

Is Delhi Silencing Punjabi? A Serious Question on Linguistic Justice

The Sikh Times
Gurcharan Singh Babbar

In a deeply concerning development, serious allegations have emerged regarding the treatment of Punjabi (Gurmukhi) language newspapers in Delhi.

Reports indicate that Punjabi language newspapers are allegedly being denied government advertisements by the Directorate of Information & Publicity (DIP) under the Government of Delhi. It has been claimed that officials have clearly stated that Punjabi newspapers will not be issued government

advertisements as a matter of policy. If true, this raises alarming questions about linguistic equality and constitutional fairness. Punjabi: Not Just a Language, But a Heritage Punjabi is not merely a regional language. It is: The first language of millions of Sikh families. The sacred language of Sikh Gurus. Widely spoken, read, and written in homes across Delhi. Recognized officially as the second language of Delhi.

Delhi is home to over 5 million Punjabis. In thousands of homes across the capital, Punjabi (Gurmukhi) is spoken daily. Gurudwaras, cultural institutions, and community organizations continue to

preserve and promote this language with pride. Any attempt to marginalize Punjabi media is not just an administrative issue — it becomes a matter of cultural dignity. Punjabi newspapers are allegedly being systematically denied advertisements. Senior officials are said to have openly declared that Punjabi papers will not receive government ads. Punjabi print media in Delhi is reportedly facing financial distress as a result. The availability of Punjabi newspapers in markets has sharply declined. If these claims are accurate, this could amount to linguistic discrimination —

something that is neither constitutional nor in the national interest. India is a nation built on linguistic diversity. Hindi and Punjabi are not rivals; they are both pillars of India's rich cultural identity. An appeal has been made to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene in the matter. The appeal seeks an immediate inquiry into the alleged denial of advertisements. Clarification of official policy regarding Punjabi newspapers. Protection of linguistic diversity. Assurance that no discrimination — linguistic or community-based — is taking place. Punjabi is the language of the

Gurus, the language of sacrifice, and the language of millions across India and the world. From Delhi to Canada, from the UK to Australia, Punjabi remains vibrant. The Sikh community worldwide has always stood firmly for national unity. Any perception of linguistic injustice can create unnecessary tension. The issue is serious and deserves urgent attention. If Punjabi newspapers are indeed being denied equal opportunity, corrective steps must be taken immediately. India's strength lies in its diversity. Protecting Punjabi is not just about one community — it is about preserving India's pluralistic identity.

Akali Dal, BJP and Congress drowned Punjab in drugs; Aam Aadmi Party is building drug-free Punjab: Arvind Kejriwal

The Sikh Times

MOGA, February 16: At the Village Defence Committee (VDC) oath ceremony in Moga, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann delivered a direct and uncompromising message on Punjab's 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh', asserting that the Shiromani Akali Dal, the BJP and the Congress had allowed the state to sink into narcotics, while the AAP government is now mounting a sustained crackdown to reverse the damage. The AAP Supremo said that for the first time in Punjab's history, a government has taken firm action against drug peddlers rather than protecting them. Citing the seizure of 2,000 kilograms of drugs, the imprisonment of major traffickers and the demolition of their mansions, he argued that the campaign is producing measurable results on the ground. He cautioned the people of Punjab that returning previous regimes to power would risk pushing Punjab back into the grip of drugs. Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann reiterated that the 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh' campaign fulfills AAP's commitment to erase the stain of 'chita' from Punjab. He emphasized that the government's strategy combines strict enforcement with long-term prevention, including



law enforcement mission and a broader effort to restore confidence and opportunity across the state. Addressing the gathering, AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal stated, "People have gathered today to participate in 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh'. One year ago, on 1 March, the Punjab Government under the leadership of CM Bhagwant Mann had started this. When we started the 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh' campaign one year ago, people had very little trust. They had seen that

earlier governments made tall claims but did nothing. So when we began this war against drugs, there was deep fear among the people. No one was ready to come forward to share information. One was willing to provide details about smugglers. They feared that their families would be threatened, harassed and intimidated." Highlighting the action taken in the past year, the AAP Supremo continued, "But in the last one year, the way the police have arrested drug smugglers and seized drugs from various places, more than 2,000 kilograms of drugs have been seized in the last year. The way bulldozers have been run over the grand bungalows of those selling drugs, the way big smugglers have been arrested, such powerful people whose names once made others tremble, slowly people began to trust that this is an AAP government. This is Bhagwant Mann's government. They will not fear anyone." He noted, "For the first time, a fierce campaign has begun in Punjab. The massive gathering today to participate in this 'yudh' clearly shows that public trust is growing and fear is leaving people's hearts. People are coming forward and their faith in the government and the police is strengthening." Explaining the structure being created, Arvind Kejriwal said, "Across Punjab, in every village and every ward, public committees are being formed.

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ALLEGES MONEY LAUNDERING, SEEKS SCRUTINY

Kharge also accused the RSS of indulging in "money laundering" and questioned the source of its funds. He claimed that the organisation has a network of more than 2,500 affiliated bodies, including some based in countries such as the United States and England. "It (RSS) has a network of more than 2,500 organisations. They are from America, England. They take money from them. I am telling...that these people are into money laundering," he alleged. He demanded that the same legal and

Karnataka minister Priyank Kharge compared the RSS to the "devil" and called the BJP its "shadow", alleging money laundering and questioning the organisation's funding sources.

constitutional standards applicable to other organisations and citizens should apply to the RSS as well. "They want us to be good citizens, pay income tax, but they want to remain free.



How is it possible? We will have to question this," he said.

QUESTIONS LEGAL STATUS, ACCOUNTABILITY

Later speaking to reporters, Kharge pointed out that the RSS is an unregistered organisation and asked whether it considers itself "above the law or Constitution".

Not a political arena: Supreme Court raps petitioner over Himanta Sarma gun video

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Monday strongly reprimanded the petitioner for approaching it directly -- instead of going to High Court -- seeking action against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his anti-'Miya Muslim' remarks and a controversial gun video. Rejecting the petition at the Supreme Court, the bench headed by the Chief Justice observed that the court was increasingly being turned into a "political battleground", and urged parties to uphold constitutional morality in the run-up to elections.

"What stops you from going to the High Court? Unless you say the High Court has also become a political battleground?" Chief Justice Surya Kant asked.

When senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the petitioners, argued that the matter involved fundamental constitutional questions and sought a special probe against the Chief Minister, the court responded: "So you're saying the HC can't set up an SIT?". The bench noted that petitions of this nature often reach the Supreme Court whenever elections approach in different states, calling it an unfortunate trend.

"Unfortunately, whenever elections start coming, there are cases. We request all parties that self-restraint must be there. We expect all to act per constitutional morality," the Chief Justice said. Himanta Sarma has courted controversy with a series of remarks targeting 'Miya Muslims' -- a term often used to refer to Bengali-origin Muslims in Assam. While the Chief Minister claims he is addressing the issue of illegal immigration, critics argue that the comments amount to hate speech and incite attacks against the community. The row intensified after a video circulated on social media purportedly showing him handling a firearm, with Muslims visible on the other side, prompting opposition leaders and activists to question the conduct of a sitting Chief Minister and seek legal action.

Terrorism, insurgency to be wiped out in J&K, Northeast by 2029: Union Home Minister Amit Shah

New Delhi.(Agency)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said terrorism and insurgency would be completely eradicated from Jammu & Kashmir and the North-East by 2029. He also reiterated the government's target of freeing the country from Maoist violence by March 31, 2026.

Speaking as the chief guest at an event marking the 79th foundation day of Delhi Police in New Delhi, Shah announced ten new initiatives, including a "Safe City" project for the national capital.

As part of the project, the Delhi Police Special Cell's integrated headquarters will play an important role in counter-terror operations.

"Around 2,100 AI-enabled cameras will soon become operational. These will be part of a larger network of 10,000 cameras under the Safe City project. In addition, 15,000 cameras that have already been installed across the city are being added to strengthen public safety," the Minister said. The Home Minister said that before 2014, India's internal security faced serious challenges, especially in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Maoist-affected areas.

He said, "Around 80 percent of these issues have now been brought under control. The government is close to ending Maoist violence completely and aims to make the



country free from Maoist threats by 31 March 2026."

He added that in the North-East, nearly 20

peace agreements have been signed with insurgent groups and more than 10,000 youths have surrendered their arms and joined the mainstream.

Referring to the abrogation of special status granted to Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370, Shah said the security situation in the Union Territory is gradually improving. "Now I can assure the countrymen that J&K and North-East would be free of violence by 2029," he announced. Praising the Delhi Police, Shah said the force has protected the country on several occasions. "They successfully handled complex cases like Parliament attack and recent bomb blast near Red Fort".

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann hospitalised due to exhaustion day before mega AAP rally

Punjab CM Bhagwant

Mann was shifted to Mohali to ensure access to advanced medical facilities at the multi-specialty hospital after experiencing exhaustion. Mann's hospitalisation comes just a day before the Aam Aadmi Party's mega 'anti-drug rally' in Moga on February 16.

Chandigarh .(Agency)

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was admitted to a private hospital in Mohali on February 15 for observation after experiencing exhaustion, a day before the Aam Aadmi Party's major rally in Moga. Mann underwent a comprehensive clinical evaluation and standard diagnostic tests. His vital parameters were found stable and within normal limits. He has been admitted for observation and supportive care under a multidisciplinary medical team. The chief minister had been in Sangrur since Saturday to attend his niece's wedding and cancelled his scheduled visit to Fazilka after feeling unwell. He was shifted to Mohali to ensure access to advanced medical facilities at the multi-specialty hospital.

Mann's hospitalisation comes just a day before the Aam Aadmi Party's mega 'anti-drug rally'



in Moga on February 16 under its 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh' campaign. The rally is expected to be addressed by AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal at Killi Chahlan, a prominent political venue in the district. The event assumes added significance as it comes ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's proposed visit to Moga in early March, where

the Bharatiya Janata Party plans to kick off its campaign in Punjab following its split with former ally Shiromani Akali Dal in 2020.

WHY MOGA MATTERS

Moga has historically served as a key political stage for parties in Punjab due to its central location, which allows mobilisation from Majha, Malwa and Doaba regions. The district also carries strong associations with farmer movements and political outreach. For the Shiromani Akali Dal, Moga has been politically significant since its 75th anniversary 'Moga Convention' in 1996, when the party broadened its appeal with the slogan "Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat." The shift contributed to the SAD-BJP alliance forming the government in 1997 under Parkash Singh Badal, and the party later launched major campaigns from the district ahead.

News box

Class 11 student found dead in Gurgaon pond; diary note leads police to location**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A 16-year-old girl, who went missing from her home in Mokalwas village around four nights ago, was found dead in a pond near the village cremation ground on Friday. Police recovered the body after finding a note in her diary indicating the location. According to the statements of family members, the deceased, Neha, had told them around 9.30pm that she was going to study in her room. Around four hours later, they discovered that she was missing and initially conducted their own search. On Thursday, a missing complaint was lodged with the police. Her family also announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh for any information about her whereabouts.

CCTV footage from cameras near her house showed Neha walking alone on the road, wearing her school uniform and slippers, on the night she disappeared. During the investigation, police questioned her classmates, one of whom said she appeared troubled for several days.

A breakthrough came when police searched her room and recovered her diary. In it, Neha had written she was leaving of her own will and that no one should be blamed for her actions. She also hinted at her location, asking her family to look for her in the pond near the cremation ground. Acting on the diary note, police teams reached the site on Friday and began a search operation. Due to high water levels and thick mud, divers initially faced difficulties. Authorities later installed a motor pump to drain the pond and found her body around 8am on Saturday, an officer said. Her body was sent for a post-mortem examination before being handed over to her family. Police initiated an inquest proceeding in the case and prima facie ruled out any suspicious circumstances or involvement of a third party. Neha is survived by her parents and an elder brother. While her mother is a housewife, her father works in the library at the local court complex.

3 rob jeweller in Gurgaon of silver, cash at gunpoint, 1 held**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Three men allegedly looted around 5 kg of silver ornaments and Rs 35,000 in cash from a jewellery shop in Khandsa village on Saturday after threatening the shop owner at gunpoint and attempting to assault him with an iron rod.

The incident occurred around 2.30pm when the trio entered the shop. According to the complaint filed by the shop owner, one of the accused pointed a pistol at him and warned him to comply, while another tried to hit him with an iron rod and forced him to open a cupboard. Police said the accused took the ornaments and cash kept inside the cupboard. Before fleeing, they pulled down the shop shutter in an attempt to delay any immediate pursuit. The shop owner, however, managed to catch one of the men as he tried to escape, while the other two fled. An FIR was registered at Sector 37 police station under the provisions of the BNS and the Arms Act. A police team reached the spot and began an investigation.

The accused was identified as Vikas (22), a resident of Khandsa village. Police said an illegal pistol used in the robbery was recovered from him. During preliminary questioning, Vikas allegedly told police that he and his associates had planned the robbery in advance. Raids are being conducted to trace and arrest the remaining two accused, officials said.

All cuts closed, commuters forced to jump over barriers to cross road


Noida.(Agency) Rampant traffic violations and congestion along sectors 102 and 102A link road connecting to Dwarka Expressway have raised road safety concerns among residents. With all median cuts on this master road closed, residents are left with little choice but to travel all the way to the main interchange on the expressway to make a U-turn. The result is a daily bottleneck at an already overburdened junction and frequent instances of wrong-side driving.

With schools located on both sides, parents and children are forced to navigate speeding traffic without the aid of a foot overbridge. Many pedestrians, including domestic workers, attempt to cross by climbing over jersey barriers, exposing themselves to fast-moving vehicles. "We are facing serious safety issues due to the absence of a median cut along this 2 km long stretch. The nearest U-turn is too far, forcing long detours," said Robin Gupta, a resident of Joyville.

Abhishek Vatsa from Emaar Imperial Gardens said school children, working families and support staff are the worst affected. Rakesh Kumar, a resident of Adani Oyster Grande, said a median cut earlier existed between B1 and B2 towers but was closed during road redevelopment. "That cut allowed easy access across the road. Now people either drive on the wrong side along the link road connecting the expressway or cross the median on foot. Vehicles move at high speed and without a foot overbridge, the risk of accidents remains high," he said. A GMDA official said, "If the traffic police assess the requirement and recommend a median cut or signal, GMDA will act accordingly. On the issue of a foot overbridge, whenever requests are received from residents or RWAs, feasibility is examined in coordination with the traffic police," an official said.

DEHLI/NCR**Land marked as park encroached for years in Noida, residents seek action****Noida.(Agency)**

Residents of Kartik Kunj Apartments in Sector 44 complained of growing frustration over a long-standing issue of encroachment in front of the society complex that persisted for nearly two decades. The land, reportedly noted as a sector park as per the Noida Master Plan, was overtaken by encroachers, residents said, raising serious concerns about public safety, hygiene, and community well-being. "What was meant to be a park for the sector has turned into a hub for criminal activities and unhygienic conditions due to the said encroachment, deeply impacting the safety and health of our residents," said Avadesh Singh, secretary of the Kartik Kunj Residents' Welfare Association (KKRWA). Residents who own apartments here said they had paid a premium to purchase park-facing houses here. However, they are now being deprived of the amenities and benefits they were promised, they added. "This is both unfair and unacceptable given the amount we invested in our homes," said Singh, one of the homebuyers. The

unabated encroachment has also resulted in a surge in antisocial behaviour, illegal dumping and waterlogging, creating an environment for disease and criminal activities to thrive, residents claimed. "This is more than just an inconvenience; it is a serious safety hazard," another resident said.

Previously, the Authority had removed encroachments at the spot, but the action had not yielded results in the long run. Residents said encroachments have kept popping up over the years.

The KKRWA has now filed a formal complaint with the additional CEO (ACEO) of Noida Authority, seeking immediate intervention for the removal of the illegal occupants. A letter issued to the Authority outlined the urgency of the situation, making clear that the health and safety of the residents are in jeopardy. "We are hopeful that necessary measures would be taken to address our concerns. We urge the Authority to take decisive action and provide the necessary police support to ensure the encroachments are cleared," said a resident.

**Delay in utility shifting holds up Gurgaon metro work on Hero Honda Chowk link****Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Construction on a 2.5km stretch of the new metro corridor between Umang Bhardwaj Chowk and Hero Honda Chowk has stalled due to delay in right of way (RoW) clearance and shifting utilities. The section is undergoing road redevelopment by NHAI, funded by GMDA, and forms part of the metro project's phase 1. A senior GMRL official said work cannot move forward until the land is cleared. The problem was reviewed in a meeting on Friday involving GMRL, NHAI, and GMDA. GMRL officials said the land needed for construction has not been cleared and asked NHAI to share a firm timeline for RoW clearance and utility relocation so work can begin on the stretch.

Multiple underground and overhead utilities, including water pipelines, sewer

lines, and power lines, run along the corridor. In addition, a shop, a portion of Himgiri Ashram, and a CNG station fall in the metro corridor's alignment, further constraining space for construction. Metro officials said although metro infrastructure needs a limited working area, the spread of utility networks across the stretch makes relocation necessary before construction can start. An NHAI official said progress depends on Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN) shifting power infrastructure before key utility work can proceed. "We have an interdependency on DHBVN for shifting of power poles along the stretch, particularly on the left-hand side. Until those poles are relocated, we cannot begin work on the water pipeline. Similarly, the sewer line work on the left-hand side is also held up due to this dependency. Once

DHBVN completes its portion and the site is cleared, we will begin water and sewer line works, which we aim to complete within 3 months," the official said. The official added that relocation linked to Haryana Vidyut Prasaran Nigam Limited (HVPNL) substation is underway and will be completed by June. "We are also planning to begin demolition of the boundary wall at Himgiri Ashram within the next 10 days," the official said. The delay has created a bottleneck in phase 1 of the 15.3km corridor connecting Millennium City Centre to Sector 9. While pile cap work and other foundational activities are progressing in other sections, the lack of clear RoW in this stretch continues to hold up construction. In August last year, Dilip Buildcon and Ranjit Buildcon were awarded the phase 1 construction contract

Vendors, kiosks take over green belts, Gurgaon sectors' 81 and 95 residents want encroachments cleared**Noida.(Agency)**

Residents of new sectors along Dwarka Expressway have raised concerns over the condition of green belts between sectors 81 and 95, citing encroachments and poor maintenance. According to residents, several green belts have been taken over by street vendors, temporary kiosks, scrap dealers and roadside eateries. Some stretches are even being used as informal parking spaces, they said. Vehicles are parked along green patches in many areas, and waste is also being dumped there. Residents said that the condition of these green belts has declined due to a lack of planning and implementation over the past two years. Last week, United Association of New Gurugram (UANG) wrote to GMDA chief executive officer, seeking removal of illegal occupations and a clear plan for

green belt development before the plantation season.

"The weather is favourable for plantation,



but the reality is that most green belts are either encroached upon or poorly maintained. Unauthorized kiosks and parking are obstructing smooth vehicular movement as well. Before a plantation

drive is undertaken, these spaces need to be cleared, demarcated and secured," said Praveen Malik, president of UANG, a citizen group. Residents further said that the encroachments have affected cleanliness and safety in the area. "Green belts are not meant to become vending zones. Their purpose is to improve air quality and act as ecological buffers in a rapidly urbanizing area like ours. But there is no visible monitoring of encroachments, and the situation only worsened over time. Restoring these green belts is essential for the environment," RWA president of Shanti Vihar AWHO VP Singh said.

A GMDA official said green belts are being developed alongside road infrastructure in the new sectors and that regular inspections and enforcement drives are being carried out.

7 die of jaundice in Haryana's Palwal village in 2 weeks; outbreak probe underway**Noida.(Agency)**

Jaundice has claimed seven lives in Palwal's Chaina between Jan 27 and Feb 11, prompting Haryana health department to investigate a possible outbreak. Of the seven deaths, four were linked to acute hepatitis or acute liver failure with hepatic encephalopathy. Chaina has 5,728 people living in 865 households. The health department received the first alert about jaundice deaths on Jan 31, following which a medical officer and a field team conducted a survey in the village. The investigation report listed causes of death as acute fulminant liver failure, acute hepatitis with jaundice, hepatic encephalopathy, acute hepatic failure with pancreatitis and sepsis, and acute hepatitis with hepatic encephalopathy. Most patients experienced fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, jaundice, and altered sensorium before death, a health official said. The patients who succumbed to the disease were Huzaf (9), Payal (9), Sarik (14),



Huma (15), Dilshad (22), Samsuddin (42) and Jamila (65). They were admitted to Shaheed Hasan Khan Mewati Govt Medical College in Nuh's Nalhar, where they later died. A rapid response team was deployed on Feb 1, and medical camps and door-to-door surveys began the next day. Bacteriological sampling of drinking water sources was also initiated in the village. "We have conducted 800 OPDs so far. Screening and blood sampling for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis E,

disease. Tests and screening also indicated water infection. Two patients who succumbed to the disease were truck drivers. They were found to have Hepatitis B," Vashisth added. Till Feb 15, as many as 800 people were screened at medical camps set up in the village.

Blood samples from 210 villagers were collected, with two testing positive for Hepatitis B and nine for Hepatitis C. All samples tested for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis E were negative. Scrub typhus test results were awaited at the time of reporting. Water samples were collected from storage tanks and pipelines. Of 31 samples, six household samples tested positive for coliforms. Orthotolidine tests showed no chlorine in 82 stored water samples till Feb 12. Next day, testing of 32 samples found four chlorine-positive samples after corrective measures were initiated.

Leptospirosis testing, including IgM and IgG ELISA, was also conducted on multiple samples,

and all results were negative.

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Akali Dal, BJP and Congress drowned Punjab in drugs; Aam Aadmi Party is building drug-free Punjab: Arvind Kejriwal

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Village Defence Committees (VDCs) have been constituted. Respected and influential people of each ward and village such as retired teachers, retired Army officers, youth, sarpanches and others are being included in these committees. These committees have mainly two responsibilities. First, to inform the government about those who are selling drugs in the village or ward and from whom they procure drugs. Addressing fears about safety, the AAP Chief added, "Many people are still afraid. They think that if they provide information, their families will be killed or harassed. Therefore, the Punjab Government has created an app. This app has been installed on the phone of every Village Defence Committee member. You can submit information through this app. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your name

will be kept secret. No one will be told that you provided the information. There is no need to fear. Many Village Defence Committees have already shared information." He added, "I am very happy that many Village Defence Committee members have said that they are not afraid and that the entire village stands with them. Now the whole of Punjab is uniting. Fear is leaving people's minds. Villages are driving away those who sell drugs." Clarifying the two core tasks, he emphasised, "One task is to provide information about those selling drugs so that the police can arrest them and send them to jail. The second is to ensure that those in the village who are victims of drug addiction are taken to the nearest centre for treatment so that they can come out of addiction. These are broadly the two main responsibilities." Calling for greater ownership, Arvind Kejriwal said, "Village Defence

Committees must now take responsibility to make their village drug free. Whatever steps are required must be taken. Tell us what you need. We will provide all facilities. Tell us what resources you require and whatever help you need will be given. But the responsibility to make your vicinity drug free must now be taken by you. The entire police stands with you. The entire administration stands with you and so does the CM. All the information you submit through the app reaches directly to the Chief Minister and to the Chief Minister's Office, and action is taken on it." Arvind Kejriwal asserted, "If any police officer at the local level does good work, he will be rewarded. If any police officer is found colluding with drug dealers, he will not be spared under any circumstances and action will be taken against him as well." Urging expansion of participation, the AAP Supremo said, given 60,000 government

"Gradually, the Village Defence Committee should not remain limited to ten members. Include the entire village in the Village Defence Committee. Include every individual. If the whole village unites, no one will dare to sell drugs. Drive out those who sell drugs from your village and ward. When the entire village and ward stand united, no one will have the courage to sell drugs." Speaking about rehabilitation and youth engagement, Arvind Kejriwal added, "In every village, CM Bhagwant Mann is getting a sports ground constructed. You can play cricket, volleyball and football there. Sports equipment will also be provided. Our hope is that children who come out of addiction should not return to it. Take them towards sports. Arrangements are being made for employment. So far, 60,000 government jobs have been given. Bhagwant Mann has

jobs without bribe and without recommendation. More employment opportunities are being arranged. Children who are addicted must be brought out of drugs, guided towards sports and provided employment. The entire government is working towards this." "You must go to every family in every village and tell them who pushed Punjab into drugs – Akali Dal, BJP and Congress. When their governments were in power, every family in Punjab was drowning in drugs. They destroyed the youth of Punjab. They ruined every family and the future of Punjab. You must go to every household and tell them not to vote for these parties even by mistake, otherwise Punjab will again sink into drugs. For the first time, a party has come that is chasing drug sellers, arresting them and sending them to jail, demolishing their houses and bungalows, seizing their property and freezing

their bank accounts," he asserted. Arvind Kejriwal pointed out, "For the first time, such a government has come. By God's grace, such a government has come. Under no circumstances should you vote for the other parties. This is the responsibility of the Village Defence Committees. We must go door to door and tell people. Very soon our Punjab will become Rangla Punjab and Nasha Mukt Punjab." Meanwhile, Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that "chitta" was infused into the veins of the youth by anti-Punjab forces, due to which the colours had vanished from the state and the lives of the people. "Those who had patronized drugs during their days in power used their official vehicles to ferry drugs in the state," he said. CM Bhagwant

Singh Mann added, "After thorough research, the state government adopted a multi-pronged strategy and snapped the supply lines, rehabilitated the victims, demolished their properties and put these perpetrators behind the bars as part of 'Yudh Nasheen Virudh'." The Punjab CM said that drug smugglers are now running from the state as a mass movement has been started against the drug menace and the positive results are before the people. "We have assumed charge of office just to carve a Rangla Punjab and no stone is being left unturned for this noble cause with the support of people," he said. Taking a jibe at the opposition, Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Even if I go to hospital for a routine check-up,

they spread canards about me and my health as they are envious of me and my pro-people approach." Slamming the opposition for spreading rumours about Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna to mislead the masses, he added, "To provide comprehensive healthcare to the people, the state government has introduced this scheme, which is first-of-its-kind in the country. Under the scheme, every resident family in Punjab is entitled to cashless medical treatment of up to ₹10 lakh.

NAME CHANGE

I here to known as Mudit Sidhu S/o Ashwani Kumar Sidhu R/o A-1/266, Madanpur, Sector-4, Ambedkar Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi-110062 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Tushar Kumar Sidhu.

NAME CHANGE

I, NO 3403343XHALDAR JAGDISH S/O MOHAN SINGH R/O VILLAGE SOVRA, POSTOFFICE-VIRA, TEHSIL-THALSSIN, DISTRICT-POURI GARHWAL, UTRAKHAND-246285, hereby declare that in my service record the name of my son has been wrongly written DEPENDER SINGH and correct name is DEPENDER SINGH BHANDARI.

NAME CHANGE

I, AMEEN S/O MOHD KAMRUDDIN R/O L-1-749/14, SANGAM VIHAR, SHANI BAZAR, DEOLI, SOUTH DELHI, DELHI-110062 hereby declare that in my bank of india A/c No.60451051001436 in my name has been wrongly written as Ameen Khan and shall rebe known as Ammen

NAME CHANGE

I here to known as Rita Devi R/o Heera Singh R/o WZ-1705, Mahindra park, Rani Bagh, PO: Sarawati Vihar, DIST:North West Delhi, Delhi, 110034 have changed my name to Rita Devi for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

SUNITA W/O DINESH PRAJAPATI R/O 142, 142, UGF, L'S PVTC NOH-2, GAUTAM NAGAR, ANDREWS-GANJ, DIST:SOUTH DELHI, DELHI-110049, have changed my name and shall hereinafter be known as SUNITA DEVI W/O DENESH PRAJAPATI.

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as GUDDI W/o BARSTAR LAL, R/o A-17 T Huts, Lal Bagh Azadpur, PO: N S Mandi, West Delhi, Delhi-110033, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sikander.

NAME CHANGE

I VISHNU SANKAR MADHUSOOD-HANAN NAIR SHOBANA KUMARI S/O MADHU SOODHANAN NAIR S/R/O SANKARAVILASAM, CHITHARA , KOLAM, KERALA 691001, I have changed my name to M.S.VISHNU SANKAR Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, JEBUNNISA D/O PAPPU R/O D-Block, Moji Wala Bagh, Azadpur, Po: N S Mandi, Dist: North West Delhi, Delhi-110033, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SHRUTI.

NAME CHANGE

I, IANSEM KHAN, S/o ABDUL SAT-TAR, R/o. D-1/TA, RAMPAL, CHOWK, SECTOR-7, DWARKA, NEW DELHI-110075, have changed my name from NASEEM KHAN to NASEEM ALI for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE

I, NITYASHREE CHAUDHARY alias NITYASHREE Kaur, W/o Anil Chaudhary D/o Onkar Singh R/o Flat no. 144, 3rd Floor, Punjabji Bagh Apartment, Rohtak Road, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi - 110063 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NITYASHREE.

NAME CHANGE

I, Shahjahan Begum W/o Mohammad Ajajad R/o A-21, Galli No.13, Rajinder Marg Road, Chauhan Bazar, Rohtak, Jhajrabad, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Chand Rani Batra

NAME CHANGE

I, JEBUNNISA D/O PAPPU R/O D-Block, Moji Wala Bagh, Azadpur, Po: N S Mandi, Dist: North West Delhi, Delhi-110033, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NISHTHA.

NAME CHANGE

I, SHOBHA, is legally mother of Arno. No. 2824174H, Rank – S/o NALE SACHIN RAMPRASAD, presently residing at Vill – Chorapanga, Post – Bibi, Teh – Lonar, Dist – Buldhana, State – Maharashtra, Pin – 443204, have changed my name from SHOBHA to NALI SHOBHA RAMPRASAD for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 16/02/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, FAJUL MONDAL S/O RAFIK MONDAL R/O H NO-246, GALLI NO-22, B-BLOCK, SANT NAGAR, BURARI, DELHI-110084. have changed my name to SK FAJUL MONDAL for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE

I, ASHISH KUMAR S/O RAMAULTAR Presently resident at: Gao-Pragruha, Badriana (4), Badriana, Rewari, Haryana-121104 presently residing at: 218 Npc, Arjan Vihar, Gate No-02, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi-110010 have changed the name of my minor son MANYU alias MANK BHAMESHRA aged 10 years and he shall hereafter be known as MANK BHAMESHRA.

NAME CHANGE

I, SURENDRAKUMAR S/O SURENDRAKUMAR Father of No 1574666W Rank NK Name SNEHLI K S presently residing KUNDAL HOUSE, VALATHODE, AYYANKUNNU, KANNUR, (KERALA)-670704 have changed my name from SURENDRAKUMAR for all future purposes. Vide Affidavit Dated 16/02/2026 before Notary Public New Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, LASHISH KUMAR S/O TAPESHWAR RAM R/O 128-A-1, TAPESHWAR RAM R/O 128-A-1, Ground Floor, Gautam Nagar, Andrewsjan, South Delhi, Delhi - 110026, have changed the name of my minor son AYUSH BHARATI aged 13 years and he shall hereafter be known as Prayta Vomy.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as KASHISH S/O MODH YAMINI R/O F-140, Galli No-8, Faish-1, Gokulpuri, Bhagirathi Vihar, Dist: North West Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SAMSHAD AHMAD.

NAME CHANGE

I, KAMAL SAGAR S/O AMER NATH SHARMA R/o Flat No-5, Plot No-Rp-53, Khasra No.-432, Street No-1, Near Indian Medical Council Building Raj Nagar Post-2, Palam Colony, Palam Vihar, Po: Palam Vihar, Dist: South West Delhi, Delhi-110045 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DESH RAJ MAURYA.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Rehana khatton W/o Md Saqib R/o RZ-2084, Tugalkabab Ext Alaknanda, South Delhi, Kalkaji, Delhi-110019 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Md Saqib.

NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Rehana khatton W/o Md Saqib R/o RZ-2084, Tugalkabab Ext Alaknanda, South Delhi, Kalkaji, Delhi-110019 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rehana khatton.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Hamida Begum W/o Wahid Ahmed R/o H.no.132, Gali No.42, Chinar Meldical Store, Jaffrabad, seelam Pur Bhajan Pura, North East, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Hamida Begum.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANDEEP KUMAR S/O MAM CHAND R/O 131, GALI NO-6, JEEVAN PARK, SIRS PUR VILLAGE, NORTH WEST DELHI-110042 have changed the name of my minor son AARAB PANWAR alias AARAV KUMAR aged 13 years and he shall hereafter be known as AARAV KUMAR.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANJAY KUMAR S/O GURJA PRASAD PAL R/O E-6/170, Sangam Vihar, Dehl, PO: Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Dist: South Delhi, Delhi-110080 have changed the name of my minor son H.B.S RUDRA PRATAP KUMAR aged 9 years and he shall hereafter be known as RUDRA PRATAP SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, PAVAN KUMAR S/O PRADEEP KUMAR R/O H no. 228-229-230, Pkt-A Dwarakash, Enclave Sector 26 Rohini, Pehlai Pur Bangar, PO: Pehlai Pur Bangar, Dist: North West Delhi, Delhi-110042 have changed the name of my minor daughter namely AKASHRA KHANDELWAL aged 13 years and she shall hereafter be known as AKASHRA KHANDELWAL.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANJAY KUMAR S/O GURJA PRASAD PAL R/O E-6/170, Sangam Vihar, Dehl, PO: Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Dist: South Delhi, Delhi-110080 have changed the name of my minor son H.B.S RUDRA PRATAP KUMAR aged 9 years and he shall hereafter be known as RUDRA PRATAP SINGH.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Bhaskar Nand S/o Bhairab Dutta R/o 872, Zamrudpur, Near GK One, Delhi, South Delhi, Delhi-110048 declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as Bhaskar Joshi and Babita Joshi in my minor daughter Diksha Joshi aged 14 years in his School Records. The actual name of mine and my wife are Bhaskar Nand and Meena Joshi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, D/o Uday Sonra R/o C-52, U/G/F, Indira Enclave, Neb Sarai, Ignou, Hauz Khas, South Delhi, Delhi-110068 declare that name of mine, my father and my mother has been wrongly written as Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Shreshtha Soren, Uday Sonra and Birsela Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra in my 10th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine and my mother are Reshma Sonra, Uday Sonra and Sheesha Sonra.

NEWS BOX

China flexes force near Taiwan again: 3 jets, 6 warships spotted as tensions continue

World. (Agency)

Taiwan detects three Chinese military aircraft and six naval vessels around its territory is a routine update on ongoing tensions with China. These detections happen in Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), an airspace where Taiwan monitors potential threats. Nine of the 11 flights crossed the median line into Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. Taiwan's MND posted on X: "We detected three PLA aircraft and six PLAN vessels around Taiwan until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. #ROCArmedForces are monitoring and responding accordingly." On Saturday, Taiwan's MND had reported 11 Chinese military aircraft and eight naval vessels near its borders.

"We detected 11 PLA aircraft flights and 8 PLAN vessels around Taiwan until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. Nine of the 11 flights crossed the median line into Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. Our forces monitored the situation and responded accordingly," the post further added.

On Sunday, Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, assured the public that the government will strengthen national defence and boost economic development, according to the Taipei Times. In his Lunar New Year speech, President Lai said Taiwan has faced many challenges and thanked the armed forces, coast guard, police, and government workers for keeping society running smoothly so people can enjoy the holiday worry-free.

Taiwan's President Lai said in his Lunar New Year address: "Taiwan faced many challenges last year, but the nation grew stronger, seizing opportunities to stand taller, see farther, and become more resilient. Taiwan's most beautiful scenery lies not just in its mountains and seas, but in people standing together through hardship."

'Air defence key priority; next week meetings expected for energy packages': Zelensky

world. (Agency)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday (local time) thanked the United States and Germany for support to Kyiv's air defence system amid the war against Russia.

After returning from the Munich Security Conference, in a video message to Ukrainians, Zelensky hailed the drone production line in collaboration with Germany. He added that Kyiv expects to hold meetings with world leaders on new energy packages. The Ukrainian President said, "I am back in Kyiv after two intense days at the Munich Security Conference. There were numerous meetings, but most importantly, new support packages for Ukraine will be introduced. The key priority is missiles for air defence, for protection against ballistic missiles. This is why we discussed it in Munich, also with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. We hope the agreements will work as needed. Thanks to Germany, we have a new strike drone production line, and will continue to expand these efforts of joint development, joint production, pan-European programs and financial instruments." Next week, we expect meetings and work aimed at new energy packages. This concerns both recovery after strikes and necessary equipment," he added in the video message posted on X. Furthermore, he asked the public to heed air raid alerts.

"Several cold days lie ahead, and everyone has already seen how the Russians exploit this. Please take care of yourselves and heed air raid alerts. We are in constant contact with all partners, emphasising that each such threat only worsens the prospects for ending the war," Zelensky said.

'Will halt airstrikes on election day in Ukraine': Russian Minister

World. (Agency)

Russia will halt airstrikes on election day in Ukraine if Kyiv decides to hold presidential polls, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin told news agency TASS. TASS reported that earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin also indicated that Moscow is ready to halt airstrikes if elections are held in Ukraine. Galuzin backed President Putin's statement and said, "Of course, Russian President Vladimir Putin's statements remain relevant. But, as I earlier noted, there is no talk yet of the practical organisation of voting in Ukraine." The Deputy Foreign Minister accused Ukraine of drone attacks during election campaigns in Russia in 2024.

"I would like to draw attention to our experience. In March 2024, presidential elections were held in Russia, and polling stations - even taking into account the ongoing military operations - were opened in close proximity to the combat zone. Kyiv tried every way possible to disrupt the electoral process in the frontline regions, not shying away from resorting to terrorist means and sabotage. However, it proved unable to achieve its goal," Galuzin said. He added that Russia "will not stoop to Kyiv's practices and will allow the people of Ukraine to fully exercise their constitutionally enshrined electoral rights and independently determine the future development of their country. Of course, if the Kyiv regime finally decides to take this democratic step." This comes after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, at the Munich Security Conference, stated that Kyiv will hold elections if Moscow agrees to a ceasefire. He urged United President Donald Trump to "push" Putin for a ceasefire. "Give us a ceasefire. President Trump can do it. Push Putin, make a ceasefire, then our Parliament will change the law, and we will go to elections. We can also offer a ceasefire to the Russians if they hold elections in Russia," Zelensky said.

Lebanon says four killed in Israeli strike targeting Palestinian group

It appeared to be the first strike Israel has claimed in Lebanon against Islamic Jihad, which is also allied with Hezbollah, since the November 2024 truce.

DHAKA. (Agency)

Lebanon said an Israeli strike on Sunday near the Syrian border in the country's east killed four people, as Israel said it had targeted operatives from Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad. Despite a November 2024 truce that sought to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying it is targeting the Iran-backed group but occasionally also targeting its Palestinian ally Hamas. It appeared to be the first strike Israel has claimed in Lebanon against



Islamic Jihad, which is also allied with Hezbollah, since the truce. An Israeli drone "targeted a car on the Lebanese-Syrian border", the state-run National News

Agency said, adding that "four bodies" were inside the vehicle.

Lebanon's health ministry confirmed the toll in a statement. The Israeli military in a

A fireworks store explosion in China kills eight ahead of Lunar New Year

BEIJING. (Agency)

An explosion and fire at a fireworks shop in eastern China has killed eight people and left two others with minor burns ahead of the Lunar New Year, authorities said. The Sunday afternoon blast in a village in Jiangsu province was caused by a resident setting off fireworks improperly near the store, the Donghai county government said in a statement. It did not provide further details on what happened.

Setting off firecrackers at midnight on the Lunar New Year is a tradition in China, but many places have banned



fireworks in recent years, at least in part because of air pollution. They may make a comeback in some places after some governments eased their bans last year. The Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival in China,

falls on Tuesday. It will mark the start of the year of the horse in the Chinese zodiac.

Following Sunday's explosion, the Ministry of Emergency Management urged all regions to strengthen the supervision of the production, transportation, sales and use of fireworks to prevent future accidents.

A ministry statement said that trying out fireworks and firecrackers around stores should be strictly prohibited and called on local governments to identify and eliminate blind spots "to ensure the people have a safe, auspicious and happy Spring Festival."

Trump says 'Board of Peace' members pledged over \$5 billion for Gaza 'humanitarian and reconstruction efforts'

Trump had earlier signed the charter to launch his 'Board of Peace' initiative at the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 22. Now, the US President said that the member nations have pledged over USD 5 billion towards humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Gaza.

DHAKA. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump on Sunday stated that the member states of the 'Board of Peace' have pledged more than USD 5 billion towards humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. This statement comes ahead of a key meeting scheduled for Thursday (February 19). The announcement follows Trump's signing of the charter to launch his 'Board of Peace' initiative at the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 22. Trump had previously described the body as potentially the "most prestigious board ever formed." In a post on the Truth Social platform, Trump also informed that the meeting will be held in Washington, D.C. On February 19th, 2026, I will again be joined by Board of Peace Members at the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., where we will announce that Member States have

pledged more than \$5 BILLION DOLLARS toward the Gaza Humanitarian and Reconstruction efforts," the US President said.

He further added that the member nations have committed "thousands of personnel to the International Stabilization Force and Local Police to maintain Security and Peace for



Gazans," and asserted that "Hamas must uphold its commitment to Full and Immediate Demilitarization."

Trump said that the Board of Peace was formally celebrated in Davos, Switzerland, last month with two dozen founding members and described it as having "unlimited potential." He claimed that a plan he released in October for a permanent end to the conflict in Gaza had been unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

"The Board of Peace will prove to be the

most consequential International Body in History, and it is my honour to serve as its Chairman," Trump said.

Trump's Gaza 'Peace Plan'

Earlier, on January 26, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated that 20 additional countries had "signed up to join US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace," but did not disclose the names of the new members.

The initiative originated from the US president's 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan endorsed by the UN Security Council, but has since expanded beyond its original scope. Administration officials said around 35 nations had committed to join, while 60 received invitations, with Trump

suggesting the new body could assume roles currently held by the United Nations. Several European allies declined to participate, citing concerns about the board's expanded mandate and its impact on the international system under the UN Charter. According to a copy of the charter cited by the media, it was reported that countries seeking permanent membership would need to contribute USD 1 billion, while non-paying members would receive a three-year mandate.

Bangladesh votes 'yes' to July Charter: What it is and how it will transform power

Dhaka. (Agency)

Bangladesh has taken a decisive step toward changing its political system. Along with a landmark election that saw the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led alliance win 210 seats, the nation voted in a referendum on the July National Charter 2025. With a 60.26 percent turnout, 70 percent of voters chose "yes". It indicates widespread public support for reforms that promise to fundamentally alter how the country is governed. According to official figures released by the Election Commission, 4,80,74,429 voters endorsed the charter, while 2,25,65,627 opposed it. The announcement was made by Election Commissioner Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed, who confirmed the margin showed approval across the country. Drafted in the aftermath of the student-led uprising in July 2024 that resulted in the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the July Charter outlines 84 reform points. Its primary objective is to prevent the concentration of executive power and to



restructure state institutions to avoid a recurrence of authoritarian rule. The reforms will be executed by a Constitutional Reform Council within 270 working days. Of the 84 reforms, 47 require constitutional amendments, while the remaining 37 will be implemented through laws or executive orders. The proposals set limits on how long a prime minister can stay in power and plan a 100-seat upper house in parliament. The seats will be divided based on each party's vote share to make lawmaking fairer. The Charter also strengthens the role of the president to reduce executive dominance, ensures judicial and institutional independence and incorporates Opposition leaders in parliamentary committees, including provisions for deputy speaker appointments.

It provides legal protections for participants in the 2024 uprising, known as "July Fighters" and seeks to increase women's representation in parliament. It shows a commitment to broader inclusion. This is the third time Bangladesh has presented a charter of reforms, but analysts say the July Charter is unprecedented in both scale and public engagement. By combining constitutional changes with legislative reforms, it seeks to lay the groundwork for a new political order in Bangladesh that prioritises accountability.

China expands secret Nuclear sites in Sichuan, satellite images reveal: Report

Reportedly recent satellite imagery shows major expansions at covert nuclear weapons sites in China's Sichuan Province.

CAIRO. (Agency)

China is reportedly expanding its Nuclear sites, satellite imagery analysis from 2022 to 2026 reveals major expansions at covert nuclear weapons sites in China's Sichuan Province. According to a Sunday New York Times report, Geospatial expert Renny Babiarz's findings highlight China's accelerated nuclear buildup since 2019, signaling a strategic shift in its capabilities. The report further states that in Sichuan's Zitong site, satellite images show new bunkers and ramparts in a valley, alongside a freshly built complex with

extensive piping suited for hazardous materials. Analysts indicate this setup aligns with high-explosives testing to perfect chemical detonators that compress nuclear material in warheads. Hui Zhang, a physicist at Harvard Kennedy School who studies China's nuclear programs, reviewed Babiarz's findings and told the New York Times, "You have a layer of high explosives and the shock wave at the same time implodes into the center. This needs blast tests to perfect them."

Recent satellite imagery shows the structure has been refurbished with new vents and heat-dispersion features, alongside fresh construction next to the main building. Border Security Risks for India? Sichuan lies relatively close to India's Himalayan frontier. The expansion poses profound strategic challenges for India amid persistent border tensions and



shifting regional power dynamics.

Enhanced Chinese nuclear capabilities could embolden aggressive postures in Ladakh or Arunachal, complicating de-escalation talks. Although India and China have mended their relations recently since the SCO summit in Tianjin, considering New Delhi's past relations with Beijing, the expansion imposes border threats. Beijing's nuclear enhancements with new bunkers for high-explosives testing and

plutonium processing facilities could lower the threshold for escalation, as a more confident China might test India's resolve in future standoffs.

The expansion further complicates India's no-first-use nuclear doctrine and deterrence strategy. It signals Beijing's pivot to strategic parity with the US, rejecting trilateral arms talks and straining regional stability as India bolsters Agni-V and canisterised missiles.

Global Nuclear Dynamics

The reported buildup by China, signals its ambition to achieve nuclear parity with the US and Russia, potentially expanding its arsenal to 1,000 warheads by 2030 amid the erosion of treaties like New START. China is secretly making plutonium parts for nukes and testing explosives, shifting from a small nuclear force to a bolder one with land, sea, and air weapons. This somehow makes it harder for the US to protect its Asian allies with its nuclear umbrella.

NEWS BOX

400 kg ganja hidden in onion boxes seized in Ahmedabad, 2 Maharashtra residents arrested

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) of Ahmedabad City Police on Saturday said it has arrested two men ferrying 406.350 kg of Ganja worth an estimated Rs 2.03 crore, hidden in steel drums containing onions.

The Crime Branch received a tip off that a Mahindra pickup truck coming from Maharashtra to Gujarat was transporting ganja.

Based on the information, a DCB team stopped a vehicle near Narol Circle in Ahmedabad city on February 13. Upon inspection of the vehicle, they found 14 steel drums used to store grains. They found bags filled with ganja hidden under the onions. The Crime Branch seized the contraband and booked the two men, Dipak Tikam Jat (20), and Satesh alias Satej Temra Pawra (23), both residents of Dhule, Maharashtra, under sections of the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

A statement from the Crime Branch on Saturday said, "Upon their interrogation, the accused revealed that two men named Sagar Pawra and Shantaram Pawra had given them the drugs which had been loaded into the vehicle in Karmala, Maharashtra, and asked them to transport it to Ahmedabad, Gujarat." A detailed investigation is underway.

Parties groom women for GBA election debut

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Following the reservation for women and Other Backwards Classes (OBC) in the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections 2026, political parties, including the Congress, BJP, and AAP, are gearing up to groom future women corporators, mayors, and deputy mayors.

On January 9, the state government published a draft notification of reservations for wards under the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), OBC Category A and B, women, and general categories for elections across Bengaluru's five city corporations. Notably, 175 out of 369 seats have been reserved for women.

Party leaders stated that while grooming workers is an ongoing process, efforts accelerate during election cycles. Special camps are being conducted to train women aspirants in everything from handling media and addressing public grievances to verifying the latest draft voters' lists.

AN Nataraj Gowda, Congress Chief Spokesperson, told, "We have received around 1,800 applications so far, over 800 of which are from women. These applicants range from grassroots party workers to relatives of established politicians. They will be scrutinised and finalised before the elections are announced. Our media, social media, and manifesto committees are all involved in the grooming process."

He added that because problems vary by ward, potential candidates are trained accordingly. "The media and social media wings train them on public speaking and digital presence. They are even taught to analyze voters' lists to identify supporters or neutral voters," he said.

Bike taxi pilots in Bengaluru allege targeted harassment by auto drivers

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Bike taxi riders in the city have alleged a pattern of targeted harassment in which groups of auto drivers book bike taxis and confront riders at pick-up points, attempting to intimidate them into stopping work.

According to multiple riders, when they reach the pick-up point, auto drivers gather around them, create chaos, and pressurise to cancel the trip, delete the app, and abandon the job. Riders say they are being deliberately singled out, turning routine trips into tense and intimidating encounters.

Syed Lukman, a bike taxi rider, recounted being called to a location through a booked ride and then confronted by a group of auto drivers. "They told me to delete the application and not to do this job, saying we are taking away their livelihood," he said. Lukman added that he was not physically harmed but was warned that they would not spare him if he continued working.

The fear of such confrontations has forced many bike taxi riders to alter their daily operations. Several riders now park metres away from the designated pick-up point and wait for customers to approach them, while others avoid certain areas altogether. They say these precautions are necessary to avoid being surrounded, threatened, or drawn into arguments.

Ravi (name changed), a bike taxi rider said, "We are usually alone, and the confrontation leads to unnecessary arguments. We are scared to accept requests in some areas because they may gang up on us," he added, noting that the anxiety has become part of his daily work. While riders emphasise that not all auto drivers are involved, they allege that some groups continue to gang up and create fear among bike taxi riders, raising serious concerns about their safety and the effectiveness of the High Court order permitting their operations.

Free meal sucks, roadside shops give a better deal: Sanitary staff

In many other wards, workers are served variety rice, which they said were neither nutritious nor appetising.

CHENNAI. (Agency)

The state government pays the contractor Rs 57.75 per head for lunch under their much-publicised scheme that offers one free meal a day for sanitary workers. However, an on-ground check by TNIE over the last week revealed that workers in many wards were being served variety rice—brinji, lemon rice, tomato rice, tamarind rice, or one-pot sambar rice, which they said were easily available in roadside eateries for anywhere between Rs 20-Rs 40 with better taste and quality.

A total of 29,455 sanitary workers, ranging from permanent to contract sanitary workers deployed across the city are included in the scheme, according to the government order.

The menu varies in the 200 wards in the city, and workers in a few areas receive white rice with sambar or vatha kulambu at least three days a week, a meal they said they enjoyed. In many other wards, workers are served variety rice, which they said were neither nutritious nor appetising.

Sanjay (name changed), a sanitary staff from the Thiruvottiyur zone, said they work hard all day and "would like to have meals for lunch with sambar and rasam or some other curry and vegetable". "As accompaniments, they mostly serve vegetables like potatoes which older

people don't prefer due to digestive issues or joint pain. Before this scheme, we used to eat at a small eatery run by a lady, who would give us egg, unlimited white rice, fish curry, sambar, rasam, and vegetables such as kootu or poriyal for just Rs 50. The food was delicious and

use the remaining for other expenses. We can even have sambar or curd rice at Amma canteens for Rs 5," a worker said.

According to a G.O. issued by the MAWS department in October 2025, A-shift workers (6am-2pm) are to be provided lunch between 1.30pm-2pm. These workers said they are asked to report by 5.30am, forcing many to skip breakfast and work until lunch without food. The meals are reportedly being distributed only after the shift ends after 2pm.

Sangeetha (name changed), a sanitary worker from Sowcarpet, said she travels daily from near Kodungaiyur dump yard and reports for duty at 5.30 am. "It is nearly impossible to cook, eat, and leave so early. If I eat outside, I have to spend Rs 40 on breakfast and another Rs 60 on tea, and water bottles. The government can provide at least A-shift workers with two-free-meals-a-day," she said.

She added that food distribution is poorly managed. "There is no one to serve. Some pack extra portions for two or three people. By the time others finish work and come, the food is over." Many workers that spoke to TNIE earlier, when meals were distributed in sealed lunch boxes, they had found bugs. The practice was discontinued soon after and food is now transported in insulated containers.



Guindy-OMR traffic may ease as CM Stalin opens L-flyover at Madhya Kailash

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Motorists can now enjoy faster travel by bypassing Chennai's heavily congested junctions—Madhya Kailash and the Cancer Institute junction at Adyar—with Chief Minister MK Stalin inaugurating the new L-shaped flyover, connecting Sardar Patel Road and Rajiv Gandhi Salai at the Adyar-Madhya Kailash intersection, on Sunday.

The two-lane, one-way flyover is expected to ease vehicular movement from Guindy towards Thiruvanmiyur, Thoraipakkam and other parts of the OMR. The seamless flow of traffic onto Rajiv Gandhi Salai will also help reduce congestion at the Cancer Institute-IIT Madras junction, where vehicles usually pile up, often stretching till Saidapet. So far, vehicles take nearly 30 minutes to cross the Madhya Kailash junction from Little Mount, and this is expected to reduce to just five to 10 minutes. Similarly, motorists



travelling from Adyar towards Guindy will soon be able to proceed without interruption, as the traffic signal at the junction would be removed. The travel time from Adyar to Saidapet/Guindy is also expected to come down by 20 minutes. The 652m flyover, constructed at a cost of 60.7 crore, aims to ease

congestion along the IIT Madras-Adyar Cancer Institute stretch, including the heavily trafficked Madhya Kailash intersection. Sources in the State Highways Department said the existing bus stop at the Madhya Kailash junction hampers smooth vehicular movement from Rajiv Gandhi Salai towards Guindy. "The bus stop will be slightly relocated near the temple, paving the way for the free flow of traffic from Rajiv Gandhi Salai towards IIT Madras. Then, the junction will be made signal-free within 10 days," an official said.

The official added that the right turn beneath the new flyover for vehicles travelling from Guindy to Rajiv Gandhi Salai will be closed. In addition, a new U-turn will be introduced under the flyover on Sardar Patel Road for vehicles coming from Gandhi Mandapam Road, making the entire stretch signal-free.

A temple, a forest, and a new Gadchiroli: How Maharashtra's red corridor is trying to reinvent itself as a tourist hub

Nagpur. (Agency)

TUCKED AWAY in a corner of Chamorshi in Gadchiroli, around 190 km from Nagpur, stands a 1.9-acre complex that is magnificent, rambling and, for the most part, bereft of people. Located on the peaceful banks of the Wainganga River and surrounded by fields of cotton, paddy and wheat, the 8th-century temple showcases intricate motifs, ornate carvings of divine beings and a towering shikhara—all of which earned it the moniker 'Khajuraho of Vidarbha'.

Despite its grandeur, the temple—dedicated to Lord Shiva and named after the sage Markandeya—sees few visitors, mostly locals from the nearby village of Markanda Deo. That changes on Mahashivaratri, when thousands of devotees from across Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh descend on it barefoot, drawn by faith and the promise of Lord Shiva's blessings.

Today, the Markandeshwar Temple, characterised by its Nagara-style

architecture that bears testimony to exceptional craftsmanship, exemplifies the resilience and transformation of Gadchiroli—long viewed as one of Maharashtra's Maoist hotbeds. Gadchiroli is now seeking to reframe its identity, drawing on its



dense forests, riverine landscape, and cultural and ecological singularity to turn the engines of tourism. At the nucleus of this push—aimed at balancing conservation, community participation and safety in a region once largely absent from Maharashtra's tourism map—is the Markandeshwar temple.

On the agenda is not only the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) conservation work at the centrally protected temple—restarted in 2024 after a seven-year gap—but also other protected sites: a fort, the Bhandareswar temple and a

Mahadev temple in Armori taluka; stone circles at Arsoda; a group of 20 cromlechs, or prehistoric burial sites, at Chamorshi, where the Shiva temple is located; and another temple at Thanegaon.

"Conservation and restoration work at the Markandeshwar temple is currently underway, from a tourism development perspective," an ASI official told The Indian Express. "ASI is working with the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) on peripheral development, which is in its final stage under Phase I. The Gadchiroli district administration has been extending substantial support for the development and promotion of these heritage sites."

Maharashtra's school education department on Saturday announced that admissions under the Right to Education (RTE) Act will begin from February 17, with parents required to apply online under a revised admission process notified earlier this month.

Under the new rules, parents can select up to 10 private unaided schools for RTE admissions, but all choices must fall within a one kilometre radius of the student's registered residential address. In another key change, applicants must upload all required documents at the time of application, instead of submitting them later during admission.

As per the RTE Act, 25 per cent of seats in private unaided schools are reserved for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with the state reimbursing schools for the fees. This year, the Maharashtra school education department has introduced two major modifications: a reduced distance criterion for school selection and mandatory online document submission during application.

Metro collapse victim's family refuses to claim body, seeks compensation, job for daughter



Mumbai. (Agency)

The family of Ramdhani Yadav, 49, who was killed after a 6x4 foot cement parapet wall from Metro Line 4 in Mulund fell onto a moving autorickshaw he was travelling on Saturday, has refused to claim his body, demanding compensation and a government job for one of his daughters.

Ramdasu Yadav, 51, the deceased's elder brother, said the family will not take the body from Rajawadi Hospital until authorities assure financial support for Ramdhani's wife and children. Ramdhani, a native of Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh, was the serving pradhan of his village and the sole earning member of his family. He is survived by his wife and three daughters aged between 15 and 20.

"Now who will take care of his daughter's education and their marriage? I am not asking for any fixed amount but the concerned agency needs to compensate a fair amount to the deceased's wife. My demand is also for free education for the children. The government should ensure a job to at least one of the daughters. The incident took place on Saturday afternoon when the parapet segment fell onto an autorickshaw travelling on LBS Road. Ramdhani was travelling with Rajkumar Yadav and Rajkumar's brother-in-law Mahendra Yadav, both of whom were injured.

Rajkumar, an autorickshaw driver who lives in Nalasopara with his wife and two children aged 20 and 12, remains in critical condition. Mahendra, a former pradhan of his village in Jaunpur, lives there with his wife and four children aged between 17 and 24.

RTE admissions to begin under revised rules, parents oppose new distance rule

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Parents said the delayed announcement has added to uncertainty, with the new academic year just three months away. "Ideally the admission should start in December/January, which is also when most schools start the admission cycle for the upcoming academic year.

But delayed RTE admission process does not allow parents the opportunity to weigh available options to finally confirm admissions," said an interested parent. While the revised policy outlines a strict timeline for future cycles stating that admissions for the 2027-28 academic year should begin in January and conclude by April, parents pointed out that the current cycle is already behind schedule. "For the upcoming academic year 2026-27, the admissions process is already delayed," the parent said.

Mukund Kirdat of the Aam Aadmi Party, who assists underprivileged families with RTE applications in Pune, said the new distance restriction would significantly limit options for applicants. "The new distance criterion for school selection and mandatory online document submission during application.

14 lakh Form 7 for deletion submitted in Gujarat, only 1.8 lakh turn out 'valid'

Of 90 lakh notices issued to 'unmapped' voters and those with 'logical discrepancies', nearly 30 pc appeared for hearing

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

As Gujarat completes its Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, the final electoral roll, to be published on February 17, is expected to see a marginal increase in the number of voters from the draft list published on December 19, which had over 4.34 crore voters, sources told.

The draft electoral roll had 4,34,70,109 voters, a decrease of 73.73 lakh from the last electoral roll, which had 5,08,43,436 voters. Of the over 73.73 lakh names deleted, over 54 per cent are in the 'permanently migrated' category. The CEO's office received nearly 14 lakh Form 7 applications from across the state, of which barely 1.8 lakh were termed

'valid' after scrutiny, sources said.

"Unmapped" voters' hearing

During the exercise, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has issued around 90 lakh notices to voters with "logical discrepancies" and those who were "unmapped" and only around 30% of them turned up for the hearing, the sources said.

The hearing for the 'unmapped' voters and those with logical discrepancies was held on February 10. "Not even 30 per cent of these 90 lakh people turned up for the last hearing," a senior government official said. The Gujarat CEO's office had to rope in more than three times more election officers



to handle the hearing of the 90 lakh who had been issued notices seeking verification from the Election Commission. From 800 Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROS) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), the number was increased to 3,000. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) said those under logical

discrepancies include cases of mismatched names, addresses and age. "For instance, mismatches were found in names or fathers' name, surname and addresses in the documents submitted or enumeration forms and 2002 electoral list. For this we have uploaded documents with their fathers' name included (with the name) in the voters' name. There were age mismatch cases too like the listed voter's age not matching with current age or the age gap between the father and the voter being low," a BLO told.

The magic realism of an India-Pak cricket match

AS children, we played cricket in bylanes with makeshift rules and borrowed equipment. There was always that one spoilt kid who owned the bat. If he was given out, he could sulk, pick up his bat and walk away. The game would collapse until cooler heads prevailed, negotiations were struck and the bat was placed back in the middle. What felt like petty childhood drama then has an uncanny echo in the administrative theatre that periodically surrounds the India-Pakistan fixture today. To be clear, India or the ICC are not the spoilt child in this story. The framework of international cricket — venues, schedules, commercial agreements and legal obligations — exists beyond individual whims. Yet the recent posturing, with threats of not playing, suggestions of walkovers and the public airing of demands, had the unmistakable flavour of brinkmanship.

Eventually, as is often the case in sport's backrooms, quieter conversations took over. Back-channel talks, legal considerations and face-saving compromises prevailed. The noise subsided and the fixture found its way to neutral ground. The India-Pakistan match will be played in Sri Lanka. The bat is back in play. Strip away the rhetoric and one truth sits at the heart of every such standoff: India-vs-Pakistan is not just a cricket match; it is the sport's most powerful commercial engine. No other fixture in world cricket compresses so much economic value into a single evening.

Broadcasters anchor advertising inventories around it. Sponsors plan entire campaigns for it. Digital platforms count on its gravitational pull. The global audience spikes in a way that no bilateral series or even most knockout games can replicate. The numbers explain the behaviour. Advertisers are willing to pay eye-watering sums — anywhere between Rs 40 lakh and Rs 1.6 crore for just 10 seconds of television airtime during an India-Pakistan match — simply because the eyeballs are guaranteed. When all revenue streams are aggregated — broadcast rights, advertising, sponsorships, platform deals and in-stadium receipts — the value of one such match is commonly estimated in the range of Rs 2,000-3,000 crore. In a sport where many boards operate on thin margins and depend heavily on marquee events to balance their books, walking away from this fixture is not merely a sporting decision; it is an economic one. This commercial gravity explains why brinkmanship rarely ends in actual forfeiture. The rhetoric may be loud, but the resolution is usually quiet and pragmatic.

Everyone understands that forfeiting an India-Pakistan match is not just forfeiting two points on a table; it is abandoning a windfall that sustains ecosystems — player payments, domestic structures, development pathways and the administrative machinery that keeps the game running. In that sense, modern cricket is less a gully match than a global enterprise with shareholders, stakeholders and financial imperatives. Yet there is a cost to allowing commerce to dominate the narrative. Rivalries are meant to animate sport, not hold tournaments hostage. When administrative posturing begins to resemble childhood tantrums, the credibility of governance suffers. Fans deserve certainty and clarity, not cliffhangers engineered as leverage. Players deserve to compete without being reduced to bargaining chips in negotiations they have little control over. T20 cricket itself has taught us humility. Reputation dissolves the moment the first ball is bowled. David can still challenge Goliath on any given day; associate nations have shown that courage and conditions can compress hierarchies. On the field, uncertainty reigns. Off it, however, power is more rigid and money speaks more loudly than most ideals. The India-Pakistan fixture sits at the intersection of sport, politics and commerce, and each time it is threatened, the ecosystem collectively holds its breath.

THE story by my colleague, Subhash Rajta, in The Tribune earlier this week, about the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu government in Himachal Pradesh buying 10 luxury cars for its use — even as the chief minister flew to Delhi to remonstrate with the powers-that-be over the 16th Finance Commission's recommendation to withdraw Revenue Deficit Grants from states and encourage them to tighten their belts — has created an uproar. People are legitimately asking why ministers and bureaucrats need to use fancy, new cars — literally, privilege the "lal batti" syndrome, hardly restricted just to the purchase of vehicles — when budgets for schools, buses, hospitals, etc are being cut. And why the Himachal government won't take a leaf out of its own party's reform book, launched back in the day in 1991 by then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, ably assisted by Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia — which not just helped change India but also gave Indians the confidence to take on the world. (Seems Sukhu has since met former finance minister P Chidambaram for a few tips.)

Certainly, with a projected revenue deficit of Rs 6,390 crore, or 2.5 per cent of the state's GDP, Sukhu has a problem. But it's not like Himachal is the only state falling short. Nor is it that spending money is a bad thing — we all know that splurging (as long as it doesn't land you into a debt you can't repay) helps the economy go round. That's why a key data point to measure how broke your state is not to look at bald figures, but what percentage of the state GDP (GSDP) is accounted for by its revenue deficit. So Punjab's projected revenue deficit, at Rs 23,957 crore, is a high 2.7 per cent of its state GDP. Tamil Nadu's revenue deficit at Rs 41,635 crore is even higher, but a low 1.17 per cent of its state GDP. Kerala's CPI(M) government — which devotes a large share of its pie to welfare schemes and has a population similar to Punjab — has a larger revenue deficit compared to Punjab, Rs 27,125 crore, but a lower GSDP, 1.9 per cent. Meanwhile Karnataka, one of India's richest states, has a revenue deficit of Rs 19,262 crore, a mere 0.6 per cent of its GSDP. You see the picture clearly. Tiny Himachal has done well on some parameters, like education, but is unable to raise revenues to fully fund itself. Much larger

states like Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, even if they throw money on freebies — which Himachal is also accused of doing — are able to control their budgets because they are able to defray their expenditure with larger investments. In fact, Tamil Nadu, which goes to the polls this year — along with Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in 2027 — has promised to bring down its revenue deficit even further. Both Punjab and Himachal, on the other hand, are staring at emptying coffers — and

there are two messages here. The first, that resilient and investor-friendly states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra will benefit; while states like Himachal Pradesh, whose capacity to earn is limited, will be hurt. The first question to ask, therefore, is what this does to Centre-State relations, which, traditionally, have been book-ended by notions of equity and a greater generosity for the underdog. Under the new formula, the underdog will have to work much harder to haul itself out of the red. Now go back to the data. It is fascinating to see that Himachal has actually got a greater share of funds from the 16th Finance Commission than the 15th. This also means that when Mr Sukhu screams blue murder because his state hasn't got enough, the FinMin babus will rightfully point out that actually Himachal has — and that the Congress government must learn to do a better job of managing its finances. (Remember that Himachal goes to the polls in end-2027.)

The second message is equally interesting. States going to the polls over the next 12 months, like Tamil Nadu, Assam, Punjab, Kerala and West Bengal — with the exception of Bengal — have been allocated a larger share of funds than what they were by the 15th. With the exception of Assam, the remainder are all Opposition-ruled states. Even more significant, large states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh — all in the cow belt and all ruled by the BJP — have been given a lower share of taxes this time, as compared to last time.

Pure coincidence or pure strategy? Mr Panagariya will, of course, wager in favour of leaner, meaner and far less wasteful economies; he will argue that

money has no colour, and so what if many of these states are ruled by Opposition parties. But the message from Delhi, it seems, is quite different. Cow-belt states are being given shorter shrift because they are already in the BJP fold. Monies can be better used elsewhere, for example to woo states going to the polls soon. We know that Punjab, like Himachal Pradesh, is fully on the BJP radar. Even if Kerala is a different kettle of fish, no harm feeding the fish — in fact, it has just bitten the bait in Thiruvananthapuram. Tamil Nadu is larger and a far more difficult pushover (and Karnataka must wait for 2028).



few ideas how to fill them.

Still, none of this is new. What has really set the cat among the pigeons these last few days is not the end of Revenue Deficit Grants announced by the 16th Finance Commission, led by the redoubtable economist Arvind Panagariya, but something far more important. The Commission has rewired the devolution of funds from the Centre to the states — as much as 41 per cent of the kitty — by adding a brand new criterion. Which is, that the amount of funds a state gets from the Centre will henceforth depend upon how much it contributes to the national GDP.

Bangladesh verdict: BNP must walk the talk on reforms

The landslide win gives the BNP ample parliamentary strength to take decisions that can shape the country's future

A largely peaceful, well-organised election and a decisive mandate — the people of Bangladesh deserve to be highly commended for a job well done. The sweeping victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) marks the dawn of a new era for a nation that has witnessed turbulence for the better part of its existence. Promising stability and reforms, the BNP has returned to power after two decades. Tarique Rahman, son of former PM Khaleda Zia, is set to take over the reins of the government. His leadership will be tested from day one. Bangladesh has remained in limbo for a year and a half after the ignominious end of Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule. Political unrest, attacks on minorities and economic disruption — especially in the vital garment sector — have left deep scars. The landslide win gives the BNP ample parliamentary strength to take decisions that can



shape Bangladesh's future. The party must avoid triumphalism and instead prioritise reconciliation as well as justice, upholding the spirit of the July 2024 uprising.

Its appeal to supporters to refrain from large-scale celebrations and offer special prayers on Friday was a prudent first step. The Jamaat-e-Islami-led coalition needs to play the role of a responsible, vigilant Opposition that should try to deter the BNP from committing authoritarian excesses.

Beyond domestic concerns lies the delicate balancing act of foreign policy. Dhaka's relations with Delhi have deteriorated sharply over the vexed issue of Hasina's extradition, even as its ties with Islamabad are on the upswing. PM Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif were among the first to congratulate Rahman on the BNP's victory. The formation of an elected government offers India an opportunity to rebuild ties rooted in a shared history and economic interdependence. However, it will require deft diplomacy and a great deal of patience to turn the tide. India would do well to help Rahman chart a pragmatic, inclusive course for Naya Bangladesh.

Giving back, for old times' sake

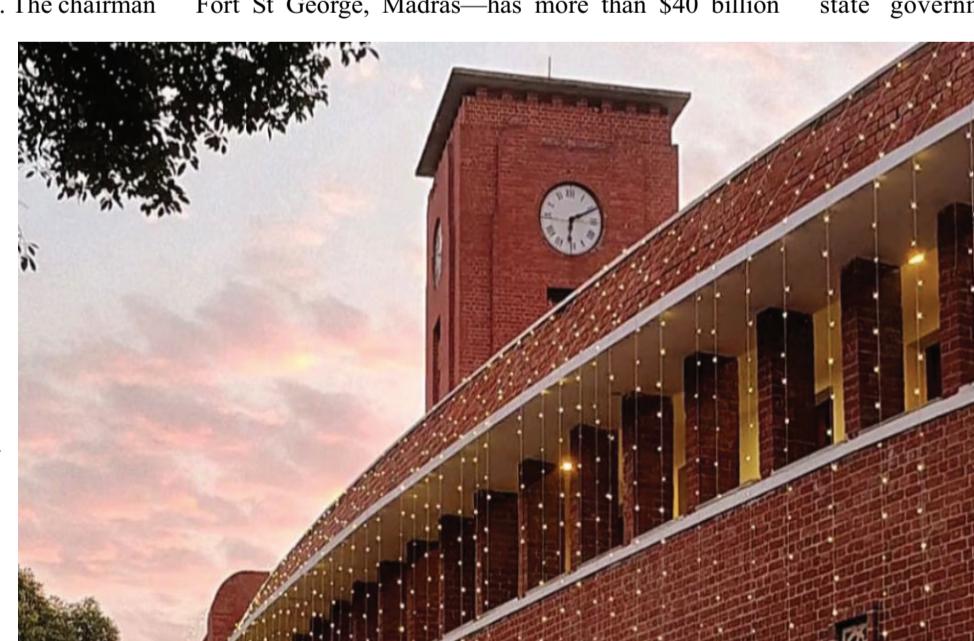
The centenary of Delhi's Shri Ram College of Commerce brought into focus philanthropic efforts by the alumni. While many Indians have been donating to their institutions, structured endowments are relatively new. The government has woken up late in easing the process

"Nostalgia is not what it used to be," is one of my favourite quotes, variously attributed to French actress Simone Signoret and American writer Peter De Vries. While its authorship may be in doubt, its ironic humour is not. I got that feeling firsthand last weekend as I went down memory lane to the University of Delhi to mark the centenary of my alma mater.

Shri Ram College of Commerce is not what it used to be, unless you count the main red-brick building laden with teenage memories. But the festive air to mark the institution's 100th year echoed with revelry, laughter and banter by older folks who were evidently feeling young all over again. This was not exactly a poet's idea of nostalgia as sweet pain, though I am sure there were silent sighs on missed buses. The joyous occasion also reflected the times we are in. Graduates from well-regarded institutions are increasingly sought after by big-ticket companies, a far cry from my days when employment prospects were far fewer. But there was a lot of gratitude one could feel in the air. Just as well, I realise that I secured a world-class degree at a monthly fee of less than \$3 at the then exchange rate. My education's real value truly dawned on me when I worked in an international agency as an equal with folks who had graduated from Yale and Oxford. It is also great to see that one of the most desirable habits of contemporary American culture is catching on in India, though there is a long way to go. Grateful alumni are happy to give back to the institutions that shaped them. SRCC has only just begun that journey, much like most Indian educational institutions. The global reach of Indian alumni, especially in the US, has triggered the imagination for philanthropy to aid one's alma mater, though the idea of building schools or offering scholarships is not really new for Indians. SRCC, though aided by the government

in a post-independence drive for higher education, also owes a lot to its founder, Lala Shri Ram, whose philanthropic footprints are all over the national capital. Former finance minister Arun Jaitley, probably the best-known alumnus of my college, figured frequently in the centenary conversations. The chairman of the college's governing board, Ajay S Shriram, recalled how Jaitley once casually suggested that the classrooms be air-conditioned. When the management murmured over the costs, a few messages went out, and within months enough funds were raised from the alumni. All rooms are now air-conditioned, a far cry from my days when slowly-whirring fans would hang from the high ceilings. The contributions were not surprising, considering the conversations I overheard at the centenary dinner. Investment bankers, private equity moneybags and tax planners were busy exchanging career notes as giant screens flashed profiles of the been-there-done-that brigade. Old boys love to network in alumni meetings. That's profitable nostalgia. But the generous alumni movement has only just begun in India and has faced hiccups. The government has not been quite prepared for it, and stirred into action only five years ago to do what might be called an 'ease of doing business' equivalent. In the US, media tsar Michael Bloomberg donated \$1 billion to the Johns Hopkins University for medical school tuition. Hedge fund manager John Paulson donated \$400 million to the engineering school at Harvard, where he studied

management. But the real deal is the way many lesser-known alumni contribute to build humongous endowments. Harvard today has an endowment larger than \$50 billion and Yale — named after its first big benefactor, Elihu Yale, who made much of his money at Fort St George, Madras — has more than \$40 billion



today. Princeton, Stanford and MIT rank close behind. But Infosys co-founder N R Narayana Murthy had a rude awakening in the 1990s when he found that he could not donate 78 crore worth of shares to IIT Kanpur because regulations did not allow equity-based donations at that

time. Murthy said a couple of decades later that had it been accepted, the stake would have been worth ₹2,000 crore. There was also a report on how a scientist had to backtrack from a donation of 8 acres of land to another IIT because it attracted a stamp duty of ₹40 crore that the state government refused to waive. Nevertheless, individual generosity has pushed ahead. Another Infosys co-founder and current Executive Chairman Nandan Nilekani in 2023 pledged ₹315 crore to his alma mater, IIT Bombay, a year after IIT Kanpur received ₹100 crore from Rakesh Gangwal, co-founder of IndiGo Airlines. The structured endowment model arrived in India in 2019, when IIT Delhi started a fund with the alumni committing ₹250 crore. Administered as a non-profit, the corpus now stands at around ₹480 crore and aims to reach ₹7,000 crore. We need many more such initiatives. In 2022, the Union education ministry issued guidelines for central universities to set up endowments to be run by boards headed by vice-chancellors, with rules on how to spend the money while growing the corpus.

There was talk at SRCC about startup incubators to help entrepreneurs and address opportunities in artificial intelligence. With AI disrupting every field including education, pedagogy needs to reinvent itself. Evidently, alumni with real-life experience can pitch in with something beyond money.

Amrit Bharat Station Scheme Transforming Railway Infrastructure Across Assam and Northeast

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 16th February: The Ministry of Railways has launched the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) to usher in a new era of modern, passenger-friendly railway infrastructure across Indian Railways. The scheme envisages comprehensive development of railway stations through a long-term, phased approach, with detailed Master Plans prepared for each selected station and implemented systematically to enhance passenger amenities and infrastructure. Under the scheme, focus is being laid on improving station access and circulating areas, upgrading waiting halls and toilets, installing lifts and escalators wherever required, enhancing cleanliness and providing free Wi-Fi facilities. Modern passenger information systems, Executive Lounges, designated spaces for business meetings, landscaping and improved station facades are integral components of the redevelopment. The scheme also promotes local entrepreneurship

through initiatives such as 'One Station One Product' kiosks, thereby creating new economic opportunities for local communities. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme is redefining the railway landscape of Assam and the entire Northeast under the jurisdiction of Northeast Frontier Railway. A total of 92 stations have been identified for redevelopment in the NFR zone, out of which 60 stations across the Northeast are being taken up under the scheme. These include 50 stations in Assam, 4 in Tripura and 1 each in Sikkim, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Assam, as the gateway to the Northeast, has emerged as the largest beneficiary in the region, with redevelopment works covering both major urban centres and important regional towns. Haibagon railway station became the first completed Amrit Bharat station in Assam and was inaugurated in May 2025 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The redeveloped station sets new benchmarks in passenger amenities, infrastructure and design.

Divyangjan-friendly infrastructure has reached 98% completion, while Biswanath Chariali station has achieved 97% physical progress. Under the Lumding Division, Chaparmukh station has recorded 85% progress. Meanwhile, in the Tinsukia Division, North Lakhimpur station and Simaluguri Junction have each achieved 65% physical progress. In Meghalaya, Mendipathar station under the Rangia Division has attained 73% progress in its redevelopment. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme marks a major step towards transforming India's railway infrastructure to meet the needs of a rapidly developing nation. The upgraded stations are expected to generate new employment and business opportunities, enhance ease of travel and emerge as centres of socio-economic activity for surrounding areas. Through improved connectivity, modern amenities and preservation of regional identity, the scheme reflects the Government's strong commitment to inclusive and future-ready development across Assam and the Northeast.

Himachal CM's Kanyadan Yojana benefits 325 families in Una district

Una (HP). (Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh government's Chief Minister Kanyadan Yojana has provided financial assistance of Rs 1,65,75,000 to 325 eligible families in Una district over the past three years, officials said. The scheme, aimed at supporting economically weaker sections, provides financial assistance of Rs 51,000 for the marriage of eligible beneficiaries. It is being implemented across the state as part of the government's social security initiatives under the leadership of Chief Minister Thakur Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu. District Programme Officer (ICDS), Una, Narendra Kumar, said the scheme has played a significant role in extending financial support to underprivileged families in the district. He added that eligible beneficiaries are being identified promptly to ensure that assistance reaches them without delay.

In the Una district, the administration under Deputy Commissioner Jatin Lal is overseeing the effective implementation of the scheme. The authorities have streamlined the process to facilitate the smooth disbursement of benefits. At the grassroots level, Child Development Project Officers, supervisors and Anganwadi workers are conducting awareness drives to inform eligible families about the scheme and assist them in completing the application process.

The scheme covers destitute girls whose fathers have passed away, former residents of Nari Seva Sadan, daughters of neglected, abandoned or divorced women, and girls whose fathers are unable to earn due to physical or mental disability. The annual income of the guardian should not exceed Rs 50,000 to qualify.

Applications must be submitted in the prescribed format along with an income certificate verified by the concerned Tehsildar. Beneficiaries can apply from two months before the wedding date up to six months after the marriage. Eligible persons may contact the District Programme Officer, Child Development Project Officer, supervisor, or the nearest Anganwadi worker for further details.

UP: Illegal property worth Rs 3.5 cr frozen in Chandauli under NDPS Act

Chandauli. (Agency)

In a major crackdown on narcotics-related organised crime, the police have temporarily frozen immovable properties worth approximately Rs 3.5 crore, allegedly acquired through illegal drug trafficking in Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh, officials said on Sunday. The operation was jointly carried out by the Mughalsarai Police Station and the Crime Branch in Chandauli in connection with cases registered at the Mughalsarai Police Station under relevant sections of the BNS and the NDPS Act.

The accused, identified as Swapnil Kesari, son of Manoj Kesari and a resident of Krishna Nagar Colony, Chandauli, is alleged to have amassed the property through the illegal trade of codeine-based cough syrup and other narcotic substances.

Under Section 68F of the NDPS Act, the police initiated attachment and seizure proceedings against six immovable properties belonging to the accused and his family members.

The properties, located in villages Bechupur, Chandasi, and Harishankarpur under Mughalsarai tehsil in Chandauli district, were provisionally frozen on February 11, 2026. The combined estimated market value of the attached property stands at Rs 3.5 crore. Police officials stated that strict and lawful action will continue against individuals involved in narcotics smuggling and organised criminal activities in the district. Further investigation into the financial transactions and assets of the accused is on.

Rs 1.5-cr embezzlement alleged in Rishi Apartments Society; probe by CBI, ED, Vigilance demanded

Mohali. (Agency)

A senior citizen of Rishi Apartments has alleged misappropriation of more than Rs 1.5 crore from the society fund and sought registration of an FIR from the Punjab Director General of Police. The complainant, Krishan Kumar Goyal (72), resident of flat no. D303, has submitted a detailed complaint requesting a thorough investigation. He also wrote a letter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), and Punjab Vigilance for a probe into the matter.

According to the complaint, following the order of the Dera Bassi SDM, dated January 16, 2023, the executive officer (EO) of Municipal Council, Zirakpur, was assigned responsibility to manage and operate the affairs and bank accounts of the Rishi Apartments Residents Welfare Association

(RWA). However, it is alleged that for nearly 37 months, audited financial statements of the society have not been made public. Goyal stated that on September 11, 2025, he sought details of audited accounts under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The Local Bodies Department forwarded the request to the Zirakpur Municipal Council, but the council reportedly

replied that no such record was available. Despite repeated personal visits and written reminders, no satisfactory response was received. He questioned why Rs 20,000 is allegedly being charged in the name of NOC despite residents already paying regular monthly maintenance. The complainant also alleged that in

2023, the Punjab Pollution Control Board imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh and halted property registrations in the society for discharging untreated sewage into open drains due to non-functional STP connectivity. Despite the reported suspension, around 80-90 property registrations were allegedly carried out later at the tehsil office.

Goyal claimed that since January 2023, Municipal Council officials have been operating the society's bank account, appointing staff, deploying security guards, and collecting monthly maintenance from residents.

Despite this, non-disclosure of financial records raises serious doubts. He also alleged that maintenance charges are being collected even though Building Completion Certificate (BCC) and Occupancy Certificate (OC) have not been issued.

3 killed as speeding car driven by man 'under influence of bhang' hits bicycle and an e-rickshaw in Chandigarh

The Chandigarh Police said that after hitting the victims, the Maruti Suzuki SX4 veered across the carriageway and crashed into two oncoming cars.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Three people were killed, and several others were injured after a speeding car being driven by a 28-year-old man, reportedly under the influence of bhang, rammed into a bicycle and an e-rickshaw in Chandigarh Sunday evening. The accused, identified as Rahul of Kishangarh, was reportedly returning from Shivratri celebrations when the crash occurred. The deceased were identified as Sushila, 35, a resident of Kaimbawala who was riding a bicycle; Raju, 40, the e-rickshaw driver; and Mamta, 50, a passenger. The police said the impact killed Sushila instantly, while the other two succumbed during treatment.

The police said the collision took place when the driver approached from the Nayagaon side at high speed and rammed into the victims from behind, who were in an e-rickshaw and a cycle. The e-rickshaw was then thrown into the air and hit a Baleno and an Innova. The police said reckless driving and intoxication appear to be key factors.

Rahul was detained and taken to the police station for questioning. During the preliminary inquiry, he told the police that he had consumed bhang while visiting Jayanti Devi Temple with friends. After dropping them off, he was heading home when, he claimed, an e-rickshaw suddenly appeared in front of him, and he lost recollection of events.

The injured were rushed to multiple hospitals. Sushila was taken to Government Multi Specialty Hospital (GMSH), Sector 16, where she died, while her husband Hanuman, who had been cycling with her, remains critical.

Raju died at GMCH, Sector 32, and Mamta was declared "brought dead" at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh (PGIMER). Another woman travelling in the e-rickshaw is undergoing treatment.

Mamta's family said she had left work around 4 pm but did not return home, and her son later identified her body at PGIMER through her clothes.

Reaping gold from 'black carrots': Abohar woman takes Punjab's 'kaali gaajar kaanji' to US, Canada, Ireland

In the times when such traditional recipes are nearly forgotten, a woman from Punjab's border town Abohar (Fazilka), is not just keeping the rare drink alive within the country, but has also taken it offshore with exports to Canada, US and Ireland, and soon Australia too.

Ludhiana. (Agency)

For those who have grown up in Punjab, their childhood memories must have a tinge of "kaali gaajar kaanji" (pronounced kaanji)—a dark purple, tangy drink that grandmothers would make at homes in winters, using rarely grown but extremely nutritious "black carrots". However, the black carrots and the "kaanji" made using it, are now nearly forgotten. The pieces of carrots would be left floating in water in a glass jar mixed with black salt and raa (mustard seed). The jar would be left for some days in the sun to ferment, usually in January and February, after which the tangy drink would be ready with chewable carrots.

In the times when such traditional recipes are nearly forgotten, a woman from Punjab's border town Abohar (Fazilka), is not just keeping the rare drink alive within the country, but has also taken it offshore with exports to Canada, US and Ireland, and soon

Australia too.

Dolly Setia's (56) black carrot kaanji is now being savoured across Chandigarh, Delhi, Ludhiana, and even in New York, Dublin and Toronto having ample Punjabi diaspora. Her venture "Kanjiwala- Say Hanji to Kanji"—where the kaanji is being manufactured—has given employment to at least 20 local women from Abohar's Toot Wala village.

Abohar woman takes Punjab's 'kaali gaajar kaanji' to US, Canada, Ireland. Apart from black carrots, Dolly is also manufacturing beetroot kaanji, amla kaanji, red chilli kaanji, haldi (turmeric) kaanji, green chilli and cucumber kaanji.

The process of manufacturing kaanji requires a lot of manual labor, and the women are trained to do it manually—from washing and peeling the carrots to chopping them and then putting them in water drums for fermentation. It gives kaanji that "authentic, Punjabi taste".



Dolly told The Indian Express: "My mother and mother-in-law used to make black carrots kaanji so it was nothing new for me. We are already into the family business of pickles for some years now and fresh veggies are grown on our farm. So two years ago we thought we should also process black

CBSE curriculum to be introduced in 11 senior secondary schools in Nadaun subdivision

Nadaun (HP). (Agency)

The CBSE curriculum is set to be introduced in 11 senior secondary schools in the Nadaun subdivision from the upcoming academic session beginning April 2026.

Nadaun is the home Assembly constituency of Chief Minister Thakur Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu. Rail and Jaliari Senior Secondary Schools will also be affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Dhaneta, Nadaun Boys, Nadaun Girls, Badaran, Amlahad, Bada, Batran, Kangri and Galod schools have already secured CBSE affiliation.

The Chief Minister has directed the School Education Department to complete all formalities for the affiliation of Rail and Jaliari schools at the earliest.

The day boarding school under construction at Amlahad will also become operational from the new academic session and is expected to serve as a model institution for the state. Construction of similar day boarding schools in other areas is progressing rapidly.

Students in these CBSE-affiliated schools will be provided with improved infrastructure, modern facilities, playgrounds and sports training. Nutritious meals will also be provided in day boarding institutions. The Chief Minister has further instructed senior officials to ensure proper accommodation arrangements for students. New multi-storey buildings will be constructed where required to replace old structures, and schools will be equipped with modern infrastructure.

On the directions of the Chief Minister, the CBSE curriculum will be implemented in 140 schools across the state from the new academic session. While 100 schools have already been affiliated, the process is underway in 40 more schools. The state government aims to introduce the CBSE curriculum in 200 senior secondary schools. These institutions will have a uniform logo, dress code and colour scheme for buildings.

Himachal Pradesh approves Rs 1,617 crore for 1st phase of healthcare modernization

Shimla. (Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh government has approved Rs 1,617 crore in the first phase of a Rs 3,000 crore comprehensive healthcare modernisation initiative aimed at strengthening public health infrastructure and ensuring affordable, high-quality medical services across the state, an official said on Sunday.

The project will be implemented from April 1, 2026 to April 30, 2031.

According to a government spokesperson here, the initiative will upgrade infrastructure in Government Medical Colleges, Super Speciality Centres and Adarsh Swasthya Sansthan. The investment is intended to improve timely access to diagnosis and treatment, as delays in medical intervention often worsen health outcomes and significantly increase costs, he said, noting that studies indicate that late diagnosis can raise treatment expenses by 30 to 50 per cent. "Under the first component, the focus will be on strengthening physical infrastructure. This includes construction, renovation and upgradation of academic blocks,

outpatient and inpatient facilities in government medical colleges. High fidelity simulation centres augmented and virtual reality-based training facilities, digital libraries and skill labs integrated with e-learning platforms will be established," he said.

Advanced diagnostic equipment such as MRI and CT scanners, digital radiology systems and molecular diagnostic laboratories will be installed. Digital platforms including PACS, LIMS, telemedicine and Learning Management Systems will be integrated to enable interoperable data exchange in line with ABDM standards.

The second component will strengthen tertiary care services at Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Ata Institute of Medical Super Specialities Chamiana and Dr Radhakrishnan Government Medical College.

Services, including renal and bone marrow transplant, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery, advanced endoscopic procedures, paediatric care and robotic-assisted surgeries will be expanded.

carrots... This year we exported it for the first time to the US and the response was tremendous." She also said, "Apart from the right amount of black salt and mustard seeds, weather also plays a major role to get that authentic taste. The drink should get ample sunshine and the right temperature for perfect fermentation."

Apart from black carrots, Dolly is also manufacturing beetroot kaanji, amla kaanji, red chilli kaanji, haldi (turmeric) kaanji, green chilli and cucumber kaanji. Dolly's son Sharad Setia said: "We are growing black carrots on five to six acres at our farm... In the US, we are supplying it in New York stores including Patel Brothers store, Maharaja in Long Island and Apna Bazar in Richmond Hill. We have received a repeat order from the US while response from Canada and Ireland is awaited. We have exported nearly 6,000 bottles of kanji till now."

Know Your Laws: Why Kanpur Lamborghini crash accused was granted bail

A closer reading of the bail order in the Kanpur Lamborghini hit-and-run case tells a more complex story, one that shines a harsh light not only on privilege and perception, but on police procedure, statutory safeguards, and the uneasy balance between liberty and accountability.

New Delhi.(Agency)
The country has been gripped by outrage over the Kanpur Lamborghini hit-and-run case. Six people were injured. The accused allegedly "disappeared" after the incident. Social media is rife with speculation: Was bail granted because of influence? Did the clout of a wealthy tobacco baron father tilt the scales? Public anger is understandable. But a closer reading of the bail order tells a more complex story, one that shines a harsh light not only on privilege and perception, but on police procedure, statutory safeguards, and the uneasy balance between liberty and accountability.

THE CHARGES MATTER

First, the law invoked in the FIR matters. The accused in the Kanpur case has been booked under provisions that carry relatively modest punishments:

Section 281 – Rash driving or riding on a public way endangering human life (maximum 6 months).

Section 125(a) – Act endangering life or personal safety causing hurt (maximum 6 months). Section 125(b) – Act endangering life or personal safety causing grievous hurt (maximum 3 years). Section 324 – Mischief causing damage of 20,000 or more (maximum 2 years). None of these offences carry more than seven years of imprisonment. That threshold is legally significant. Under Section 35 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) – which replaces the old Section 41 of the CrPC – the police can arrest without warrant ONLY in specified circumstances. But when an offence carries less than seven years' imprisonment, the law mandates restraint.

The grounds of arrest are laid down in Section 35(1) of the BNSS (akin to the old Section 41A CrPC). It requires that in cases involving less than 7 years imprisonment, arrest without



warrant is permissible only if the following conditions are met.

Crucially, if the police do arrest in such cases, they must record written reasons and justify them before the court. Without these justifications, Section 35(3) mandates that instead of making an immediate arrest, the police must issue a notice directing the accused to appear for questioning. Section 35(4) says that if notice to appear for questioning is issued,

the suspected person must appear before the police and join the investigation.

Clause (5) adds: "Where such a person complies and continues to comply with the notice, he shall not be arrested unless 'the police officer is of the opinion that he ought to be arrested' – In this case also, the Police has to give written reasons justifying the arrest.

Arrest of such a person who absconds instead of joining the investigation can be done after court orders.

THE PROCEDURAL LAPSE

The bail order reportedly notes a glaring issue: the notice under Section 35(4) was dated February 12 – the same day the accused was shown as arrested. In effect, the safeguard of prior notice appears to have collapsed into a formality. The court also observed that the prosecution did not substantively argue that arrest was necessary to prevent tampering with evidence, ensure proper investigation, or prevent absconding – grounds that could.

Lalu Yadav Pleads Not Guilty In Land-For-Job Case, Says Will Face Trial

New Delhi.(Agency)

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav and former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi on Monday pleaded innocence in the alleged Railways land-for-jobs corruption case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and expressed their willingness to face trial.

Appearing before the Special CBI Court at Rouse Avenue, the couple pleaded not guilty to charges of corruption, cheating and criminal conspiracy and opted to contest the case on merits. Earlier, on January 29, the trial court had granted permission to Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leaders Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav to appear before it between February 1 and February 25 for the purpose of the formal framing of charges in the land-for-jobs case. The court had directed the accused to remain present with prior intimation of at least one day and fixed March 9 as the date for the commencement of the trial.

Earlier in January, Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogte of the Rouse Avenue Court formally framed charges against Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family members, noting that they were "operating as a criminal enterprise" and were part of a broader conspiracy in which public employment in the Indian Railways was allegedly exploited as a bargaining chip to secure immovable properties.

The court held that the central agency's charge sheet prima facie showed that close associates of Lalu Prasad Yadav facilitated the acquisition of land in lieu of jobs in the Railways across different parts of the country. Rejecting the plea seeking discharge, the court said that "the plea of Mr Lalu Yadav and his family members to be discharged is completely unwarranted". According to the court order, of the 98 surviving accused named in the case, charges have been framed against 46, including Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family members, while 52 accused have been discharged.

5 Bishnoi gang members held for murder of Delhi businessman

New Delhi.(Agency)

Five members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang have been arrested in connection with the recent killing of a 35-year-old businessman in outer north Delhi's Bawana industrial area, an official said on Sunday.

Acting on an intelligence input, police intercepted some of the suspects earlier in the day. When challenged, the accused allegedly opened fire at the police team in a bid to escape, prompting the personnel to retaliate in self-defence, leading to a brief encounter.

During the exchange of fire, one of the accused sustained a bullet injury to his leg and was overpowered. Three accused were apprehended during the encounter, while two others were arrested subsequently, taking the total number of arrests in the case to five, police said, adding that none of their personnel sustained serious injuries.

Vaibhav Gandhi, a plastic granules manufacturer, was shot dead around 12.50 pm on February 9 near his factory in Sector 4 of the DSIDC industrial area. Four men were reportedly involved in the attack. The assailants allegedly first attempted to snatch the keys of the victim's car and forcibly took away his laptop bag when he resisted before shooting him at close range. Police had also recovered around ₹1 crore from inside Gandhi's car after the incident.

A day after the murder, a social media post purportedly issued in the name of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang claimed responsibility for the killing. The post, allegedly from an account using the name "Randeep Malik Anil Pandit," claimed the murder was carried out on behalf of multiple gangs, including that of Bishnoi. The post alleged that Gandhi was interfering in the gangs' activities.

3 nabbed in gunfight

One of the accused sustained a bullet injury to his leg and was overpowered. Three accused were apprehended during the encounter, while two others were arrested later, taking the total number of arrests to five.

UP cancels licences of 178 private hospitals, files case against 281 after complaints

New Delhi.(Agency)

Uttar Pradesh government has cancelled the licences of 178 private hospitals in the state following complaints and inspections, of which 59 were later restored after hearings before the competent authority, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak informed the Assembly on Monday. Additionally, cases had been registered against 281 hospitals that were allegedly operating in violation of norms, he added.

Around 500 complaints have been received, and "we have cancelled the licences of 178 hospitals. After cancelling the licences, the hospitals appealed to an authority, which revived the licences of 59 hospitals after hearing," he said, replying to a question by Samajwadi

Party MLA Atul Pradhan on complaints against private hospitals and the action taken.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who also



holds the Medical Health portfolio, added 533 hospitals were "seized", while notices had been issued to 1,542 hospitals directing them to improve compliance with regulations. The government was also asked whether it planned to regulate excessive billing

by private hospitals, bring uniformity in consultation fees and medical test charges, and prevent arbitrary price hikes.

To this, Pathak replied that there was currently no policy to fix consultation fees of private doctors or standardise rates for medical tests in the state. He, however, noted that free treatment, including consultation and medicines, was being provided to the public through government hospitals. The Deputy Chief Minister further said beneficiaries under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) were entitled to cashless treatment up to ₹5 lakh in empanelled government and private hospitals under prescribed packages, while senior citizens above 70 years were covered under the Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana.

Nine-judge bench to begin Sabarimala women entry review hearing on April 7

The nine-judge Bench will examine seven specific legal questions, including the scope of religious freedom, the interplay between individual rights under Article 25 and the rights of religious denominations under Article 26, and whether these rights are subject to other constitutional provisions.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will begin hearing pleas in the Sabarimala review case on April 7, concerning the legality of women's entry into the Kerala hill shrine. The Bench has set March 14 as the deadline for parties to submit written arguments, with hearings scheduled to conclude by April 22.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi on Monday ordered that the reference be listed before a nine-judge bench, the composition of which will be notified by the CJI through an administrative order. The matter dates back to a September 2018 Supreme Court

verdict, which allowed women of all ages entry into Sabarimala, overturning a long-standing practice that barred women of menstruating age from the temple. The 2018 decision was made by a five-judge Constitution Bench with a 4:1 majority. Following this verdict, widespread protests erupted across

Kerala, resulting in several review petitions being filed by individuals and organisations before the Supreme Court.

In November 2019, the Supreme Court delivered its judgment on these review petitions without settling the issue. The Court indicated that broader legal questions regarding essential religious practices and constitutional rights required examination by a larger Bench.

The nine-judge Bench will examine seven specific legal questions, including the scope of religious freedom, the interplay between individual rights under Article 25 and the rights of religious denominations under Article 26, and whether these rights are subject to other constitutional provisions.



Don't politicise national security: Kiren Rijiju to Rahul Gandhi from China border

New Delhi.(Agency)

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday visited the India-China border near Bumla Pass in Arunachal Pradesh, where he slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his remarks on the Galwan Valley clash, saying matters of national security should not be politicised. The Y-Junction at Bumla was among the flashpoints during the 2020 standoff.

Speaking exclusively to India Today from the border, the Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister said Rahul Gandhi knows nothing about border issues and should educate himself before making remarks.

Rahul Gandhi in Parliament had cited excerpts from former Army Chief General MM Naravane's memoir to accuse the government of mishandling the Galwan standoff, claiming the book points to a "paralysis" in political leadership and alleging that the Prime Minister told the

General to "do what you think is right", effectively abdicating responsibility. The government strongly objected to the remarks and the use of the book, arguing that quoting from an unpublished work violates norms, harms national security, and is against the national interest. Gandhi was barred by the Speaker from mentioning the book.

Minister Rijiju, who has been hitting back at Gandhi since then, reiterated his position and said the matter concerned national security and the Congress leader should not have ventured into politicising it. "What is there to discuss about a book that has not even been published? We should not be talking about it. This is a matter of national

security, and we must approach it with seriousness. The country's security is a stage? He should study and learn a bit. He should have proper knowledge about the border," the minister said. On the

Opposition's notice to impeach Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rijiju said nothing would come of it and accused the Congress of trying to create an issue out of nowhere. "He (Rahul Gandhi) does not have the numbers to pass an impeachment motion. What will he impeach? It does not work like this. Such things do not happen in Parliament. They raise these matters only to create an issue, but nothing will happen," he said. Parliamentary Affairs Minister underscored that despite the Opposition's protests, which led to reduced working hours, the business of both Houses, particularly legislative.



Further escalating his attack, Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh, said Rahul Gandhi "doesn't know anything about the border". "That's why he is making such

NEWS BOX

'Biggest crime in the world': Shoaib Akhtar slams PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan after India defeat

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar launched a fierce attack on Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi after Pakistan's heavy 61-run loss to India in the T20 World Cup. Akhtar said Pakistan's current situation is the result of poor leadership and bad decisions over many years. Speaking to ABP News after the match, he criticised the PCB leadership, saying, "One guy who does not know anything has become the Pakistan Cricket Board's chairman. What can you do? How will the team run?" He also slammed the team's reliance on underperforming superstar players, saying, "You have made a superstar out of a player who cannot win you a game."

Akhtar added that poor appointments are a major problem, calling it "The biggest crime in the world is to give a particular job to incompetent people."

He even described Naqvi as "incompetent and 'jaahil'" and said he was not fit to lead the board. Akhtar also criticised Pakistan's performance, saying the team was far behind India and lacked modern-day cricket standards. He said Pakistan have failed to



invest in talent for years and can no longer compete with India at the highest level.

In the match, India scored 175/7 thanks to Ishan Kishan's 77 and useful contributions from Suryakumar Yadav and Shivaan Dube. Pakistan's chase collapsed early, falling to 13/3 in just two overs. Babar Azam was dismissed cheaply, and despite Usman Khan's 44, the team kept losing wickets regularly.

India's bowlers dominated, with Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, and Varun Chakravarthy sharing wickets as Pakistan were bowled out for 114 in 18 overs.

Has Babar Azam ever played a Kohli-esque knock? Irfan Pathan slams PAK batter

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan asked cricket fans to stop the comparisons between Virat Kohli and Babar Azam after the Pakistan batter suffered another failure during an IND vs PAK clash. Babar was dismissed for just five runs off 7 balls as India thrashed Pakistan in the T20 World Cup 2026 clash in Colombo.

IND vs PAK: Full Scorecard | Highlights

Babar has struggled against India in T20Is after his 68 in the 2021 edition of the T20 World Cup, registering scores of 10, 14, 0, 13 and 5. The Pakistan batter has now scored just 110 runs in six matches with an average of 22 and a strike-rate of 123.59. At the same time, Kohli has scored 492 runs in 11 matches against Pakistan, with an average of 70.28. This includes his heroic knock against the arch-rivals during the match in



MCG during the T20 World Cup 2022, where he helped India win from a tough spot. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Pathan pointed out the MCG knock from Kohli and asked if Babar has ever played such a knock under pressure and finished games for his side. And please, stop comparing Babar Azam with Virat Kohli. Virat Kohli is in a different league. Look at his innings against Pakistan in the 2022 World Cup — has Babar ever played such a knock under pressure? Apart from 2021, when he played a big role, how many times has Babar absorbed pressure and finished games like that?" said Pathan.

The Indian all-rounder felt that Babar should have focused on taking the game deep and playing singles and doubles rather than looking for a big shot. "With three wickets down, he should have batted till the 15th over, focused on singles and doubles, and played a long innings. Even a strike rate of 120 would have been acceptable given the scoreboard pressure."

T20 World Cup: Day 10 of the tournament features crucial clashes in Delhi, Kolkata and Pallekele as Afghanistan face UAE, England meet Italy and Australia take on Sri Lanka in matches that could shape the Super 8 race.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Day 10 of the T20 World Cup promises high drama as teams continue their push for coveted places in the Super 8. With the group stage entering a decisive phase, every result could significantly alter the points table and qualification scenarios. The action begins at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, where Rashid Khan's Afghanistan face Muhammad Waseem's United Arab Emirates. Afghanistan will start as favourites, but UAE have shown enough grit to threaten on their day. Attention then shifts to the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata, where England take on Italy. England will be eager



to secure their progression, while Italy aim to carry their momentum from the win against Nepal. The day concludes with a blockbuster clash at the Pallekele International Stadium as Australia meet Sri Lanka in what could prove decisive for both sides.

When and where to watch
Afghanistan vs UAE in Delhi in a Group D clash at 11 am IST

England vs Italy in Kolkata in a Group C match at 3 pm IST. Australia vs Sri Lanka in Pallekele in a Group B match at 7 pm IST. All matches will be telecast on Star Sports, with live streaming available on JioHotstar.

Here is a quick preview of the three games scheduled on Day 10 of the T20 World Cup.

MATCH 1 Prediction: Afghanistan vs UAE in Delhi

Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates face off in a crucial Group D encounter, with both teams seeking a defining result in their campaign. Afghanistan have endured a frustrating start, losing both of their opening matches. Their latest defeat was particularly painful, as they went down to South Africa in a rare double Super Over thriller, falling just short after pushing the contest to the limit — a result described as devastating by head coach Jonathon Trott.

The loss left Afghanistan winless and dented their net run rate, placing them in a precarious position in a tightly packed group. While their batting unit has shown flashes of promise, with Rahmanullah Gurbaz among those making meaningful contributions, they have struggled to deliver collectively in key moments. The UAE, meanwhile, enter the clash with renewed confidence following a five-wicket victory over Canada. Chasing 151, they recovered from 66 for four thanks to an 84-run partnership between Aryansh Sharma and Sohaib Khan, sealing the win with two balls remaining.

Earlier, Junaid Siddique's five-wicket haul had restricted Canada to 150 for seven, setting up the chase. Encouraged by that performance, UAE will look to build momentum and strengthen their qualification hopes.

Rohit Sharma hugs Pakistan legend Wasim Akram in Colombo

Colombo. (Agency)

Former India captain Rohit Sharma shared a warm moment with Pakistan pace legend Wasim Akram in Colombo ahead of the much-awaited India vs Pakistan clash on Sunday. The two were seen chatting, hugging and shaking hands during the pre-match ceremony, with the clip quickly going viral online.

Rohit was in Colombo in his role as a brand ambassador for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, and he made sure to soak in the build-up around cricket's biggest rivalry. He spent time around the Indian camp, greeting players and support staff with smiles and handshakes, looking every bit like a senior figure dropping in to wish the team well before the big night. The moment that stole the spotlight, though, was his interaction with Akram. Rohit and the Pakistan great had the duty of walking out with the T20 World Cup trophy ahead of the India vs Pakistan clash, alongside International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Sanjog Gupta. Before the routine ceremony at the R Premadasa Stadium, the two shared a friendly exchange, posed for photographs, and embraced, which drew mixed reactions from



fans online.

Why Rohit and Akram's hug caught the eye: The interaction stood out even more because it came against the backdrop of India continuing their no-handshake stance with the Pakistan team. At the toss, India captain Suryakumar Yadav once again did not take part in the customary greeting with Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha, in line with the policy the Indian side has followed since the Asia Cup. Amid the intensity of the match and its surrounding narratives, Rohit's moment with Akram offered a softer snapshot, the two icons from opposite sides of the border sharing a laugh and a hug around the trophy, while the stadium braced itself for another chapter of the rivalry.

India's C team will thrash Pakistan: Srikanth calls for end of greatest rivalry hype

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Kris Srikkanth has called for an end to the greatest rivalry hype between India and Pakistan after the result in the T20 World Cup 2026 tie on Sunday, February 15. Srikkanth said that the Indian C team is enough to thrash Pakistan after their meek surrender in the game in Colombo.

IND vs PAK: Full Scorecard | Highlights

India defeated Pakistan comprehensively by a margin of 61 runs in a game that was built up once again with a lot of hype and proved once again to be a one-sided affair. With this, India extended their record to 8-1 against Pakistan in T20 World Cups and qualified for the Super 8 stages of the tournament. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Srikkanth sympathised with the viewers for the lack of quality within the Pakistan side to put up a fight against India. The former India selector said that the hype around Shaheen Shah Afridi is over and Pakistan are struggling to find a good pacer at the moment. Srikkanth was extremely critical of the current batting

lineup, claiming that Pakistan shouldn't play T20Is if Babar Azam is their main batter. That Shaheen Afridi, all that boogeyman hype — finished, gone."

"Have you seen Pakistan like this live? The



likes of Waqar Younis, Imran Khan, Wasim Akram, after that so many — Aqib Javed, how many bowlers? Now they are struggling to get one fast bowler. Has cricket deteriorated so much in your country? In batting, there is not even one proper batter. If Babar Azam is your main match player, then leave it, you don't even need to play T20." "This is one of the worst

batting sides of Pakistan I have ever seen. I have seen the likes of Saeed Anwar, Inzamam-ul-Haq, before that Rameez Raja — what a batting team that was."

"Shall I tell the truth? India's fourth eleven will thrash them. They should say 'we are not available for main India team, India C team will play against you. You call us, we will come and beat you. India C team will beat them,' said Srikkanth.

WHO MAKES TOSS CALLS?

Throughout the show, Srikkanth said that Pakistan handed the game to India with their decision to bowl first. The former Indian opener said it was a ridiculous and question if it was a call from coach Mike Hesson or captain Salman Ali Agha.

"On this wicket, Salman Ali Agha went and won the toss and took fielding. From there itself, the match was done. Actually, it was a ridiculous decision. Who is making the decision? Is it Mike Hesson or Agha, I don't even know," said Srikkanth.

Pakistan have a lot to do if they're to qualify for the Super 8 stage after losing to India. They need to beat Namibia in their final group match to make it to the next phase.

There is little more pressure than a normal match: Axar on India vs Pakistan games

COLOMBO. (Agency)

All-rounder Axar Patel conceded that there is an extra layer of pressure around a cricket match between India and arch-foes Pakistan, but said the players try to remain steady-minded by staying away from outside talks about the intensity of the age-old rivalry. In the latest episode of the showdown between the two teams, India trounced Pakistan by 61 runs at the Premadasa Stadium here Sunday night to advance to the Super Eight stage of the ICC T20 World Cup. "Yes, there is pressure. People around you or your family or friends talk to you about it. So, yes, there is a little more pressure than a normal match," Axar said in the post-match press conference.

"As professional cricketers, we just focus on controlling our emotions. We don't think too much about the rivalry or put extra pressure on ourselves because of it," he added.

"We are seeing them as a team. So, we are not thinking about these rivalries etc. We are just focusing on cricket. So, whenever I am

playing, I treat it as one match against an opponent." Ishan Kishan played a sensational 40-ball 77 to lift India a competitive 175 for seven, and Axar lauded

to the New Zealand series and then in the last match also he scored 50. "So, when your confidence is high you don't think much about yourself or the wicket.

Obviously, there is confidence also and a lot of skill also. He has not hit all his shots in one place, he has played shots all over, over the cover, slip - so he used the field well. So I think credit goes to him," he detailed.

India's lopsided win did not do any justice to the match's billing as a battle between Men In Blue's batters and Pakistan's spin bowlers. Axar said the team was not focussing on such topics.

"We are focusing on our strengths and it's outside talk (India batting vs Pakistan spin). We are not thinking about that. We are just thinking about our plan and our execution when we are batting or bowling, we are just thinking about if we are bowling first or we are bowling second what we have to do? How the wicket was? All those things," he said.



the opener for playing a game-changing innings. Yeah, obviously the way he batted, I think one of the great knocks, because it was not so easy, the ball was spinning, some were going straight under light, so it was not easy. It's just that the form he has had in domestic cricket - he has carried it forward

Like Kohli in Melbourne, Ishan Kishan finds cricket's loneliest place in Colombo

T20 World Cup 2026: In Colombo against Pakistan, Ishan Kishan found cricket's loneliest place, the same space Virat Kohli once inhabited in Melbourne, but reached it through dominance rather than endurance.

CHENNAI. (Agency)

There is a moment, rare and fleeting, when nothing else reaches you. Not the crowd, not the noise, not the decades of geopolitics pressing in from the boundary. Thirty thousand people could be screaming, the game balanced on the edge of history, but the outside world simply blurs into irrelevance. Time slows. The ball leaves the hand and

feels larger, clearer, more obedient than it should. The pitch is turning square, but you see only straight lines. Decisions stop feeling like decisions. They become instinct.

Batters call it being in the zone, but that phrase misses its profound isolation. It is a quiet severing from everything that is not leather and seam. Four years ago, Virat Kohli found that silence on a cold night at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. On Sunday, Ishan Kishan found it in Colombo, on a surface that resisted every certainty except his own, against Pakistan, who appeared to have a plan until he showed them they did not.

If Kohli's MCG special was a Shakespearean tragedy-turned triumph, Kishan's 77 was John Wick. Fast, clinical, and unapologetically violent. Both belonged to that transcendental space where the outside world ceases to matter. But while one felt like salvation, the other felt like execution.

IN THE ZONE
On a Colombo surface that gripped and turned,

Kishan produced an innings that refused to acknowledge its difficulty.

Pakistan had loaded their XI with spin. Off-spin, leg-spin, left-arm spin, and even



mystery spinner Suryakumar Yadav admitted was "out-of-the-syllabus" on the eve of the match. Yet none of it mattered to Kishan. He struck 77 off 40 deliveries, at

193, on a pitch where everyone else seemed bound by its terms. Even India's best players of spin, Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav, moved at nearly run-a-ball, respectful of its resistance. Kishan moved at nearly twice their speed, as if he alone had solved its resistance. The dismissal of Abhishek Sharma in the first over should have set the tone. Salman Ali Agha, Pakistan's captain and off-spinner, showed immediately that the pitch was a bowler's ally. At that stage, there was tension. "When the match started, and Salman Agha got a wicket of Abhishek Sharma in the first over itself, I thought umm... this could be something different," Sunil Gavaskar told IndiaToday.in. India were 1 for 1. Jolted.

You could feel it too, couldn't you? That brief flicker of doubt. That quiet, uneasy "umm" forming before the mind could articulate it.

The next over. Shaheen Afridi, new ball in hand, Colombo heavy with expectation. Pakistan sensed vulnerability. The pitch seemed ready to enforce it.

Govt launches CBDC-based Digital Food Coupon: How can Beneficiaries redeem entitled quantity of foodgrains Explained

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Government of India has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Digital Food Currency pilot in Gujarat.

The initiative has been launched by the Government of India in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India and the Government of Gujarat under the Public Distribution System in Ahmedabad, Anand, Valsad and Surat districts. As part of its scale-up strategy, subsequent phases will extend to the Union Territories of Puducherry, Chandigarh, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Under the CBDC framework, digital coupons generated through the Reserve Bank of India will be credited directly to beneficiaries as programmable digital currency (e?). Beneficiaries can redeem their entitled quantity of foodgrains at Fair Price Shops (FPS) using CBDC coupon or voucher codes.

The system will address challenges related to biometric authentication and e-POS operational issues while ensuring secure, traceable and real-time transactions.

Under the CBDC-enabled system, beneficiaries' digital wallets will carry programmable Digital Rupee, enabling seamless QR code-based or coupon code-based transactions at Fair Price Shops for purchase of entitled foodgrains. The system eliminates repeated biometric authentication, improves transaction efficiency, and generates a real-time digital trail, thereby enhancing transparency, monitoring and accountability. Fair Price Shop dealers will also receive their margins on a real-time basis, creating a mutually beneficial ecosystem. Over the past several years, the Department of Food and Public Distribution has undertaken extensive digital transformation of India's food security ecosystem.

Using old tax regime Here's how draft income tax rules 2026 could help you save more

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government's draft income tax rules for 2026 appear to offer a small but meaningful lift to taxpayers who prefer the old tax regime. While the new regime has been in focus in recent years, these proposed tweaks make the traditional structure a bit more attractive, especially for salaried employees with common allowances.

At first glance, the changes may look technical. But in practice, they could help many working families save a little more tax through higher exemption limits on everyday benefits.

HIGHER HRA RELIEF FOR MORE CITIES

One of the biggest proposed changes relates to House Rent Allowance. Cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Ahmedabad may now be treated on par with major metros for HRA calculation. This means employees living in these cities could claim up to 50% of their basic salary for HRA exemption, instead of the lower limit that applied earlier. Here, it must be mentioned that 50% HRA exemption is currently only for metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata. For people paying high rents in fast-growing urban centres, this revision recognises the reality that housing costs are no longer limited to just a handful of metro cities. A higher HRA exemption can directly reduce taxable income for many salaried workers.

BIGGER TAX-FREE WINDOW FOR EMPLOYER GIFTS

Another welcome change is the higher exemption on gifts given by employers. The proposed rules raise the tax-free limit to Rs 15,000 in a financial year, up from the earlier Rs 5,000.

Rupee slips 1 paisa to 90.67 against US dollar in early session

New Delhi.(Agency)

The rupee slipped by 1 paisa to 90.67 against the US dollar in the early session on Monday amid FII outflows and a stronger greenback. A marginal rise in global crude oil prices and a sharp decline in the country's forex reserves also weighed on the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened higher at 90.63 before falling to 90.67 against the US dollar, down 1 paisa from its previous close. The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled 5 paise lower at 90.66 against the US dollar on Friday. "The rupee opened slightly stronger from Friday close and should remain in a small range on a day when cash demand will be lower due to US Presidential Day holiday," Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said. Markets will watch out for India's trade balance figures, which could be released by the commerce ministry on Monday, he said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent higher at 96.93. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.04 per cent higher at USD 67.78 per barrel in futures trade. At the domestic equity markets, Sensex declined 71.53 points to 82,555.23 in early trade while Nifty was down 11.95 points to 25,459.15. On Friday, foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 7,395.41 crore, according to exchange data. Reserve Bank data released on Friday showed India's forex reserves were down USD 6.711 billion to USD 717,064 billion during the week ended February 6.

Startup founder claims his company lost Rs 2 lakh after hiring candidate who faked his salary, experience

Giving a breakdown of the cost, the startup founder said, his office spent Rs 1.35L on the employee's salary for 3 months, Rs 40K on training and Rs 25K on replacement hire.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A startup founder has claimed that his company lost Rs 2 lakhs after hiring a candidate who made false statements on his resume.

Ashutosh Gupta, Chief Business Officer at Paper Media said on LinkedIn that the company did not perform background verification of candidates earlier as it was smaller. During that time, they hired candidates based on interviews and intuition. One such applicant was Chirag who exuded confidence and experience and claimed to be earning Rs 40K in his last job. Thus, the office offered him a Rs 45K salary. Gupta said that in two months something happened that raised concern about Chirag. The office had assigned the employee a reaction video edit which he

took two days to complete and the output was unsatisfactory. Gupta said that Chirag's claim of 3 years of experience and Rs 40K salary in the last job did not match the task he performed. When Gupta's office contacted Chirag's former employer for verification, they discovered that he was earning Rs 25K instead of Rs 40K. He had also not resigned but was fired for poor performance. Gupta said that the office spent Rs 1.35L on Chirag's salary for 3 months, Rs 40K on training and Rs 25K on replacement hire. The company suffered a total loss of Rs 2 lakhs, Gupta said. Gupta said that after Chirag's incident, background verification has been made compulsory for all new hires. The process now includes email and phone calls to the previous employer's office, LinkedIn check and salary slip verification.

Gupta advised offices that are hiring new employees to start background verification. He said that although his company learnt its lesson after losing Rs 2 lakhs, others should not wait and start



verification at the first stage. **Netizens Reactions**

Several users have commented on the post with some saying that there should be better managers who can assess the skills

Massive fraud at Bengaluru Indian Bank branch -- Assistant Manager steals 2.7 kg gold worth Rs 4 crore

New Delhi.(Agency)

A massive bank fraud has been uncovered in Indian Bank branch in Bengaluru. The assistant manager of Indian Bank has allegedly stolen customers' gold weighing approximately 2.7 kg and worth Rs 4 crore from their lockers and using them to fund online betting and gambling.

The 34-year-old assistant manager named Kiran Kumar allegedly had access to locker keys and when the branch manager was absent, he would gradually misplace small amounts of gold over a period of time. Kumar has been arrested by Bengaluru police in connection with siphoned off of ornaments from the bank. The case was first reported on January 2. It came to limelight when customers visited the branch withdraw their ornaments.

Locker verification showed discrepancies, which led to detailed enquiry and inspection. It was later revealed that the jewellery items were



missing from 21 packets partially, while it completely missing from three items. In a related news, a massive bank fraud was uncovered in State Bank of India (SBI) Chennur branch in Telangana district in August last year.

The cashier of SBI Chennur branch in Telangana's Mancherial district has allegedly misappropriated funds of customers to the tune of over Rs 14 crore. As per media reports, an audit conducted on August 21 and 22 found the massive misappropriation of assets and cash in the SBI branch. The cashier of the branch has allegedly siphoned off 20 kg of gold ornaments (worth Rs 13 crore) and Rs 1.1 crore in cash.

The accused, who is the cashier of the branch, reportedly made plans regarding the scam over last 10 months before finally implementing his plan. He allegedly made secret accounts of his family members and relatives to transfer the funds and golds from the account of SBI genuine customers.

RBI move hits Dalal Street stocks: BSE, Groww fall up to 10%. Here's why

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of capital market companies such as BSE, Angel One and Groww fell between 2% and 10% on February 16 after the Reserve Bank of India tightened rules for bank lending to stock brokers and other capital market intermediaries. The selling pressure came after the RBI issued a revised circular on February 13 under its amended RBI (Commercial Banks - Credit Facilities) Directions. The new rules change how banks can lend to entities involved in the capital markets. At 10:15 am on February 16, the Nifty Capital Markets index was trading nearly 2% lower. Shares of Angel One were down 4%, while Groww fell 3.5%. Other capital market stocks also traded in the red, with declines ranging from 2% to 10%. The new framework tightens banks' exposure to capital market intermediaries. One of the key changes is related to proprietary trading.

The circular states, "Banks shall not provide finance to a CMI for acquisition of securities on its own account, including for proprietary trading or investments". This means banks cannot fund brokers or other capital market intermediaries to buy securities for their own trading books, except for limited market-making activities.

Under the revised norms, brokers will now have to provide full collateral against loans taken for proprietary trading. Most exposures must be backed by 100% collateral. A large part of this collateral must be in cash. The RBI has also raised collateral requirements for bank guarantees issued to capital market participants.

WHY THE MARKET REACTED Brokerages and exchange operators are expected to face higher costs because of the stricter rules. According to Jefferies, BSE is likely to be among the most affected. The brokerage said the new regulations on proprietary trading could lead to a 10% impact on BSE's earnings. Proprietary trading involves using a company's own funds to trade in the market. This activity plays a large

role in India's derivatives segment. Jefferies said proprietary trading accounts for 50% of equity options premium turnover. Devarsh Vakil, head of prime research at HDFC Securities, said proprietary trading drives around 40% of futures and options turnover. Vakil said the RBI's new circular tightens banks' capital market exposures and will raise costs for brokers and proprietary desks. He said this would curb leverage and liquidity in derivatives.

ROLE OF PROPRIETARY AND ARBITRAGE DESKS

Industry participants said the RBI's intent to safeguard the banking system is understandable. However, they argued that a blanket approach could disrupt core liquidity functions performed by proprietary and arbitrage desks.

These desks play a key role in cash-futures arbitrage, options market making and index arbitrage. These are low-margin and high-volume strategies that help narrow spreads and improve price discovery in the market.

Why Mumbai remains India's top luxury housing hub

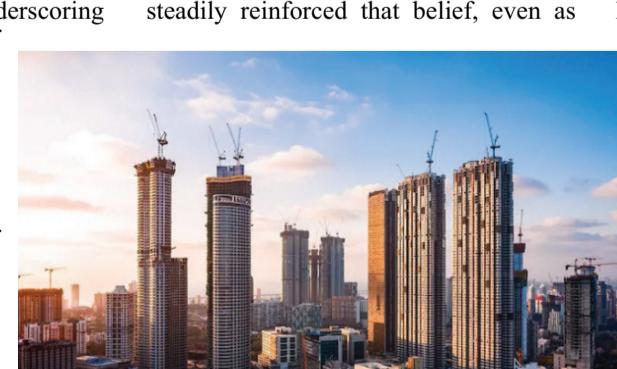
The global recognition Mumbai is receiving today is best understood as validation rather than arrival. International research now ranks the city among the world's fastest-growing luxury housing markets, reflecting sustained price appreciation at the very top end.

New Delhi.(Agency) Mumbai has always been a city that rewards patience. Its luxury housing market is no exception. What we are seeing today is the natural outcome of years of steady evolution, a phase where Mumbai's prime residential landscape is being viewed, quite rightly, alongside the world's leading luxury markets. This is not a moment driven by hype or short-term exuberance, but one shaped by consistency, confidence and long-term value creation. The global recognition Mumbai is receiving today is best understood as validation rather than arrival. International research now ranks the city among the world's fastest-growing luxury housing markets, reflecting sustained price appreciation at the very top end.

That dominance has only intensified into 2025, with India's ultra-wealthy spending more than Rs 7,186 crore on just 51 ultra-luxury homes, of which Mumbai accounted for 35 deals worth around Rs 5,128 crore, reinforcing its primacy in high-net-worth residential demand. Mumbai's luxury segment continues to reach new heights in 2025. In the first half of the year alone, homes priced above Rs 10 crore recorded sales of Rs 14,750 crore, the highest half-yearly total ever, an 11% increase over the same period in 2024. Around 692 luxury units were sold in H1 2025, with strong growth in micro-markets such as Prabhadevi, Bandra West and Tardeo. Combined with H2 2024,

total luxury home transactions over the last 12 months reached roughly Rs 28,750 crore, another all-time high.

Luxury housing, by definition, does not respond to fleeting sentiment. It responds to belief—belief in the city's economic relevance, its institutional strength, and the enduring value of its land. Mumbai has steadily reinforced that belief, even as



global markets have moved through uncertainty. This is why the city's prime residential micro-markets continue to attract patient, and purposeful capital.

One of Mumbai's greatest strengths is that its luxury market has always been anchored in location-led fundamentals. The most sought-after homes are not scattered across the city; they are

concentrated in neighbourhoods where infrastructure, accessibility and social capital have matured over decades. South Mumbai embodies this advantage. Its relevance has endured not because it has constantly reinvented itself, but because it has remained central to the city's economic, cultural and institutional life.

In a market where land availability is

permanently constrained, such locations offer a level of certainty that few others can replicate. Within these established zones, a subtle yet

important evolution is underway.

Pockets like Tardeo are drawing

renewed attention from buyers who understand the nuances of the market. This is not interest-driven

by novelty but by discernment.

Buyers here are looking for well-planned homes that offer privacy, manageable density and seamless connectivity, while remaining close

to the city's core. The demand is selective

and predominantly end-user driven, a critical factor that lends durability to the

luxury segment.

Globally, cities that sustain strong luxury housing markets over decades tend to share common traits such as limited prime supply, deep pools of private wealth, and a role as long-term economic anchors.

Rashmika Mandanna

Calls Chhaava 'Special Film' Shares
BTS Glimpse Featuring Vicky Kaushal

Rashmika Mandanna and Vicky Kaushal's historical drama Chhaava has completed one year and actors were seen celebrating this special occasion. The actress shared some BTS moments and called it a "special film". Chhaava is a historical action film based on the life of Sambhaji Maharaj, the second ruler of the Maratha Empire. An adaptation of the Marathi novel Chhava by Shivaji Sawant, it is directed by Laxman Utekar and produced by Dinesh V Jain under Maddock Films. Taking to her Instagram handle, Rashmika Mandanna shared photos and celebrated first year of the release. "Going down memory lane today... What a special film this was. Truly truly grateful! So much love to Dino sir, @laxman.utekar sir, @vickykaushal09 and the entire @maddockfilms family. THANK YOU!" read the caption. Fans also reacted with heart emojis.



Vicky also took a walk down memory lane and shared some BTS moments from the set. The pictures feature Rashmika, Vineet Kumar Singh, Ashutosh Rana and the captain of the ship, Laxman Utekar. Vicky's portrayal of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj left the audience stunned. He outperformed in the film, which focuses on the life, bravery, and martyrdom of the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, highlighting his resistance against the Mughal Empire. Vicky wrote, "#1YearOfChhaava I bow my head in gratitude to the great Maratha legacy and to all of you for celebrating it with us. Your love has truly been very special! जय भवानी | जय शिवराय." Chhaava led the way, dominating box office receipts and becoming the highest-grossing Bollywood film of 2025. A plethora of surprise blockbusters and established franchises followed the film, which perfectly reflected the wide-ranging tastes of Indian moviegoers. Raked in more than Rs 615.39 crore in India to top the year's box office list unchallenged. A historical epic that won praise for its grandeur, narrative, and the in-depth acting of the lead cast, Vicky Kaushal.

Rashmika Mandanna And Vicky Kaushal's work front

Vicky is currently busy shooting for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love & War. The film also stars Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt in the lead roles. It is one of the most awaited films of 2026. As of now, it is slated to hit theatres in August. Apart from this, he has the mythological epic Mahavat. Directed by Amar Kaushik, the film will see Vicky playing Chiranjeevi Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Lord Vishnu.

'I Am Proud Of Her'

Sunny Leone

Backs Mouni Roy Following Karnal Harassment Incident

Mouni Roy recently took to her Instagram to share a horrifying incident where a group of men harassed her during a live event performance. Now, days after Mouni voiced these concerns, Sunny Leone, who herself has attended many events, has come out in support of the actress.

Speaking to HT, Sunny Leone lent her support to Mouni and, while sharing that she can resonate with her feelings, said, "Maybe those people were a lot closer to her, and I am glad she spoke up. I am proud of her for taking that stand, that it's not okay, as it's not. I think in the US, it was happening with a lot of artistes on stage, and they got extremely angry with that behaviour. I am happy Mouni did this."

Sunny further, while sharing her experience, said, "I haven't gone through something like what she has, and if anything is happening in my surroundings during my performance, I don't even notice that. I am usually in my own world when I am performing. It's just seven to eight minutes of my life, so I just go on stage, perform, and then I am out. I am not paying attention to what's happening."

Earlier, Mouni Roy took to Instagram to speak about what she described as unacceptable behaviour by members of the audience during an event in Karnal, Haryana. She alleged that she was harassed despite repeatedly objecting. Taking to Instagram, Mouni shared, "Had an event in

Karnal last night, and I'm disgusted with the behaviour of the guests, especially two uncles who are well-aged to be grandparents. As the event started and I walked towards the stage, uncles and family members (all men) put their hands on my waist to click pictures (sic)."

She went on to describe how the situation worsened once she was on stage. Revealing how two men in



the front row behaved, she said, "On stage is an even better story. Two uncles stood right in front, making lewd remarks, showing me lewd hand gestures, and name-calling. I realised that and first politely gestured to them not to do it, to which they started throwing roses at me. It was then that, mid-performance, I walked towards the stage exit but immediately came back to finish my performance. They didn't stop even after that, and no family or organisers moved them from up front."



Tu Yaa Main Box Office Day 2: Shanaya Kapoor and Adarsh Gourav's Film Struggles, Earns Rs 1.69 Crore



When a film blends romance with creature horror, you expect curiosity at the ticket window. But Tu Yaa Main box office collection Day 2 numbers suggest that curiosity hasn't yet translated into footfall. The Bejoy Nambiar directorial saw only a slight jump on Saturday after a slow start on Friday. According to Sacnilk.com, the Shanaya Kapoor and Adarsh Gourav-starrer earned Rs 1.09 crore nett in India on Saturday, taking the total to Rs 1.69 crore in two days.

Day-wise breakdown

Tu Yaa Main opened to Rs 60 lakh on Friday. On Saturday, it showed marginal growth, collecting Rs 1.09 crore as per early estimates. The film reportedly had 1186 shows with an average occupancy of 16.8 per cent. Despite the weekend boost, the overall numbers remain modest, putting pressure on Sunday collections to stabilise the film's theatrical run.

What the film is about

Tu Yaa Main follows two social media influencers whose romantic trip turns into a survival nightmare. Shanaya Kapoor plays Avani, aka Miss Vanity, while Adarsh Gourav essays Maruti, also known as Aala Flowpara. Their getaway spirals out of control when they find themselves trapped in a swimming pool with a crocodile.

The film attempts to mix romance, tension and creature horror into one narrative, banking on its unusual premise.

Review and word of mouth

News18 Showsha rated the film 3.5 stars. An excerpt from the review read, "Watch Tu Yaa Main for its freshness. It may test your patience before it tests your nerves but it dares to blend romance and creature horror into one experience, and that almost works. The film, however, slightly falters at its closing frame. After investing heavily in prolonged tension and emotional build-up, Tu Yaa Main opts for an ending that feels rushed, leaving a few questions unanswered. But all said and done, it is Bejoy's willingness to take risks that gives the film its distinct identity."

Engaged Season 2: Jiya Shankar Says Her Partner Is A Virgo; Elvish Yadav Reacts 'Kahi Main Hi Toh Nahi?'



Elvish Yadav and Jiya Shankar are stepping into Valentine's Day with a dose of romance, drama and a whole lot of speculation as they co-host Engaged Season 2, which premiered on February 14, 2026. But while the show promises relationship conversations and emotional twists, it was their off-screen banter that truly grabbed attention.

Compatibility Challenge Turns Competitive

In a Valentine's Day special interaction with Free Press Journal, the duo participated in a playful compatibility challenge to test how well they know each other. While fans expected sparks to fly, what followed was a revelation — Jiya clearly knew Elvish far better than he knew her. She answered most of the questions correctly, emerging as the undisputed winner of the round.

During the candid conversation, Jiya casually mentioned that her current partner is a Virgo. That was enough for Elvish to jump in with a cheeky, "Kahi ye main hi to nahi," instantly reigniting dating rumours that have been floating around them for months. Social media had already been buzzing with speculation about their relationship, especially after promotional material hinted at something more than just friendship. However, as it turns out, reality and marketing don't always align.

Beach vs Mountains: Old Preferences Resurface

One of the lighter moments during the challenge came when they were asked whether Jiya prefers beaches or mountains. Jiya confidently picked beaches, but Elvish disagreed, insisting she has always been a mountain person. Adding fuel to the playful exchange, he quipped, "Tum beach person ban gaye ho ab? Jab pehle hum saath the to yeh mountain mountain karti thi." His comment instantly sparked reactions, hinting at shared memories and giving fans more reason to speculate. Jiya laughed it off, admitting her preferences have changed recently. However, when asked a more serious question about marriage, both gave the same answer. They agreed that Jiya would marry for love — not comfort — bringing a moment of sincerity amid the teasing.



From splashing colours to going natural -- you can use your creativity to make your child's room a true fairyland.

Get your creative best for your

Child's room

Induce creativity:

Your bundle of joy needs to be gently nudged into a world of imagination and wonder. Grab his or her interest in all things creative and stimulating by infusing an element of magic, fantasy and popular kids' literature into their rooms. Think of bedsheet and pillows with cartoon characters, wall motifs



that make them want to read fairytales and wall decals with famous animated movie figures.

Splash colours:

Most parents understand that a child's room must exude bright happiness in terms of the colour scheme. Yet many desist from undertaking the project of altering the way the room looks. This is because the traditional belief is that to spruce up the room, one has to invest in recolouring the walls. However, this isn't true. In fact, most contemporary designers believe that it's better to have the walls painted in a sober shade and splash vibrancy in other ways through upholstery, accessories, exuberant rugs, beanbags and lots of visually pleasing books.

Go natural:

Children love the outdoors and nature, and if you don't want them to end up as couch potatoes once they grow up a little, it will be

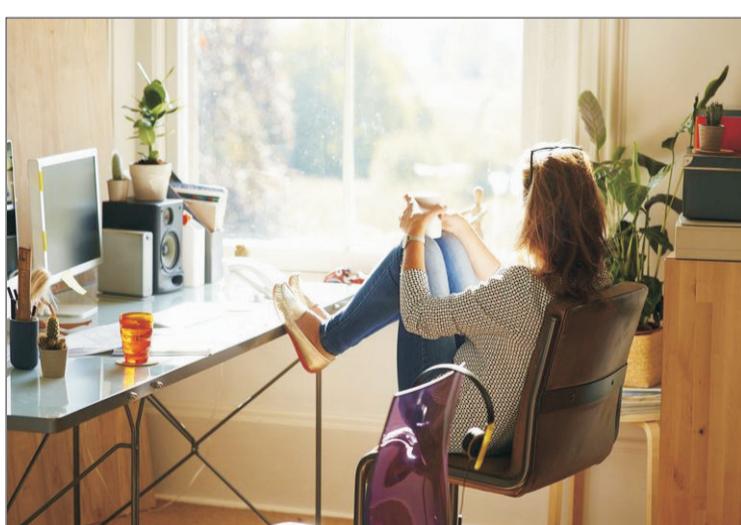
best to encourage this feeling of oneness with all things natural. Boost their love for the wild by cleverly infusing quirky elements into their abode. Wallpapers that represent forests or mountains and ceilings with stars that shine in the dark usually work well. Wooden furniture and flooring best complement such a theme.

Create space:

When designing an interior scheme for your baby's room, it's essential to keep in mind that he or she needs a lot of space. If you have one room for two children, a bunk bed is a great idea. Not only do children find it cool and fun, it also makes way for an activity area. Just spread a funky carpet, scatter a few toys here and there and the perfect playroom is ready. Your little princess can also lay her Barbie set here and delve into her beautiful world of fantasy.



When it comes to locating plots, buildings, orienting homes, placing decor and even planning gardens the first thing which would come to our mind is unhindered flow of energy and a feel good factor.



This is quite possible when we plan our home keeping in mind some important tenets of Feng Shui in terms of decor, alignment and design.

The adaptation could extend beyond the framework of building design as it can be used to enhance the interiors, furnishing, decor and other aspects of the design elements in a space.

A simple approach to Feng Shui would be in terms of providing the right plot levels, set backs, proper layout and allocation of rooms. How do we go about this? The basic understanding to allocate rooms in the right

Designing homes the Feng Shui Way

sectors is a step after getting to know the interpretation of the magnetic fields and compass directions. Presuming that one has got to know the axis of the plot and located the cardinal magnetic directions, it becomes a lot easier to design a home as per Feng Shui tenets.

Some of the very generic rules in Feng Shui home design are:-

Main door: The main door should be the largest door in the home and the door should not open into a kitchen area. Moreover the position of the main door is critical and would vary depending upon the direction and axis of the plot, however doors right on the cardinal directions are considered bad

positioning.

Kitchen: What we eat, where we eat and how we eat are all part of the science of health and vitality; hence kitchen location is vital to the overall harmony of the home. Kitchen as many elements which operate in tandem or could be conflicting like water, fire (stove /electricity), metal (utensils) etc. In addition locating the stove and sink is of great importance so having the water body away from the fire is quite important.

Master bedroom: This is one of the most important rooms in a home. It is said that deep

sleep is when we reunite with the source, hence if we sleep deeply we awaken refreshed ready for the new day. Quality of sleep is far more important than the length of time. Certain locations are more conducive to peaceful sleep than others. Using wooden bed/cot is preferred as wood is benign and warm as against metal beds, which are cold and oppressive, and metal is said to be associated with the planet Saturn.

Living room: This room is the sanctuary for relaxation. Feng Shui treatises says that the centre portion or the 'tai chi' of the house is not conducive for major activities as it receives least amount of cosmic energy, hence it is beneficial if a major portion of the living room occupies the central zone of the building. Remember to orient your sofas and heavy furniture such that they occupy the south and west sectors of the room and avoid furniture or blockages at the northeast sector of the room which is the knowledge sector.

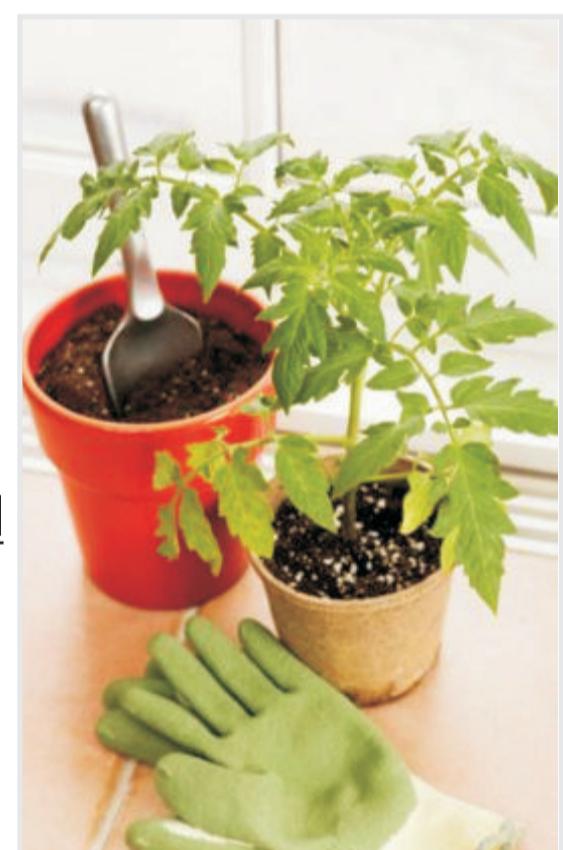
Toilets: In the earlier days the toilets were away from the main house and later they were made 'en-suite' or attached. Toilets should not be too close to kitchen as the food energy and toilet energies are incompatible.

Feng Shui reminds us of the basic relationship between earth, man and cosmos. By adapting these principles our lives, we can create a healthy environment with harmonious living and working environment.



Create a container Garden in your home

A container garden is a great way to utilise the space in your house and also add greenery. This is how you can do it...



Map the area where you want to make the garden

Since this type of a garden can make your home look cluttered, always select one specific area in your house where you would like to have it. This can be a space, either in your living area, your balcony or a place in your dining room. Go for plants that can sustain for a long duration

Mostly built indoors, choose plants that can survive with minimum or no sunlight for days at end. However, you must remember to water them from time to time, so that they remain fresh.

Go for bright blooms

Instead of going in only for green plants, you can also opt for flowers in bright colours — marigolds, lilies, etc



are good options. They not only add to the beauty of the room, but also lend a calming effect. Make sure you choose flowering plants that are not seasonal.

Do not opt for too many planters

Build the garden in such a way that it does not overpower your room. Since you also have to maintain uniformity, having about three to four planters placed side by side will make the garden look complete. This will also lend a neat look to your room and the plants will have enough breathing space.

Place them on faux grass

To give the garden a more authentic look, you can have the planters placed on fake grass. If you are planning to do this in your bedroom, make sure that you choose an area (possibly near the windows, so that your plants can get sunlight). You can alternatively also use pebbles for non-flowering plants that need less water to keep them clean.