation ends.

Fadnavis said the aircraft's black box had already been recovered and that investigations on all fronts had commenced. Pawar and four others were killed when the Learjet aircraft crashed near the Baramati airstrip in Pune district on January 28. Describing the DGCA inquiry into the incident as "very important", Fadnavis stressed the need to wait for its findings. The CM was talking to reporters here in response to a question about Ajit Pawar's nephew and MLA Rohit Pawar's claims and concerns regarding the plane crash.

Rohit Pawar on Tuesday raised several questions regarding the sequence of events leading up to the plane crash. He alleged that there was a reason to suspect sabotage in the tragic incident that killed his uncle Ajit Pawar, and demanded a comprehensive probe by multiple expert agencies. Fadnavis said, "I have not personally seen what Rohit Pawar said. I am somewhat aware of it. I believe that if anyone has any doubts, they should be addressed. From this perspective, the investigative agencies

Fadnavis said the aircraft's black box had already been recovered and that investigations on all fronts had commenced.

available under Indian law have already begun the kind of investigation expected in such cases."



The chief minister said he was the first to write to the Union aviation ministry seeking a detailed probe into the accident that claimed the lives of Pawar, the pilot, the co-pilot, and two others. "If we can learn from the errors or shortcomings in our civil aviation sector, we can fix them and make it safer for civilians and leaders as well," he said.

Sought 'dua' before joining BJP: Congress attacks Himanta over Bangladesh cleric link

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Congress on Tuesday stepped up its attack on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, with party leader Pawan Khera claiming that Sarma had met a Bangladeshi Islamic cleric in 2015 and acted on his advice before joining the BJP.

Replying to his earlier post on X, Khera alleged that Sarma was a "devotee" of Dewan Muhammad Saidur Raham Chisti Saidabadi, the head of the Chistiya Saidia Darbar Sharif in Dhaka, and had sought his guidance at a critical point in his political career.

According to Khera, Sarma met Dewan Chisti in 2015, after resigning from the Congress and being uncertain about joining the BJP. He claimed Sarma shared his personal and political problems with the cleric and sought 'dua' or prayers. Khera further alleged that the cleric advised Sarma to join the BJP, an advice he claimed Sarma followed when he joined the party in August 2015. "The rest is history now," Khera said in the post.

QUESTIONS ON FOREIGN LINKS

Building on the claim, Khera raised a fresh set of questions, asking whether Sarma had met the cleric in Bangladesh and, if so, why the visit was not disclosed publicly. He also questioned whether the interaction had influenced Sarma's political rise and whether the Chief Minister continued to receive "advice or directions from across the border". Khera went on to allege that Sarma could be "susceptible to foreign manipulation", framing the issue as one with national security implications.

EARLIER POST AND PHOTO CLAIM
The second post followed Khera's earlier claim that he had received a photograph purportedly showing Sarma with Dewan Chisti. In that post, Khera alleged that the cleric was linked to a Jamaat-e-Islami-led coalition in Bangladesh, which he described as historically pro-Pakistan and ideologically committed to establishing Shariah law. While stopping short of direct accusation, Khera said the photograph raised questions about when and why the meeting took place and why it was not disclosed if there was nothing objectionable about it.

No tension within INDIA alliance: Tamil Nadu Congress president Selvaperanthugai

Chennai.(Agency)

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K Selvaperanthugai on Tuesday dismissed speculation about internal discord within the INDIA alliance in the state, asserting that coalition partners remain united and discussions on alliance coordination are currently underway.

Speaking on the sidelines of the introductory meeting and training camp for newly appointed district leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress Party, Selvaperanthugai said rumours of rifts within the alliance were baseless. He stressed that the Congress leadership has been given full authority to hold negotiations and coordinate with other

partners. "There is no tension in the Alliance. We are talking," Selvaperanthugai said, indicating that communication among alliance members is continuing smoothly. He added that Congress is actively participating in alliance-related decision-making processes while maintaining constant contact with its coalition partners.

Taking a sharp dig at AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswamy, who recently made remarks about the Congress-DMK alliance, Selvaperanthugai said the opposition leader should instead focus on the stability of his own party. "Edappadi K Palaniswamy should worry



about his own party, lest BJP swallows it whole. Ask him not to leave the AIADMK party and worry about his party," he said. Accusing the BJP of weakening regional parties across the country, Selvaperanthugai

compared the saffron party's political strategy to an octopus. "The BJP has swallowed all the parties like an octopus. The next party to swallow is the AIADMK. It has swallowed three-quarters of the AIADMK. The big thing is to keep Edappadi Palaniswamy safe," he added. The Congress leader also warned that the BJP had already absorbed several political groups and that parties like the AIADMK must remain vigilant if they wish to retain their identity. Selvaperanthugai's remarks come amid visible efforts by alliance partners to project unity. Recently, leaders from the INDIA bloc appeared together at the inauguration ceremony.

Refrain from speaking on leadership issues, DK Shivakumar urges Congress leaders

Speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence, Shivakumar said that remarks either in his favour or against him would only create confusion and damage the party's image.

Karnataka.(Agency)

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday urged Congress leaders to strictly follow AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's directive to refrain from making public statements on leadership matters, warning that such comments could harm the party.

Speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence, Shivakumar said that remarks either in his favour or against him would only create confusion and damage the party's image.

"Any statement made by legislators, ministers or others in favour of me or against me will do more harm than good to the party. AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge had asked everyone to keep their mouth shut some time ago," he said, referring to ongoing speculation



surrounding leadership issues in the Karnataka Congress.

Responding to queries about some party leaders expressing confidence that he would bring "good news" after his visit to Delhi, Shivakumar said he viewed every day positively despite political challenges. "Every

day is a good day for me. Every day is a day of good beginnings, good tidings and challenges. We face a lot of difficulty in resolving issues faced by people on a day-to-day basis. We have to continue working in the midst of criticism," he said.

On demands for an early resolution of what some leaders have described as "leadership confusion," Shivakumar asserted that he had no uncertainty and that only others were creating unnecessary tension. "I don't have any confusion, others may have it. Siddaramaiah and I know what we have spoken.

There is no secrecy in that, our leaders are aware of it. Let others not take tension about this. Issuing statements won't help anyone," he said, dismissing rumours of secret talks between him and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

News box

Man gets life for 2018 DLF Phase-2 murder

Faridabad.(Agency)

A Gurgaon court on Tuesday awarded life imprisonment to a man who, in 2018, helped his employer murder an acquaintance in DLF Phase-2 and dispose of the body parts. Public prosecutor Sumit Saini said the prime accused, Harnek Singh Dhillon, who was 80 at the time, took Rs 60 lakh from his acquaintance, Jas Karan (52), on the pretext of getting him permanent residency of Canada. When Karan started asking for his money back, Dhillon planned his murder and enlisted his servant, Jagdish (now in his 30s), to help him.

On Oct 14, 2018, Karan came to Dhillon's house. There, Dhillon and Jagdish killed him with a hammer and dismembered his body with a khukri. The duo stuffed the parts into plastic bags and loaded them onto Dhillon's vehicle with his wife's help. The two drove nearly 350km to Ludhiana and got rid of the body parts, clothes, the murder weapon and the keys to Karan's two-wheeler at various spots. A few days after killing Karan, Dhillon allegedly murdered his wife as she kept insisting that they go to the police and confess to the crime.

Dhillon died in Dec 2023, when both trials were still ongoing. Forensic evidence, CCTV footage in which Karan was seen entering Dhillon's house, footage from a toll plaza, a DNA report establishing the identity of the deceased, and the statement of a neighbour proved crucial in the conviction. Neighbour Wakil testified that he saw Dhillon take Karan into his house and, five minutes later, heard screaming. When he rushed over to inquire what had happened, Dhillon opened the door and told him that a monkey had got in and bit him.

Saini submitted that the evidence showed financial dealings and disputes between Dhillon and the deceased. Terming the crime "heinous and brutal", additional sessions judge Punit Sehgal said, "The conduct of Jagdish shows that he tried to destroy the evidence by cutting the body into pieces and dumping the same at multiple locations." The court denied any leniency and observed that awarding a lesser sentence would "encourage any criminal" and "society would suffer" as a result. "Undue sympathy by means of imposing an inadequate sentence would do more harm to the justice system and undermine public confidence in the efficacy of law," the judge said, and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on Jagdish along with the life sentence.

80 fines worth Rs 8L in Jan: Cops turn volume down on 'Bullet patakas' in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

During a special drive conducted in Jan, traffic police issued 80 challans worth Rs 8 lakh against two-wheeler riders using modified or non-functional silencers on Royal Enfield Bullet motorcycles. The month-long drive targeted modified motorcycles and pressure horns that produce loud and sudden sounds, causing public nuisance and posing risks to other road users. Police said such noise often distracts commuters and increases the chances of accidents.

"These modified silencers create excessive noise and can be especially disturbing for senior citizens. Riders must act responsibly and avoid causing inconvenience to others. Strict action will continue against such violations," a traffic police officer said.

Enforcement continued in Feb, with 12,440 challans issued between Feb 2 and Feb 8. Of these, 11,045 challans were issued on the ground, generating fines of Rs 1.41 crore. Major violations included wrong-side driving (1,702), wrong parking (1,128), riding without helmets (1,541, including riders and pillion riders), seat belt violations (762), drunken driving (399), dangerous U-turns (340), lane change violations (324), triple riding (145), speeding (57), mobile phone use while driving (62), and noise pollution (29).

In addition, 1,395 challans were issued through automated cameras for violations such as no-entry (902), lane changes (245), speeding (64), air pollution (56), and multiple helmet and seat belt violations.

To strengthen monitoring, police have increased surveillance on NH-8, Dwarka Expressway and Mumbai Expressway using NHAI-installed cameras and drones to detect lane-changing and overspeeding violations, officials said.

Speed up work on industrial units around airport: YEIDA

Noida.(Agency)

With the launch of the Noida International Airport approaching, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) has issued notices to investors to expedite construction of industrial units around the area.

According to a YEIDA official, Yamuna City has industrial sectors in Sectors 24, 24A, 28, 29 and 33—all located close to the airport. Proximity to the airport has led to increased interest from domestic and overseas investors. So far, a total of 3,113 industrial plots have been allotted. Of these, construction is complete on 52 plots while 27 units have commenced production, the official said. Another 340 units are currently under construction, he added.

The official said YEIDA plans to have production start in around 180 industrial units by the end of this year. YEIDA has shifted the building plan approval process online, allowing allottees to track the applications remotely. Till date, 672 companies received approval of their industrial building plans and around 50% of them have already started construction. YEIDA also spent Rs 5,500 crore on land acquisition in 2025-26 to accelerate the process. Officials said legal follow-ups in long-pending land cases also helped in easing acquisition hurdles. Investors have received possession of 1,634 industrial plots so far. The official said notices are



First structural work starts as pile caps cast for new metro corridor near Cyber Park station

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Construction of the first phase of the new metro line gathered pace as the pile cap work started on Tuesday near the proposed Cyber Park station. With this, on-ground structural activity of the project will gradually become visible along the corridor, the GMRL officials said. The 15.3-km Phase 1 corridor will connect Millennium City Centre to Sector 9, passing along the key residential, commercial and corporate hubs of the city. Officials said that the construction of piers—the vertical columns that will carry the elevated viaduct—will now begin in phases along the alignment. Over 700 pile caps will be constructed underground

in Phase 1. GMRL started the piling work in Nov last year. "After completing the piling at designated locations, we now started casting pile caps near the proposed Cyber Park station. This marked the beginning of the substructure for the elevated corridor," an official said. A pile cap is a thick concrete slab that sits on top of a group of piles. These piles are deep cylindrical structures drilled into the ground to transfer the load of the metro viaduct to stable soil strata below. The pile cap binds these individual piles together and distributes the load evenly, forming a strong foundation base for each pier. Once the pile cap is cast and gains strength, the pier shaft is erected above it, followed by the

pier head and ultimately the launching of girders that support the tracks. Officials said that with pile cap casting underway, residents will soon see pier construction activity picking up along different sites of the corridor. In Aug last year, Dilip Buildcon Ltd and Ranjit Buildcon Ltd were tasked with the construction of Phase 1 for Rs 1,277 crore, and the work is expected to take 30 months. In the first phase, interchanges are planned at Millennium City Centre with the Yellow Line, Subhash Chowk with the proposed Bhondsi metro line, Hero Honda Chowk with RRTS corridors and Sector 10 with the bus terminal-cum-depot. An underpass at Bakhtawar Chowk will also be built.



Gaps in air monitoring: Haryana needs 45 stations, to get only 7

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana's air quality monitoring network is set for an expansion. However, only seven new continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations (CAAQMS) have been planned even as regulators have raised concerns over "a much larger gap in monitoring coverage" across the state.

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said on Tuesday it was reviewing the augmentation of 27 new CAAQMS across Delhi-NCR, of which seven are proposed for Haryana. Haryana at present has 22 operational CAAQMS in its NCR districts. However, CAQM's latest assessment shows that the state requires 45 monitoring stations to ensure scientifically robust and uniform air quality surveillance, indicating a shortfall of 23 stations. Many NCR stations went offline last year for several months, raising serious questions about the reliability of the monitoring network and the state's preparedness to track pollution in real

time. Of Haryana's 32 monitoring stations, 29 operated by HSPCB went offline between late 2024 and April 2025, including three of Gurgaon's four monitors and all stations in Faridabad, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak and Yamunanagar. Only two stations operated by India Meteorological Department (IMD) at Gwalpahari in Gurgaon and Panchkula recorded the data. One AQI monitoring station is currently being operated by a private agency at Pachgaon. Several stations, including those in Gurgaon, were brought back online on Oct 1. CAQM said it undertook a detailed review of the scientific criteria for future expansion of the air quality monitoring network in Delhi-NCR, stressing that "monitoring density must reflect population distribution and land-use characteristics", including residential areas, traffic corridors, industrial zones and background locations. Special emphasis was placed on urban contiguity

and the rapid expansion of peri-urban and suburban regions, particularly relevant for Haryana's fast-growing NCR towns. Under the revised norms, CAQM adopted a grid-based spatial coverage model, with one monitoring station for every 25 sqkm (5 km x 5 km grid) in major urban and contiguous NCR cities. Other district headquarters and cities would require one station per 50 sqkm. CAQM also underlined the need for background and border stations to better understand regional transport of pollutants and baseline air quality levels influencing NCR cities. Monitoring coverage in peri-urban and suburban areas was identified as critical to assess pollution inflow and outflow and to study the impact of urban sprawl on regional air quality—a growing concern in districts such as Gurgaon, Faridabad and Sonipat. Based on these criteria, CAQM assessed that 46 additional stations are required across Delhi-NCR, including 16 in Haryana

Taxi driver who tried to stop group from harassing girl stabbed to death in Faridabad

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 32-year-old man was stabbed to death by a group of youths after he intervened to stop the harassment of a girl in Girdawar colony under the Palla police station area of Faridabad on Monday evening.

The man, identified as Jai Singh, suffered multiple knife injuries and doctors at BK Civil Hospital declared him dead on arrival. Police said Singh worked as a taxi driver and lived in Girdawar colony with his family.

On Monday afternoon, he was sitting in a park near his house with his friend, Saurabh, when a boy approached him seeking help, alleging that some youths in the park were harassing his sister. Singh confronted the youths, threatened them, and chased them away. According to the victim's family, Saurabh initially tried to

attack took place around 8pm when four to five youths returned to the park and attacked him. He sustained seven to eight



stab wounds, several of them on the chest. Hearing his screams, Singh's wife, Aarti, rushed to the spot and found him lying in a pool of blood. Saurabh took him to BK Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. According to the victim's family, Saurabh initially tried to

flee from the hospital after leaving the body there, but colony residents caught him and handed him to the cops.

He later revealed the crime to the police. Police reached the hospital after receiving information from the hospital authorities, took possession of the body, and handed it over to family members following the post-mortem. Police said a murder case was registered on the complaint of Singh's brother, Jagat, against Sonu and Tushar, besides others, at Palla police station. The accused are residents of the same colony.

Singh was the youngest of three brothers and is survived by his wife and two daughters. Palla police station SHO said raids are being conducted to arrest the suspects, and further investigation is underway.

3 years gone, but revamp of 2 Ghaziabad bus depots yet to begin

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A proposed upgrade of three major bus depots in Ghaziabad, announced in 2022 as part of a modernisation drive by the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC), has run into delays, with work yet to begin at Kaushambi and Sahibabad terminuses more than three years later.

The redevelopment plan, proposed to transform the depots into multi-storeyed transport hubs with modern passenger amenities, was initially scheduled for completion within 24 months. While construction began at the Old Bus Adda last year, officials

said the projects at Kaushambi and Sahibabad have remained stalled amid changes triggered by the state's transit-oriented development (TOD) policy. "The work on Old Bus Adda started last year, but we are yet to commence construction at Kaushambi and Sahibabad," a senior UPSRTC official said. "So far, we have only cleared trees that were obstructing the

work at the two depots." According to officials, the delay stems from the need to recalibrate the projects after both depots were brought under the TOD influence zone, owing to their proximity to rapid rail and metro corridors. Under the UP Transit-Oriented Development Policy 2022, areas within a 1.5km radius of such corridors are eligible for higher development intensity.

Kaushambi's inter-state bus terminal lies adjacent to the Kaushambi and Anand Vihar Metro stations, and close to the Anand Vihar station of the Namo Bharat rapid rail network. The Sahibabad depot, meanwhile, is located near the Sahibabad rapid rail station. Together, the two depots handle an estimated daily footfall of around 40,000 passengers.

The TOD policy raised the permissible floor area ratio (FAR) in these zones to 4, from 1.5 when the depot redevelopment plans were first drawn up in 2022. While the higher FAR allows for taller,

multi-storeyed structures, it also expands the scope of development, requiring fresh consultations with planning agencies.

Since Kaushambi and Sahibabad fall within the TOD zone, the delay was largely due to reaching a consensus with the Ghaziabad Development Authority and the National Capital Region Transport Corporation on the applicable FAR and development norms," the official said. The revised FAR is expected to alter the scale of the projects. In addition to the originally planned two-storey depots, the TOD framework permits commercial complexes, shopping malls, food outlets and hotels within depot premises.

Last year, the UP govt formally approved an FAR of 4 for both depots under the TOD policy. UPSRTC officials said construction could begin by March, once the "right to work" permit is issued to the private developer and statutory no-objection certificates are

secured. From that point, the projects, undertaken under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, are expected to be completed within two years. The 24,284 square metre (sqm) Kaushambi depot is to be redeveloped at an estimated cost of Rs 261 crore, while the 15,000 sqm Sahibabad depot will cost about Rs 161 crore. The Old Bus Adda project, spread over more than 10,000 sq metres, would be developed at Rs 62 crore. In total, 23 bus depots across UP are slated for modernisation, including the three in Ghaziabad. UPSRTC said the upgraded depots will be designed to resemble airport terminals, with modern ticketing systems, large waiting areas and integrated food and retail facilities. Plans also include seamless pedestrian links to nearby rapid rail stations at Sahibabad and Ghaziabad.

The push to upgrade the depots has also been driven by environmental concerns. Located in densely populated areas, the heavy movement of

buses in the area adds to air pollution, prompting

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Delhi Police seizes 31 kg of Alprazolam tablets; busts multi-state racket with arrest of 3

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has busted a major interstate psychotropic drugs racket with the arrest of three people and seizure of 31 kilograms of Alprazolam tablets, an official said on Saturday. The accused were allegedly part of an organised network involved in the illegal manufacture, transportation and distribution of the banned psychotropic substance across Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and the National Capital Region (NCR), he said. The operation was carried out following intelligence-driven surveillance aimed at tracking drug peddlers active in the NCR. Acting on specific inputs, the team arrested two accused near Nand Nagri Bus Depot while they were travelling in a car bearing an Uttar Pradesh registration number. The arrested individuals have been identified as Shamim, a resident of Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, Rajeev Sharma and Mohit Gupta, both from Bulandshahr. During the search, police recovered 31 kilograms of Alprazolam tablets, estimated to be around three lakh tablets - which falls under commercial quantity as defined in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The commercial quantity threshold

for Alprazolam is 100 grams, officials said. Apart from the tablets, the team



seized 11 kg of aluminium foil with "Alprazolam" printed on it, 25 kg of PVC sheet rolls used for tablet packaging, 20 rubber stamps bearing batch numbers, manufacturing and expiry dates and the car used in transportation. The recovery of packaging material and printing tools indicated a large-scale illegal pharmaceutical manufacturing setup, police said. An FIR under the relevant sections of the NDPS Act was registered on January 29. During the investigation, the vehicle was found to be registered in the name of Mohit Gupta, who was subsequently apprehended at the instance of the other accused. During interrogation, Sharma allegedly told police that he used to collect Alprazolam tablets from Shamim and his associate Randeep in Himachal Pradesh on the directions of Gupta, and supply them to local pharmacies in Bulandshahr. Shamim allegedly disclosed that he and his partner were running an illegal manufacturing unit in Parwanoo, Himachal Pradesh, where the tablets were produced and supplied to distributors in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Gupta, who allegedly runs a medical firm in Bulandshahr, told in-

vestigators that he procured the illegal tablets through his firm and distributed them to pharmacies in Agra and Bulandshahr, police said.

Gurugram: Siblings killed, mother injured in road mishap

Gurugram: A 16-year-old boy and his 10-year-old sister were killed while their mother suffered serious injuries after a speeding car hit them in the Farrukhnagar area. According to the police, Sapna, a resident of Bhera village, along with her 16-year-old son Kartik and 10-year-old daughter Mahi, had gone to Farrukhnagar for some work on Thursday afternoon. When they were returning to their village around 6:30 pm, a car hit them near World College. The unidentified car driver fled the spot after the mishap. The trio suffered serious injuries in the mishap. They were rushed to a private hospital, where doctors declared Mahi dead on arrival. Kartik succumbed to his injuries during treatment on Friday, while Sapna is undergoing treatment. The police said the victim's husband works as a contractor for a private company.

Punjab Govt To Explore All Legal Options On Issue Of Gram Nyayalayas

In State: CM Mann

Contd.....Front page

Referring to the venue of the meeting, the Chief Minister said, "This Municipal Bhawan is known as 'Appointment Bhawan,' as around 50,000 appointment letters come out of a total 63,000 jobs have been handed over from here." He added, "The Punjab government has already taken a number of people and citizen-centric decisions to benefit the common man and many more are in the pipeline. In democracy, people are supreme. Those living in palaces had locked their doors during the heyday of their power, but when people got the chance, they ousted them." Earlier, Advocate General Punjab Maninderjit Singh Bedi welcomed the Chief Minister and highlighted the significance of the event.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, SIMRAN CHAWLA CHADHA D/O SANJEEV KUMAR CHAWLA R/O HOUSE NO.15/13, NEAR LAL MANDIR, EAST PATEL NAGAR, DELHI-110008 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SIMRAN CHAWLA.

NAME CHANGE

I Naval Rai Singh S/O. Rameshwar Dayal R/O 1/1043, UGF, LHS, Gali No-3, Khasra No-326, Village Babarpur, Delhi-110032 have changed my name to Navalay.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I is for general information that I, Narendra Kumar Joshi S/O. Manohar Chandra Joshi R/O House No. 212, Third Floor, Block B Duggal Colony, Khanpur, PO : Pushpa Bhawan, District : South Delhi, Delhi - 110062. Declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as POOJA DHINGRA in my all Educational Documents. The actual name of my mother is SANTOSH DEVI DHINGRA which may be amended accordingly.

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NEWS BOX

Bangladeshi Hindus' 'Future Concerns' Amid Rising Violence Ahead Of Polls

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

As Bangladesh is on the cusp of a historic election, the Hindus in the nation are grappling with living in fear of reprisals after the election as the targeted killings of Hindus continue in Bangladesh.

NDTV reported from Dhaka, on the apprehensions of a community that worries about its future in the face of persecution by radical forces in Bangladesh. That worry particularly emanates from several incidents targeting members of the Hindu community in the run up to the elections. At the Dhakeshwari Temple, the NDTV team met Samadrita Das, who was accompanying elderly members of her family to the temple. The Dhakeshwari Temple is one of the Shakti Peethas and is believed to be around 800 years old. The original idol was moved to Kolkata's Kumartuli in the 1950s, but the temple continues to be a strong identity of Bangladesh's secular credentials. Bangladesh has the rare distinction of having a National Temple of Bangladesh and the Dhakeshwari Temple is a shining example of respect for minorities' faiths. As we approach Samadrita, what she told us paints a worrying picture for the future of minorities in Bangladesh and highlights how despondent Hindus in Bangladesh are. I think things are shifting right now. I think before the election, parties are portraying that we will be supportive towards the Hindu community, or any other minority community, I think that will change after the election. Earlier, I used to feel safe going out. Nowadays, certain parties portray that they don't support women in the job sector and they don't support women going outside their homes. I think if they come to power they will definitely not show support towards women or any other community" she said.

"This is my country and nowadays, I feel I don't belong here. I feel that somehow things are shifting. Though people are saying that we are with you, I feel even they know that Hindus don't belong here and this must be an Islamic state," Das added.

"Devastated": Canada PM Mark Carney After 10 Killed In School Shooting

Ottawa. (Agency)

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Wednesday said he was devastated by the "horrible shooting" at a school in the British Columbia district, in which 10 people, including the woman shooter, died.

"I join Canadians in grieving with those whose lives have been changed irreversibly today, and in gratitude for the courage and selflessness of the first responders who risked their lives to protect their fellow citizens. Our ability to come together in crisis is the best of our country - our empathy, our unity, and our compassion for each other," he said in a social media post. His office announced that he will cancel his planned trip to the Munich Security Conference. In the shooting at the Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, eight people were found dead on the premises. Two more people found dead at a home believed to be connected to the incident, Canadian authorities said. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said more than 25 people are injured, including two who were airlifted to hospital with life-threatening injuries. RCMP's North District chief superintendent Ken Floyd said that the suspect, a woman in a dress with brown hair, was the same as that described in an earlier alert sent to the community in the area. He has refused to release her name, as well as that of the victims. "We are not in a place to understand why or what may have motivated this tragedy," Floyd said.

The town of Tumbler Ridge, which has a population of about 2,400 people, is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) north of Vancouver, near the border with Alberta. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from Grades 7 to 12.

'Soggy Poppadums' vs 'Fine Tandoori': UK MPs Debate Benefits Of India Trade Deal

London. (Agency)

The Brits are known for their wit, and a specimen of it was seen in the UK Parliament this week, when members across party lines debated on the merits of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the House of Commons. While Trade Secretary Andrew Griffith criticised the deal, comparing it to "a bag of soggy poppadums" for failing to include UK services in the agreement, Trade Minister Chris Bryant defended it, saying UK businesses saw it as a "fine tandoori". The India-UK deal came under fire in the House, with some MPs (members of parliament) criticising the Keir Starmer government for failing to include provisions to support UK services, especially legal services, for allowing Indian workers and their employers to evade paying National Insurance for three years, for taking five to 10 years before British goods exporters see tariff reductions, whilst Indian goods exporters will see them immediately, and for failing to agree to a bilateral investment treaty, among other things. "British businesses needed something with a really good kick in it to get this country growing. Instead of a vindaloo of a deal, the Prime Minister came back with a bag of soggy poppadums," Griffith said, criticising the deal. Conservative MP Katie Lam also tried to corner the government, saying, "We have already seen this model take hold in the US. The result has been a massive expansion in the number of lower-cost Indian workers at the expense of American workers." Defending the deal, Trade Minister Chris Bryant noted that the India-UK agreement goes well beyond India's precedent in opening the door for UK businesses. The UK-India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is the UK's most economically significant bilateral free trade agreement since leaving the European Union," he said, quoting a Select Committee report.

Colombian senator rescued from kidnappers; President Petro targeted in election run-up

The 53-year-old senator was rescued by a group of Indigenous people, hours after the vehicle she had been traveling in with two bodyguards was found abandoned.

BOGOTA. (Agency)

A Colombian senator was rescued from kidnappers Tuesday as the country's president reported an attempt on his own life in the run-up to elections that observers have warned could be marred by violence. Senator Aida Quilcue, an award-winning Indigenous activist, was taken by unknown people in her home department of Cauca, a conflict-ridden, coca-growing region fought over by dissidents of the now-disbanded FARC guerrilla army. The 53-year-old was rescued by a group of

Indigenous people, her team reported on X, hours after the vehicle she had been traveling in with two bodyguards was found abandoned. "I'm OK now," Quilcue said through tears in a video posted by Defense Minister Pedro Sanchez, which also showed her being bundled into an armored vehicle by members of Colombia's military anti-kidnapping unit. She later told AFP she had been taken by "various armed men", without saying which group they belonged to.

"They took us out of the vehicle and then forced us to walk to an unknown location," she said. Noticing the Indigenous trackers on the hunt for them, the kidnappers "ran away," Quilcue added, "and we were able to get away." President Gustavo Petro had earlier warned the kidnappers to release Quilcue or risk crossing "a red line."

Petro on Tuesday claimed that he too had been targeted, escaping an assassination attempt after months of warnings about an

alleged plot by drug traffickers against him. On Monday night, his helicopter was unable to land at his destination on the Caribbean coast because of fears that unspecified people "were going to shoot" at it, the president reported.



"We headed out to open sea for four hours and I arrived somewhere we weren't supposed to go, escaping from being killed," Petro said. Risk of electoral violence Over a quarter of a million people

have been killed during six decades of armed conflict between left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, drug traffickers and the military in Colombia.

The violence decreased dramatically after the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's biggest rebel group, agreed in 2016 to lay down arms. But FARC dissidents opposed to the peace deal continue to fight other groups for control of Colombia's lucrative cocaine trade and to carry out attacks on the security forces, who frequently retaliate.

Last week, a Colombian observer group said more than 300 municipalities -- a third of the national territory -- are at risk of electoral violence. Under pressure from Washington, Petro has ramped up action on criminal groups, prompting the country's biggest cartel to suspend peace talks with the government.

10, including suspect, dead in shootings at school and residence in Canada

World. (Agency)

A shooting at a school in British Columbia left eight dead, including the suspect, with two more people found dead at a home believed to be connected to the incident, Canadian authorities said Tuesday. Twenty-seven people were injured, including two with serious injuries and 25 with non-life-threatening injuries, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a statement.

Police added that the incident involved an "active shooter at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School" in British Columbia province and that "an individual believed to be the shooter was also found deceased with what appears to be a self-inflicted injury." "As part of the initial response to the active shooting, police entered the school to locate the threat. During the search, officers located multiple victims," RCMP said in a statement. "Six additional individuals, not including the suspect, have been located deceased inside the school.

Two victims have been airlifted to hospital with serious or life-threatening injuries. A third victim died while being transported to hospital." Canadian media has reported that the shooter was female, but the RCMP statement did not

include any details about the suspect. "This was a rapidly evolving and dynamic situation, and the swift cooperation from the school, first responders, and the community played a critical role in our response," the RCMP's northern district commander Ken Floyd said in a statement.

"This has been an incredibly difficult

and emotional day for our community," he added.

School shootings are rare in Canada. The town of Tumbler Ridge, which has a population of about 2,400 people, is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) north of Vancouver, near the border with Alberta. The Peace River South School District said earlier Tuesday that there was a "lockdown and secure and hold" at both the secondary school and the Tumbler Ridge Elementary school.

Larry Neufeld, the member of the legislature for Peace River South, told reporters at the legislature that an "excess" of resources, including RCMP and ambulance support, have been sent to the community. He said he didn't want to release any more information over concerns that it might jeopardize the safety of the ongoing operation. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from Grades 7 to 12.



US Used Pakistan Then Threw Away Like Toilet Paper': Khawaja Asif's Big Admission

Islamabad. (Agency)

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has made one of the starkest admissions of Islamabad's past alignment with the United States, accusing Washington of "exploiting" the Southeast Asian nation for its strategic interests and then discarding it "like a piece of toilet paper" after its objectives were met. Speaking in Pakistan's National Assembly, Asif admitted that Pakistan often denies its terror history, calling it a "mistake committed by dictators in the past."

The Pakistani minister also termed Islamabad's involvement in two Afghan wars 'a mistake,' saying that the terrorism in Pakistan today was the blowback of past mistakes. On Pak-US Alliance Asif reflected on Pakistan's post-1999 realignment with Washington, particularly in relation to

Afghanistan, which, according to him, left lasting damage on the country. He

said the costs of realigning with the US after 1999, particularly following the September 11, 2001, attacks, were devastating. "Pakistan was treated worse than a piece of toilet paper and was used for a purpose and then thrown away," he said. The Defence Minister noted Islamabad again aligned itself with Washington in the US-led Afghan war in the post-2001

period, turning against the Taliban in the process. He said that while the United States eventually withdrew from the region, Pakistan was left grappling with prolonged violence, radicalisation and economic strain. Asif also challenged the official narratives that Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflicts was driven by religious obligation. He acknowledged that Pakistanis were sent to fight under the banner of jihad, calling that framing misleading and deeply damaging. He told the Parliament that "two former military dictators (Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf) had joined the war in Afghanistan, not for the sake of Islam, but to appease a superpower." We deny our history and do not accept our mistakes. Terrorism is a blowback of the mistakes committed by dictators in the past," the minister said



basic tenets of democracy. Bangladesh's second-largest political party, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party, presently led by Tarique Rahman, son of Begum Khaleda Zia), was never banned by the Awami League. The BNP made a deliberate choice not to participate in the 2024 elections. The Wind Blows Many Ways The national opinion survey conducted by Bangladesh's leading vernacular daily, Prothom Alo, in October 2025, published on December 9 that year, revealed that close to 70% of those surveyed want the Awami League to participate in these elections, conditionally or unconditionally. Twenty-eight per cent said they did not want the Awami League to participate in the elections. However, in terms of likely vote share, the survey revealed that close to 66% would vote for the BNP, and nearly 26% would vote for Jamaat-e-Islami, with only 7.2% voting for the Awami League. Buddhists, Christians, Sufis and

King Charles III seeks 'moral high ground' with pledge to help police as Epstein scandal deepens

LONDON. (Agency)

In an earlier era, Britain's royal family might have tried to bury the scandal surrounding Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's friendship with Jeffrey Epstein. Not during the reign of King Charles III.

Since October, the king has stripped his younger brother of the right to be called prince, forced him to move out of the royal estate he occupied for more than 20 years and issued a public statement supporting the women and girls abused by Epstein.

Then came Monday's unprecedented announcement that Buckingham Palace was ready to cooperate in the event of a police inquiry into Mountbatten-Windsor's links to Epstein. Charles was forced to act after the US Justice Department released millions of pages of Epstein documents that revealed the details of his relationship with Mountbatten-Windsor and torpedoed the former prince's claims that he severed ties with the financier after his 2008 conviction for soliciting a minor for prostitution. Break

with the past Fifty or 100 years ago, "you can imagine the gentlemen's agreements" that would have sought to "bury this kind of story," said Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?" "But, thankfully, we live in a more democratic age where people are rightly held accountable for their actions. In taking the moral high ground — and that is what the king is doing here — the monarchy is signaling very clearly that it recognizes that public opinion demands that justice be served and that it is willing to comply with the police inquiry."

The King's latest step was triggered by allegations that Mountbatten-Windsor sent Epstein confidential reports from a 2010 tour of Southeast Asia, which he undertook as Britain's envoy for international trade. The correspondence was uncovered by reporters combing through the Justice Department files.

Police assess allegations

The Thames Valley Police, an agency that



stands ready to support them as you would expect."

Mountbatten-Windsor has denied any wrongdoing in his relationship with Epstein. The palace's announcement was splashed across British newspapers on Tuesday, with The Sun tabloid filling its front page with the headline "King: We'll Help Cops on Andy."

Efforts to contain scandal

The palace's commitment to cooperate with police is just the latest in a series of actions designed to isolate Mountbatten-Windsor and shield the rest of the royal family from the scandal, said Craig Prescott, an expert on constitutional law and the monarchy at Royal Holloway, University of London.

While the revelations about Mountbatten-Windsor have tarnished the family's reputation, support for the monarchy remains firm, Prescott said. "As long as it's contained to Prince Andrew, then I think the monarchy's relatively safe," he said of the scandal.

NEWS BOX

Six militants arrested in crackdown across Manipur

Imphal. (Agency)

Manipur Police and security forces arrested six active cadres of proscribed militant outfits in separate operations across the state and outside Manipur, while also recovering a stolen vehicle from Tengnoupal district.

Three of those arrested were allegedly involved in a recent bomb blast at Lilong Chajing under Singamei Police Station in Imphal West district, police said. In a separate operation the same day, security forces arrested another suspected cadre of a proscribed outfit. Police also arrested one alleged militant from Gurugram in the northern state of Haryana in an inter-state operation, officials said.

Separately, security forces recovered an abandoned four-wheeler from M. Chanou area under Moreh Police Station in Tengnoupal district. The vehicle had earlier been reported stolen from the Imphal area, and a case was registered at Imphal Police Station. Police said further investigation is underway to identify and apprehend those involved in the vehicle theft.

Odisha Govt effects two-fold hike in monthly honorarium for contractual AYUSH doctors

Bhubaneswar. (Agency)

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved an increase in the honorarium of contractual AYUSH doctors working under the National Health Mission (NHM) in Odisha. Recognizing the significant contribution of AYUSH doctors to the State's healthcare delivery system and to motivate them to provide better services, the Odisha Government on Tuesday announced a two-fold increase in the honorarium of contractual AYUSH doctors working under the National Health Mission (NHM) in the State.

As per the Chief Minister's decision, the monthly honorarium of contractual AYUSH doctors under NNM has been enhanced by Rs 20,000 to Rs 40,000 based on their length of service, Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a statement. Doctors with less than five years of service will receive an increase of Rs 20,000 per month, raising their minimum monthly honorarium to Rs 56,948.

Those with five to ten years of service will get an increase of Rs 25,000 per month, taking their salary to Rs 74,467. Doctors with ten to fifteen years of service will receive an additional Rs 30,000 per month, raising their honorarium to Rs 80,467, while those with more than fifteen years of service will receive a hike of Rs 40,000 per month, taking their maximum monthly honorarium to Rs 91,467, it further stated.

It may be noted here that currently 2,912 AYUSH doctors are engaged in the State. With this decision, the State Government will incur an additional annual expenditure of around Rs 1 crore. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi later expressed optimism that the move will further strengthen AYUSH healthcare services in Odisha.

Amid opposition outcry, Assam publishes final electoral rolls after SIR

Guwahati. (Agency)

Amid the allegation of manipulation of voters list by the Opposition parties, Assam on Tuesday published the final electoral rolls which included 2,49,58,139 voters eligible to cast their votes in the forthcoming assembly elections. The State Election Office Assam on Tuesday published the final voter list for the 126 legislative assembly constituencies in Assam. A statement issued by the Chief Election Officer Assam on Tuesday said that there are a total of 2,49,58,139 voters in Assam, who are eligible to cast their votes in the forthcoming assembly elections scheduled this year.

The statement said that out of the total electorates 1,24,75,583 are females while the number of male voters are 1,24,82,213. The final electoral rolls also registered 343 electors from third gender. The statement said that the final electoral rolls registered a 0.97 percent decrease compared to the draft voter list which was published in the month of December last year.

It may be mentioned here that the integrated draft voter list for the Special Revision (SR) was published on December 27, 2025 and prior to this house-to-house verification drive was successfully conducted across the state from November 27 to December 20 last year. The period for submitting claims and objections was from December 27, 2025 to January 22, 2026.

The Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls in Assam, initiated by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for the upcoming 2026 Assembly elections, necessitated primarily to ensure an accurate, updated, and transparent voter list in a state with a unique and complex demographic and citizenship context.

As the National Register of Citizens (NRC) data is yet to be fully concluded and is subject to Supreme Court supervision, the Election Commission of India (ECI) opted for the Special Revision (SR) in Assam to avoid conflicts with ongoing legal processes, rather than a deeper, more disruptive SIR. The SR is sort of a purification of electoral rolls during the current SR cycle in Assam and it is a meticulous administrative effort focused on enhancing the integrity of the electoral roll ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

Seven years after NGT orders, Karnataka yet to restore Bellandur, Varthur lakes

Bellandur and Varthur lakes made global news because of a high level of pollutants, frothing and fire.

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Despite a National Green Tribunal (NGT) order seven years ago, and two reminders five years ago, the Karnataka government is yet to desilt, rejuvenate and revive Bellandur and Varthur lakes.

The two lakes made global news because of a high level of pollutants, frothing and fire. Agitated with the snail-paced work and government agencies blaming each other, experts and former NGT-appointed committee members have now sought a detailed report of expenses and work done. They are also looking at approaching NGT again.

On January 15, a team of experts met Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) Commissioner P. Manivannan and Chairman N.A. Haris and submitted a memorandum to protect the two water bodies. The BDA is the custodian of the two lakes. The experts pointed to unscientific inlet design, due to which sewage is entering storm water drains (SWD) and flowing into the lakes. They also pointed to silt entering the lakes, which negates all work done so far. "There is a lack of transparency and accountability, particularly with Rs 576 crore kept in BBMP's escrow account for

rejuvenation of the two lakes. The deterioration of water quality is evident, as water hyacinth and other invasive species can be seen in large areas. Reduction in the rajakaluve's width and encroachments continue to be a concern," said Jagadish Reddy, Bellandur and Varthur lakes



warden.

Prof TV Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, and former committee member, said some desilting was done at Bellandur lake, but was stopped due to fund crunch. The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is yet to fill lakes

with treated water.

Despite High Court orders, the government has not cleared illegal colonies around the lakes and the pipeline running through Varthur Lake. The government must come out with a white paper on work done and amount spent, he said.

UV Singh, former committee member, added that work has slowed down after the committee was dissolved. As the assigned task is not completed, all the money spent so far is wasted. Work done should be thoroughly reviewed and completed, he said. The former committee members pointed out that BBMP and BWSSB have been unable to arrest the flow of contaminated water into the two lakes from slums, SWDs and underground drains, despite the creation of diversion channels.

Rahul Priyadarshi, BWSSB engineer, said: "No treated water from Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) is entering the two lakes. It is diverted through channels downstream to Dakshin Pinakini and Kolar. We built a 458MLD capacity STP, of which a 248MLD STP is being upgraded at Bellandur Lake. Another 90MLD STP has been set up in Bellandur Ammanikere. A 25MLD STP at Varthur Lake is yet to come up. It is delayed because of land issues."

B-SMILE plans to recruit 16 engineers to speed up Bengaluru road white-topping

As per the direction of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, the plan is to white-top 500 km of roads over the next three years.

BENGALURU. (Agency)

To the Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE), the special purpose vehicle (SPV) of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), aiming to white-top nearly 500 km of roads in the city by 2028, a key hurdle is the shortage of dedicated engineers.

Officials said that apart from mandatory clearances and time-consuming shifting of utilities, the absence of engineers exclusively assigned to monitor the work has further delayed execution.

To ensure time-bound completion and adherence to prescribed standards, B-SMILE plans to hire 16 engineers on contract. They will be tasked solely with supervising the white-topping work



across the city. "White-topping works are under way in different parts of the city. While we aim to complete them within the stipulated time, delays occur due to permissions from multiple

departments, shifting of utilities and other unforeseen issues. Sometimes, the real problems surface only after roads are dug up. Having dedicated engineers on site will help us address such hurdles quickly and proceed with the work," a senior B-SMILE official said.

In one such instance, a British-era stormwater drain was discovered when the then BBMP took up white-topping in Cottontop. The drain collapsed during excavation, significantly delaying the project. As per the direction of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, the plan is to white-top 500 km of roads over the next three years. "To execute this mammoth task, we need dedicated engineers," the official added.

Madras HC closes appeal as GCC, sanitary staff strike a deal

The workers staged a protest in front of the GCC headquarters from August 1-13 last year demanding the civic body to give up the decision to outsource.

CHENNAI. (Agency)

The Madras High Court has closed the appeal petitions filed by Uzhaippor Urimai Iyakkam, representing conservancy workers, following the submission of an agreement reached between the union and the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) on absorbing the workers of Thiru Vi Ka Nagar and Royapuram zones into two other zones.

A joint memo, in this regard signed by GCC Commissioner J. Kumaraguru and president of Uzhaippor Urimai Iyakkam advocate K. Bharathi, was filed before the division bench of justices S.M. Subramaniam and C. Kumarappan on Tuesday. It stated that the GCC has agreed to redeploy 1,400 SHG temporary sanitary workers of the fifth and sixth zones into fourth and eighth zones by the end of February 2026, as per the list provided by the union. Both sides have also

decided to proceed with the original pleas filed before the Industrial Tribunal in Chennai, it said.

Recording the submissions, the bench closed the appeals, which were filed against the August 20, 2025, order of a single judge who refused to quash the GCC's decision to outsource the conservancy works to a private agency. However, the judge had directed the GCC commissioner to negotiate with the agency to ensure the staff were paid the last

drawn wages.

The workers staged a protest in front of the GCC headquarters from August 1-13 last year demanding the civic body to give up the decision to outsource. However, on August 13 midnight, they were removed from the place following an HC order. Still, the workers continued to protest in various places in the city, ending the agitation after 165 days once the government assured that their demands would be met.

Meanwhile, the proposed construction of RoB to replace Korukkupet railway level crossing 2A will come up on Ennore Highway and, similar to 2B project, will be implemented on a 50:50 work-sharing basis between the southern railway and GCC. The RoB has a total length of 840m, including a 72m railway span. It is 8.4m wide, with service roads measuring 5m in width on either side. The bridge is expected to benefit around one lakh people.

With the opening of new RoB on Manali Road, built at Rs 96 crore using the infrastructure and amenities fund, commuters and residents of Korukkupet, Tondiarpet and Ezhil Nagar are expected to get some relief from traffic disruptions through the day that often last up to 30 minutes. The construction of the bridge

began in 2023, and the work was undertaken on a 50:50 work-sharing basis between the southern railway and GCC. The RoB has a total length of 840m, including a 72m railway span. It is 8.4m wide, with service roads measuring 5m in width on either side. The bridge is expected to benefit around one lakh people.

Meanwhile, the proposed construction of RoB to replace Korukkupet railway level crossing 2A will come up on Ennore Highway and, similar to 2B



railway section, and include service roads measuring 11m in width and a five-metre-wide pedestrian walkway. The bridge will begin about 30m from Power house junction and end near IOCL junction,

'Dhurandhar' Star Ranveer Singh receives threat, Mumbai Police increase security

Mumbai. (Agency)

Actor Ranveer Singh, known for his role in Dhurandhar, received a threat via WhatsApp from unidentified individuals, prompting the Mumbai Police to bolster security outside his residence. The Mumbai Crime Branch and Cyber Cell are investigating the origin of the voice note and examining digital footprints to identify the sender, officials said on Wednesday.

The threat, suspected to be linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, demands a large sum of money, reportedly in crores.

This comes after a similar threat and firing incident outside filmmaker Rohit Shetty's residence, which led to five arrests. Ranveer Singh and his wife, Deepika Padukone, have strengthened security at their Mumbai home amid concerns from their housing society in Prabhadevi, central Mumbai as six armed guards have been deployed in common areas. Sources said the managing committee of the Beau Monde residential tower approached the Dadar police station regarding the deployment of armed private security guards without the society's permission in Singh's flat.

In a written communication, the society said that a uniformed police official was also seen stationed with the actors.

In a written communication, the society noted that a uniformed police official was also seen stationed with the actors.

It may be recalled that for more than two weeks, around a dozen Bollywood personalities have reportedly received threatening calls from individuals claiming to be members of the Bishnoi gang. No complaints or FIRs have been registered so far, with most celebrities reportedly blocking unknown numbers or stopping responses to unfamiliar calls. The growing menace of the Bishnoi gang, particularly after the firing outside Salman Khan's residence, the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddiqui last year, and the attack on Shetty's house, has gripped Mumbai's film fraternity with fear.

Women-led protest in Patna highlights rise in sexual violence

Patna. (Agency)

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Patna on Tuesday as AISA-AIPWA organised the "Assembly March" to protest against the "alarming rise" in horrific crimes against women. The women-led protest march, that started from Gandhi Maidan and was headed to the Bihar Legislative Assembly, was stopped by police.

The protesters wanted to submit a memorandum to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar demanding justice in cases of rising sexual violence, rape, and harassment of women, including the NEET aspirant case, after the elections in Bihar.

But Bihar Police stopped them by setting up barricades. When the protesters broke through the barricades, the police intervened forcefully.

To disperse the protesters, the police resorted to lathi charge. As the women continued attempting to move ahead, the police called in additional forces and deployed water-cannon vehicles to make every effort to stop them.

The protesters alleged that the government's claims of women's safety in Bihar have become mere slogans. The arrogance of power and administrative authoritarianism have become deadly for women and girls. If the government does not

take immediate, impartial, and transparent action in these cases, it will be clearly understood that the state government bears moral and political responsibility for these violence.

Leading the protest, AIPWA General Secretary Meena Tiwari said that serious crimes against female students and women are continuously occurring in Bihar. The NEET student case, the rape and murder of a six-year-old girl in Darbhanga, and incidents in Buxar show that the government has completely failed in ensuring women's safety in the state. Instead of taking strict action against criminals, the administration is using force against women protesters.

She stated that justice in the NEET student case will not be ensured merely through a CBI investigation. The investigation should be conducted under the direct supervision of the Supreme Court. Women of Bihar will not accept injustice, and the movement will continue until justice is delivered.

MLC Shashi Yadav said that from the legislature to the streets, the government wants to suppress this issue. In the Assembly, the Chief Minister "insults" women representatives, and on the streets, the police repress them.

Korukkupet RoB to bring relief to commuters in North Chennai

Commuters and residents of Korukkupet, Tondiarpet and Ezhil Nagar are expected to get some relief from traffic disruptions through the day that often last up to 30 minutes.

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Chief Minister MK Stalin will inaugurate the newly constructed rail overbridge (RoB) replacing the Korukkupet railway level crossing (numbered 2B) on Thursday.

He will also lay the foundation stone for a similar bridge at the adjoining level crossing 2A. The two RoBs are expected to ease vehicular movement for commuters and residents in North Chennai areas.

With the opening of new RoB on Manali Road, built at Rs 96 crore using the infrastructure and amenities fund, commuters and residents of Korukkupet, Tondiarpet and Ezhil Nagar are expected to get some relief from traffic disruptions through the day that often last up to 30 minutes. The construction of the bridge



benefiting one lakh people, including residents of Nehru Nagar, once completed. The official said, "The completion of the RoB replacing level crossing 2B will not only ease long waiting hours at this junction but also allow vehicles approaching level crossing 2A to temporarily divert via the new RoB until the 2A project is completed."

TK Shamugam, president of Federation of North Chennai Residential Welfare Association, said, "Commuters often attempt to cross the tracks on two-wheelers even before the level crossings 2A and 2B are opened, leading to multiple accidents in the past. After years of struggle by North Chennai residents, we have finally got this RoB," he said.

Peace, stability at stake in Manipur

Central government revoked President's rule in Manipur last week, nearly a year after its imposition. Yumnam Khemchand Singh — a former Speaker, two-time MLA and an RSS loyalist — has taken oath as the chief minister. His appointment by the BJP is aimed at killing two birds with one stone.

First, to restore a popular government in the state which was in suspended animation since February 13, 2025, so that it gives enough elbow room to the party to prepare the electoral and political ground for retaining power in the February 2027 Assembly elections.

Second, the BJP has sought to effectively neutralise the Kukis' 'separate administration' demand and fortify the territorial integrity of the state with a two-pronged strategy of co-option and accommodation. Inducting Nemcha Kipgen as one of the two deputy chief ministers and holding out the promise of ministerial berths to LM Khaute (a Zomi) and Ngursanglur (a Hmar) are intended to break the backbone of a 'separate administration' demand. Even as the 'Kuki-Zo' political formation got horizontally split as a consequence, Kautilya's statecraft could not have a better imprimatur of 'bhed' (fractionalisation) as the hallmark of its co-option politics.

Notwithstanding this strategy and the fact that the BJP has a well-oiled electoral machine, it must be admitted that this involves a high-risk political gamble. The party realised that although almost a year of President's rule helped in a halting return to normalcy by containing the outbreak of armed violence, prolonging this rule ran the risk of routinising a tutelary democracy. However, unlike a democratically elected government, giving effective powers and control to an unelected executive and bureaucracy (especially the armed forces) for a prolonged period under this rubric ran the risk of eroding popular legitimacy and trust in the State and its institutions.

To be sure, the persistence of 'buffer zones' despite over 50 weeks of President's rule bespeaks of its limited power and usefulness to bridge the deep ethnic divide and hard wall of territorial separation between the Zo (Kuki-Zomi-Hmar) and the Meiteis. The de facto inability to freely access national highways across the buffer zones and the inability of the Zo groups to access the Imphal airport have exposed the claim of the return to normalcy and peace in the state.

The sub-human conditions in which thousands of internally displaced people continue to languish in relief camps, and the lack of any serious effort to rehabilitate and rebuild their burnt homes as well as villages have accentuated their suffering. The stubborn refusal to negotiate the demand for a 'separate administration' and the resistance by the Kuki groups to participate in the formation of a popular government imposed difficult, if not impossible, hurdles to government formation.

Seen against this backdrop, the formation of a popular government led by Khemchand assumes political significance in as much as it opens a new window of opportunity and challenges. The exceptional leeway given to the BJP's Kuki leader Nemcha Kipgen, the first to take the oath of office online — and that too from a distant, safe place (Manipur Bhawan in New Delhi) — is highly symbolic and symptomatic of the calculated risk involved in this political gamble. It's for the first time that a Kuki, and that too a woman, has been nominated as a deputy CM of the state. The fact that the BJP high command anticipated a popular backlash not only from the Kukis in Kangpokpi, her electoral constituency, but also from majoritarian-minded Meitei constituencies must have been a weighty reason why she was extended this exceptional privilege. The series of shutdown protests organised on February 5-6 and the social boycott announced by various Kuki groups against Kipgen and two of her colleagues, LM Khaute and Ngursanglur, who have been branded as 'traitors' state.

The recent AI wave has changed the development, growth patterns and application of research in almost all scientific disciplines. However, the associations with AI vary from discipline to discipline. The 2024 Nobel Prize in chemistry, for example, was awarded for the revolutionary AI-assisted breakthroughs in the understanding and design of protein structures, although the research in technology that forms the basis for AI development is generally acknowledged as physics research. AI can also have a similar impact on healthcare, improving the development of new treatments and diagnosis or transforming care systems. Although the majority of the disciplines have a one-way association with AI, either improving AI technology or being enriched by AI, the subject "statistics" is quite different. Because of its very nature, statistics, including data science, influence and is influenced by AI. In fact, statistics can have an even more important role in the development of AI than the reverse.

Since the rise of "data science" in the 21st century, largely from computer science, the area of statistics has undergone a dramatic transformation. The recent wave of generative AI has shocked the system, presenting new challenges to the statistical community. How does statistics, the subject, relate to the emerging analytics landscape? Yes, traditional statistics had difficulty handling millions or billions of data points as the internet and social media transformed data into "big data" in the past decades. To tackle big data challenges, the development of new statistical methods, the improvement of simulations, the automation of analysis and the promotion of causal and applied statistical research, AI has helped the development of statistics. In fact, AI is orchestrating the value addition of statistical methods from anomaly detection in financial data to customer classification in marketing to personalised recommendations in product development.

While AI accelerates and expands statistical analyses, it is statistics, the subject, that maintains AI as trustworthy, understandable, and data-driven. In their 2021 paper "Is there a role for statistics in artificial intelligence?" published in the journal *Advances in Data Analysis and Classification*, Sarah Friedrich and her co-authors argue that statistical learning provides the rigour and discipline needed to develop trustworthy AI systems. Basic statistical techniques such as cross-validation, hypothesis testing and uncertainty quantification remain essential to understanding what an AI system is doing and why, from model selection to evaluating model performance. And, thus, statistics is essentially the

foundation of modern AI. Interestingly, Kim Martineau wrote on the "Top 10 Ideas in Statistics That Have Powered the AI Revolution" for Columbia News in 2021. The first two in the list were Hirotugu Akaike's 1973 idea of AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), which judges the fit of a model based on its projected predictive accuracy, and John Tukey's 1977 book *Exploratory Data Analysis*, which is thought to have inspired developments in network analysis, software, and

statistical theory and computer science. The explanation of complex algorithms also needs knowledge of statistics. The AI models, whether neural networks or ensemble models, become more complex and advanced, but they also become less interpretable. In this scenario, statistics offers an explainability tool that allows users to test assumptions, validate findings, and decide not to put blind faith in "black box" predictions.

Indeed, AI expert Sam Bobo termed AI as "Probability and Statistics" in a 2023 essay on Medium. Let's explore how statistics guides AI. Consider YouTube and Netflix recommendations. The system employs probability to analyse your viewing history. Based on similar behaviour, it predicts your chances of enjoying a movie. Statistical models estimate predicted preferences by comparing millions of people. Online shopping recommendations follow the same pattern.

Self-driving cars' noisy data from sensors is cleaned up by statistical processing. AI systems calculate the probability of a target being a shadow or a pedestrian. As a result, decisions (brake, turn, slow down) are made according to risk probabilities, not certainties.

AI models are trained on thousands of past cases for medical diagnosis. They estimate the probability of a disease given images or symptoms. To decide if they should trust the AI's suggestion, doctors use statistical metrics. AI is applied in email spam filters to estimate the probability of an email being spam based on the sender's behaviour, language, and links. Your face is matched with stored information by the AI in facial recognition and phone unlocking. And so on. Thus, AI can learn from data, deal with uncertainty, make predictions, and evaluate decisions in real-world applications like security, entertainment, healthcare, and transportation through statistics. At a conference in 2017, Google AI researcher Ali Rahimi received a standing ovation for stating that much of what was being done in AI at the time was "alchemy", which means that developers had no way of knowing which algorithms would work and which would not, or which architecture of AI was better than another. In other words, AI lacks a basis for inference - a solid foundation upon which to build predictions and decisions - if statistics are not applied properly.

In short, the connection between AI and statistics is mutual: AI is based on statistics, and through extensive applications, AI promises the advancement and modernisation of statistics.



theoretical frameworks that combine confirmation, criticism, and discovery.

Combining statistics with AI systems can increase their efficiency by minimising the number of errors and accelerating the prediction process. In this way, it can improve the decision-making process by shedding light on the data and giving the machine the capability to make predictions from the data. Statistics helps in the identification and reduction of bias and the detection of specific insignificant patterns, data points, and summaries of measures. Artificial intelligence is the act of transforming large amounts of raw data into useful information. Statistical methods offer the required analytical skills for this. Therefore, if AI is the engine, statistics is the physics that drives it. "The big tent of statistics has grown massively bigger, with the role of statisticians in this new and evolving world requiring adaptation," as stated in the American Statistical Association's 2023 Statement on The Function of Statistics in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. It added, "The boundaries between statistical and computational methods have become more blurred, given the advances in ML and deep learning algorithms, which often require a deep understanding of both

Farmers' fears: India-US trade pact raises questions

The Tribune Editorial: If the government believes that the India-US deal truly prioritises farmers' interests, it should prove this through transparency, parliamentary debate and meaningful consultation.

THE outcry over the India-US interim trade agreement, whose framework was unveiled on Saturday, has laid bare a familiar fault line: who bears the cost of "free trade" and who reaps its rewards? As farmer organisations gear up for nationwide protests on February 12, their anger is not merely about import duty concessions on apples, soybean oil or dried distillers' grains. It's about trust, transparency and the future of Indian agriculture. The Union government insists that adequate safeguards are in place. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has assured farmers that minimum import prices, quota-based concessions and calibrated tariff cuts will protect domestic producers. On paper, these assurances sound comforting. In practice, however, farmers' apprehensions are far from baseless. Past free trade agreements with New Zealand and the European Union did lead to a surge in cheaper imports, squeezing already vulnerable growers. For apple farmers in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand, the prospect of competing with heavily subsidised



American and European agribusiness is daunting. The Centre is claiming that agriculture and dairy sectors remain protected, even as the joint framework speaks of reducing tariffs and resolving non-tariff barriers on a

range of agricultural and food products. Farmers grappling with low incomes, rising input costs and mounting debt need clarity on these pressing matters. Several farm unions, Opposition parties and some state governments have demanded that full details of the deal should be placed before Parliament. This demand is reasonable because trade pacts shape livelihoods as profoundly as domestic laws.

Without robust domestic support — fair prices, subsidies, infrastructure and risk protection — steps to open up markets can overwhelm small and marginal farmers. The upcoming "general strike" is thus a warning sign. If the government believes that the deal truly prioritises farmers' interests, it should prove this through transparency, parliamentary debate and meaningful consultation. Otherwise, the narrative of reforms will again fail to address the anxieties of those who feed the country.

Chagos sovereignty deal: What changed on Feb 4-5

While the US had earlier termed the pact as an 'act of great stupidity', its mercurial President Trump has since softened his criticism

TWO developments of February 4-5 significantly altered the course of the India-facilitated Mauritius-UK agreement of May 2025 on sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. First, while the US had earlier termed the pact as an 'act of great stupidity', its mercurial President Trump has since softened his criticism, saying it was the best deal British Prime Minister Keir Starmer could obtain. He added that the US would militarily thwart any threat to the joint US-UK military base of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago, whose sovereignty the UK has relinquished for reasons of decolonisation and self-determination. Second, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has disowned his predecessor Solih's endorsement of the agreement, which forfeited claims to the Special Economic Zone around Mauritius. Earlier, the House of Lords failed to ratify the agreement, which has faced the Opposition's strategic ire. It reflects that long-term agreements are subject to alteration by regime change and a U-turn in the case of the US. Of the Chagos Archipelago's islands, Diego Garcia is the crown jewel. It was detached from Mauritius in 1965 prior to the grant of independence and established as a joint UK-US military base. The UK will pay Mauritius 3.4 billion pounds for 99 years, with a provision to extend the lease by another 44 years.

The agreement not being ratified will hurt India's interests in the Indian Ocean Region as Mauritius had an in-principle agreement with India for the development and surveillance of the Chagos Marine Protected Area as it is ecologically sensitive. India's relations with Mauritius were reflected when PM Modi called the Chagos agreement as a milestone for its sovereignty. An Indian national has been the NSA in Mauritius since 1984. India has helped Mauritius develop the Agalega Island, a dual-use strategic infrastructure with a 3,000-m runway, deep water jetty, surveillance and monitoring

station. It is linked to its Indian Ocean Region Surveillance Network in Madagascar, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka. Access to Agalega is strictly by invitation. Diego Garcia is the most coveted real estate in the IOR, which the UK has used profitably since the 18th century and the US militarily for the last half a century for operations in West Asia and East Africa. The US has deployed 2,500 military personnel and the UK 100 Marines. It is administered by a diplomatic commissioner based in London. Last November, nuclear-capable B2 bombers struck Houthi targets in Yemen from Diego Garcia, which the US calls 'indispensable to security.'

France is the other country to have sovereign island territories, like Reunion in the IOR. China has constructed military facilities at Djibouti and is jockeying for dual-use space in Gwadar, Hambantota, Coco Islands and Madagascar.

India has invested heavily in Mauritius, the latest being the 2025 tranche of \$680 million for Maritime and Defence Cooperation Agreement. India is building a metro system and a supreme court building and assisting in the revamp of Air Mauritius. Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam who replaced Pravind Jugnauth has hailed Port Louis ties with Delhi as 'perpetually beneficial.'

When Mauritius regained its sovereignty last year over Chagos, both India and the UK offered to provide ships to access Diego Garcia to plant the Mauritian flag. Eventually, three flags will fly on the military base. For India, the 2015 Agalega Agreement and last year's

Maritime and Defence Cooperation Partnership are strategic. China has an active Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and FTA and is modernising Port Louis. South Africa has been an old partner in trade, economics and tourism.

Russia is conspicuously absent from the IOR. One of the reasons the US and the West laughed away Sri Lanka



and India's calls for making the IOR a zone of peace and neutral, nuclear-free region because they said the USSR was in occupation of Afghanistan for a decade overlooking the IOR.

The official renewal of the lease and grant of sovereignty over Chagos will face hurdles. In the May 22, 2025

agreement, the UK formally agreed to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia. Both countries require parliamentary approval and the Peers want to make amendments: referendum by Chagossians on the deal, including on the right to self-determination, human rights and decolonisation. The dispute over the Chagos Islands is rooted in international law as the

International Court of Justice in 2019 said that the UK's separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was unlawful and it must end its administration of territory as rapidly as possible. A future Mauritian government could lease any of the Chagos Islands to China and Russia. Security safeguards and the sovereignty issue are embedded in the 2025 agreement. The existing marine-protected area is well patrolled by the British Navy; last year, 32 Indian fishermen from Kerala and Kanyakumari were detained and charged with sailing towards Diego Garcia. If the 2025 agreement comes into force, according to Human Rights Watch, some of the 10,000 displaced Chagossians may return to other islands, but Diego Garcia will remain off-limits. The East-of-Suez vacuum of the 1960s caused by British withdrawal has now crowded the IOR, with contestants seeking their share of control in the region. The UK took charge of Chagos in 1965 on the pretext of establishing a communications base

in Diego Garcia despite a UNGA Resolution not to dismember Mauritius. Even without Diego Garcia, Mauritius is strategic geography. The recovery of sovereignty over Diego Garcia, when it happens, will make no difference to the UK-US joint military base and for Washington's long-strike arm.

Himachal MLA Pathania announces Rs 80 cr for drinking water schemes in Shahpur

Shahpur (Kangra). (Agency)

Shahpur MLA and Deputy Chief Whip Kewal Singh Pathania on Tuesday said the Water Power Department is spending nearly Rs 80 crore on drinking water projects in the Shahpur Assembly constituency to ensure an uninterrupted supply of potable water for residents.

Speaking at a public meeting after inaugurating three electric-operated hand pumps in Manjhgrah Panchayat, Pathania said, "The state government is fully committed to providing basic amenities, including drinking water, roads, electricity, health, and education."

The electric hand pumps were inaugurated at Ward No. 5 Dadroli, Ward No. 2 near Satvik Marriage Palace, and Ward No. 3 Dukhru. Constructed at a cost of about Rs 9 lakh, the facilities will benefit nearly 65 families and hundreds of residents who have long faced drinking water scarcity.

Pathania also announced, "Underpasses will be constructed at Daraman and Manjhgrah, and necessary directions have already been issued to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)." He further added, "Financial assistance of Rs 50,000 will be provided for the construction of a house to Bhuri Singh of Dadroli."

Senior Congress leaders and local representatives present on the occasion thanked the Deputy Chief Whip for the developmental initiatives.

Himachal: Sukhu holds talks with P. Chidambaram on RDG cut, seeks way out of fiscal crunch

Shimla/New Delhi. (Agency)

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today held detailed discussions with former union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram to explore financial and legal options to address the serious fiscal strain faced by Himachal Pradesh following the discontinuation of the Revenue Deficit Grant (RDG).

Sukhu left Shimla for New Delhi earlier in the day and met Chidambaram to deliberate on the widening gap between the state's revenue receipts and committed expenditure. The Chief Minister said the interaction focused on identifying practical solutions to bridge an estimated shortfall of around Rs 6,000 crore, which has emerged after the Centre did not provide RDG support in the current financial framework.

In a statement later shared on social media, Sukhu said he had an in-depth discussion with the senior Congress leader on the prevailing financial challenges. He noted that Chidambaram's long experience in public finance and constitutional matters provided important and valuable suggestions that would be helpful in charting the state's future financial strategy.

CRS Inspection to be conducted in Murkongselek - Sille section of Murkongselek - Pasighat New Railway Line Project

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 11th February: The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), NF Circle, Shri Sumeet Singh will conduct a two-day statutory inspection of the newly constructed Murkongselek-Sille section (approximately 15.60 km) on 12th and 13th February, 2026. This section constitutes the first phase of the 26.15 km long Murkongselek-Pasighat New Railway Line Project under Tinsukia Division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). Successful completion of this inspection and subsequent authorization will pave the way for commencement of regular train operations upto Sille for both freight and passenger services, thereby significantly enhancing rail connectivity in the region. During the inspection, the CRS will be accompanied by senior officials of the NFR Construction Organisation, under whose supervision the works have been executed. The inspection is scheduled to commence at 08:30 hours from Murkongselek station.

The Murkongselek-Pasighat New Railway Line Project spans 26.15 km, originating from Murkongselek in Assam and extending up to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. The project has been planned in two phases — Phase-I: Murkongselek-Sille (15.60 km) and Phase-II: Sille-Pasighat (10.55 km). The alignment includes three new stations, namely Sille, Labo and Pasighat, along with several major and minor bridges, Road Over Bridges (ROBs), Road Under Bridges (RUBs) etc. Upon full completion of the entire 26.15 km project, the line will substantially improve connectivity for the people of Arunachal Pradesh with Assam and the rest of the country. The project is expected to facilitate economic growth by encouraging small-scale industries, tourism and trade in the region. It will also reduce transportation costs and travel time, ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities, and provide long-distance rail access to the people of the region. The rapid expansion of railway infrastructure in the Northeast region continues to play a transformative role in strengthening regional integration and fostering socio-economic development.

Punjab: Bal Jogi Pargat Nath appointed chair of Valmiki Tirath advisory board

The Punjab government has pitched Ram Tirath as a global centre of Dalit faith and heritage.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

The Punjab government Tuesday appointed Bal Jogi Pargat Nath as chair of the advisory board of the Bhagwan Valmiki Ji Tirath Sthal, signalling its intent to develop the historic site on an international scale. The government said the move underlines its push to position Ram Tirath as a globally recognised centre of Dalit faith, heritage and spiritual philosophy.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann congratulated Bal Jogi Pargat Nath and said that under his leadership, the Tirath Sthal would be developed as an international centre of Dalit faith, attracting devotees, scholars and visitors from across the world.

Dalit community's contribution huge'

Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said Dalit communities have made a major contribution to India's progress and that the AAP government was committed to honouring this contribution and taking the message to every household. He said the Tirath Sthal was not only a sacred place of belief but also a site of

civilisational importance, and its development on an international scale would ensure global recognition of the values of equality, dignity and social justice associated with Bhagwan Valmiki.

Cheema said the government was working with a



long-term vision to develop the site in a manner that presents the life, philosophy and contribution of Bhagwan Valmiki on a global platform. The effort, he said, was to transform the Tirath into a landmark of international repute

where faith, history and learning converge, enabling people across countries to engage with the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Adi Kavi Valmiki.

He added that giving global recognition to Dalit faith and heritage was a matter of dignity and justice, and developing Bhagwan Valmiki Ji Tirath Sthal on an international scale reflected the government's resolve to ensure the legacy received the respect and visibility it deserved worldwide.

Why is the Tirath Sthal important?

Located around 12 km west of Amritsar on Chogawan Road, Bhagwan Valmiki Ji Tirath Sthal dates back to the Ramayana period and is revered as the hermitage of Maharishi Valmiki. The site houses an ancient holy tank and several temples, along with a hut marking the place where Sita is believed to have given birth to Luv and Kush. Also preserved are Valmiki's hut and the historic well where Sita is believed to have taken her bath.

Shimla RTO impounds pvt bus for various violations

The Regional Transport Office (RTO), Shimla, on Monday seized a private bus plying on a local route in Shimla district after detecting multiple violations during an inspection, officials said. According to officials, the bus was operating with an expired fitness certificate and without a valid permit, and the driver was found without a driving licence [...]

Ludhiana. (Agency)

The Regional Transport Office (RTO), Shimla, on Monday seized a private bus plying on a local route in Shimla district after detecting multiple violations during an inspection, officials said.

According to officials, the bus was operating with an expired fitness certificate and without a valid permit, and the driver was found without a driving licence and the registration certificate. In addition, special road tax dues were pending since 2021, they said, adding that the bus was also being plied outside its permitted route.

Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Vishva Mohan Dev Chauhan said, "The vehicle posed a risk to

passengers' safety. Negligent operation would not be tolerated. Legal proceedings would be initiated against the impounded vehicle. It was impounded following a thorough check of its documents. The checking of buses will continue in the coming days."

Chairing the 5th meeting of the State Transport and Road Safety Council on January 10, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri had said that a majority of private buses in the state had been running in violation of several norms, including expiry of permit, compromising with safety measures, without fitness certificates, etc. Agnihotri had urged private operators to fulfil all pending formalities.



Four months ahead of monsoon: Experts sensitise apple farmers to keep fungal diseases Alternaria and Marssonina at bay

Shimla. (Agency)

With the threat of widespread Alternaria leaf spot and Marssonina leaf blotch looming over apple orchards, horticulture experts on Tuesday launched an extensive awareness and sensitisation drive across Himachal Pradesh nearly four months ahead of the monsoon season, the period most conducive to the spread of these fungal diseases.

The week-long drive in Shimla, Kinnaur, Chamba, Kullu and Mandi districts, till February 19, will strengthen farmers' knowledge of disease identification, preventive care and integrated disease management to promote sustainable apple production and safeguard orchardists' livelihoods.

In Himachal Pradesh, Shimla is the largest producer of apple products, followed by Kinnaur. At least eight scientific teams — comprising experts from Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry (UHF), Nauni, Regional Horticultural Research and Training Stations, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and the State Department of Horticulture — have been constituted. The teams will tour major apple-



growing districts of Shimla, Kullu, Kinnaur, Chamba and Mandi by February 19 to conduct field visits, farmer meetings and on-site demonstrations. Senior scientist Dr Usha Sharma said, "Alternaria and Marssonina fungal diseases attack apple foliage under rising temperature and humidity, particularly during monsoon months of June to August. In recent years, these diseases have emerged as major threats

across apple-producing regions of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand, causing premature leaf fall, reduced fruit size and significant yield losses."

Apple grower Hari Chand Rooth of Saroga village in Kotgarh told The Indian Express, "Farmers have suffered heavy losses over the past three years as these diseases spread rapidly when temperatures hover around 22°C to 28°C and high humidity during rains. Timely preventive sprays, quality fungicides and organic anti-fungal measures remain the only effective control."

Experts said recent heavy snowfall in higher reaches has helped maintain essential soil moisture — critical to tree health — but warned that humid orchard microclimates later in the season could again favour fungal outbreaks.

TCP adopts Citizens' Charter under Public Service Guarantee Act

Shimla. (Agency)

In a move aimed at ensuring transparency and time-bound redressal of public grievances, the Himachal Pradesh Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department has adopted a Citizens' Charter under the Public Service Guarantee Act for disposal of complaints related to town and village planning. spokesperson of the Town and Country Planning Department said that detailed guidelines have been issued under the grievance redressal system to resolve public complaints in a fixed timeframe at the local level.

The primary objective of the system is to establish a transparent and accountable mechanism so that grievances related to planning issues are addressed without delay.

Under the new framework, a Divisional Town Planning Grievances Redressal Authority has been constituted in each Divisional Town Planning Office. Complaints could be filed before the Town and Country Planner, while dissatisfied complainants may prefer an appeal before the State Town Planner. Similarly, Sub-Divisional Town Planning Grievances Redressal

Authorities have been set up in Sub-Divisional Offices, where grievances can be lodged with the Assistant Town Planner, with the provision of an appeal to the Town and Country Planner.

In districts where no Divisional Town Planning Office exists, residents of Chamba would submit complaints to the Town and Country Planner, Dharamshala, those of Una to the Town and Country Planner, Hamirpur; and residents of Bilaspur to the Town and Country Planner, Mandi. The spokesperson said that grievances must be heard within fifteen working days and resolved within thirty working days.

Appeals would be registered within five working days and finally decided within sixty working days. Complaints could be filed through a dedicated portal on the TCP website or at District Town Planner offices.

A State Grievance Monitoring Committee will review complaint disposal and submit a semi-annual report to the government. Administrative action would be taken against officials for failure in timely redressal.

Once united, why Punjab's farmers are facing a test as protests widen beyond MSP

Farmer unions in Punjab are now divided among several forums. Apart from the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, unions are aligned with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and SKM (non-political).

Amritsar. (Agency)

'Together we win, divided we fall' is a phrase most farmer union leaders readily agree with. Yet, the current phase of protests across the country tells more complex story—one where farmers are agitating on multiple fronts but largely through fragmented platforms, unlike the united resistance seen during the 2020-21 movement against the now-repealed three farm laws.

Central trade unions (CTUs) have called for a nationwide general strike against the India-US trade framework on February 12. The strike has the support of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of farmers' unions, whose members will participate in protests across the country alongside trade unions at locations designated by the CTUs. However, the level of unity seen during the historic farm laws agitation is missing this time. Punjab reflects wider fragmentation

Punjab, which had once emerged as the epicentre of a nationwide farmers' uprising, now presents a fragmented picture. Farmer unions in the state are divided among several forums, each announcing its own protest programmes. Apart from SKM, unions are aligned with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and SKM (non-political), in addition to various other worker organisations.

"The February 12 general strike has the SKM's support. This forms a large base of unions, but yes, if all the unions are united on one platform, we would be able to press upon the issues in a better way," said Raminder Singh Patiala, general secretary of Kirti Kisan Union and a member of SKM's national coordination committee. "SKM is always open for principal unity, as the issues before us are big, apart from the India-US trade deal," he added. The contrast with the 2020-21 agitation is striking. That



movement, which eventually led to the repeal of the three central farm laws on November 19, 2021, had united deeply divided unions under the SKM banner. Although SKM continues to exist, several offshoots have since formed their own forums.

Joint struggles, separate paths

The SKM (non-political), led by Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, and KMM,

coordinated by Sarwan Singh Pandher, had jointly organised a prolonged agitation at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders between Punjab and Haryana from February 13, 2024, to March 19, 2025. The protest sought a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and lasted over 400 days before being forcibly lifted by the Punjab government.

Since then, the two forums have not launched any joint agitation, even though the core demand of MSP as a legal guarantee remains unmet. "We have no issues with KMM. That was a joint agitation on an issue, and after that, both forums are doing their own programmes. If needed, we can come on a common platform again," said Dallewal. "If you recall the 2020-21 agitation, we all were divided initially, but gradually came together for a common cause. I am sure that if needed, we can come together again."

UP moving steadily towards becoming a start-up hub: 4 accelerators selected under the Central Government Scheme

Lucknow. (Agency)

Uttar Pradesh has made an impressive mark in the ambitious "Start-up Accelerator of MeitY for Product Innovation, Development and Growth (SAMRIDH)" scheme of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India. The number of accelerators and start-ups selected from Uttar Pradesh under this initiative indicates that the state is rapidly emerging as one of the country's leading start-up hubs. The impact of the policies adopted under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is now clearly visible at the national level.

The UP Government has been continuously ensuring coordination at the state level to deliver the benefits of central government schemes to the grassroots.

The processes of monitoring, mentorship, and market linkage for accelerators and start-ups have been strengthened so that young entrepreneurs not only receive funding but also gain a sustainable path for long-term growth.

Officials here on Tuesday said under the SAMRIDH scheme, a total of 10 accelerators from UP submitted Expressions of Interest, out of which 4 accelerators were selected.

Through these selected accelerators, 35 start-ups from the state received acceleration support, and 27 start-ups successfully secured funding. A total of ₹9.91 crore has been disbursed to start-ups from UP under this scheme.

This funding is aimed at product development, market expansion, and technological strengthening. The scheme also provides matching funding of up to ₹40 lakh per start-up, along with financial assistance to the accelerators working with these start-ups.

Rafale hero of Op Sindoor: Air Force vice-chief ahead of mega jets deal

IAF Vice-Chief Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor's remarks come as the country was moving closer to clearing a major proposal to acquire 114 multi-role fighter aircraft (MRFA), with the Rafale emerging as a frontrunner.

New Delhi.(Agency)
Calling the Rafale the "hero of Operation Sindoor," Indian Air Force (IAF) Vice-Chief Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor signalled the force's intent to expand its fleet of advanced fighters, saying the IAF is looking forward to inducting more combat aircraft as a major acquisition decision nears. "Rafale is definitely the buzzword," Air Marshal Kapoor told India Today, adding that the aircraft was the "hero of Operation Sindoor — among many other heroes."

His remarks come as the country was moving closer to clearing a major proposal to acquire 114 multi-role fighter aircraft (MRFA), with the Rafale emerging as a frontrunner.

Earlier this week, sources told India Today TV that the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC),



chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, is likely to consider granting Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the multi-billion-dollar programme ahead of French

President Emmanuel Macron's visit later this month.

The proposal had already been cleared by the Defence Procurement Board, headed by the

Defence Secretary, last month — a key procedural step that brings the acquisition closer to formal negotiations.

If approved, the deal, estimated to be worth around Rs 3.25 lakh crore, would rank among India's largest-ever fighter jet procurements. While Air Marshal Kapoor stopped short of naming a specific platform for the MRFA programme, he confirmed the IAF's intent to strengthen its combat fleet.

"We are looking forward to inducting more MRFA aircraft," he said, adding, "I cannot say which type, as it is under deliberations."

The urgency behind the procurement stems from a widening capability gap. The IAF currently operates around 29 fighter squadrons, significantly below its sanctioned strength of 42, even as security

challenges persist along both the western and northern borders. Under the proposed mega deal, sources said India plans to acquire 114 Rafale fighter jets, with 18 aircraft to be delivered in fly-away condition and the remaining to be manufactured in India.

Nearly 80 per cent of the fleet is expected to be produced domestically, with indigenous content potentially reaching up to 60 per cent under the Make in India framework. The proposed configuration includes 88 single-seat and 26 twin-seat variants for the Indian Air Force. French manufacturer Dassault Aviation is likely to partner with Indian private sector firms for local production and assembly, significantly expanding domestic aerospace manufacturing capabilities.

Vande Mataram to play before national song, standing up mandatory: Check new rules

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Union Home Ministry has issued fresh guidelines mandating the singing or playing of the national song Vande Mataram at designated government functions. Under the new rules, a six-stanza version of the national song, lasting 3 minutes and 10 seconds, will be rendered at special state occasions.

By comparison, the national anthem Jana Gana Mana runs for 52 seconds. The national song will be performed at civilian honours ceremonies, including the Padma Awards, and during events attended by the President, on both arrival and departure.

The guidelines also state that the sound of the mridangam will precede the national anthem. When both Vande Mataram and Jana Gana Mana are played, the national song will be rendered first.

Standing during Vande Mataram will be mandatory at official events, though this requirement will not extend to venues such as cinema halls. Additionally, schools have been directed to begin the day with the national anthem.

Officials said the move is aimed at ensuring uniformity and protocol in ceremonial observances across government institutions. Detailed guidelines regarding the approved version and its duration have been circulated to relevant authorities.

The government's directive follows closely on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's launch of a year-long commemoration marking 150 years of Vande Mataram. The Prime Minister inaugurated the celebrations by releasing a special commemorative stamp and coin in honour of the national song.

The nationwide programme, running from November 7, 2025, to November 7, 2026, marks a century and a half since the composition of the iconic song that became a rallying cry during India's freedom struggle and remains a symbol of national pride.

Vande Mataram was composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterji for Akshaya Navami in 1875, which that year fell on November 7. The Winter Session of Parliament also witnessed heated debates and exchanges between the government and Opposition during discussions on the national song.

Relief for tribal residents as Supreme Court pauses Assam forest evictions

New Delhi.(Agency)

In relief to residents of tribal villages located in Assam's reserved forest areas, the Supreme Court has ordered status quo on eviction of petitioner villages until verification of Jamabandi registers is completed to determine authorised occupants. The Assam government informed the court that a joint committee of Revenue and Forest officials will be constituted to examine residents' claims.

The court said occupation of a gaon panchayat within a forest is permissible if supported by sufficient proof in the Jamabandi register maintained by the Forest Department or under provisions of the Forest Rights Act. It also noted that individuals recognised under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest

Rights) Act, 2006 are legally authorised to occupy forest land and cannot be evicted.

A bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Adarsh passed the directions

The court observed that the state's mechanism for removing encroachments includes procedural safeguards and conforms to principles of fairness, reasonableness and due process. It recorded the assurance of the Solicitor General that the process would be implemented objectively and fairly.

The procedure outlined includes formation of a committee of forest and revenue officials, issuance of notices to alleged unauthorised occupants, opportunity to present documentary proof, and eviction only after determination of encroachment. Where occupants are found outside notified forest areas, cases will be referred to the revenue department. A speaking order must be passed and a 15-day notice issued before any eviction.



while hearing a batch of PILs alleging mass eviction drives across districts in Assam. Petitioners argued that the actions raised constitutional concerns under Articles 14 and 21 and risked displacement of long-settled families.

Gangster Sombir Motta deported from US, taken into custody by Haryana Police

New Delhi.(Agency)

Fugitive alleged gangster Sombir Motta, wanted by the Haryana Police in connection with a murder case and the use of firearms, was deported from the United States to India on Tuesday in an operation coordinated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in collaboration with the Ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs. Officials said Motta was taken into custody by the Haryana Police soon after he landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi on Tuesday.

Confirming the development, the CBI said in an official release that the deportation was carried out on February 10, 2026. "The subject has been deported from the USA to India on 10.02.2026 and Haryana Police is taking over the custody of the subject (Motta)," a

CBI release said.

Officials said the CBI had earlier facilitated the publication of an INTERPOL Red Notice against Motta on

and provisionally arrest wanted persons pending extradition or deportation.

After the Red Notice was issued, the CBI coordinated with the National Central Bureau (NCB) in Washington to trace Motta's whereabouts in the United States and ensure his return to India. The coordinated effort ultimately led to his deportation, the agency said. The CBI, which serves as India's National Central Bureau for INTERPOL, works closely with law enforcement agencies across the country through the BHARATPOL network to provide international assistance via INTERPOL channels. Highlighting the growing success of such coordinated operations, the CBI noted that more than 150 wanted criminals have been brought back to India in recent years through INTERPOL-based coordination.

February 11, 2025, following a request from the Haryana Police. The Red Notice, which is circulated globally to law enforcement agencies, is used to locate

children, I went on stage and played a role. It's like a serial. It's a fake toy," he added.

Calling it a family affair blown out of proportion, Patel said, "There was a program for a family function in a resort. The police department has also enquired. They have also checked and given a report."

He maintained that the prop was brought from home and used only as part of a staged act during the celebration.

POLICE VERIFICATION UNDER WAY

Kalaburagi Superintendent of Police Sharannappa SD confirmed that the police have taken note of the

viral video and initiated a verification process. "In connection with one viral video which is circulating on social media, I have already initiated and issued

Karnataka Congress leader waves gun to 'FA9LA' song at event, row erupts

New Delhi.(Agency)

A wedding celebration in Karnataka has snowballed into a political controversy after a Congress leader was seen dancing with what appeared to be a gun and later posing with it at a family function, prompting a police probe and a sharp political backlash. The video, which surfaced on social media, shows Afzalpur Congress leader Mateen Patel at a resort event in Kalaburagi, holding a firearm while dancing to music. Patel is known to be a close aide of Congress MLA MY Patil.

'IT'S A FAKE TOY,' SAYS PATEL
As the clip went viral, Patel denied that he had used a real weapon and insisted

that the incident was being given a political colour.

"There was a program of my elder sister's daughter. There were members of



our family in that program. In that resort, they gave me a role in a Dhurandhar film," Patel said. "By taking toys from home and being requested by my

instructions to the local police to verify in detail what are the weapons are being used in the reel which is being circulated and also in what context the viral video was made," the SP said. "Definitely, there will be an action in connection with the concerned viral video," he added.

The police have not yet clarified whether the object seen in the video was a licensed firearm, an imitation weapon or a toy, and whether any legal provisions have been invoked. The episode has triggered a fresh political flashpoint in the state, with the optics of a ruling party leader handling what appears to be a gun at a public function drawing scrutiny.

While Patel insists it was a harmless prop used during a family skit, the viral footage has fuelled debate over public conduct and the message such displays send.

NEWS BOX

Winter Olympics' most bizarre moment: Biathlete wins medal, confesses to cheating girlfriend

NEW DELHI. (Agency) Norwegian biathlete Sturla Holm Laegreid took third place in the 20km individual biathlon at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, but his post-race interview became the focus after he admitted to an affair that occurred three months ago. Laegreid, who had been with his girlfriend for six months, described the time since the revelation as "the worst week of my life" and expressed deep regret. Laegreid secured his first individual medal in biathlon, as he claimed bronze with Johan-Olav Botn winning gold and Frenchman ric Perrot finishing second. However, it was Laegreid who stole the spotlight with his bizarre confession.

Winter Olympics 2026: Full coverage "There's someone I wanted to share it with who might not be watching," he told NRK, Norway's state broadcaster. "Six months ago I met the love of my life - the most beautiful and kindest person in the world. Three months ago I made my biggest mistake and cheated on her." "I had the gold medal in life, and I am sure there are many people who will see things differently, but I only have eyes for her. Sport has come second these last few days. Yes, I wish I could share this with her." Laegreid later told Norwegian newspaper VG that he wanted to come clean



and hope that his girlfriend can forgive him for his mistake. "My only way to solve it is to tell everything and put everything on the table, and hope that she can still love me. I've done that for her, and now for the whole world. I have nothing to lose. I want to be a good role model, but I have to admit when I make mistakes." "There's someone I wanted to share it with who might not be watching," reflecting on the personal toll of the situation while on the podium. Laegreid has now won two Olympic medals, including a relay gold at the 2022 Games. "Of course, now I hope I didn't ruin Johan's day. I don't know if it was the right choice or not, but it was the choice I made. I made the choice to tell the world what I did so maybe there's a chance she will see what she really means to me - maybe not, but I don't want to think I didn't try everything to get her back. I don't want to steal the show. I hope this is just like a day-or-two thing. Then you are an Olympic gold medallist forever."

How Sanju Samson's quiet fight stood out in India's boisterous nets in Delhi

MUMBAI. (Agency) Captain Suryakumar Yadav's warning was sharp and immediate. Anyone standing along the boundary ropes was ordered to face the pitch, not the stands. India's first training session at the Arun Jaitley Stadium ahead of the Namibia clash was under way, and the ball was being struck with enough venom to make back-turning a safety hazard. Fielding coach T Dilip set the tone, timing his fungo hits perfectly as India began their drills under the floodlights. The mood in the camp was characteristically buoyant. Having survived a scare against the USA in their opener, the squad seemed intent on keeping things light.



"Shot yaar, Dilip sir!" Hardik Pandya bellowed, his laughter echoing across the turf as he plucked high catches out of the night sky. Yet, amidst the high-fives and the banter, a distinct contrast was brewing. While the group pivoted on collective joy, Sanju Samson seemed to be operating in a different time zone – one of intense, almost solitary focus. It wasn't just Dilip who was timing the ball well. As the fielding drills wound down, the top four padded up.

Abhishek Sharma was a notable absentee. The India opener missed Tuesday's training session as he continued to recover from a stomach-related illness he picked up during the opening game against the USA on Saturday in Mumbai. Sources told India Today that Abhishek was hospitalised on Monday in the capital city.

SAMSON vs ISHAN: AUDIBLE CONTRAST On Tuesday, Samson was batting alongside the man who replaced him in the XI – and the man he could yet partner on Thursday – Ishan Kishan. The contrast, though, was audible. The sound of Kishan's bat reverberated through the empty Kotla stands; he was middling everything, Pepperidge-cracking balls into the mid-wicket and long-on tiers.

The sound of Kishan's bat reverberated through the empty Kotla stands; he was middling everything, Pepperidge-cracking balls into the mid-wicket and long-on tiers.

New Delhi, (Agency) After riveting action over the first four days of the ICCT20 World Cup 2026, the excitement will continue in the T20 extravaganza, with three action-packed matches lined up for

Tangled in green: How Pakistan's spin cycle could trap India in the big rivals clash

T20 World Cup: Pakistan's spin attack has found its perfect stage in Colombo. With five wicket-takers and India's batters struggling on spicy tracks, the rivals might finally have a weapon that could do some damage.

NEW DELHI. (Agency) Usman Tariq's run-up is a study in deception. He approaches the crease like Bruno Fernandes approaches a penalty—stop, stutter, wait. The batter commits. The ball doesn't. It hangs, dips, turns, and by the time the strokemaker realises what's happened, the stumps are rattled or the edge is found. Since March 24, 2025, against Faisalabad, Tariq hasn't gone a single match without taking a wicket, 23 consecutive games. 23 times he's made someone look foolish. Two games into the T20 World Cup, Pakistan sit unbeaten atop Group A. They've survived the Netherlands with last-gasp heroics and dismantled the USA with clinical efficiency. Both wins came in Colombo, where the R Premadasa Stadium pitch had something to

offer for the spinners. **THE CHAMP IS HERE**

The defending champions arrive in Colombo on February 15 with history on their side—13 wins in 16 T20 meetings, including seven of eight at World Cups. But for the first time in years, Pakistan might have found India's vulnerability: a pitch that grips and turns, spinners who know exactly how to exploit it, and an Indian batting order that looked fragile before Suryakumar Yadav's rescue act against the USA.

In T20 cricket, where one bad over can flip everything, Pakistan's five-man spin attack could finally tangle India in green.

THE WEB PAKISTAN SPUN

Tariq isn't alone. Pakistan's spin attack has quickly become one of the most lethal forces in T20 cricket since the 2024 World Cup final. Abrar Ahmed and Mohammad Nawaz have claimed 47 wickets a piece, in that span. Saim Ayub has 26. Add Shadab Khan, fresh off an all-round masterclass against the USA, and suddenly Pakistan can field five spinners who've been hunting wickets.

The numbers tell the story of Pakistan's resurgence. Since that 2024 final, they've won 29 of 49 matches—not far behind India's 32 wins in 42 games among full

member nations. They've learned from their Asia Cup mistakes, built depth, and found a formula that works in subcontinental



conditions. In Colombo, where they've been training for two weeks while India were finishing their group stage elsewhere, that formula has found its perfect testing ground.

INDIA'S ACHILLES HEEL

"It's going to be a challenge going to Colombo, where Pakistan have been for the last two weeks," admitted Ryan ten Doeschate, India's assistant coach. The concession was small, almost grudging. But it was there.

India's opening match against the USA exposed cracks that Suryakumar's brilliance

papered over. On a spicy Wankhede pitch, India's batters struggled badly before their talisman's unbeaten 84 rescued them to a 29-run win. Man for man, India still looks stronger. But T20 cricket doesn't work on paper comparisons. It works on moments, on conditions, on who handles pressure when the ball starts doing things batters don't expect. Pakistan's spinners have made careers out of creating those moments. On turning tracks, against strokemakers who want to dominate, they've become executioners. India's aggressive batting style—built on taking risks early and often—could walk straight into the trap.

THE MOMENTUM SHIFT

Confidence built on track record matters. India have earned their favourites tag through years of dominance over Pakistan. But momentum has a way of mattering more in tournaments, and right now, Pakistan have it. Two wins. A settled bowling attack. Home conditions. And perhaps most dangerously, belief. The boycott controversy that threatened to derail their tournament will be behind them. Pakistan know they have a weapon that works, and they're facing an opponent that might not be ready for it.

Pak's Usman Tariq finds support in Ashwin amid claims of illegal bowling action

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO. (Agency)

Pakistan's Usman Tariq received support from R Ashwin, whose bowling action came under the scanner once again after the win over the USA in the T20 World Cup 2026 on Monday, February 11. Tariq picked up three wickets for 27 runs as Pakistan secured their second win of the campaign but instead of his performance, it was the mystery spinner's action that was under the limelight once again.

Unlike some of the other spinners, Tariq has a visible bend in his arm and an unconventional run-up that has led to questions about how he continues to play international cricket and in top T20 leagues around the world. His action was called into question by Australia's Cameron Green during the recent bilateral series against Pakistan.

More scrutiny followed Pakistan's win over the USA, with a video of fans mocking the spinner's action during the game. Fans also voiced their concerns on social media, saying that Tariq was deliberately chucking during the game and needs to be banned by the



ICC. Former cricketer Shreevats Goswami also joined the discourse and he wasn't particularly with the pause that Tariq takes during his run-up, pointing out how a similar approach has been stopped while taking penalties in football. Goswami said that the action shouldn't be continued. "Even football doesn't allow players to pause during a penalty run-up anymore. How is this ok? Action - all good. But pause? That too while loading to deliver. This can't be continued seriously!" tweeted Goswami on X. **HOW DID ASHWIN DEFEND TARIQ?**

It was Goswami's remark that made Ashwin come to the defence of Tariq, as the former Indian spinner asked why such restrictions are put in place when it comes to bowlers and not the batters.

India vs Pakistan won't be a one-sided contest: Sahibzada Farhan sends warning

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan has issued a warning ahead of the India clash in the T20 World Cup 2026, saying that the battle between the arch-rivals won't be a one-

India have won 8 matches with Pakistan's solitary win coming in 2022 and one being a no-result. It was during the Asia Cup last year that Suryakumar Yadav suggested that India-Pakistan isn't a rivalry anymore and



sided affair. India have had the upper hand over Pakistan in their recent battles, winning all three games, including the final in the Asia Cup last year. In the last 10 matches between the sides in all formats,

similar comments were echoed by Tilak Varma and many former cricketers. However, Farhan suggested that Pakistan would turn up and fight during the match on Sunday, February 15 in Colombo.

ICC backed off, not Pak, ex-PCB chief claims on U-turn over India match

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Former Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi has made a startling claim about the Pakistan government's recent U-turn in the T20 World Cup standoff, insisting that it was the International Cricket Council that stepped back, not Pakistan.

The India-Pakistan group match in the 2026 T20 World Cup will now go ahead as scheduled on February 15 in Colombo after Pakistan's government withdrew its boycott call. The decision followed days of negotiations involving the ICC and the Bangladesh Cricket Board, bringing an end to a tense impasse that had cast a shadow over the tournament. Sethi, however, offered a sharply different interpretation of how events unfolded. "In fact, it's the ICC that has taken a step back. I think the ICC has decided to back off a little bit, give

Bangladesh some space. It was a very considered decision from Pakistan. They looked at all the angles. They knew that there could be no sanctions (for boycotting



India match). They consulted the top lawyers at home and abroad," Sethi said in an exclusive interview with India Today's

consulting editor, Rajdeep Sardesai. "And there are precedents that made it clear to them that they were on a very strong wicket. And at best, they would lose a point, no more

than that. And I think the ICC also realised that, which is why then the ICC got into motion and made overtures. That's how Imran Khawaja, the deputy chief, got into action. That's how the Bangladeshis got into action. That's how they came to Pakistan to negotiate so that Pakistan could play this match," Sethi added. Meanwhile, Mohsin Naqvi, the current chief of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), claimed that the Pakistan government agreed to play the upcoming T20 World Cup match against India only after they managed to secure "respect" for Bangladesh.

Matchday Preview: Australia's campaign begins, England and WI collide in Mumbai

T20 World Cup 2026, Matchday preview: Three exciting matches are scheduled for February 11 in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026.

Australia will begin their campaign against Ireland, while South Africa will take on Afghanistan in the second game. The third fixture will have England and West Indies going up against each other.

New Delhi, (Agency)

After riveting action over the first four days of the ICCT20 World Cup 2026, the excitement will continue in the T20 extravaganza, with three action-packed matches lined up for

fans on Wednesday, February 11. The first match of the day will see South Africa take on Afghanistan at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad at 11 am IST.

The second fixture of the day will feature former champions Australia finally getting their campaign underway against Ireland at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo at 3 pm IST. The final fixture of the day will have all eyeballs fixated on it, with England and West Indies locking horns at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, starting at 7 pm IST.

When and where to watch
South Africa vs Afghanistan in Ahmedabad in a Group D match at 11 am IST. England vs West Indies in Mumbai in a Group C match at 7 pm IST.

MATCH 1 Prediction: South Africa vs Afghanistan in Ahmedabad

South Africa could not have hoped for a better start to their campaign as they hammered Canada by 57 runs in their opening fixture. The entire Proteas batting line-up came to the fore, with everyone contributing to post

213/4 in their allotted 20 overs. With the ball, Lungi Ngidi was at his best, registering impressive figures of 4/31 in four overs.

Having got their campaign off to a winning start, South Africa will aim to continue their momentum by thrashing Afghanistan. The

MATCH 2 Prediction: South Africa vs Ireland in Ahmedabad

Proteas ended Afghanistan's dream run in the T20 World Cup 2024 by beating them in the semi-final. They hold a clean record against their opponents and will hope for another clinical performance in the upcoming fixture. On the other hand, Afghanistan come into the fixture having lost their opening

match against New Zealand by five wickets. After being put in to bat first, Afghanistan posted a competitive score of 182/6 in their 20 overs, but New Zealand chased down the target in 17.5 overs to seal a comfortable victory.

After failing to win their opening game, the upcoming fixture becomes a must-win contest for Afghanistan, as another loss would almost knock them out of the tournament. Hence, the Rashid Khan-led side will have plenty to play for in the upcoming game and will look to give their all in the encounter.

Pitch Report

A total of nine men's T20I matches have been played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, with six of those games won by teams batting first. The surface favours big hitters, with the average first-innings score standing at 191. The highest successful run chase at the venue is 165. While dew is expected to play a role in the second half, captains are still likely to opt for batting first to take advantage of the favourable conditions.



Proteas ended Afghanistan's dream run in the T20 World Cup 2024 by beating them in the semi-final. They hold a clean record against their opponents and will hope for another clinical performance in the upcoming fixture. On the other hand, Afghanistan come into the fixture having lost their opening

Sensex, Nifty open in green as investor sentiment improves renewed FII buying

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened higher on Wednesday, extending gains for the third day in a row as investor sentiment on Dalal Street seems to have picked up after India-US trade deal and strong Q3 results. The S&P BSE Sensex was up 71.22 points to 84,345.14, while the NSE Nifty50 added 44.90 points to 25,980.05 as of 9:28 am.

Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited said that there are two trends that can sustain the ongoing mild rally in the market. "One, this is a comprehensive rally with the broader market, too, participating with more enthusiasm. The appreciation in mid and small caps have brought cheer to retail portfolios and retail investors are participating eagerly in the rally. Two, sustained FII selling, which has been a major drag on the market, has stopped. FIIs have been buyers in the market in the last five out of six trading sessions. This cannot be taken as a complete reversal of the FII stance; but the sustained selling appears to be over," he added. After the opening bell, Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd led the Sensex gainers, rising 2.03%. Titan Company Ltd followed with a gain of 1.42%, while Maruti Suzuki India Ltd was up 1.04%. State Bank of India Ltd added 0.41%, and HDFC Bank Ltd also opened higher, rising 0.26%. HCL Technologies Ltd saw the sharpest fall, slipping 1.20%. Trent Ltd declined 0.91%, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd was down 0.88%, ITC Ltd fell 0.59%, and Infosys Ltd eased 0.57%. "The around 10 percent depreciation in dollar during the last one year has significantly eroded the dollar gains of foreign investors from investment in the US market. So FIIs might look for markets outside the US for gains this year and beyond," said Vijayakumar. The rupee stability and hope of appreciation in the months ahead also can nudge FIIs to turn buyers in India. Apart from these factors, the improving earnings growth prospects in FY27 and the strong macro construct will provide the fundamental support to a modest rally," he added.

Anthropic AI engineer quits to pursue career in poetry: 'World in peril'

New Delhi.(Agency)

Mrinank Sharma, an artificial intelligence (AI) safety engineer at Anthropic, resigned from the much sought-after position to pursue his passion for poetry. In his resignation note shared on social media platform X, Sharma said, "The world is in peril. And not just from AI, or bioweapons, but from a whole series of interconnected crises unfolding in this very moment." "We appear to be approaching a threshold where our wisdom must grow in equal measure to our capacity to affect the world, lest we face the consequences," he added.

Who is Mrinank Sharma?

Mrinank Sharma was the lead of the Safeguards Research Team at Anthropic. Before joining the company, he completed a PhD in Statistical Machine Learning at the University of Oxford. Sharma has also mentored projects outside Anthropic through programmes such as MATS and Anthropic Fellows. Apart from research, he writes poetry and has cited Bohemian poet Rainer Maria Rilke as a major influence. He has also published a poetry collection.

What was Sharma's role at Anthropic?

At Anthropic, Sharma worked on AI safety. His work included studying AI sycophancy and its causes, developing safeguards to reduce risks from AI-assisted bioterrorism, implementing those safeguards, and writing one of the early AI safety cases. Reflecting on his time at the company, he wrote, "I arrived in San Francisco two years ago, having wrapped up my PhD and wanting to contribute to AI safety. I feel lucky to have been able to contribute to what I have here," he wrote. "Thank you for your trust. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that the time has come to move on," he said.

Tata Trusts reviews governance at Sir Ratan Tata Trust; trust deed likely

New Delhi.(Agency)

A key charity within the Tata Group's philanthropic network may see changes in how it is governed. The Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT), one of the two main trusts under Tata Trusts, is reviewing its existing structure and considering whether to formalise its functioning through a written trust deed, according to a report by The Economic Times. The move comes at a time when new state regulations have tightened rules around trustee appointments and tenure.

Governance review under way

According to the report, Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata has spoken with senior legal experts about the possibility of drafting a formal trust deed for SRTT. At present, the trust operates under the terms of a will dating back to 1918. The review is also taking place alongside renewed attention on trustee appointments. A recent meeting called to consider the induction of Neville Tata as a trustee of SRTT was postponed due to the absence of the required quorum. Under the current rules of the trust, any new trustee can be appointed only if all existing trustees agree unanimously. Neville Tata, who is Noel Tata's son, was appointed as a trustee of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) in November 2025. SDTT and SRTT are the two principal charitable trusts within Tata Trusts. Together, they hold a majority stake in Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, giving them significant influence over group decisions. The present trustees of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust include Noel Tata, Venu Srinivasan, Vijay Singh, Jimmy N Tata, Jehangir H C Jehangir and Darius Khambata. Another meeting of the trust is scheduled, where the issue of trustee induction may again be discussed.

Impact of new Maharashtra ordinance

Legal experts, cited in the report, said the timing of the review is significant. The Maharashtra Public Trusts (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, which came into effect on September 1, has introduced fresh norms governing trustee appointments and tenure.

No tax refund even after 90 days? Here's the reason behind the delay

Many taxpayers expecting quick refunds are finding themselves stuck in a long wait. With several income tax returns pending for over 90 days, concerns are growing about delays and what they mean for ordinary filers.

Mumbai.(Agency)

If your income tax refund has not arrived yet, you are not alone. The government has told Parliament that nearly 24 lakh income tax returns (ITRs) for Assessment Year 2025-26 have been pending for processing for more than 90 days. In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said that out of 8.79 crore ITRs filed till February 4, 2026, about 24.64 lakh

returns were pending for more than 90 days.

DELAYS LINKED TO TECHNOLOGY CHECKS, NOT BLANKET ACTION

The Finance Ministry clarified that the delay is mainly due to technology-driven risk analysis and compliance campaigns run by the Income Tax Department. It stressed that this is not a general crack down on honest taxpayers. According to the ministry, the department is using advanced data tools to identify possible mismatches or risky claims before clearing returns. This extra scrutiny is slowing down processing in selected cases.

WHAT MPS ASKED THE GOVERNMENT

The issue was raised by Rajya Sabha MP Deepak Prakash. He asked whether the Income Tax Department had sent large-scale messages in late December 2025 asking taxpayers to revise their returns within just three to four days. He also questioned why refunds of honest

taxpayers, particularly senior citizens, were being held back without clearly explaining the problems in their returns. In addition, he sought details on how many returns had been pending for over

Direct Taxes. NUDGE stands for Non-intrusive Usage of Data to Guide and Enable. These campaigns use data analytics and digital communication to gently push taxpayers towards voluntary compliance, instead of taking strict action later. Under this system, selected taxpayers are asked to review or revise their filed returns if the system detects possible risks.

WHO WAS FLAGGED UNDER THE NUDGE CAMPAIGN

According to the government, taxpayers flagged under the NUDGE campaign were identified through advanced risk analysis that detected possible irregularities. These mainly included non-disclosure of foreign assets or income, incorrect or excess deduction claims, and wrong claims under sections such as 80G, 80GGC and 80E. The minister said most cases involved unreported foreign holdings or inaccurate deduction claims.



90 days as of January 31, 2026.

WHY SOME TAXPAYERS GOT 'REVISE YOUR RETURN' MESSAGES

Responding to the query, Chaudhary said these messages were part of the NUDGE campaign run by the Central Board of

RBI raises ceiling for unsecured loans of UBCs to 25% of total advances

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Government of India and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have taken various measures to strengthen cooperative banks' financial health, governance and digital inclusion along with enhancing deposit security, credit availability and prudent regulation, said Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. As part of efforts to support business expansion, Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) have been permitted to open new branches, enabling wider outreach and improved customer access. In a move aimed at boosting credit flow, the permissible housing loan exposure of UCBs has been raised to 25 per cent of their total loans and advances, from the earlier limit of 10 per cent. To improve governance continuity, amendments to the Banking Regulation Act have increased the maximum tenure of directors of cooperative banks from eight years to ten years, allowing experienced boards to provide longer-term oversight. To promote digital payments and financial inclusion, the licensing fee for onboarding cooperative banks to the Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS) has been reduced, lowering entry barriers for smaller institutions.

The government has also strengthened institutional support for cooperative banks through the creation of new entities. The National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation Limited (NUCFDC) was established as a non-deposit-taking, non-banking financial company to serve as an umbrella organisation for UCBs, providing information technology infrastructure and operational support. For rural institutions, a Shared Services Entity (SSE) named Sahakar Sarthi has been established to deliver common technological services to Rural Cooperative Banks, improving efficiency and reducing operational costs. Further strengthening customer protection, Rural Cooperative Banks have been brought under the RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, providing customers with access to a unified grievance redressal mechanism. On deposit safety, the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) continues to insure deposits of all cooperative banks up to Rs 5 lakh per depositor per bank, including both principal and interest, providing enhanced confidence to depositors. Recently, it was also announced that loans sanctioned by banks to the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), as of January 19, 2026, for on-lending to cooperative societies, are eligible for classification as priority sector lending under the respective categories.

Journalist Ravi Nair sentenced to one year in jail in Adani defamation case

New Delhi.(Agency)

A court in Mansa has sentenced journalist Ravi Nair to one year in jail in a criminal defamation case filed by Adani Enterprises Limited.

The case was heard in the Court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class, Mansa. Adani Enterprises had filed a private complaint under Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code, alleging that Nair published defamatory tweets and online articles that harmed the company's reputation. According to the complaint, Ravi Nair posted a series of tweets between October 2020 and July 2021 from the handle @t_d_h_nair. The company also told the court that he published articles on a website called adaniwatch.org. Adani Enterprises claimed that these posts falsely accused the Adani Group of

corruption, misuse of government agencies, environmental violations and political patronage. The company argued that such content damaged its



goodwill and reputation, especially among investors and regulators. The court first conducted an inquiry under the Criminal Procedure Code and later issued process against the accused. During the trial, Adani Enterprises examined three witnesses and produced

copies of the tweets and articles as evidence. The defence cross-examined the witnesses and challenged the claims. It argued that the posts were not defamatory and raised questions about intent and evidence of actual damage. After examining the evidence and hearing arguments from both sides, the court held that the tweets and articles amounted to criminal defamation under Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code. The court found that the imputations made in the posts harmed the reputation of the complainant company. It therefore convicted Ravi Nair and sentenced him to one year of imprisonment. The judgment marks a significant development in a case involving allegations of reputational damage linked to social media posts and online publications.

Rupee falls 6 paise to 90.62 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI.(Agency)

The rupee depreciated 6 paise to 90.62 against the US dollar in early trade on Wednesday as geopolitical tensions and dollar demand from importers weighed on investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.56 against the US dollar, then lost some ground to touch 90.62, registering a loss of 6 paise over its previous close. In the initial trade, the rupee also touched 90.46 against the American currency. On Tuesday, the rupee pared initial losses and settled on a positive note, higher by 10 paise at 90.56 against the US dollar.

Forex traders said that while markets initially welcomed the India-US trade deal, fresh concerns have emerged after the White House released its fact sheet. The fact sheet highlights key terms of the agreement, including that India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products. This includes dried distillers' grains, red sorghum, tree nuts, and fresh and

processed fruit. Certain pulses, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products, and India has committed to buy more American products and



purchase over USD 500 billion of US energy, information and communication technology, agricultural, coal, and other products. "The US document goes a step further than the February 6 joint statement by explicitly mentioning tariff reductions on additional American agricultural products, including certain pulses. This is a sensitive area for India - both politically and economically," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said in

a note. Pabari said, "In the near term, the 90.00-90.20 zone continues to act as a strong support for the rupee. As long as this area remains intact, USD/INR could slowly move higher, with the 91.00-91.20 range emerging as the next potential upside zone in the coming sessions." Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.14 per cent lower at 96.66. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.78 per cent higher at USD 69.34 per barrel in futures trade. For India, as a major oil-importing country, higher crude prices mean a heavier import bill. And a heavier import bill almost always translates into pressure on the rupee, even if the impact is gradual, Pabari said. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 141.21 points to 84,415.13 in early trade, while Nifty advanced 51.95 points to 25,987.10. On Tuesday, foreign institutional Investors purchased equities worth Rs 69.45 crore, according to exchange data.

Why awareness is the only antidote to mis-selling in insurance

As India's insurance ecosystem continues to scale, the responsibility of protection must be shared, insurers must simplify, platforms must guide transparently, and consumers must engage with curiosity and awareness.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's insurance sector is witnessing a duality - a significant spike across the market and an underlying layer of challenges. While market growth can be attributed to rising medical service costs, GST cut-downs, and customised offerings, gaps in understanding insurance products, leading to easy mis-selling and fraudulent activities, are becoming catalysts in aggravating the sector's challenges. According to the Insurance Development Authority of India's (IRDAI) Annual Report for 2024-25, insurers in India processed over 11.26 crore general and health insurance

claims, as well as 26.68 lakh life insurance claims. In response, 2,57,790 policyholder grievances were filed on the Bima Bharosa portal across life, general, and health insurance. This contrast highlights that while claims volumes are large, disputes largely stem from gaps in product understanding, coverage clarity, and suitability rather than intent alone. Mis-selling has consequences beyond individual policyholders; it erodes trust in the insurance system. In FY2024-25, complaints classified under Unfair Business Practices (UFBP), which include mis-selling, rose to 26,667, accounting for over 22% of life insurance grievances, up from 19% in the previous year. Claim denials from unsuitable policies increase disputes, strain grievance mechanisms, and distort risk pools, making insurance more expensive for everyone. This dynamic disproportionately affects first-time buyers, who rely more on guidance at purchase and are more likely to disengage after an adverse claims experience, as

reflected in regulator and ombudsman observations.

Now, as an industry, insurance is rebutting the challenge with AI-led guidance, pricing parity across platforms, and



focused awareness efforts that help consumers compare, understand coverage, and make better-informed decisions. AI and digital tools play a critical role in enabling this shift; no longer optional add-ons, they are essential to strengthen informed decision-making. In India's insurance sector, AI and generative AI are already delivering 10-20% efficiency gains in underwriting,

reducing service costs by 20-30%, and improving claims payout outcomes as intelligence is embedded across sales, underwriting, servicing, and claims.

The scale of adoption is reflected in India's insurtech ecosystem, valued at approximately USD 15.8 billion with nearly USD 0.9 billion in revenue. By helping consumers compare premiums in context, identify coverage gaps, and better understand claims processes, these tools provide neutral, insight-led guidance. Shift the focus from sales incentives to product suitability. Efforts are also being made towards repositioning consumer awareness as the primary defense. When individuals

clearly understand their risk profiles and coverage requirements, the scope for unsuitable product recommendations narrows. Awareness extends beyond price comparison to a working knowledge of exclusions, waiting periods, sub-limits, and co-payments, enabling buyers to question advice, compare alternatives, and select policies aligned with their health and financial objectives.

Are Avinash Mishra

Eisha Singh

Teaming Up With Yuzvendra Chahal And Jannat Zubair?

Avinash Mishra and Eisha Singh have been quite popular since their appearance on Bigg Boss 18. The duo have reminded close friends and their fans have often shipped them together off screen. While the duo are quite busy with their projects, they recently were seen with Yuzvendra Chahal and Jannat Zubair in the former's latest photo dump. Yuzvendra Chahal shared a bunch of pictures with the caption, "Fantastic four." The snaps featured Avinash Mishra, Eisha Singh and Jannat Zubair. While it is uncertain whether the four of them are collaborating together, their camaraderie was quite visible in the pictures.

Avinash Mishra and Eisha Singh's Friendship



Eisha Singh recently discussed her relationship with Avinash Mishra and how it has altered since Bigg Boss 18. In an interview with The Times of India, the actress said the reality show had a positive impact on her personal relationships. "There's a common belief that relationships fall apart after Bigg Boss, but in my case, my bonds have improved and become even stronger," Eisha said. She added that the people who were close to her before the show remain just as important in her life, and nothing has changed for the worse.

Eisha has a close relationship with Avinash Mishra, with whom she became good friends during their Bigg Boss 18 journey. While admirers praised their relationship, reports of their rumoured engagement quickly spread last year and made headlines. The actress stated that, as a public figure, she is used to rumour, but the engagement talk surprised her.

Avinash Mishra and Eisha Singh Career So Far

Eisha Singh recently returned to fiction with the hit supernatural franchise Naagin 7, further strengthening her position on television. She was also seen in the third season of Laughter Chefs with Vivian Dsena. Avinash Mishra has appeared in a number of television shows, including Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya, Ishqbaaz, Love on the Run, Zindagi Ke Crossroads, Mariam Khan – Reporting Live, and Yeh Teri Galiyaan. In 2020, he received additional appreciation for his performance as Kunal Rajvansh in Yeh Rishtey Hain Pyar Ke. Between 2020 and 2021, the actor played Dev Aneja in Durga – Mata Ki Chhaya. Most recently he was seen in Pyaar Se Bandhe Rishte.

Tamannaah Bhatia's Ragini MMS 3 Director REMOVED, Film Put On Hold? Here's What We Know

In 2025, it was reported that Tamannaah Bhatia has been finalised to lead the third part of Ekta Kapoor's Ragini MMS franchise. As soon as the reports were out, her fans were quite excited about this project. However, it seems like they will have to wait a little longer for Ragini MMS 3. A new report claims that the film has gotten into trouble even before it could go on floors. Read on to what really

present on set daily. This very reason impacted the shooting schedule of Ragini MMS 3, forcing the makers to part ways with the director. The film's team is looking for a replacement but it seems like it won't go on floors anytime soon.

As per the earlier reports, Ragini MMS 3 is expected to re-brand the film franchise

into a new genre. Reportedly, Ekta is focusing more on supernatural elements and looking forward to breaking ties with the horror-erotica space.

The Ragini MMS franchise started off in 2011 with Rajkummar Rao and Kainaz Motivala, followed by Ragini MMS 2 in 2014. The

sequel is known for the song Baby Doll featuring Sunny Leone. A recent report suggested that the makers are now looking to recreate the magic of that song with Tamannaah Bhatia in the third part. Meanwhile, Tamannaah also has Vann with Sidharth Malhotra and Rohit Shetty's upcoming biopic on ex-Mumbai top cop Rakesh Maria.



went wrong!

Tamannaah Bhatia's Ragini MMS 3 put on hold
According to Variety India, the exciting third instalment of Ragini MMS has been indefinitely put on hold. According to the report, the director Sahir Raza, who was supposed to helm the film, has been removed now.

The reason behind his abrupt removal is said to be due to a scheduling clash from his ongoing commitments. The sources told the publication that Raza is currently serving as a showrunner on a Netflix series and as per a recent mandate from the streaming platform, the showrunner should be



'Naagin' Priyanka Chahar Choudhary's Green Saree Is Giving All The Right Signals



Priyanka Chahar Choudhary has grown to be one of the most talked-about celebrities on television, and her recent appearance on the Naagin 7 set in a green saree has only increased the hype around her style sense. Fans can't stop sharing videos and images about radiant appearance, elegant demeanour, and command of the camera.

In an Instagram video, Priyanka can be seen stepping out of her vanity van wearing a gorgeous green satin saree, paired with a black sleeveless blouse. She completed her look with a pair of high heels. This moment exemplifies Priyanka's transformation from a Bigg Boss favourite to the main character of one of the largest supernatural TV series in India.

From Reality TV To Serpent Queen

Priyanka has quickly become a superstar following her Bigg Boss 16 stint. Later, she made the move to fiction with Naagin 7, where she portrays the formidable Naagin Purvi, a combination of a dangerous supernatural creature and an innocent girl. In interviews, she has openly discussed being inspired by actresses who played the role earlier, such as Mouni Roy in Season 1 and Tejasswi Prakash in Season 6. Priyanka has stated that her focus is on giving the role the best she can.

"The moment I was offered Naagin 7, I felt a tremendous feeling of responsibility because Naagin is a legacy that spans years," Priyanka told Mid-Day, sharing her journey and sources of inspiration.

Naagin 7 Record-Breaking OTT Debut

Despite mixed reactions about VFX, Naagin 7 has become an OTT powerhouse. The show topped digital viewership ratings for supernatural content on JioHotstar, garnering an amazing 18.2 million views in its first month of release. This success is largely credited to the confluence of the fandoms for Naagin and Priyanka Chahar Choudhary. Furthermore, the popularity of the show is not limited by the number of OTT users. Since the show airs on Colors TV, it is also garnering a lot of TRPs.

Ranbir Kapoor Calls Relationship With Rishi Kapoor 'Distant'; Wishes To 'Break That Glass Wall' With Raha



Ranbir Kapoor's bonding with his daughter Raha is quite visible in pictures Alia Bhatt has shared on her social media or during public sightings. Even Alia Bhatt herself has often spoken about how Ranbir and Raha are just inseparable when they are together, and recently the actor himself has also spoken about the bond he shares with his daughter.

Ranbir Kapoor was recently announced as the brand ambassador of a legacy jewellery brand, and during the event for the brand, he spoke about his relationship and bonding with daughter Raha, and said welcoming her has been a "life-changing experience." He further explained, "My father's relationship with me was... there was a little bit of distance; it was not like friendship. That's how that generation was." Describing the distance as a glass wall, RK went on to add, "With my child, I want to break that glass wall. I want to be a friend to her, give her the wings to fly in whichever direction she wants."

Ranbir comes from a legacy family, but that never pressured him to do things a certain way. Speaking about the same, the actor said, "I never felt the pressure. It was always a sense of responsibility that, you know, I have been given this thing on a platter. You know, there are 10,000-million talented artists who are waiting to get that opportunity, and the fact that I'm getting this opportunity so easily, I cannot take it for granted. I have to work very hard, I have to apply my mind, I have to be original, I have to be new, and that was very important to me. Thankfully, I think because of my upbringing, I would want to credit a lot to that; I had an understanding before I started working."

Ranbir Kapoor's Upcoming Films

Love & War: Directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Love & War is an epic saga set against a historical backdrop. Ranbir's portrayal in this film is highly anticipated, marking a significant collaboration with Bhansali, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal.

Ramayana Part 1 (Diwali 2026): Under the direction of Nitesh Tiwari, Ranbir takes on the role of Lord Ram in this grand adaptation of the ancient Indian epic. The film also stars Sai Pallavi as Sita, Yash as Ravana, and Sunny Deol as Hanuman.

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

Choosing a hobby idea when your little one is ready for summer holidays is not rocket science. Just you need to take care of the following things:

Know his or her interest: It is very important. Not knowing what interests the most to your child may backfire if you get him or her into a wrong hobby class. So, seek their opinion first and ask them which class they want to go for.

Don't press for one:

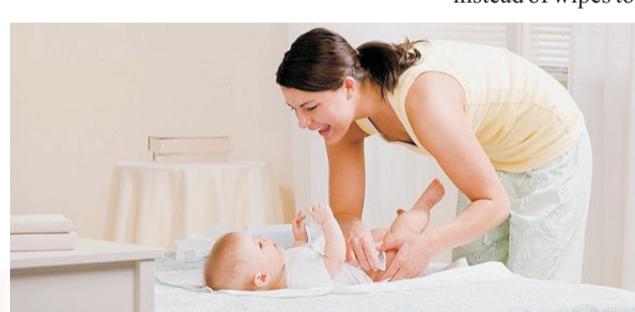
If your child wants to enjoy some fun moments at home and is comfortable this way, let it be. It does not



Does your little one suffer from diaper rash?

The main cause for that annoying rash on the bum and thighs of your baby are nappies or wet diapers that cause great discomfort.

Although the main cause for diaper rash is excessive wetness, other causes include tight diapers, humid climate, and not washing cloth nappies properly, which



leaves residues of detergent in the nappy.

- Change your baby's nappy as often as you can so as to keep their bottoms clean and dry.

- Letting your baby stay without a diaper for a few minutes helps the rash heal faster.

- Applying aloe vera gel on the rash keeps the skin free of moisture.

- When you keep dirty nappies for a wash, add half a cup of vinegar to the water and rinse the diapers without using any detergents, which might be causing the

Hobby ideas for your Child



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

Make your home a hobby destination:

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

Popular hobby ideas:

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

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

9 things never to say to Your child

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

We list 9 insensitive things that you should avoid saying to your child.

1. I was much more responsible when I was your age

Comparing your child and giving him an example of what all you were capable of when you were a kid is the first big mistake parents make. Their irritation stems from 'expectations' - expectations of bringing up the 'perfect' kid. Try and recall your shortcomings as a child and what all troubles you bothered your parents with. You are the elder one in the relationship hence you ought to know more. A statement such as this will break your child's confidence.

2. You always end up taking wrong decisions

Don't penalise your kid for being immature. Everyone is allowed to make mistakes and it is in fact a part of the learning process. He might

have taken up a field of study that doesn't interest you or perhaps working with a company that you're not very proud of, but that doesn't mean you accuse him of the decis

ions. Your job as a parent is to guide him, not force him to obey your opinions.

3. Why can't you be more like your brother/sister?

This is once again an unreasonable comparison and a common one at that. Avoid seeding in animosity between your children by comparing their abilities. Doing so may create a fissure between the siblings. You don't want your kid to harbour negative feelings for you, hence avoid assessing your kids.

4. Leave me alone!

Adults have huge responsibilities to take care of, responsibilities that children are innocently oblivious of.

And there are times when we want to be left alone too.

Kids are incapable of understanding the gravity of such situations. An impatient outburst of 'Leave me alone!' can make your child feel neglected, unwanted and depressed at the same time. Show some patience and avoid saying something bad to him.

5. You should be ashamed of yourself

This statement is outright harsh and saying such an awful thing to any child is simply 'bad'. Yes, there are mischievous kids who go about pestering people with a devil-may-care attitude but that does not mean you reprimand him like this. There are better and milder ways to make the child understand the difference between good and bad.

6. You're just like your father/mother

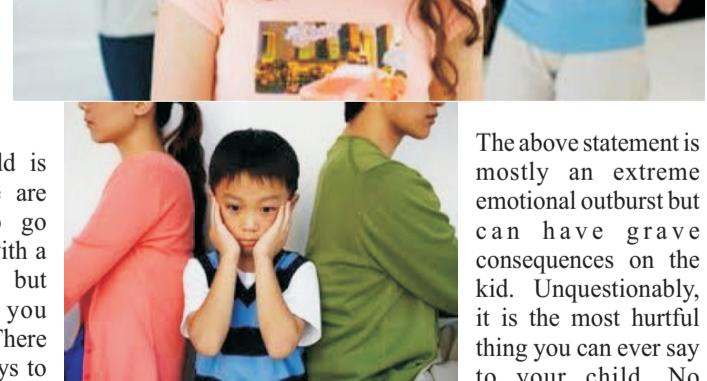
Not all married couples are happy living together and the bitterness in their relationship often translates into exchange of unkind words against each other. Some relationships end in separation too. Either ways, kids are a witness to this mutual hostility and criticism. So when you shower

your partner's animosity on your kid, that's when he begins to lose respect.

7. You always find ways to hurt me

There are times when children hurt their parents' sentiments by going against their wishes. Most times it is unintentional but there are kids who do so on purpose. However, saying something like the above statement would make your child feel guilty about his/her decision. He might comply with your demands to make you happy but you'd be taking away his right to happiness in the long run. Let your children take their own decisions and let them live a guilt-free life.

8. It's better to be childless than have a kid like you



The above statement is mostly an extreme emotional outburst but can have grave consequences on the kid. Unquestionably, it is the most hurtful thing you can ever say to your child. No matter what the crisis

is, saying something like this could make you regret for life.

9. Get rid of the bad company of your friends

We (read adults) don't think before making friends. Neither do children. The only difference is that we know how to stay away from bad company and children don't. Their friends mean the world to them and therefore you cannot just order them to get a new set of good friends.

