

PM compromised, will surrender again: Congress renews attack over US tariff chaos

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being "compromised", alleging that the trade deal exposed India to unfair concessions, after US President Donald Trump said the India-US trade deal would remain unchanged despite the court ruling striking down key tariff powers.

New Delhi.(Agency) After the US Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's global tariffs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being "compromised", saying his "betrayal" in the India-US interim trade deal stood exposed.

to protect his "fragile image" and waited just 18 days more, Indian farmers would have been saved from the agony and distress, and Indian sovereignty would have been protected.



respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal between the United States and India", the Congress leader said.

deal in the night of February 2...?" Ramesh asked. "What had happened in the Lok Sabha that afternoon that had compelled Mr. Modi to get so desperate and reach out to his good friend in the White House to create a diversion?"

RSS Not Seeking Power, Focused On Uniting Hindu Society: Mohan Bhagwat

Interacting with around 950 national and international sportspersons at Madhav Kunj in Shatabdi Nagar here, Bhagwat emphasised the importance of social unity and said the organisation does not work in opposition to or competition with any particular group.

New Delhi.(Agency) RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is not driven by any desire for political power and is solely committed to organising the entire Hindu society and fostering character-building among individuals.

entire Hindu society and character-building of individuals," one of the participants told reporters, quoting Bhagwat.Explaining the idea of India, diversity rather than caste, adding that while modes of worship and deities may differ, the cultural foundation is harmony and unity.

The RSS chief also outlined four pillars of society -- value inculcation, Sanatan culture, spirit of dharma and embodiment of truth -- and reiterated that the Sangh's mission is to organise the entire Hindu society through individual development.



Criticism against me rooted in caste prejudice, says Siddu

Bengaluru.(Agency) Marking the World Social Justice Day, CM Siddaramaiah on Friday alleged that sustained criticism and personal attacks against him are rooted in caste prejudice and unease among entrenched elites over his rise from an underprivileged backward-class background to the state's highest office.

welfare-driven governance. He pointed to landmark legislation aimed at institutionalising equity beyond political cycles. These included the Karnataka Scheduled Castes Sub-Allocation and Scheduled Tribes Sub-Allocation Act, 2013, which mandates earmarking resources in proportion to the population share of SCs and STs.



Like a ping-pong ball...: DMK cries vendetta over ED case against minister

The political temperature has risen in Tamil Nadu ahead of elections over an ED case against senior minister KN Nehru, who has been accused of bribery. The DMK has mounted a strong defence, calling it 'political jealousy'.

New Delhi.(Agency) The DMK accused the BJP of carrying out "political vendetta" on the advice of AIADMK chief Edappadi Palaniswami against senior Tamil Nadu minister KN Nehru, who faces ED charges in a Rs 630 crore cash-for-jobs case.

Bhagwant Mann Govt's Shikhya Kranti Delivers Historic Results as 305 Govt School Students Qualify JEE Mains: Harjot Singh Bains

CHANDIGARH, February 21: In a major boost to the Punjab Government's education reforms under Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, as many as 305 students from Punjab Government Schools have qualified in the first attempt of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains 2026, registering a remarkable 63 percent increase over last year's 187 successful candidates.

week residential training camp to prepare the qualified students for JEE Advance, ensuring they receive focused guidance for the next stage. "This feat marks a moment of immense pride for our entire school education department.

icant milestone in just one year is a testament to the transformative power of our Punjab Shikhya Kranti initiative. We are committed to further accelerating our progress," said Harjot Singh Bains.



shop and his mother works as a tailor. "Despite financial constraints, his determination to pursue engineering and uplift his family remained unshaken. With strong school support and disciplined preparation, he achieved outstanding success," he said.

Amit Shah at Assam border village: Will send back every infiltrator

Shah is in Assam for a two-day visit, and began his programmes in Southern Assam's Barak Valley, where Cachar is located.

Assam.(Agency) Union Home Minister Amit Shah formally launched the second phase of the central government's Vibrant Villages programme in a village on the Indo-Bangladesh border in Assam's Cachar district on Friday.

decided that border villages are not the last villages but India's first villages. And because of this, this village of ours too is going to be a first village," he said, addressing a gathering at the village.



along the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The second phase that was launched on Friday, with a total outlay of Rs 6839 crore till the financial year

2028-2029, aims to cover a total of 1,954 villages in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, J&K, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, Shah said.

News box

949 fined for flouting lane rules in 19 days in Gurgaon

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Police fined 949 commuters for flouting lane rule violations during a special drive this month. A fine of Rs 8 lakh was imposed on offenders during the 19-day drive that lasted bet Feb 1 and Feb 19. According to police, teams were deployed across key stretches of the city to monitor vehicles not adhering to designated lanes. Officers said wrong-lane driving and abrupt lane changes are among the major causes of road accidents, posing risks to both motorists and pedestrians. Officers focused on ensuring compliance with lane markings, which are designed to streamline traffic flow. As per norms, the leftmost lane is meant for heavy vehicles, the middle lane for light vehicles, and the right lane for overtaking. Police said the objective of the campaign was to make traffic movement in the city more organised and smooth and to enhance road safety. Police challaned 75,280 motorists for improper lane changes last year. In Jan this year, 3,555 violators were challaned for lane-change violations. A traffic official said that in Jan, a total of 1,31,423 challans were issued for various traffic violations across the city. "A fine of Rs 500 is levied for the lane-change violation for the first time, but if it is repeated, the violator has to pay Rs 1,500 each time," a traffic cop said. In addition to penal action, the department also conducted awareness programmes and workshops for truck union representatives, company drivers, bus and school bus drivers, and auto-rickshaw drivers to sensitise them about the importance of traffic rules. Officials said similar special drives will continue in the coming days to ensure stricter compliance and safer roads across Gurgaon.

Gurgaon civic body to set up zone-level safai monitoring cells

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG has decided to set up a sanitation monitoring cell in each of the city's zones. The cells will be led by joint commissioners, who will ensure daily monitoring of sanitation work in their area. The decision was taken at a review meeting chaired by MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya on Friday. "The cells will conduct surveys to assess the status of sanitation in their areas. They will regularly monitor the attendance of sanitation workers, their working methods and if deployment of sanitation vehicles is being made as per needs," Dahiya said, adding that the work of assistant sanitary inspectors will also be reviewed to fix



accountability at the field level and improve performance. Further, the cell will ensure timely removal of waste from garbage vulnerable points across the city. "Garbage should not be left unattended for long, as it affects cleanliness and public health. The cell will check if the work is being carried out as per prescribed standards," Dahiya said. The cell will also ensure complaints received from residents are addressed promptly, and action taken against littering, illegal dumping and violations of cleanliness rules. "With the formation of the cell, there will be improvement in the cleanliness system, regular review of works will happen and citizens will get better services," the civic chief said. At the meeting, officials were directed to implement the system with immediate effect and submit daily progress reports.

Rs 15 lakh gold jewellery sold in scrap, Faridabad dealer returns 'lost treasure' months later

Gurgaon.(Agency)

In a rare display of integrity, a scrap dealer in Faridabad returned nearly 100 grams (around 10 tolas) of gold jewellery worth approximately ₹15 lakh to a family six months after they had unknowingly sold it as scrap. The incident pertains to Ashok Sharma and his family, who had stored their gold ornaments in a small box placed inside a sack at their residence before leaving for the Kumbh Mela in January last year, in an attempt to safeguard the valuables from theft. However, during Diwali cleaning, the sack was inadvertently disposed of and sold as household scrap to a local scrap trader, Haji Akhtar Khan. The family realised the ornaments were missing only while preparing for the Diwali puja and subsequently began searching for them. They approached the scrap dealer two to three times over the following months, but the jewellery could not be traced at that time. Explaining the sequence of events, Haji Akhtar Khan said, "They brought the scrap six months ago and sold it. At that time, we did not notice anything unusual. After about two months, they returned and informed us that some of their gold jewellery might have been in the scrap. I told them to look for it, but if they had come within 20 days or a month, we could have checked the CCTV footage. By then, too much time had passed and nothing was found." He further stated, "Day before yesterday, while examining some scrap material, I found a plastic packet. Someone might have kept it there assuming it was brass. I suspected it could be theirs and got it verified by a jeweller, who confirmed it was 100% gold, 22-karat, weighing 100 grams. I decided it belonged to Sharma Ji and no one else, and therefore it should be returned. We believe in earning through hard work and cannot keep someone else's property. My family also agreed that it must be returned."

4.5/10: Pre-Swachh survey paints a sorry picture of Gurgaon and Faridabad

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A rapid sanitation audit by Chief Minister's Good Governance Associates (CMGGA) has laid bare lapses in cleanliness and waste management in Haryana's two major cities — Gurgaon and Faridabad — which are in the 'needs attention' bracket. The two cities scored a meagre 4.5 out of 10, placing them among the poorest performers. The survey that came ahead of the Swachh Survekshan survey in the city, evaluated districts on a scale of 0 to 10. Those with scores between 0 and 4.5 were placed in the 'needs attention' bracket. Districts scoring between 5 and 6 were classified as 'average', while the districts with scores between 6.5 and 10 were placed in the 'good' bracket. Launched in 2016, the CMGGA aims to improve governance in the state by ensuring high-priority citizen-centric schemes are implemented at the grassroots level. The solid waste management (SWM) feedback survey, conducted on Feb 11-12 across 23

districts, inspected markets, wards, public toilets and bus stands against eight sanitation indicators. Karnal led the rankings with a score of 7.5, earning a 'good' rating. Rohtak and Hisar followed with 7 points each, also graded 'good'. Ambala, Kaithal, Panchkula and Bhiwani scored 6.5, remaining in the same category. Near the bottom, the contrast sharpened. While Charkhi Dadri fell further to 2.5, Nuh ranked last with a stark 0.5. The eight parameters covered in the audit included visible cleanliness, door-to-door waste collection and segregation, waste processing and disposal, access and usage of toilets, drainage management, sanitation worker welfare, IEC (information, education and communication) awareness, and ULB leadership and monitoring. "We plan to focus on all parameters considered in the survey. Moreover, we established a sanitation monitoring cell today (Friday) to further strengthen our performance,"



said MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya. The report also highlights a significant personnel shortage in Gurgaon's sanitation administration, one of the steepest gaps recorded in the state. Currently, only 41 of the 83 sanctioned supervisory posts are filled, resulting in a 51% vacancy rate. This shortfall has left critical roles in inspection, monitoring, and enforcement vacant. CMGGA took into account posts including chief sanitation inspectors, sanitation inspectors, assistant sanitation inspectors, supervisors and darogas for human resource mapping. In Faridabad,

90 posts are sanctioned, of which 66 are filled. Statewide, the average shortfall stands at 30%, but the report states that even larger municipal corporations, which are expected to have stronger administrative capacity, face significant deficits. Karnal, the top performer, has only 19 sanctioned posts but exceeded this number, with 62 positions filled. Palwal has 8 sanctioned posts but 10 filled, while Rewari filled all 10 of its posts. In contrast, Panchkula has 77 posts, of which 54 are filled. Internal findings are unusually candid, directly blaming sanitation failures on manpower shortages that cause weak enforcement and "unchecked field activities." The report also flags widespread "paper compliance": ward committees, waste-free declarations, and processing systems that formally exist on paper but are non-functional on the ground.

Wheat stubble burning too adds to NCR pollution, Haryana to track every farm after CAQM order

Gurgaon.(Agency)

With wheat stubble burning emerging as a major springtime pollution source in NCR, Haryana will carry out an exercise this year — mapping every farm in villages and specifying, plot by plot, how wheat residue will be managed during the harvest. The move follows new directions from Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which has stepped up scrutiny of wheat-season fires after last year's spike across north India. While wheat residue burning has traditionally drawn less attention than paddy fires, CAQM says it is now a key contributor to pollution in April and May. During the wheat season in 2025, Haryana recorded 1,832 fires between April 1 and May 31, Punjab logged over 10,200 incidents, and NCR districts of UP reported 259. Officials cited labour shortages, high residue-handling costs and limited availability of crop residue management (CRM) machinery during peak harvesting days as major drivers of the increase. A shift towards wheat, supported by assured procurement, has also raised residue volumes. In response,

Haryana has been directed to implement an arm-by-farm management plan specifying if straw will be incorporated into soil, used as fodder, diverted for ex-situ applications, or managed through crop diversification. For tighter monitoring, each district must tag nodal officers to farmers, with one officer responsible for no more than 100 cultivators. A senior agriculture department official said Haryana has already begun preparing implementation plans. "This wheat season, our focus is on strict field-level monitoring and ensuring that every farmer gets access to the machinery and support needed to avoid burning. We are implementing systems so that no farmer should feel burning is the only option," the official said. A key focus of the directive is timely and adequate availability of machines. States have been instructed to provide access through a mobile app and ensure that small and marginal farmers receive rent-free equipment via custom hiring centres (CHCs). The commission said machinery shortage during the narrow harvesting window remains one of the biggest triggers for burning. Haryana has also been asked to strengthen wheat-

straw storage infrastructure to prevent accidental fires and maintain stable fodder supplies through the year. Each district must build a residue supply chain to enable rapid collection, storage, and transport for industries that can use the straw. To tighten enforcement, CAQM has directed the state to form a dedicated "parali protection force" at district and block levels. The task force — comprising police, agriculture officials and local administrators — will conduct intensive patrolling, especially late in the evening and at night, when farmers often set fields on fire to avoid satellite detection. The regulator has also called for strict imposition and recovery of environmental compensation from violators, along with large-scale awareness campaigns on alternatives to burning and the health risks linked to crop-residue fires. Haryana, along with Punjab and UP, must submit monthly progress reports to CAQM. The commission said it will closely monitor compliance, noting that wheat stubble burning, once seen as a relatively minor issue, has become a serious and under-recognised threat to NCR's air quality during spring.

Gurgaon horror: 19-year-old confined, assaulted, raped by live-in partner; admitted in AIIMS with burns

Noida.(Agency)

A 19-year-old student of a private university was allegedly confined, assaulted and raped by her live-in partner following a dispute at their paying guest (PG) accommodation in the Badshahpur area. Sources told TOI that the woman had burns on her body when she was first taken to the Sector 10 hospital, after which she was referred to AIIMS Delhi for advanced care due to the seriousness of her condition. The accused, also a 19-year-old, was arrested from Delhi shortly after the incident was reported, police officials said. The woman's mother contacted Badshahpur police station on Feb 19, alleging that her daughter was being confined and harassed by her boyfriend at their PG accommodation. A police team was dispatched to the location. When officers reached the spot, they found the



woman visibly injured and took her to the hospital. "In the preliminary investigation, it was found that the victim and the accused met in Sept 2025," a police officer said. The survivor is originally from Tripura and the accused from Delhi. It was not immediately clear how long she was confined or what made the mother reach out to police. According to police, the

woman said in her complaint that she and the accused lived together in the same room. During the course of their relationship, the man frequently questioned her about her activities. Police said that an argument broke out between the two, which escalated to assault and rape. Investigators also said that both families were aware of the relationship and there were talks regarding their wedding. "It came to light during interrogation that the families were discussing the couple's marriage. However, due to some disagreements, the accused allegedly assaulted the victim," said Gurgaon police spokesperson ASI Sandeep Turan. Based on a complaint lodged by the woman, a case was registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at the Badshapur police station.

Haryana gets 'A' grade, ranks 8th in power regulatory performance rankings

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana has secured an 'A' grade with 88.5 out of 100 marks in the first national regulatory performance rankings released by the Power Foundation of India in collaboration with REC Limited. The state has been ranked eighth nationally, placing it among top-performing states in the 'A' category, including Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam and Madhya Pradesh. Officials said Haryana's strong performance was driven largely by improvements in power supply reliability. The state scored a full 32 out of 32 in resource adequacy, reflecting long-term planning, notified regulations and clearly defined reserve margins for power procurement. Approval of three-year capital expenditure plans for the state transmission utility and distribution companies, along with penalty provisions for delays, contributed to the score. "This score represents a marked improvement from earlier years when reliability and planning standards were areas of concern", an official said.

Haryana also received full marks in regulatory governance, securing five out of five. Transparent procedures for appointments and structured classification of posts into groups A, B, C and D strengthened administrative and institutional functioning. The financial performance of the state's distribution companies also improved. The state scored 23.5 out of 25 in this category, supported by the timely issuance of tariff orders for 2025-26 and the timely completion of the triuing-up process for 2023-24. Officials noted that no regulatory assets were created during the latest triuing-up cycle. The introduction of a mechanism to adjust surcharges for monthly fuel and power purchase costs helped manage costs and reduce financial pressure, officials added. In the ease of doing business category, Haryana scored 16 out of 23. The state fixed timelines for new electricity connections—three days in metro areas, seven days in municipal zones and 15 days in rural areas—with compensation for delays.

82km, 40 mins: Inside Namo Bharat pre-launch run

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The concourse at Sarai Kale Khan rapid rail station felt oddly suspended in time — silent, scrubbed clean, and guarded by security personnel and a handful of NCRTC officials moving with quiet urgency. There were no commuters, no queues, no announcements echoing through the hall. With 48 hours to its inauguration, the Namo Bharat rapid rail, at its pre-launch trial on Friday, covered 82 km in just 40 minutes—touching the top speed of 159kmph—though with no stopovers in between. The Namo Bharat trains have a design speed of 180kmph but a maximum operational speed of 160kmph. At precisely noon, the train sped out of the elevated station, before the handful of passengers had settled into the wide recliner seats of the premium coach. Footrests clicked open, screens flickered to life, and the city slipped away below.

At traffic junctions below, lines of cars waited for signals to turn green. Elsewhere, vehicles sped along service roads, suddenly

sluggish by comparison. While the rapid rail trains are to complete their run from Delhi to Modipuram in less than an hour, the distance is covered by road in around one and a half hours, which sometimes stretches to around two hours during peak traffic. Within four minutes, the train crossed New Ashok Nagar station. The speed display oscillated between 80 and 100 kmph, climbing steadily as the skyline opened up. Soon, the train was gliding over the Yamuna, offering a fleeting aerial view of the DND Flyway on one side and the Signature Bridge near Wazirabad on the other. A staff member pointed out that the 1.3-km bridge beneath the train was Delhi's longest over the river, and one of several engineering milestones along the route. Rows of kinar trees and scattered water bodies sped past as the train dipped underground near Anand Vihar at 12.10 pm. This is the corridor's first subterranean station, where the Namo Bharat threads past the Delhi Metro's Pink and Blue lines and the Anand Vihar railway station

above. The pressure change was distinct — a mild ear pop, like the sensation during take-off on a flight. "Keep chewing," a fellow passenger advised with a grin. Emerging from the tunnel at Sahibabad, the train surged ahead. Between Sahibabad and Duhai, it briefly touched 160 kmph. Dense clusters of buildings and shanties soon gave way to open farmland. Moments later, a calm announcement broke the quiet: "We have reached Meerut." Industrial sheds and smoking chimneys marked the approach to Meerut South and Shatabdi Nagar. Then, just as abruptly, the train slipped underground again at Begumpur, before resurfacing at Modipuram at 12.39 pm. Forty minutes. Eighty-two kilometres. No halts. The corridor, stitched together by elevated viaducts, deep tunnels and massive pre-cast segments, has already been dressed for its formal inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. Sarai Kale Khan Namo Bharat station in Delhi, which will be a multi-modal

integration with Delhi Metro (Pink Line), Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, Veer Hageeqat Rai ISBT and city bus services, will be commissioned along with Shatabdi Nagar, Begumpur and Modipuram in Meerut. The Jangpura station in Delhi will be constructed later. The total project completion cost is Rs 30,274 crore. Currently, a 55km section across 11 stations from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South is operational. Sarai Kale Khan station will serve as the converging point between all three corridors — Delhi-Panipat-Karnal, Delhi-SNB-Alwar and Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut — under the first phase of RRTS. "This interoperability will allow passengers to travel between corridors without changing trains," said an official of National Capital Region Transport Corporation, which is executing the RRTS project. After the other two corridors are completed, the length of Delhi's mass transit system, including Delhi Metro, will be 743km, which is more than the length of London

Crossrail, Hong Kong MTR and Paris RER, said officials.

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# Mental health issues transcend all age groups: AIMS expert

New Delhi: World Mental Health Day, observed annually on October 10, concludes with World Mental Health Week (October 4-10). Established in 1992 by the World Federation for Mental Health and endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), this day emphasises the importance of mental health as integral to overall well-being. Professor Dr Nand Kumar, Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the AIMS, Delhi, says: "Mental health is like physical health. It depends on our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Good mental health means being able to cope with the normal stresses of life and maintain functioning in work and daily life." Common mental health disorders (CMDs) include anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), somatic symptom disorders and insomnia. Dr Kumar explains, "Anxiety is normal in certain situations, but it becomes a disorder when worry is excessive, persistent over months, and interferes with daily activities such as work, study or family life." Depression is identified when "low mood persists for at least two weeks, accompanied by loss of interest in activities, social withdrawal, decreased energy and feelings of hopelessness. Occasionally, thoughts of self-harm may appear." India faces a significant mental health challenge. The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) of 2015-16 reported that 10.6 per cent of adults suffer from mental disorders, equating to approximately 150 million individuals in need of active medical intervention. The Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 estimated that 197.3 million people in India had mental disorders, including 45.7 million with depressive disorders. Despite the high prevalence, treatment remains limited. The NMHS indicates that the treatment gap for mental disorders ranges

between 70 per cent and 92 per cent, with common mental disorders like depression and anxiety having gaps of 85.2 per cent and 84.0 per cent, respectively. Urban areas, while having more accessible treatment facilities, often lack awareness. Dr Kumar notes, "Many individuals do not recognise depression or anxiety as medical conditions." Mental health issues affect all age groups. Youth face pressures of hopelessness. Occasionally, thoughts of self-harm may appear." India faces a significant mental health challenge. The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) of 2015-16 reported that 10.6 per cent of adults suffer from mental disorders, equating to approximately 150 million individuals in need of active medical intervention. The Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 estimated that 197.3 million people in India had mental disorders, including 45.7 million with depressive disorders. Despite the high prevalence, treatment remains limited. The NMHS indicates that the treatment gap for mental disorders ranges

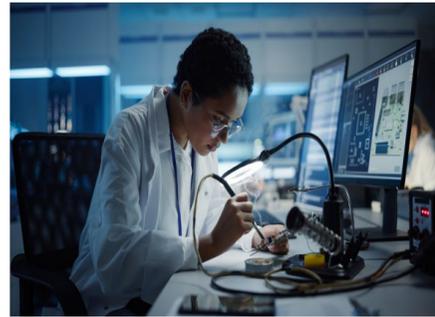
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# India's semiconductor sector poised for lift-off: Smartphones to space tech

## The Sikh Times

New Delhi: A state-of-the-art national research and development centre for next-generation display devices and optical technologies based on semiconductors is being established by Council for Scientific and Industrial Research at Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (CSIO) in Chandigarh. This centre, named Opto Microelectronic Research Centre, will address the needs of strategic sectors like defence and space, as well as healthcare, telecommunications, and automotive sectors. The facility, the first of its kind in the country, will initially focus on the design, assembly, testing, and packaging of mini-displays and later move on to other equipment like new types of head-up displays for aircraft. This will fill the gap in the indigenisation of futuristic high-technology gadgets. "Our aim is to address the existing and future challenges obstructing indigenisation in strate-

gic and commercial display devices and optical technologies and to take a step forward in providing a well-



versed research and development ecosystem for the rising semiconductor industries in India," a scientist at CSIO said. Semiconductors have become a critical part of the industry because they are the foundational building blocks of modern electronics, acting as the "hidden brains" that make devices work. They are crucial for a vast array of technologies across different disciplines. Acting as a brain, semiconductor chips help machines take decisions while processing heavy data, giving them iterative direction. Their ability to control electrical conductivity makes them ideal for use in virtually all electronic devices, ranging from smartphones and

deal of resources is being devoted to semiconductor technology, and its advancement is fuelling innovation in various fields, leading to smaller, faster, and more powerful electronic devices. With greater digitalisation and automation in day-to-day activities, semiconductors have become integral to economic security and strategic independence. The acute shortage of chips during the Covid pandemic and its aftermath, as well as the Ukraine-Russia war that affected the manufacture of cars, mobile phones, and other electronics, is a pointer towards this end.

## Wanted in murder and armed dacoity cases, Nepali criminal killed in police encounter in Delhi

New Delhi: In a joint operation by Delhi and Gurugram police, a criminal wanted in multiple cases of murder and armed dacoity was shot dead in an encounter near the Astha Kunj Park in south-east Delhi, an official said on Tuesday. According to police, Bhim Mahababdur Jora (39), a native of Lalpur in Nepal, was wanted in connection with the murder of Dr Yogesh Chander Paul, who ran a private clinic in Jangpura, in May 2024. A reward of Rs 1 lakh was announced for information leading to Jora's arrest. Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of Gurugram Crime Branch and Special Staff of the south-east district intercepted Jora near the Astha Kunj Park around 12.20 am on Tuesday. "Jora fired six rounds at the police team, which returned the fire with five rounds, hitting the accused," a senior police officer told PTI. Jora was rushed to the AIMS Trauma Centre, where doctors declared him dead. Police seized an automatic pistol, empty cartridges, one live round, and a bag containing house-breaking tools from the spot, the officer said. Jora was involved in at least six cases of murder, dacoity, and burglary across Delhi, Gurugram, Gujarat, and Bengaluru, he added.

## 7 cyber criminals duped over 5K people of about Rs 75 crore: Cops

Gurugram: A police investigation has revealed that seven cyber criminals arrested by the Gurugram police had duped more than 5,000 people across the country of about Rs 75 crore. The accused were arrested during the last three months, their mobile data revealed this shocking revelation. According to the police, the arrested accused were identified as Sachin Kumar, Hitesh, Rahul Pandey, Mohammad Shahzad Ansari, Abhishek, Shivraj and Amarnath, natives of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. A total of 5 mobile phones, 4 SIM cards and Rs 3 lakh were seized from their possession.

# Bhagwant Mann Govt's Shiksha Kranti Delivers Historic Results as 305 Govt School Students Qualify JEE Mains: Harjot Singh Bains

Contd....Front page  
The Education Minister stated, "Priyanka Sharma, a Grade 12 Science student of School of Eminence, Sangrur, comes from a supportive family where her father works as an accountant and her mother is a private school teacher. With an annual family income of around ₹3.5 lakh, she prepared with discipline and consistency, benefiting from PACE classes, regular mock tests and strong academic guidance. Her efforts resulted in an excellent 96.44 percentile in JEE Main achieved alongside her NEET preparation." Narrating another success story, the Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains stated, "Harmandeep Sharma, a Grade 12 Non Medical student of School of Eminence, Chhajli Sangrur, comes from a family where his father works as an accountant and his mother is a homemaker, with an annual income of around ₹2.5 lakh. Aspiring to pursue engineering, he prepared entirely through school support without taking any private tuition, relying on teacher guidance and PACE learning resources. His disciplined preparation resulted in an outstanding 98.75 percentile in JEE Main." The Education Minister noted, "Palak Kaur, a Class 12 student of a Government School in Amritsar, comes from a humble background and faced significant personal challenges after losing her father. She is being raised

by her mother, a homemaker, with an annual family income of less than ₹1,00,000. Despite financial hardship and emotional difficulties, she remained focused on her education. Her perseverance resulted in a commendable 90.11 percentile in JEE Main." He further said, "Kajal, a Class 12 student of a Government School in SAS Nagar, comes from a modest family where her father works as a supervisor in a private security company and her mother is a homemaker. With an annual family income of around ₹80,000, financial limitations were a challenge, but her focus on education remained strong. She aspires to pursue Computer Science from IIT Madras. Her disciplined preparation resulted in a strong 92.66 percentile in JEE Main 2026." The Minister highlighted, "Pardeep, a Class 12 student of a Government School in SAS Nagar, comes from a modest family where his father works as a labourer in a water cooler factory and his mother is a homemaker. With an annual family income of around ₹1,20,000, financial challenges were constant. His aspiration is to secure a good job so that his father no longer has to work in difficult factory conditions. His disciplined effort resulted in a commendable 93.11 percentile in JEE Main 2026." "We have countless such stories of children from modest backgrounds dreaming of IIT Madras, IIT Bombay,

IIT Delhi and BITS Pilani," said Minister Harjot Singh Bains, crediting the success to the Punjab Government's focused interventions, especially the PACE coaching portal that provides free, high-quality preparation support to government school students and narrows the gap for talented children from humble backgrounds. Looking ahead, the Education Minister expressed confidence that the tally would further rise after the second attempt of JEE Mains. "This is only the first phase result. With the second attempt approaching, I am confident that our final figures will increase substantially and be even more impressive," he said. The Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains emphasised that no other state government has matched this scale of achievement in government schools. He congratulated all 305 stu-

dents and their parents, and thanked the teachers for making what he described as a historic day for Punjab's government school system. The Minister said there has been a visible rise in girl students qualifying for JEE exams counting 134 girl qualifiers, reflecting growing gender equity in STEM education across government schools. "This success is attributed to structured two year JEE preparation under PACE, free residential coaching camps during summer and winter breaks, regular mock tests and performance analytics, access to digital learning through the PACE Portal, and mentorship by expert faculty from partners such as Avanti Fellows and leading coaching institutions," he added.

## Woman dies by suicide in Southeast Delhi's Sunlight Colony area

New Delhi: Her family has alleged that she faced sustained abuse from her husband and in-laws since her marriage nearly two years ago. According to police, a PCR call about the incident was received around noon on Saturday. When officers arrived at the scene, the woman, identified as Sadhna, was found hanging in her room in the Sidharth Basti locality. Her body was sent for post-mortem and later handed over to the family. Statements of her mother and brother were recorded by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Defence Colony. Sadhna's mother, Sunita, alleged that her daughter endured constant harassment. "She was never happy in that house. They kept hurting her," she said tearfully. Recalling the morning of the incident, Sunita said she had spoken to Sadhna around 8.30 am. "She didn't say anything was wrong. I left for work soon after. Later, my elder daughter called to inform me that Sadhna had taken her life. By the time I got home, her body had already been taken down." The family has filed a written complaint with the police and submitted a video as evidence. "We want justice. Those responsible for pushing my daughter to this must be punished," Sunita demanded. Police said the case is under investigation and action would be taken based on the findings. Meanwhile, a video circulating on social media shows Sadhna in tears, alleging repeated physical abuse by her husband, Yogesh, and his family. In the footage, she claims the violence began after she married Yogesh against the wishes of both families. Police are currently verifying the video's authenticity.

## Biker held for celebrating with dangerous stunts in Delhi after India's cricket win over Pakistan

New Delhi: A biker attempted dangerous stunts on a busy road in central Delhi to mark Indian cricket team's victory against Pakistan in the ongoing T20 world cup, following which he was detained by police, an official said on Tuesday. A group of angry commuters even gathered around the biker once he stopped but police intervened and controlled the situation. On February 15 at around 11:30 pm, police received information about a biker riding in a rash and negligent manner on Bada Bazar Road in Old Rajender Nagar, posing a serious threat to public safety, they added. The rider was identified as Mohit Sharma, a resident of Old Rajender Nagar. The police personnel reached the spot and apprehended the rider along with his motorcycle. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central District) Anant Mittal said. During interrogation, Mohit disclosed that he was performing motorcycle stunts to celebrate India's win over Pakistan in a cricket match, the official said. "In his excitement, he rode the motorcycle on a public road without any regard for the safety of pedestrians and other road users," he added. Police also found that the rider was not wearing a protective helmet at the time of the incident. A large crowd gathered at the spot, and the situation turned volatile, with several individuals attempting to physically assault the rider out of anger over his reckless behaviour. Sensing the possibility of mob violence, police promptly intervened, shielded the rider from the aggressive crowd, dispersed the crowd and safely escorted him from the area, the DCP said.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ABDUL TAWWAB S/O Shri Abdul Rehman Resident of House No. C-16, Abhimanyu Gali, Near Babu Ram Chowk, Arjun Mohalla, Moujpur, Delhi-110053 has changed my name ABDUL TAWWAB to ABDUL TAWWAB for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Kapil Kumar Yadav S/o Dinesh Yadav R/o House No-523 P, Sector-14, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, Have Changed My Name To Kapil Yadav For All Purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Pradeep Kumar S/o Prem Chand R/o D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 has changed the name of my minor son from Arjun to Arjun Vaidwan.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Taran Preet Singh Kochhar S/O Manpreet Singh Kochhar R/o 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Change My Given Name Taranpreet Singh and Surname Kochhar for all purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Anupama D/o Pradeep Kumar R/o D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 have changed my name to Anupama Chaudhary.

**CAMC OF ELEPHANT INTRUSION DETECTION IN LUMDING DIVISION**  
E-Tender No.: SNT-43-LMG-2025-26; Dated: 19-02-2026; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Name of work : CAMC of Elephant intrusion detection between Lumding-Lanka section in Lumding division of NF Railway. Tender Value: ₹1,62,15,668/-. Bid Security: ₹2,31,100/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:30 hours on 13-03-2026. Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in  
DSTE, Lumding  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA S/O PARTAP SINGH resident of H.No.16, Tara Nagar Main Kakrola Road, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have changed the name of my minor daughter SHREYA ALIAS SHREYA VERMA aged 13 years, in she shall hereafter be known as SHREYA VERMA.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as SAMEERA SINGH D/O SUDHIR KUMAR SINGH residing at Flat No.E-1058, River Heights, Raj Nagar, Extension, Tower-15, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SAMEERA SINGH AMETHIA.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Rahul Vishwakarma S/o H.P. Vishwakarma R/o Ground Floor Gandhi Market, Mir Dard Road, Minto Road, Indraprastha, Central Delhi, Delhi-110002 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Rahul Kumar Vishwakarma in my minor daughter namely Anika Vishwakarma aged 5 years in his School Records. The actual name of mine is Rahul Vishwakarma.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, INDU CHAUHAN W/O NARENDER SINGH CHAUHAN R/O N-129/1, T-HUTS, KHILONA BAGH DIST NORTH WEST DELHI-110009 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as INDU KANWAR YARDHAN SINGH CHAUHAN aged 13 years in his school record and birth certificate No. MCDOLIR-2211-005020356. The actual name of mine is INDU CHAUHAN which may be amended accordingly

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that CHANDER VEER S/O RAM JI LAL R/O Q-157 Vikas Vihar Uttam Nagar West Delhi Delhi-110059 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as CHANDER PAL in my minor daughter namely KIRTI aged 15 years in her birth certificate No.MCDOLIR-0110-004425162. The actual name of mine is CHANDER VEER which may be amended accordingly

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
Expression of Interest  
Delhi Division, Northern Railway invites 'Expression of Interest' for provision of supply, installation and maintenance of 10 parcel scanners and management of other miscellaneous parcel activities at New Delhi parcel office premises for a period of three (03) years. The detailed information regarding EOI is available on the official website of Northern Railways i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in. Last date for submission of EOI is upto 15:00 Hrs on 27/02/2026.  
File No. C9-Parcel-NDLS-Outsourcing Parcel Scanner and Other activities/2026 Dtd: 20.02.26  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 591/26

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Swaran Kaur Sawhney W/o Prith Pal Singh R/o 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Changed My Name to Swaran Kaur for all purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, BALJEET SINGH S/O GURCHARAN SINGH R/o 12/32, Geeta Colony, East Delhi-110031 declare that name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter has been wrongly written as BALJEET SINGH CHUGH, GURPREET KAUR CHUGH, JASLEEN KAUR CHUGH in my minor daughter JASLEEN KAUR aged 16 years in her 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter are BALJEET SINGH, GURPREET KAUR and JASLEEN KAUR respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG Wife of J.C-33507L Rank-NB/SUB Name-MOGHAL MOHAMMAD BAIG Presently residing at 9-5-5, ANDHRA RATNA NAGAR, PERALA HIGH SCHOOL, PERALA, CHIRALA PRAKASAM DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH-523157, have changed my name from MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG to FATHIMA SHAIK for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 16/07/2025 before First Class Magistrate, Shillong, Meghalaya.

**PROVISION OF DIGITAL 25 W-VHF SETS**  
E-tender Notice No. S&T/APDJ/59 Dated: 19-02-2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No. AP-ST-59-2025-26. Name of work: Provision of Digital 25 W-VHF sets with voice recording at all stations in Alipurduar Jn. Division. Tender Value: ₹2,80,59,328.94/- Earnest Money: ₹2,90,300/- E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. of 18-03-2026 & opening at 18-03-2026 after closing E-Tender. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in  
DRM (S&T)/Alipurduar Division  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Tajinder Kaur W/o Jaspreet Singh Baweja R/o 52/43 Ramjas Road Karol Bagh Delhi -110005 Have Changed My Name To Tajinder Kaur Baweja For All Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Sansara Anurud Narayan father of No.4580898H Rank-Hav Name Sansara Ravindra Anurud residing at Vill. Deotali Pravara, Tehsil - Rahuri, District.Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra - 413716 have changed my name from Sansara Anurud Narayan to Anurud Narayan Sansara vide affidavit dated 15/07/2025 executed before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name-JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILLBHI UTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name-JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILLBHI UTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ANITA BANSAL W/O PAWAN BANSAL residing at B-504, MAYUR-DHWAJ APARTMENT, I.P EXTN, EAST DELHI-110092 have Change my name to ANITA RANI BANSAL for all future purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I Jyoti pal W/O Sunil Kumar R/O WZ-125, Village Begumpur, North West Delhi - 110086 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Jyoti in my minor Daughter Yashika aged 14 years in her school cords and birth certificate no MCDOLIR09362899. The actual my name is Jyoti Pal.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, PUNNAM DEVI Wife of No-14313053K Rank-HAV Name-NARENDER SINGH R/O C-7, LAXMI GARDEN, NAJAFGARH, NEW DELHI-110043 have changed my name from PUNNAM DEVI to POONAM DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VLL-BISUNJAS, PO-MURSAN, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**E-AUCTION FOR THE CONTRACT FOR LEASING OF SLRS**  
E-Auction for the contract of leasing of SLRs for 3 years in trains originating from Lumding Division. Description: Parcel Space in SLR Coach (Single Compartment). Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 11:00 hrs. on 09-03-2026. Auction Close Date & Time : 18:00 hrs. on 09-03-2026. Rate Unit: Per Trip Licensing Fee .

Auction Catalogue No.: Lease-LMG-09-26			
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Trips/Days	
AA/1	15634-SLR-F1-GHY-BKN-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/2	15077-SLR-F1-KYQ-GTNR-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/3	15602-SLR-F2-GHY-DBB-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/4	15669-SLR-F2-GHY-DBRG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/5	15602-SLR-F1-GHY-DBB-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/6	22512-SLR-F1-KYQ-LTT-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/7	15655-SLR-F1-KYQ-SVDK-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/8	15632-SLR-F1-GHY-BME-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/9	15653-SLR-F1-GHY-JAT-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/10	15648-SLR-F1-GHY-LTT-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/11	15815-SLR-F1-GHY-DKGN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/12	15669-SLR-R1-GHY-DBRG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/13	15602-SLR-F1-GHY-DBB-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/14	15624-SLR-F1-KYQ-BGKT-26-1 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/15	15640-SLR-F1-KYQ-PURI-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/16	19306-SLR-F1-KYQ-UDZ-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/17	12518-SLR-F1-GHKOAA-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	156	
AA/18	15668-SLR-F1-GHY-GIMB-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/19	15662-SLR-F1-KYQ-RNC-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/20	15644-SLR-F1-KYQ-PURI-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/21	15754-SLR-F2-GHY-APDJ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/22	15665-SLR-F2-GHY-MXN-25-4 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/23	15665-SLR-F1-GHY-MXN-25-4 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/24	15669-SLR-F1-GHY-DBRG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/25	12552-SLR-F1-KYQ-SMVB-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/26	15651-SLR-F1-GHY-JAT-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/27	13247-SLR-F1-KYQ-ARA-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	627	
AA/28	15603-SLR-F1-GHY-LEDO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/29	15815-SLR-F2-GHY-DKGN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/30	15620-SLR-F1-KYQ-GAYA-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/31	15636-SLR-F1-GHY-OKHA-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/32	12510-SLR-F1-GHY-SMVB-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	470	
AA/33	15754-SLR-R1-GHY-APDJ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/34	15815-SLR-R1-GHY-DKGN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/35	19616-SLR-F1-KYQ-UDZ-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/36	12088-SLR-F1-GHY-NHLN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	470	
AA/37	15613-SLR-F1-GHY-MZS-23-1 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/38	15754-SLR-F1-GHY-APDJ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/39	15665-SLR-F1-GHY-MXN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/40	22449-SLR-F1-GHY-NDLS-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	313	

Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing Module of IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in.  
Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

NEWS BOX

## India Reiterates Backing For Two-State Solution To Palestine Issue

BEIJING. (Agency)

India on Friday reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution to the Palestine issue and said it had joined more than 100 countries and international organisations in a statement condemning Israel's attempts to expand unlawful settlements in the West Bank. India did not figure in the initial statement that was endorsed by around 80 countries and organisations. Palestine's UN envoy Riyad Mansour released it on Tuesday. A fresh statement saw India and around 20 countries and organisations back it.

Asked why India was not part of the initial statement, External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing that the document had not been negotiated by the countries and organisations as has been the norm.

"Our position on this particular issue was most recently expressed in the India-Arab League ministerial joint statement," he said. In their meeting held in New Delhi on January 31, India and the Arab League pitched for a sovereign and viable Palestine state living side-by-side with Israel while calling for "just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East" in line with relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. In a joint statement, the two sides also called for a "sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine based on 1967 borders, living side by side in peace with Israel. Both parties supported the practice of inalienable rights of the Palestinian people." Jaiswal said that in consonance with the position outlined in the joint statement, India associated itself with the Palestinian initiative, keeping in mind the "concerns addressed by the statement". In the statement, the signatory countries and organisations reiterated their commitment to take concrete measures in line with UN resolutions and the July 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which declared Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory as illegal and sought the evacuation of all settlements in the West Bank.

## Canada moves to withhold evidence in Nijjar murder case, cites national security concern

CHANDIGARH. (Agency)

The government of Canada has sought court approval to keep some sensitive national security evidence secret in the case related to the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, saying disclosure could be "injurious to international relations and national security." The trial in the case is expected to begin later this year.

According to a report by Global News, the Attorney General of Canada filed an application under Section 38 of the Canada Evidence Act in the Federal Court on December 24 last year, requesting permission to suppress certain evidence. A spokesperson for the British Columbia Prosecution Service said the trial is not expected to begin before August. A spokesperson for the Department of Justice confirmed that the Attorney General is seeking an order under a section of the Canada Evidence Act and added that they cannot provide further detail at this time. Four Indian nationals — Karan Brar, Kamalpreet Singh, Karanpreet Singh, and Amandeep Singh have been accused of involvement in Nijjar's killing and were arrested. It is not unusual for federal lawyers in Canada to ask courts to allow them to withhold national security information during trials, especially when the information was shared by a foreign agency on the condition that it cannot be used in court. The case is currently in the pre-trial phase and is subject to a publication ban. Canadian media reports say the Royal Canadian Mounted Police believes India used alleged mob figure Lawrence Bishnoi to arrange the killing. The case has remained a major strain in India-Canada relations since then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly alleged Indian involvement in September 2023.

## Asos founder Quentin Griffiths dies after fall from 17th floor of Thailand home

Toronto. (Agency)

Quentin Griffiths, who co-founded British fast-fashion retailer Asos, has died after falling from the 17th floor of an apartment building in Thailand, police said on Friday. He was 58. Police also said no evidence of foul play was found, although they believed the death was suicide.

Thai police said Griffiths fell from the balcony of the 18-storey building in the seaside resort city of Pattaya on February 9. His body was found on the ground directly below the balcony. Investigators said the victim, a British passport holder, had been alone in the apartment, which was locked from the inside, with no signs of forced entry. CCTV footage showed no one entering the room and an autopsy found no evidence of foul play. Police said initial findings pointed to suicide.

VICTIM WAS ENTANGLED IN LEGAL DISPUTES WITH EX-WIFE

A police investigator told the BBC that documents related to ongoing lawsuits were found in the apartment. A Thai friend told police that Griffiths had been worried about legal disputes involving his former wife, a Thai national. Griffiths was separated from his second wife, a Thai national, who accused him of stealing more than USD 673,000 from a business they ran together, The Sun reported. He was arrested last year and questioned by police after she alleged he forged documents to sell land shares without her knowledge. He was later released, but the investigation was ongoing at the time of his death, according to The Sun report. The BBC said Griffiths had been involved in a legal dispute with his wife over the venture. An Asos spokesperson said the company was "saddened to hear about the passing of Quentin, one of our original co-founders," adding that he played an important role in the firm's early success.

# Meet Asha Sharma: Indian-origin executive named CEO of Microsoft Gaming

World. (Agency)

Microsoft has named Asha Sharma as the new chief executive of its gaming division, marking one of the most significant leadership changes in Xbox's history. Sharma succeeds long-time gaming head Phil Spencer, who is retiring after nearly four decades at the company and will stay on as an adviser through the summer. Her appointment comes at a challenging moment for Microsoft Gaming, which is facing slowing revenue growth, rising costs and intense competition in the global console and content market.

Sharma has been appointed Executive Vice President and CEO of Microsoft Gaming and will report directly to Satya Nadella, Microsoft's chairman and chief executive. In her first comments following the announcement, Sharma said she would refocus on Xbox's core audience while navigating a rapidly changing gaming landscape shaped by subscriptions, cloud gaming and large-scale acquisitions. Asha Sharma's journey to becoming

Microsoft Gaming CEO

Before taking charge of Microsoft Gaming, Sharma held senior leadership roles across some of the world's biggest technology companies. At Microsoft, she most recently worked in AI platform and product leadership, giving her direct exposure to the company's broader push into artificial intelligence. Before that, she served as chief operating officer at Instacart and held product leadership roles at Meta. Her career has largely focused on scaling platforms, managing large teams and steering products through periods of rapid growth.

Sharma is US-educated, with a business degree from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. While she is widely described as being of Indian origin, publicly available biographies and official company disclosures provide limited detail about her family background or roots, and she has not spoken extensively in public about her personal history. Her professional profile, however,



places her firmly among a growing cohort of global tech leaders with diverse backgrounds.

The leadership change comes as Microsoft Gaming faces multiple pressures. Gaming revenue has declined in recent quarters, hardware prices have risen due to cost pressures, and consumer spending remains uncertain. At the same time, Microsoft is still integrating Activision Blizzard, acquired in 2023 in a \$69 billion deal that

reshaped the company's position in the gaming industry.

Sharma's background in operations, platforms and AI suggests Microsoft is betting on a leader who can balance content, technology and business discipline.

Changes across the gaming division

Alongside Sharma's appointment, Microsoft confirmed other senior changes. Matt Booty has been promoted to chief content officer, overseeing game studios and titles, while Sarah Bond is leaving the company to pursue a new chapter. Together, the moves point to a broader reset of the Xbox leadership structure.

Sharma takes over at a time when Xbox is reassessing its identity. Competition from Sony's PlayStation remains strong, especially in console market share and exclusive games. Analysts will be watching closely to see whether Sharma prioritises hardware, subscriptions, first-party content, or deeper integration with Microsoft's AI and cloud businesses.

## US military strikes another alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific, killing three



WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The U.S. military said Friday that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

U.S. Southern Command said on social media that the boat "was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific and was engaged

in narco-trafficking operations." It said the strike killed three people. A video linked to the post shows a boat floating in the water before bursting into flames. Friday's attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats to at least 148 people in at least 43 attacks carried out since early September in the

Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part because the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. over land from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India. The boat strikes also drew intense criticism following the revelation that the military killed survivors of the very first boat attack with a follow-up strike. The Trump administration and many Republican lawmakers said it was legal and necessary, while Democratic lawmakers and legal experts said the killings were murder, if not a war crime.

## Buddhist monks rally in Sri Lanka to pressure government for wider role in state affairs

COLOMBO. (Agency)

Hundreds of Buddhist monks rallied in Sri Lanka's capital on Friday to protest

alleged government disrespect of their religion and disregard for a long-standing tradition that they be consulted in matters of state. The protest passed without any reported violence. The constitution of the island nation of around 22 million people states that Buddhism is the state religion, though freedom of religion is protected by law. The charter also states that the government has an obligation to protect and foster Buddhism. More than 70% of the population is Buddhist and their clergy are influential in social, cultural and political affairs. There are also

minority Hindus, Muslims and Christians living in Sri Lanka.

The monks at the protest in Colombo



read out an appeal note they said would be sent to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

The note said the responsibility of the government in the island nation is to base its values on the principles of

**They also urged for excluding non-Buddhists from top office in Sri Lanka, incorporating Buddhist values in schools and education system and protecting all archaeological sites connected to the religion.**

Buddhism, which emerged in the 5th century B.C. in ancient India, and recognize the right of the clergy to counsel in the affairs of the state.

It also urged for excluding non-Buddhists from top office in Sri Lanka, incorporating Buddhist values in schools and the education system and protecting all archaeological sites connected to the religion. The appeal is likely part of the efforts by the monks to pressure the government.

## Democrats demand refunds after US court tosses Trump tariffs

Washington. (Agency)

Governor JB Pritzker sent Donald Trump an invoice Friday demanding nearly \$9 billion in tariff refunds for Illinois families after the US Supreme Court ruled the president's much-touted tariffs are illegal.

Pritzker urged the White House to "cut the check" after justices ruled 6-3 that Trump had exceeded his authority by invoking emergency powers to impose tariffs that reshaped global trade and pushed up prices at home. "Your tariff taxes wreaked havoc on farmers, enraged our allies and sent grocery prices through the roof," the veteran Democrat wrote, warning that further legal action could follow if compensation was not forthcoming. In the letter shared with US media, Pritzker demanded about \$1.7 billion for every Illinois household — the amount Yale University experts said the average US household would pay on tariffs last year. Pritzker wasn't alone in seeking payback — both political and literal — for widespread consumer woes.

Earlier Friday, California Governor Gavin Newsom said the money Trump's tariffs had raised came from US voters' pockets — and should be refunded.

"Time to pay the piper, Donald. These tariffs were nothing more than an illegal cash grab that drove up prices and hurt working families, so you could wreck longstanding alliances and extort them," he said. Every dollar unlawfully taken must be refunded



immediately — with interest. Cough up!" Pritzker and Newsom re widely seen as a potential Democratic contender in the 2028 presidential race.

Their demands add a populist flourish to a complicated legal and economic reality. Announced with fanfare last April, Trump's tariffs have raised more than \$130 billion from importers, with a significant proportion of that extra cost passed on to consumers through higher prices. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has expressed skepticism that ordinary Americans will see direct compensation. The scale of potential repayments is vast. The influential Penn-Wharton Budget Model has estimated that refunds could total \$175 billion, though it's unclear who would ultimately receive the money. Trump himself acknowledged that any refund process could take years. In his dissent, Trump-appointed conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh noted Friday's ruling "says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers."

# US boy, 11, kills adoptive father for taking away game console, faces adult trial

## An 11-year-old Pennsylvania boy shot his adoptive father in the head while he slept after his gaming console was taken away on the night of his birthday.

SANDRINGHAM. (Agency)

An 11-year-old boy accused of killing his adoptive father during a birthday celebration at their Pennsylvania home, allegedly after his gaming console was taken away, has been ordered to stand trial as an adult, given the gravity of the crime. He made his first court appearance on Thursday, handcuffed, maintaining an expressionless demeanour and ignoring questions from the press. The incident

occurred on the night of the child's birthday, January 13, when an argument reportedly broke out between the boy and his adoptive parents over video games. Police said the boy, Clayton Dietz, shot his 42-year-old father, Douglas Dietz, in the head while he was asleep, using a revolver he had taken from a bedroom safe at their home. According to police, the shooting took place shortly after midnight, after the family had gone to bed following a birthday celebration during which they sang "Happy Birthday" to Clayton. The victim's wife, the boy's mother, told authorities she woke to a loud noise, tried to rouse her husband, and then noticed blood coming from his head as he lay motionless.

She also told police that after the shooting, the boy said to her, "I killed my dad. I hate myself." An officer reportedly also heard him say, "I killed Daddy". The

boy later told police he had enjoyed the day with his parents but was upset because his Nintendo Switch had been taken away, Fox

going to shoot" and that he loaded the revolver, pulled back the hammer, and shot his father while he slept.

Prosecutors argued that the severity of the crime warranted transferring the case to adult jurisdiction, a request the judge approved following a preliminary hearing. The decision means the child could face significantly harsher penalties than those typically imposed in juvenile court if convicted. Defence attorneys opposed the move, contending that the boy's age, psychological development, and family circumstances should have kept the case within the juvenile justice system. They indicated they may appeal the ruling, according to the Daily Mail.



News reported. Court records cited by local reports mentioned that Clayton admitted he "had someone in mind who he was

The child remains in custody pending further hearings, and authorities have not released his identity due to his age.

NEWS BOX

**Social activist Snehamayi detained over 'fake' audio clip of former MUDA commissioner**

**BENGALURU. (Agency)**

Social activist Snehamayi Krishna, who had filed a complaint against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others in connection to the alleged illegal allotment of sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), was detained by the Bengaluru Central Crime Branch (CCB) police on Friday, for allegedly creating fake documents and uploading a fabricated audio clip on social media, based on a complaint filed by ex-MUDA commissioner DB Natesh.

On Tuesday, Krishna had uploaded a six-second audio clip in which a person, whom Krishna claimed was Natesh, was heard saying, "We should find some link to establish connection with Snehamayi Krishna one-to-one." Activist detained when he arrived in Bengaluru for court case Krishna had alleged in the social media post that there has been constant effort to lure him into retracting from the MUDA case.

"Earlier, I had filed a complaint when Srinidhi and Harsha tried to lure me. Now, former MUDA commissioner Natesh has contacted a person close to him, asking the person to take me to him. I have got the audio recording of the same and I will submit it to the court seeking investigation," Krishna posted. Further, he claimed that Natesh had paid a huge sum to a senior IAS officer to get a promotion and claimed that he had filed a complaint with the Income Tax department and Enforcement Directorate.

On Wednesday, Natesh, who is a senior KAS officer, in a complaint with the Cyber Crime Police alleged that Krishna had created fake documents and an audio clip and uploaded them on his Facebook account using his photograph, carrying out a defamatory campaign against him and harassing him.

**Dutch PM gives thumbs-up to green Bengaluru's air quality, tech ethos**

**BENGALURU. (Agency)**

The city endeared itself to Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof, who gave a shout-out to "green" Bengaluru, its "vibrant atmosphere", air quality and scientific and tech-driven ethos. Schoof arrived in the city on Thursday evening, after attending the AI India Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi.

"The city is green and its air quality is good. I ran in the morning and checked the air quality. It was roughly on par with The Netherlands," said Schoof. He spoke at length about the use of AI by the traffic police in managing Bengaluru's traffic and startup culture, which he witnessed during his visit to the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), where he was impressed by two startups using AI in healthcare and agriculture. Recounting his visit to the Traffic Management Centre, Schoof said he was "most surprised at how police were using AI to regulate traffic in the city. They have all the data from open source and are able to predict, analyse and regulate traffic in real time, including creating green corridors to facilitate organ transport (for life saving organ transplant)." The Dutch PM underscored the use of AI across domains, especially healthcare, and said it will be a gamechanger for all stakeholders; from doctors and healthcare providers to patients, and most importantly, it will bring down the cost. "The Netherlands has a big ageing population and healthcare cost and services are going out of control," he said, adding that AI applications in healthcare, for instance, in detecting diseases will improve quality, and timely services by doctors and nursing staff while making it more affordable to people.

**GBA back to drawing board as govt says 6,500 staff too many**

**BENGALURU. (Agency)**

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) is reworking on the new Common Cadre and Recruitment (C&R) rule, as the state government has raised objections to its proposal to have around 6,500 officers and staff, including IAS, KAS and other officials, to the five city corporations. This would have a financial implication of Rs 50 crore per month, with a major part being the salaries of the staff. Citing higher burden on the exchequer, GBA has been told to rework the numbers of officers and staff and the finances.

"Excluding pourakarmikas and sanitation workers, who form the largest group, GBA and the five corporations together were estimated to require around 6,500 officers and staff across all categories -- Group A, B, C and D. The same was discussed at the state government level before submitting the C&R rule officially and we have been told that the staff numbers are higher and Rs 50 crore per month would be a big burden on the exchequer," said a senior GBA official.

"We were told by officials from the Urban Development Department that the state finance department would not approve 6,500 employees. After this, we ran through the staff requirements again and found that some of the departments seem to have requested more staff than actually needed. Further, if the existing staff are utilised and optimised effectively, the total staff needed could be cut down. We are reworking on it."

**Monorail's indigenous signalling system gets independent safety assessor certification**

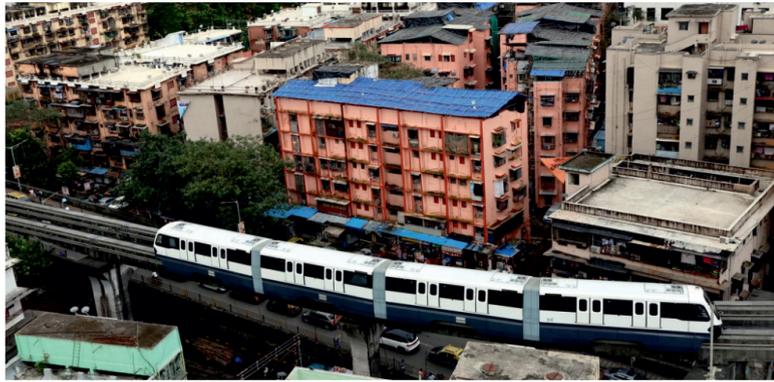
**A total of 10 new rakes from Medha have been being delivered incrementally for over a year. The old rakes will be integrated with the new signalling system.**

**Ahmedabad.(Agency)**

FIVE MONTHS after it stopped operations, the indigenously-made Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC) signalling system and new rolling stock for the Mumbai monorail has got certification from an Independent Safety Assessor (ISA). This makes it for the first time that an Indian-made CBTC system will run in the country. Bureau Veritas, a global firm in testing, inspection, and certification, has given the certification to the Hyderabad-based Medha Servo Drives Pvt Ltd system. Previously, a senior MMRDA official had hinted the ISA certification was being delayed as the system had Chinese components.

While a distance still remains in the monorail being back to functioning in Mumbai, the certification makes it a step closer to being back. A total of 10 new rakes from Medha have been being delivered incrementally for over a year. The old rakes will be integrated with the new signalling system.

An official from Maha Mumbai Metro Operation Corporation Ltd (MMMOCL), which runs the monorail, said the next step is the clearance from a retired or present commissioner of Metro Railway Safety (CMRS). As this is in contravention to the rules mentioned in the



Indian Tramways Act, 1886, a notification from Urban Development (UD) is awaited to give its approval.

"Once a CMRS officer is appointed, inspections will continue, following which there will be some compliances required, as per usual," said the official, refusing to date when the monorail might restart. When it does start, another

official from the MMRDA said the monorail (from Chembur to Saat Rasta) would work on a frequency of every 8 minutes, with 12 rakes in service. The MMRDA plans to start the Chembur station of the Metro line 2B (Mandale-Andheri), which will be connected with the monorail station, hoping to increase ridership on both the modes of transport.

**Census vs voter roll revision? Maharashtra may ask EC to postpone SIR in April**

**School exams go on till April and teachers will be busy with Census work too, say sources in CEO office**

**HYDERABAD. (Agency)**

A day after the Election Commission (EC) asked the remaining states to begin preparatory work for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in April, sources in Maharashtra indicated that the state may seek a postponement, citing a clash with Census work, The Indian Express has learned.

On Thursday, the EC wrote to Chief Electoral Officers of 22 States and Union Territories, asking them to complete all preparatory work related to the SIR at the earliest, as the exercise "is expected to start from April 2026". The preparatory work includes mapping existing voters with the electoral roll of 2002-2004, when the last SIR was conducted, and training booth-level officers (BLOs) to carry out the exercise. However, on Wednesday, a state-level conference on preparedness for Census 2027 was held in Mumbai, which was joined digitally by

Registrar General and Census Commissioner (RGCC) Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan. During the conference, Additional Chief Secretary



Seema Vyas announced that Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases.

The first phase, involving house-listing and housing census, will take place from May 16 to June 14, 2026. Prior to this, a self-enumeration

facility will be available from May 1 to May 15, 2026. She noted that preparations for Census 2027 in the state are in the final stages and that the training process has commenced.

Sources within the office of Maharashtra's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) informed The Indian Express that undertaking SIR in April 2026 will be difficult.

"The school exams continue till first or second week of April and teachers, who will participate in SIR will be busy. Later, the same government employees will be busy with ground work for Census. The SIR and Census work cannot be done at the same time," an official from the office of the CEO told.

Approximately 2.64 lakh enumerators and supervisors will record data directly into the Census Management and Monitoring System using their mobile devices, thereby avoiding delays in data collection.

**Seven young athletes gear up for epic swim; to cover 150 km of open sea in 10 days**

**Ahmedabad . (Agency)**

On Saturday, just after sunrise, seven young swimmers and kayakers will dive into the Arabian Sea at Somnath. Over the next ten days, they plan to cover 150 kilometres along Gujarat's coast — from the Somnath Mahadev Temple to Simor Beach in Delwada. For 19-year-old Vanessa Shukla, the distance is only part of the story.

"It's an endurance test. It's not about speed," she says. Vanessa has been swimming for 12 years. She began in a pool at the age of seven, eventually transitioning to swimming in open water and seas. The difference, she says, is psychological.

"Most of the time it's just us with the water. The sea is an open space. We don't know what's beneath us or what's coming ahead," she

says. "We may feel like giving up but we have to overcome that." The expedition is organised by the Rajkot District Swimming Association (RDSA) as part of the



Somnath Swabhimani Parv - 2026. It will move along coastal stretches including Sutrapada, Mul Dwarka, Sikotar Mata Temple Beach, Velan Lighthouse and Ghoghla, before concluding on March 2.

Each day, the swimmers are expected to spend hours in shifting currents, covering 15 to 20 km. For 14-year-old Parthiv Meghani, who has been swimming for five years, the preparation has meant routine and repetition. "We swim 7-8 km every day. On weekends, we swim 15 to 20 km for two to three days," he says. But he speaks as much about discipline as distance. "The aim is to create awareness among the youth to get off their phones and accomplish more by immersing themselves in sports," he says, describing what he hopes the expedition signals.

Divyam Chotaliya, also 14, has completed a 10-km open water swim in Porbandar. For him, the sea is unpredictable in a way that no pool can simulate.

**Govt moves to amend Gujarat registration of marriages act: What is Panchmahal 'fake nikaah case' Dy CM cited in Assembly?**

**Nashik.(Agency)**

OVER 4,600 'suspicious' marriage certificates — including some dubious nikaahnamas, issued from nine villages of four talukas of Panchmahal district — are being cited as the catalyst for the Gujarat government bringing in the amendments to the Gujarat Registration of Marriages Act, 2006.

Officials said on Friday that in these villages, such marriage certificates were granted to couples who were not even residents of Gujarat. Couples from 11 different states allegedly got marriage certificates from these four talukas of Panchmahal. A departmental probe is underway against six Talati-cum-Mantris (village administrative officers).

Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, who proposed the marriage amendment in the Gujarat Assembly earlier in the day, said that "hundreds of nikaah certificates were handed out from Panchmahal

**Cong MLA's 'water bottle' sparks drama in Gujarat Assembly**

**Ahmedabad. (Agency)**

Congress MLA from Danilimda constituency Shailesh Parmar was reprimanded by the Legislative Assembly Speaker Shankar Chaudhary on Friday for bringing an alleged contaminated groundwater sample in a plastic bottle to the House, in an effort to support his allegations that a private company in Mahisagar was flouting environmental norms.

The incident unfolded during Question Hour after Congress MLA from Khedbrahma Tushar Chaudhary sought details from the government regarding action taken against alleged chemical contamination of groundwater surrounding the dumping site of Murya Enviro Project Private Limited in Jamiyatpura, Balasinor in Mahisagar. The MLA stated in the House that nearly 29 villages in the vicinity are affected due to the contaminated water.

Responding on behalf of the state government, Minister of State for Forest and Environment Pravin Mali informed the House that five complaints had been received in 2024 and 2025 regarding alleged chemical contamination of wells in the surrounding areas of Murya Enviro Project Private Limited.

Mali said that based on these complaints, the Gujarat Pollution Control Board has taken more than 26 samples of groundwater from the premises of the unit as well as from outside on February 3, 2024, April 12, 2024, August 16, 2024, December 3, 2024 and April 18, 2025.

Mali informed the house that based on the inspections of groundwater samples collected from within the premises as well as from the surrounding villages during these inspection visits, there did not appear to be any significant or long-term contamination of groundwater quality and the few changes observed in water quality were minor and transient.

Dissatisfied with the response, Independent MLA from Bayad Dhavalisinh Zala questioned the state government, asking whether it was keen to close down the unit or not. "The Chief Minister had called the SDM in front of me last year when I had apprised him of the situation.

**IVF facility to be available at KEM hospital in Mumbai**

**Public-Private Partnership between KEM Hospital and Malpani Infertility Clinic aims to make fertility care affordable.**

**Mumbai.(Agency)**

King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital, which made history in 1986 when Dr. Indira Hinduja delivered India's first officially documented test-tube baby here, is now setting up a dedicated IVF department — more than four decades later. Despite its pioneering achievement, the hospital did not continue IVF services at scale due to lack of infrastructure, trained embryologists, and sustained funding. That gap is now being addressed with the inauguration of the Malpani Anjali and Aniruddha (MAA) In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) Centre on February 23. The centre has been set up by gynaecologists Dr. Anjali Malpani and Dr. Aniruddha Malpani, alumni of the hospital, to expand access to fertility treatment in the public sector.

The inauguration will be carried out by Public Health and Family Welfare Minister Prakash

Abitkar in the presence of Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde. Dr. Anjali Malpani said, "This is the first BMC-run municipal hospital to have a full-fledged IVF centre. We are working to bring down the cost of In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) to about ₹40,000-₹50,000 per cycle, compared to ₹2-3 lakh in private clinics, so that couples from lower-income groups who cannot afford private treatment have the possibility of becoming parents."

She explained that the centre has been established on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with the Malpani family contributing about ₹1 crore annually for the first five years. "Running an IVF unit requires continuous investment in laboratory media, injections, and equipment. These costs are not just doctors' fees but the



essentials needed to keep the clinic functioning. That is why we have committed to putting in about ₹1 crore every year for the first five years. I have already invested ₹1.25 crore this year, including equipment and interiors. The unit is 4,000 square feet and designed with state-of-the-art facilities," she said.

The centre will provide IVF, Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), and Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI). Applications have been made for approvals to expand into embryo freezing, sperm and egg banking. It will also serve as a training hub for gynecology residents and a research centre. "There are three aspects to this partnership: affordable care, teaching, and research. Residents will rotate through the unit and learn IVF procedures," Dr. Malpani said.

On February 18, KEM Hospital resumed offering Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) services after many years, with the first procedure performed on a 27-year-old woman from Sewri who had been trying to conceive for six years. State-run hospital Cama & Abless Hospital launched IVF services in 2024.

## The idea of neutral law

The standard foundational myth of political modernity portrays the modern State as the offspring of a linear trajectory of disenchantment. In this narrative, modern States—a Westphalian conception—resulted from a long-drawn process of subtraction: as societies modernised, they shed the baggage of religiosity and theology, of make-believe and mysticism, replacing reverence for the supernatural with the legitimacy of scientific certainty, purifying themselves in Popperian rationalism. The transformation into political modernity, in other terms, required a fundamental shift in the epistemic basis of what the polity held to be true—from the fountainhead of the transcendent and sublime to the headwaters of causality. The idea of an ordered, rational cosmos governed by divine providence and deliverance thus perished. With the collapse of this old moral and political order, the death of God in our immanent and temporal realm became inevitable.

A central anxiety of the incipient liberal secular State, bereft of a supreme source of moral law, lay in establishing the foundations of its own moral authority. While the State required—as it still does—civic virtue, solidarity and moral cohesion, it faced a dilemma. If it were to guarantee these on the basis of what had largely been a religious ethos, it risked ceasing to be secular. This was particularly so because religious arguments have always been fundamentally non-public, relying on authority in the form of revelation that cannot be shared by all reasonable agents. On the other hand, if the State were to provide only a broad skeletal procedure without replenishing the well of moral capital, it could become vulnerable to illiberal forces. Mere legal compulsion, procedural or otherwise, could never guarantee social cohesion. Yet, the moral fiber of constitutional rights and duties must originate somewhere. States addressed this dilemma by displacing religion with a democratic ethos, inventing a shared language of legitimacy supported by an origin story and a civil religion that were non-denominational, binding the populace to State's highest ideals. States, in other words, established a mythology around their creation—and often their constitutions—that endowed their existence with meaning and inspired a non-rational emotional response from their citizenry that has sustained them. Such foundational myths need not be historically accurate to be effective. What matters is that they answer the need for significance. They must confer meaning and explain why the nation exists, what it stands for, and what unique destiny it embodies. State and its machinery, however, are composed of individuals, each with distinct lived experiences, knowledge, conceptions of self and visions of destiny. Some may be religious, with deep convictions. Most possess the innate capacity to view the world collectively and in a detached manner, thinking in terms that transcend immediate experience and interest. Yet each individual remains situated in a particular place, with an irreducibly particular perspective. Nowhere is this tension more evident than in the judiciary. For the judge, it manifests with special force: the judicial role formally demands impartiality, that is, the application of law to facts without regard to personal preference. Yet, the judge inevitably has a perspective shaped by accidents of birth, religion, ideology, geography and time. He does not merely apply rules mechanically or exercise unblemished discretion. He engages in constructive interpretation, determining what the law requires by asking which interpretation presents the legal system in its best moral light. His decisions are inevitably informed by personal psychological predispositions. This alone, however, does not render him prejudiced, for all interpretation proceeds from within a historically determined horizon that shapes what counts as meaningful, acceptable, relevant or persuasive.

## A quantum leap is a distant dream

India's quantum computing ambitions present a study in strategic paradox

AMID the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, it's time to evaluate where India stands in the arena of frontier technologies — artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors, robotics, genomics, the Internet of Things and quantum computing, to name a few. China spent \$98 billion on AI in 2025, out of which the government expenditure was \$56 billion. Five US-based private companies — Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Meta and Oracle — will collectively invest \$700 billion in 2026. In comparison, the Indian government will spend \$1.2 billion over five years on its AI Mission.

China spent \$38 billion on semiconductors in 2025, while India has committed to spend \$0.12 billion in 2026-27 on the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0. The Union Budget has allocated an additional \$0.96 billion for the Modified Programme for Development of Semiconductor and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem. It is quite evident that India's outlays belie its rhetoric.

Now take the case of quantum computing, a fundamental fourth Industrial Revolution technology. India's quantum computing ambitions, articulated with considerable fanfare through the National Quantum Mission (NQM) and its Rs 6,000-crore (nearly \$670 million) outlay, present a study in strategic paradox.

On paper, India has acknowledged that quantum technologies are not merely a scientific frontier but the bedrock of 21st-century geopolitical power. In practice, the gap between this acknowledgment and the reality of India's R&D ecosystem is a bridge too far.

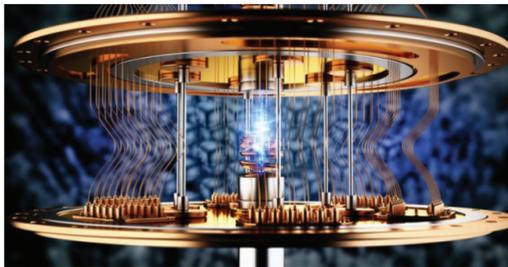
Between 2000 and 2018, India published around 1,700 papers on quantum technologies. China published around 12,000; the US about 13,000. When the metric shifts from quantity to quality, the proportion of papers in the top 10% most cited globally, India ranks 20th. China ranks third; the US is first. Only 9% of India's quantum computing publications penetrate this upper echelon, compared to 29.1% for the US and 14.6% for China. In patenting, the picture is even bleaker. Between 2015 and 2020, India filed 339 quantum patents. China filed 23,335, the US 8,935. India ranks ninth globally.

The NQM ambitiously targets a 50-1,000 physical qubit quantum computer by the end of the decade. This remains a chimera, unless we are prepared to confront the arithmetic of the present. India currently employs an estimated 5-10 principal investigators working on quantum computing hardware. For context, a single mid-tier American university lab often hosts more. These investigators support perhaps 300-400 PhD students across the entire quantum technology spectrum.

China's University of Science and Technology alone operates a Division of Quantum Physics and Quantum

Information with hundreds of researchers, multi-disciplinary teams of physicists, engineers and materials scientists working in integrated physical centres — not virtual hubs scattered across institutions with procedural handbrakes on every import.

Indian R&D labs import around 90% of the critical subsystems required for quantum computing: dilution refrigerators, high-purity silicon-germanium substrates, arbitrary waveform generators, specialised lasers and cryogenic components. Last year, Europe initiated a review of outward FDI in critical security technologies, with quantum among the top three areas under scrutiny. Export controls on quantum components are tightening globally. The US has already signalled that cryogenic systems are moving to controlled lists. India's response?



A procurement regime which mandates that Global Tender Enquiry (GTE) exemptions are still ad hoc.

The human capital crisis is deeper. India produces over 91,000 graduates annually in fields relevant to quantum technology. This places us second globally, behind only the EU. Yet this statistic masks a rot. These graduates are not being converted into quantum engineers. The reason is brutally simple: there are no jobs. Not in academia, where permanent faculty positions are stagnant and postdoctoral fellowships in quantum hardware are scarce. Not in the industry, where Indian IT services firms are building "quantum practices" that consist primarily of running Qiskit tutorials on IBM's cloud.

This funding fallacy is the heart of the matter. India's total NQM budget is around \$670 million over eight years. China's estimated investment is \$15 billion. Japan committed \$7.4 billion in 2025 alone. Germany, the UK, France and the Netherlands all outspend India manifold. We are attempting to build gods with tools we refuse to fund. You cannot build a 1,000-qubit superconducting processor on a diet of crumbs. Superconducting qubits require Josephson junction fabrication at nanometre precision, ultra-low-loss dielectrics and control

electronics with picosecond timing accuracy.

A nation that cannot fabricate its own qubits cannot secure its own data. Post-quantum cryptography is a mere protocol patch. If a fault-tolerant quantum computer emerges in the next decade, and the US, China and Europe are racing towards it, India's encrypted state secrets, financial infrastructure and military communications will be rendered transparent. The Indian armed forces currently rely on symmetric encryption and public key infrastructure that Shor's algorithm (a quantum algorithm for factoring integers) will eviscerate. The timeline for topological qubits, once dismissed as decades away, has compressed. The DRDO's DIA-CoEs (centres of excellence) are laudable initiatives, but they are not yet integrated into a national mission rhythm that forces transition from TRL3 to TRL7 (technology readiness levels) within defined timelines. In contrast, the Russian Skolkovo model, the European CERN Venture Connect and the US National Quantum Initiative's 14 research centres are operating systems for technological sovereignty. India's NQM hubs remain, in large part, virtual collections of existing grants rather than physical, co-located, multi-disciplinary foundries.

The procedural rot runs deep. The GTE process delays equipment procurement by two to six months. When a dilution refrigerator costs \$3 million and requires six months to install, a six-month procurement delay is a project killer. Maintenance contracts for imported lasers and cryostats are rarely pre-funded; equipment fails, and labs shut down for four months while components are shipped to Europe or Japan for repair. The most dangerous delusion is that quantum computing is a software problem. In fact, it is a materials science problem, a cryogenics problem, a microwave engineering problem, a semiconductor fabrication problem. India's failure in the field of semiconductors, despite prescient warnings dating back to the 1990s, is now being repeated on the quantum front. The Department of Space and ISRO succeeded because they built an integrated, mission-mode vertical. The Department of Atomic Energy succeeded because the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre controlled the fuel cycle. Quantum technology was handed to the Department of Science and Technology, which historically funds curiosity-driven research, not national security-driven engineering. The NQM is not a quantum leap but a down payment on a down payment. It cannot, at the current velocity, produce a 1,000-qubit computer, a satellite-based QKD (quantum key distribution) network spanning 2,000 km or a single-photon detector that competes with ID Quantique. The government must put its money where its mouth is.

## Made in China: Row over robotic dog is an eye-opener

The key lesson from the Galgotias University controversy is there must be no compromise on institutional credibility

THE controversy over a made-in-China robot is embarrassing for a nation that aspires to become an AI powerhouse. Greater Noida-based Galgotias University was told to vacate its stall at the India AI Impact Summit after one of its professors apparently tried to pass off Unitree Go2 — a robotic dog made by a pioneering Chinese company — as its own innovation. The university eventually apologised, attributing the unsavoury episode to an "ill-informed" representative, while IT Secretary S Krishnan asserted that the government did not want any exhibitor to display items that were not their own. Despite the exercise in damage control, the incident has undoubtedly tainted the high-profile event. Such forums are not marketing expos. There should have been diligent scrutiny of various exhibitors by the organisers, considering that this was an international platform designed to showcase indigenous innovation and



India's AI ambitions. The university has said that it

remains "firmly committed to academic integrity, transparency and responsible representations of its work", but the key lesson from this brouhaha is obvious: there must be no compromise on institutional credibility. There is nothing inherently problematic about universities using globally available tools, including Chinese-made hardware, to teach AI programming. In fact, exposure to international technology is often indispensable for learning. However, attribution cannot be dispensed with at any cost.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has affirmed that India has the talent and entrepreneurial energy to establish itself as an AI creator, not just as a consumer. The country cannot become a global leader in this fast-developing field if its institutions give short shrift to transparency and rigorous honesty. Researchers, educators and innovators must prepare themselves for the long haul rather than banking on shortcuts and false claims.

## Cong-DMK rift resurfaces ahead of Tamil Nadu polls

While a break-up might cost the DMK some seats, it is the Congress that stands to lose more.

WHAT'S an election season without a problem in an alliance? As Tamil Nadu gears up for the state Assembly polls in a couple of months, a Congress-DMK spat that seemed to be heading towards a break-up appears to have blown over for now, but the issue at the heart of the very public clash still hovers over the Secular Progressive Alliance: why can't those who fight elections together in Tamil Nadu agree to share power in a coalition government if voted to office? What began as the Congress asserting this demand to its Dravidian ally in the state came close to breaking point for a longstanding alliance, delaying seat-sharing talks. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was the first to raise it in January, when DMK deputy general secretary K Kanimozhi met him for seat-sharing talks. After Kanimozhi reportedly said a firm "no" at a stormy meeting, Gandhi did not rake up the demand again, but prominent voices in the party close to the central leadership picked up the baton. Earlier this month, Chief Minister MK Stalin reiterated at a public forum that the DMK was not for a coalition government in Tamil Nadu. But the matter did not end there. The argument being put forward for power-sharing is that the Congress has stood with the DMK all these years, even providing unconditional outside support when the DMK formed a minority government in 2006, but suffering ignominy and parliamentary defeat in 2014 "because of the DMK" — a veiled reference to the alleged 2G scam. So, it's payback time.

The DMK's response is that a coalition government at the Centre and Dravidian rule in the state is the ideal formula for the health of federalism and the Dravidian model. Second, the Congress has benefited by winning seats in both the Assembly and Parliament due to the alliance, and that the very idea of a coalition puts off Tamil Nadu

voters due to concerns about stability. The DMK believes it has experienced popular rejection due to a power-sharing agreement. In 1980, on the back of a sweeping win in the Lok Sabha election, including in Tamil Nadu, the Congress-DMK believed it could repeat the performance in the state Assembly election. The MGR-led AIADMK government was dismissed. The Congress and the DMK agreed on a coalition government. The alliance lost to the AIADMK-led alliance. The Congress could have pushed for power-sharing in 2006, when the DMK did not win a majority. But Sonia Gandhi and other party leaders were disinclined. The Congress may have believed it had greater leverage by offering outside support to a minority DMK government, but that lost opportunity is being aired as a bad decision now. It's not just the DMK that is against power-sharing in the state. The AIADMK, too, does not believe in power-sharing coalitions. Like the DMK, it has fought elections in alliance with national and state parties, and been part of ruling coalitions in Delhi since MGR's support for the Janata government. But never in the state. AIADMK leader Edappadi Palaniswami was quick to deny any arrangement for a coalition rule with the BJP when Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced after persuading the party into an alliance that the "NDA" would form the next government in Tamil Nadu. With Congress Member of Parliament Manickam Tagore and All-India Professionals' Congress chair Praveen Chakravarty pressing on with the demand, it seemed the party was going for broke, the TNCC president's frantic reprimands notwithstanding.

The perception grew that this was more than posturing for a higher share of seats, and that the Congress was

opportunisticly escalating the matter at a time when the entry of actor Vijay has introduced more fluidity than usual in Tamil Nadu's political scene. His Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has not joined any alliance yet.

As the rhetoric escalated, Stalin conveyed that the DMK



was not afraid of going it alone. The sudden Rs 5,000 payouts to 1.32 crore women — a three-month advance to the beneficiaries of the Rs 1,000 universal basic income scheme for women, plus a bonus "summer allowance" of Rs 2,000 — may have been as much a gearing-up for a possible break with the Congress as a pre-emptive move against an anticipated Election Commission of India strike at the scheme. Stalin is also banking on the state's economy, headlining the government's target of a \$1-trillion economy by 2031, its growth rate of 11.19% in 2024-2025, and welfare programmes. Over the last two years, the DMK leader has also been focussed on positioning the contest in Tamil Nadu as one of the ideologies — between the

Dravidian model and Hindutva, cultural nationalism, federalism and constitutionalism. On Wednesday, he tabled the report of his government-appointed High-Level Committee on Union-State Relations, among whose recommendations is a paring down of the Governor's powers. DMK supporters are clear that while a break-up with the Congress might cost the party some seats, it is the Congress that stands to lose more. In every election that the two parties have fought together, the national party, which has no organisation to speak of in Tamil Nadu, has been fully dependent on its Dravidian ally and its well-oiled machinery of cadres for smooth vote transfers. With its winnability, the DMK has helped keep Congress alive in Tamil Nadu. The INDIA bloc's biggest haul of 40 seats was from Tamil Nadu. Over the last few days, when a split in the alliance seemed imminent, social media lit up with speculation of a Congress-TVK alliance.

Sections within the Congress and among Vijay's fans want this. Some believe if the two joined hands, they would "sweep" Tamil Nadu. It is anyone's guess how the Congress would gain from a party that has more star-struck fans than workers on the ground, and whose leader's savoury complex is more suited for movies, in which the hero takes all, than for the rough and tumble of electoral politics.

Seat-sharing talks are next on the agenda and are expected to begin next week. How that goes will show the mood in both the Congress and DMK after a bruising first round on power-sharing. The Rajya Sabha elections in mid-March will be another test for the alliance.

## Indore contaminated water: Vijayvargiya says many Bhagirathpura residents are 'uneducated'

**Bhopal.(Agency)**

With people still mourning the deaths of 35 people due to contaminated drinking water, Madhya Pradesh Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya on Friday added insult to injury for the people of his Assembly constituency of Bhagirathpura in Indore, saying that many residents of the locality are "uneducated", which makes it difficult for the municipal authorities to carry out the intended works.

Reportedly, at least 35 people have died due to the consumption of contaminated drinking water of Narmada river supplied by the Indore Municipal Corporation through taps in the households of Bhagirathpura.

Vijayvargiya's controversial and derogatory remarks intended against the already bereaved people of Bhagirathpura came amidst heated discussions on the Indore incident in the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly in its ongoing budget session.

Vijayvargiya compared Bhagirathpura to the Dharavi slums of Mumbai. He said Bhagirathpura is a smaller version of Dharavi.

The minister added that Bhagirathpura is an 80-90-year old locality and many residents are illiterate and uneducated. He reasoned that it makes it very difficult for the municipal authorities and workers to carry out the intended works there.

Vijayvargiya, although, conceded that residents had lodged complaints in the past about contaminated drinking water and unhygienic conditions. He also admitted that the tragedy occurred due to negligence of authorities. Bhagirathpura comes under the Indore-1 Assembly seat, from where Vijayvargiya is the MLA. He has been elected to the State Legislative Assembly seven times.

## MP: Congress leader Hemant Katare resigns as DyLoP

**Bhopal.(Agency)**

In a surprise development, amidst the opposition Congress aggressively cornering the ruling BJP in the ongoing budget session of the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly, Deputy Leader of Opposition Hemant Katare tendered his resignation from the post on Friday late evening. In his resignation, Katare cited reasons like not being able to give ample time to his constituency Ater in Bhind, as well as to his family commitments.

Sources quoting state party organisational general secretary Sanjay Kamble said that Katare submitted his resignation to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee chief Jitu Patwari and Leader of Opposition Umang Singh. Sources mentioned that Kamble categorically clarified that the resignation pertains only to the post and not to party membership, and that Katare was, is and will continue to remain with the Congress party with full commitment. Kamble was also quoted saying that Katare will be asked to continue and his resignation will be turned down.

The final decision to accept or reject Katare's resignation from deputy LoP post, rests with the state Congress president and the party's top leadership.

## Union Health Minister to launch Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria (Td) vaccine at CRI Kasauli

**Solan.(Agency)**

Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare J.P. Nadda is to launch the Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria (Td) vaccine at the Central Research Institute (CRI), Kasauli on Saturday. Institute's spokesman said that extensive scientific evidence indicates that widespread childhood immunization with DPT group of vaccines has significantly reduced the incidence of diphtheria and tetanus in many countries. However, antibody levels may decline over time especially in the case of Diphtheria, necessitating booster doses.

In view of this in 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended that countries transition from Tetanus Toxoid (TT) vaccine to Td vaccine. This recommendation was reaffirmed in the WHO Tetanus Vaccine Position Paper (2017) and through deliberations of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) in 2002 and 2016.

The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, has also recommended replacing the TT vaccine with the Td vaccine in India's immunization programme for all age groups, including pregnant women.

This transition aims to extend and strengthen protection against diphtheria in addition to tetanus, while sustaining the gains achieved in maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination and routine immunization activities.

## Shimla MC budget: House passes a Rs 688-crore annual budget for FY 2026-27 in the absence of the Opposition

**Shimla.(Agency)**

The Shimla Municipal Corporation on Friday passed a Rs 688-crore annual budget for the financial year 2026-27 after BJP councillors walked out of the House, raising slogans against Mayor Surinder Chauhan and questioning the legality of his tenure's extension.

Soon after the mayor began reading his budget speech, Bittu Kumar, Saroj Thakur and Kusum Thakur demanded that the mayor produce the government notification confirming his tenure extension. Other BJP councillors including, Asha Sharma, Kamlesh Mehta, Kalyan Dhiman, Rachna Jhinna, Nisha Thakur and Meena Chauhan alleged that he was presenting the budget in an "unconstitutional" manner. They also argued that his original term had ended on November 5, 2025, and that the ordinance enabling the extension had lapsed.

After staging a walkout, the councillors met Deputy Commissioner Anupam Kashyap and submitted a memorandum against the mayor's continuation in office. On October 25 last year, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led

Cabinet approved the extension of the tenure of mayors and deputy mayors of municipal corporations from two-and-a-half years to five years. The decision benefited Surinder Chauhan and Deputy Mayor Uma Kaushal — both elected



in July 2023.

The BJP councillors cited the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was passed in the Vidhan Sabha's winter session. However, it has not yet received assent from Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla. The Bill was again passed during the ongoing Budget session and sent for the Governor's consent.

Chauhan told The Indian Express that the protest was a "political propaganda", and the matter was sub judice. The Opposition should have participated in a "historic" Rs 688-crore surplus budget, up from Rs 188 crore last year. He said the increase in the budget size was largely due to scheme-based funding. Surinder Chauhan is an elected councillor from Chotta Shimla Ward, which was once represented by Sukhu.

The Asian Development Bank has sanctioned Rs 66 crore for the construction of a world-class wellness centre, for which 87 bighas of land were procured near Tara Devi in Shimla. The mayor also announced Rs 34 crore for the development of a municipal colony.

Among welfare measures, Chauhan said health employees of the civic body would be provided an insurance cover of Rs 40 lakh in case of death, with the premium to be borne annually by the corporation. He also announced that sanitary napkins would be made available in all public toilets and feeding rooms for lactating mothers would be set up at Ridge and Mall Road.

## ED files complaint against 5 in Rs 7 cr 'digital arrest' money laundering case

**The ED also said the proceeds of crime were transferred in a systematic manner to multiple mule accounts to facilitate layering and concealment.**

**Jalandhar.(Agency)**

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Jalandhar Zonal Office, has filed a prosecution complaint against five accused persons in connection with a money laundering probe linked to the alleged "Digital Arrest" case of a Ludhiana-based businessman. The complaint was filed under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, before the Special Court (PMLA), Jalandhar, on February 19, 2026.

The five accused include Rumi Kalita, Arpit Rathore, Anand Chaudhary, Atanu Chaudhary and his firm M/s Frozenman Warehousing & Logistic. The agency alleged that the fraudsters

impersonated officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) "digitally arrested" S P Oswal and extorted Rs 7 crore from him. The funds were initially routed through the bank accounts of M/s Rigglo Ventures Private Limited and M/s Frozenman Warehousing & Logistics. An APK-based application was reportedly used to route the crime proceeds.

The investigation was initiated on the basis of an FIR registered by the Cyber Crime Police Station, Ludhiana, under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, the agency said. The probe revealed that proceeds of crime generated from at least eight other cybercrime cases were credited into the bank

accounts of M/s Frozenman Warehousing & Logistics on August 28, 2024. Investigators found the bank accounts of the firm



were allegedly controlled by Rumi and Rathore.

Rathore is alleged to have arranged multiple mule bank accounts in India and abroad and have received

commissions in the form of virtual digital assets credited to his Binance account.

The ED also said the proceeds of crime were transferred in a systematic manner to multiple mule accounts to facilitate layering and concealment.

Earlier, the ED had provisionally attached assets worth Rs 1.76 crore in the case. Searches were conducted on January 31, 2025, and December 22 and 31, 2025. Rumi was arrested on December 23, 2025, while

Rathore was arrested on December 31, 2025. Both are currently under judicial custody. Further investigation in the matter is underway.

## Inspected over 2,000 govt schools since assuming office, says Bains

**Amritsar.(Agency)**

Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains conducted a surprise inspection at Government Senior Secondary School, Jhita Kalan, on Friday. During his visit, he announced that he has completed ground inspections of over 2,000 government schools across Punjab since assuming office, setting what he termed an 'unprecedented benchmark in the state's history'.

Bains said, "I have set a new record by conducting ground visits to more than 2,000 government schools across the state since I assumed office. This marks the first time in Punjab's history that an Education Minister has undertaken such an extensive, grassroots-level review of the education system."

He said, "There is no district left from Pathankot to Fazilka, Ferozepur to Mohali. This is my passion, this is my obsession. There are 20,000 schools in Punjab, and I am on a mission."

He interacted with staff and students, and claimed that he reviewed the standards of education and management at the school and assessed the progress of the 'Samarth' program — a flagship initiative aimed at addressing the learning crisis in primary

classes. Bains said, "Through the 'Samarth' program, we identified the children (those unable to read or write) and worked on them. Where we have good teachers, the results are excellent." The education minister warned that strict action would be taken against educators who fail to discharge their responsibilities. Bains also directed officials to expedite ongoing development projects to sustain the momentum of reforms being carried out under "Punjab Sikhya Kranti".



The education minister on Friday also led a School Education Department delegation to the India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. There he held interactions with global technology firms including Google, Deloitte, Intel, OpenAI, NVIDIA and Dell. Bains also held detailed discussions with education and AI ecosystem pioneers, including Wadhvani AI, gnani.ai and Bodh.ai. The delegation also engaged with the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and the Ministry of Education, gaining insights on national AI strategy, digital public infrastructure and governance models that could be adapted for Punjab's classroom.

## Himachal ministers meet AICC leadership, push for RDG Restoration; BJP criticised for staying silent

**New Delhi/Shimla.(Agency)**

Intensifying its campaign against the discontinuation of the Revenue Deficit Grant (RDG), the Himachal Pradesh Council of Ministers met the All India Congress Committee (AICC) parliamentary leadership in New Delhi and urged the party to raise the issue of the discontinuation of the RDG in the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh, Deputy Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister Chander Kumar, and Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) President Vinay Kumar met AICC President, General Secretary K C Venugopal, state in-charge Rajani Patil, and other parliamentary leaders to highlight the potential financial impact on the state.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Agnihotri said the Council of Ministers had resolved to seek active intervention of Congress MPs to highlight the adverse impact of the 16th Finance Commission's

recommendation to discontinue RDG to 17 states, including Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

After the meeting, HPCC leader Agnihotri said the 16th Finance Commission's decision to discontinue RDG to 17 states, including Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland, would severely undermine fiscal stability.

"Himachal had received nearly Rs 50,000 crore under the 15th Finance Commission. Without RDG, the state faces a revenue gap of nearly 13 percent, while Nagaland could face a 17 percent shortfall," he said. He added that narrowing fiscal space under the GST regime, combined with the withdrawal of compensation and reduced borrowing limits, has strained the state's financial autonomy.

He said the grant had served as a crucial bridge between revenue receipts and committed expenditure and its withdrawal would severely undermine the state's financial stability.

## CAG report flags safety, noise, and financial irregularities in Lucknow metro

**Lucknow.(Agency)**

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has highlighted serious anomalies in the Lucknow Metro, including passenger safety risks, noise pollution, violation of government norms, and financial mismanagement. The report on Lucknow Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC), covering 2017-2022 and tabled in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Friday, revealed that the metro tracks are below Indian Railways standards, compromising the safety of the passengers and failed to renew the interim speed certificate. IIT Kanpur found that track hardness at depots ranged from 229-242 BHN and on main lines from 291-308 BHN, below prescribed norms, and noted that the interim speed certificate was not renewed, putting passenger safety at risk.

The report says that the rail tracks on the Lucknow Metro are inferior to the prescribed standards. The Metro Corporation has also put passenger safety at risk by operating the metro without renewing the speed limit certificate. Simply put, the metro rails were

installed with less robust tracks than expected, which could lead to faster wear of the tracks and train wheels, resulting in higher repair costs in the future. IIT Kanpur also tested the metro's noise levels and found that, while the international standard is 65 decibels, the noise level inside the stationary metro at Munshipulia station exceeded 76 decibels. Even when the metro was in operation, the noise level exceeded permissible limits.

The noise level between Munshipulia and KD Singh Babu Stadium reached 83 decibels, while the standard is 75 decibels. This means that the noise levels inside exceeded international standards, whether the metro was stationary or moving.

The CAG also noted that the company failed to renew its interim speed certificate. Issued in March 2017 with a five-year validity period, this certificate determines the safe speed at which a metro train can operate and the extent of wear and tear on its wheels. In short, failing to renew the certificate unnecessarily puts passenger safety at risk. The report further



says that Phase 1 of the Lucknow Metro Rail Project included 22 stations over a distance of 22.88 kilometers. According to the DPR, Mahanagar station was projected to be ranked third in terms of daily passenger capacity in 2015 and second in 2020.

However, the Metro Rail Corporation only built 21 stations and excluded the Mahanagar Metro Station from the project. The company violated the DPR, MOU, financing agreement, and project agreement by removing the Mahanagar Station from the

project without obtaining permission from the Government of India.

The CAG has also acknowledged that tube wells were installed to supply the water required for the Lucknow Metro. For this, registration with the Ground Water Department and obtaining a NOC (No Objection Certificate) were mandatory. However, the company failed to register with the Ground Water Department or the Central Ground Water Authority. It also failed to obtain a NOC for groundwater extraction from 2013 to 2023. Besides the government order, the contractor was required to obtain additional performance guarantees, but the company failed to do so. Despite awarding the contract at an 11.50% lower rate, the guarantees totaling ₹75.30 crore were not obtained. An advance of Rs 31.74 crore was given to the contractor for machinery and equipment, even though the company already had the necessary machinery and ignoring the terms of the contract, irregular payment of Rs 14.01 crore was made to the contractor.

# Centre reconstitutes high-power panel led by Home Secretary to ease Delhi's traffic woes; first meet on Feb 26

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a bid to unplug the Capital's choked roads, the Centre has reconstituted a high-power committee led by Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan.

The first meeting of the panel is slated for February 26 at the Kartavya Bhavan, said officials. A source in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said a similar committee, chaired by the then Union Home Secretary in September 2018, had offered a slew of recommendations, which were eventually implemented.

However, an increase in the population and vehicular volume over time in the city reignited the crisis, prompting the reconstitution of the committee. "The panel, comprising top officials from key ministries and agencies, will propose and implement solutions over the next six months to three years. Its formation comes as daily gridlocks affect lakhs of commuters, with vehicle numbers surging while traffic police strength dwindles, undermining the Delhi government's public transport push," the source said.



Apart from Home Secretary Govind Mohan, other key members include Delhi Chief Secretary Rajeev Verma, Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golchha, DDA Vice-Chairman Dr N Saravana Kumar, NDMC Chairman Keshav Chandra (IAS), and Delhi

Metro's Managing Director Dr Vikas Kumar, among others.

Sharing some of the key points of their meeting, the source said the focus will be on enhancing the traffic mobility, improving the road design, boosting public transport,

promoting use of electric vehicles, integrating multi-modal transport and upgrading parking payments via online modes.

To ensure smooth movement for commuters amid the heavy flow of foreign dignitaries

and VVIPs, over 7,500 personnel of the Delhi Traffic Police and the local district police have been deployed to manage traffic amid the ongoing AI Summit at Bharat Mandapam and nearby areas in the Capital. Despite these efforts, residents are still facing severe traffic congestion in Central Delhi and commuters are taking nearly an hour to cover just two to three kilometres.

"The MHA has directed the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to study intelligent traffic management systems of different states and union territories, including the pilot project in Chennai to create an all-India ITMS, incorporating best features of all," the source said.

The Union Home Ministry is also learnt to have instructed the police chiefs across states, union territories and Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) that non-payment of challans should be linked to non-renewal of driving licences. The directions were issued after the matter was discussed at the DGP/IGP Conference in Raipur last November.

## Cow vigilante Bittu Bajranghi reaches Aligarh with baarat, finds bride missing, realises he was duped

New Delhi.(Agency)

Ready to tie the knot, cow vigilante Bittu Bajranghi (47) — an accused in the 2023 communal riots in Haryana's Nuh — arrived in Aligarh with his baarat on February 7, only to find the venue deserted. Surprised, he called up the woman he was supposed to marry. The woman who picked up his call also appeared to be surprised. She told Bajranghi that she was unaware that she was supposed to marry him.

It was then that Bajranghi realised he had been cheated by a man and his accomplices who had taken money from him on the pretext of fixing his marriage, police said on Friday.

An FIR was registered at the Saran police station in Faridabad on Thursday against accused Bunt, Rani, and others, under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for cheating Bajranghi of Rs 30,000.

The alleged bride-to-be was not identified by the police but she is believed to be involved in the fraud, officers added.

In a police complaint, Bajranghi has alleged that he had told Bunt, a relative of his neighbour, that he wanted to get married. Bunt allegedly introduced him to a woman named Rani, who promised to help find a suitable match. Bajranghi alleged that he was taken to Aligarh thrice last year to meet prospective brides but he did not approve of any. Later, Bunt sent him a photograph of a young woman whom he liked, said police. On September 5, 2025, Bunt and Rani allegedly brought the woman and her family to Bajranghi's residence in Faridabad.

The wedding was fixed for February 7 — the rituals were to take place at a temple, Bajranghi was told, said police. Bajranghi allegedly also transferred Rs 30,000 to the accused on February 6 to purchase clothes for the bride-to-be. "Even at his (Faridabad) house, decorations and other preparations were in place to welcome the bride," a police spokesperson said. "We are looking into the accounts where the money was transferred, and will then conduct raids accordingly," the spokesperson added. Calls to Bajranghi for a comment went unanswered.

## JNUSU calls for VC's resignation after her 'casteist' statement: 'Can't permanently play victim card... Was done for Blacks, same was brought for Dalits here'

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) on Friday (February 20) demanded the resignation of Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit for making allegedly "blatantly casteist statements" during a media interview published this week. The union pointed to the VC's criticism of the new equity regulations notified by the University Grants Commission, which she described in the interview as being "totally unnecessary", "irrational", and "wokeism". "You cannot progress by being permanently a victim or playing the victim card. This was done for the Blacks; the same thing was brought for Dalits here...", Pandit said. The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, which was notified on January 13, sought to address discrimination, including caste-based discrimination, in



higher education institutions. The Supreme Court stayed the regulations on January 29, saying they could trigger "very sweeping consequences" and had the potential to "divide society".

"We are shocked at the blatantly casteist statements made by the VC on a podcast," JNUSU said, alleging that Pandit's remarks reflected "the chronology of injustice, caste supremacy, and perpetual systemic exclusion in universities and public spaces". The union has called for a "national protest day" on Saturday (February 21) to call for Pandit's resignation. The VC made the statements during a 52-minute interview given to The Sunday Guardian, which was published as a podcast on February 16. She spoke at length about student protests on campus, the recent rustication of JNUSU office bearers, and the role of the Left in JNU, apart from the now-stayed UGC equity regulations.

## Zepto delivery man killed after car mows him down in West Delhi, driver arrested

New Delhi.(Agency)

A 25-year-old delivery worker from quick-commerce platform Zepto was killed after a car allegedly hit his electric scooter from behind in West Delhi's Tilak Nagar, in the early hours of Friday.

According to police, a PCR call regarding the accident was received at Tilak Nagar police station at 3.26 am.

Police rushed to the spot near Subhash Nagar Metro station signal on Najafgarh Road, towards Rajouri Garden, where two vehicles involved in the accident were found.

The injured rider, identified as Hem Shakar, a resident of Raghuraj Nagar, had already been taken to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital. Doctors declared him brought dead. He was working as a

Zepto delivery worker and was on duty at the time of the incident, police said.

A police officer said initial findings suggested that the Hyundai Verna car



allegedly hit the e-scooter from the rear. The accused driver, Mohit Kumar, 27, a resident of Najafgarh, was taken into custody at the scene. The car has been

seized. An FIR has been registered and further legal action is underway. Police have collected CCTV footage and recorded statements of people at the spot. The car driver's blood sample has been sent for testing to ascertain if he was under the influence of the alcohol, an officer said.

The incident comes days after a 23-year-old man was killed after an SUV, which was being driven by a juvenile, hit the youth's two-wheeler in Dwarka on February 13.

The Delhi Police apprehended the errant juvenile driver and seized his vehicle. During the probe, police found that his Mahindra Scorpio was being driven at high speed, leading to the fatal accident.

## 'Terror threat' near Delhi's Red Fort: Police tighten security across key temples and markets

This comes months after the deadly bombing in November outside the historic fort that left 13 dead.

New Delhi.(Agency)

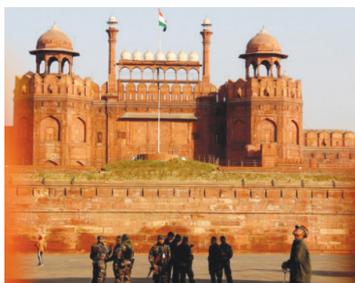
Security agencies have issued an alert about a possible terrorist attack in major cities across India, including at a temple in Delhi's Chandni Chowk. Following the alert, Delhi Police officers said that security has been tightened in the market area and around the Red Fort. According to a senior officer, although the national capital remains on high alert, security has been increased around major temples and markets across the city.

The alert from the intelligence agencies read, "According to a recent input, Lashkar-e-Taiba is planning IED attacks across big cities in India, including at a temple in Chandni Chowk area of Old Delhi, to avenge the attack at a mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan on February 6, 2026."

The alert comes months after the massive

blast outside the Red Fort. On November 10, 2025, a car laden with explosives exploded near the Red Fort, killing 13 people and injuring around a dozen others.

The Delhi Police registered an FIR and



later transferred the probe to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on the directions of the Ministry of

Home Affairs (MHA).

The main attacker was identified as Umar Nabi, and he was allegedly the one driving the Hyundai i20 that exploded.

Apart from Nabi, two other members of the now-busted Jaish-e-Mohammed terror module — Pahalgam resident Dr Muzammil Ganai and Lucknow resident Dr Shaheen Shahid Ansari — were working at Al Falah University in Faridabad. They were arrested by the NIA. The other members of the module who were arrested include Dr Adeel Rather, who was employed at a private hospital in Saharanpur, and Kashmir cleric Mufti Irfan Wagay. Later, over a dozen people, were arrested for hatching a conspiracy to carry out terrorist activities in the country.

On February 13, the Delhi court granted 45 more days to the NIA to file a chargesheet in the case. The NIA had sought an extension of 90 days after three months of investigation.



of the area for over 30 years, said, "English humein aati nahi hai. Ek sign karne se galat ho jaata hai sab... par phir bhi humne kar diya (We don't know English. One sign can ruin it all but we did it anyway)," he said, adding that he and many fellow residents signed documents served by officials on Thursday.

Residents added that officials indicated they would return on Monday to complete formalities. The visits by officials, they said, date back to January 2024, when authorities conducted what was described as a survey to determine the number of residents living in the clusters.

Families said they have to pay monthly instalments of Rs. 5,000 to gain ownership of the allotted flats and the livelihood opportunities near the new site remain uncertain. Sonu Yadav, a momo vendor who operates outside the DID Camp, asked, "Yahan bikri ho jaati hai. Wahan kaun khareedega mere momos? (I earn my livelihood here... Who will buy my momos there?)"

## Faridabad fire death toll reaches 5: Firefighter, cop among latest casualties

Three victims died at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, where they were undergoing treatment, on Friday and Saturday

Faridabad.(Agency)

The death toll from the devastating fire and series of explosions at industrial units in Faridabad's Mujesar area rose to five after a firefighter, a policeman and another man succumbed to severe burn injuries while undergoing treatment in Delhi, officials said Saturday.

Firefighter Bhuvu Chand (45), attached to the NIT fire station, died at Safdarjung Hospital between 2.30 pm and 3 pm Friday. He had suffered critical burns while battling the blaze alongside colleague Ranvir on February 16.

"Ranvir continues to remain critical and on ventilator. Chand's condition was serious but he was able to talk till Wednesday when I had gone to meet him. But on Thursday morning, he had to be put on ventilator support. Both were on contract. Their families will get compensation as per state policy; details

have been sent to Chandigarh," Fire Safety Officer Rakesh Yadav told. The second victim, sub-inspector Ravi Chand, passed early Saturday morning, police said.

"SI Ravi Chand, son of Nawab Singh, and a resident of Kyodak village in UP's Kaithal district, was posted at Mujesar police station. He succumbed to his injuries during treatment at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, around 7.30 am," a Faridabad police spokesperson said.

His family will be entitled to applicable compensation for a police official who died on duty, the spokesperson added. The other victim, Brijpal (38), died during treatment at Safdarjung Hospital on Saturday at 7.40 am, the police

spokesperson said.

Hailing from Hamirpur district in UP, police said Brijpal was living on rent in Jivan Nagar, Faridabad Sector 54.



Brijpal was a worker at a nearby factory in Mujesar, but police await confirmation from family, sources said. Police said he likely rushed to help when the fire broke

out, sustaining severe burns.

On Thursday, two of the injured had succumbed to burn injuries while undergoing treatment at AIIMS Delhi, police said. They were identified as Abhishek Monga (35), a resident of Sector 23 and co-owner of Kalkaji Lubricant Trading Company, and Pradeep Kumar (35), a resident of Sanjay Colony. While Kumar's neighbours claimed he worked with Monga, police are still awaiting official confirmation from his family in this regard.

Faridabad Police spokesperson, SI Yashpal Yadav, said the shop was owned by Abhishek Monga and his father Vijay Monga (65). An FIR had been registered at the Mujesar police station against the owners and managers of both units under charges of voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous means.

NEWS BOX

**Floyd Mayweather does retirement U-turn, to return to pro-boxing after Mike Tyson bout**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Floyd Mayweather Jr. has revealed his intention to resume professional boxing, moving beyond his recent series of exhibition bouts. The announcement comes as Mayweather prepares to share the ring with Mike Tyson in a tentatively scheduled exhibition match for April 2026 in Congo. This development marks a significant shift for the former champion, who has not participated in a professional contest since his retirement in 2017 after defeating Conor McGregor and securing a 50-0 record. Mayweather, 48, officially hung up his gloves following his 2017 victory over McGregor, where he achieved a tenth-round TKO in a widely viewed crossover fight. Since then, he has remained active through exhibitions against a variety of opponents, including professional fighters, MMA competitors, and celebrities.

His latest outing took place in August 2024 in Mexico, where Mayweather faced John Gotti III, the grandson of the well-known crime figure John Gotti, maintaining his public profile but not affecting his undefeated professional record. In 2025,



Mayweather confirmed signing a contract to fight Mike Tyson, 59, in what is expected to be a major boxing event. The match brings together two of the sport's most recognised figures, whose combined ages total 107 years. However, Mayweather has suggested this encounter could signal a transition back to professional competition. **WHAT MAYWEATHER SAID ABOUT HIS RETURN?**

The boxing great said that he still has it in him to create more records in the sport.

"I still have what it takes to set more records in the sport of boxing," Mayweather said in a statement. "From my upcoming Mike Tyson event to my next professional fight afterwards - no one will generate a bigger gate, have a larger global broadcast audience and generate more money with each event - than my events. And I plan to keep doing it."

**Abhishek Sharma fires up India teammates before Super 8s clash vs SA**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Abhishek Sharma may not have opened his account in this T20 World Cup, but in Ahmedabad, he made sure his presence was felt. On the eve of India's Super 8 opener against South Africa, it was the young left-hander who injected energy into the camp with a stirring Punjabi war cry during training at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

As the squad gathered in a tight huddle under lights on Friday, a video shared by the BCCI captured Abhishek stepping into the middle. He delivered a brief, charged-up speech before finishing with "Jo Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akaal," drawing an instant roar from



teammates and support staff. The context made the moment more compelling. India and South Africa, finalists in 2024, meet again on February 22, this time in Ahmedabad. The Proteas, led by Aiden Markram, come in with strong momentum and quiet motivation. For India, unbeaten so far, the margins only get tighter from here. For Abhishek personally, the war cry contrasted sharply with his numbers in the ongoing T20 World Cup. The opener has registered ducks against the USA, Pakistan and the Netherlands, and missed the Namibia clash due to illness. Picked for his fearless approach at the top, he has not yet found rhythm with the bat.

Yet, the mood around him inside the nets suggested anything but panic. He spent extended time with head coach Gautam Gambhir during the session, working through technical details. Gambhir was seen explaining finer points, while Abhishek listened intently before heading into a high-catch drill and then back to batting.

**INDIA BACK ABHISHEK DURING RUN SLUMP**

Despite the lean patch, the team management has shown no signs of doubt. Bowling coach Morne Morkel dismissed suggestions of internal discussions about Abhishek's place in the XI.

**Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni admits anti-gay slur at Vinicius, denies racist abuse**

**Benfica winger Gianluca Prestianni reportedly admitted to using a homophobic slur at Vinicius Junior while denying racist abuse. UEFA's investigation is ongoing, with severe disciplinary consequences possible if discriminatory conduct is confirmed.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Benfica winger Gianluca Prestianni has presented his account to UEFA following the explosive incident involving Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior in Lisbon this week. In what many have described as a bizarre line of defence, the 20-year-old has reportedly denied racism, while admitting to using an anti-gay slur instead. UEFA has opened a formal investigation into the moment that overshadowed Real Madrid's 1-0 win at the Estadio da Luz. Shortly after Vinicius scored the decisive goal, he approached referee Francois Letexier alleging that he had been racially abused. The match was halted for close to ten minutes as UEFA's anti-discrimination protocol was activated. According to ESPN, Prestianni has

already given evidence to investigators. The Argentine reportedly stated that he did not use the word "mono" - Spanish for monkey - but instead directed a homophobic insult in Spanish at the Brazilian forward. While the clarification shifts the category of the alleged abuse, it does little to reduce the gravity of the situation under UEFA's rules, which treat all discriminatory language as serious misconduct.

Real Madrid have formally submitted what the club described as all available evidence to UEFA to support Vinicius' complaint. Several teammates, including Kylian Mbappe and Aurelien Tchouameni, publicly backed the Brazilian, saying they heard offensive remarks during the altercation. Benfica have stood by Prestianni, rejecting accusations of racism and suggesting the situation has been misrepresented. Television footage captured Prestianni speaking while covering his mouth, a gesture that intensified scrutiny and fuelled debate over what was said. No clear audio has surfaced, but UEFA has appointed a disciplinary inspector to gather statements and evidence before the case is reviewed by



its commission. With the second leg set for February 25 in Madrid, UEFA is expected to move quickly in reaching a decision.

**WHAT DID PRESTIANNI DO?**

The flashpoint occurred minutes after Vinicius' goal. The Brazilian immediately alerted the referee, claiming Prestianni had called him a racist slur. The referee responded by stopping play and initiating the governing body's anti-racism protocol.

According to ESPN's reporting, Prestianni denied using a racist insult but admitted to

uttering a homophobic slur in Spanish. Even if racism is ruled out, UEFA regulations classify any discriminatory remark - whether racial, homophobic or otherwise, as a punishable offence.

**WHAT PUNISHMENTS CAN PRESTIANNI FACE?**

If UEFA determines that discriminatory language was used, Prestianni faces a minimum 10-match suspension from UEFA competitions. Additional sanctions could be imposed depending on the severity and interpretation of the findings.

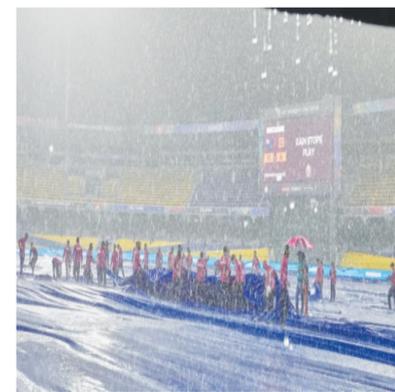
Financial penalties are also possible. Benfica may face fines, and the club could come under further disciplinary scrutiny after online clips appeared to show monkey gestures from sections of the crowd.

UEFA's disciplinary commission will assess the inspector's report before issuing its ruling. Given the spotlight on discriminatory behaviour in European football, the outcome could carry significant sporting and reputational consequences for both player and club.

**PAK vs NZ, Colombo weather report: Will rain put Pakistan under early Super 8 pressure**

Colombo. (Agency)

Pakistan is set to face New Zealand in their opening Super 8 match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Saturday. The fixture brings together two sides searching for consistency after unsteady group stage campaigns. Both squads finished second in their respective groups, with New Zealand losing to South Africa and Pakistan defeated by India. On the field, New Zealand's main challenge lies in their bowling unit, which has raised concerns after recent performances. Matt Henry, Jacob Duffy, and Mitchell Santner are likely to be crucial for the team's defence. For Pakistan, the focus is on addressing batting weaknesses, with opener Sahibzada Farhan expected to play a key role in providing a solid start at the top of the order. Since January 2022, the two sides have faced each other 24 times in T20 internationals. New Zealand holds a slight edge in recent head-to-head encounters, winning 13 matches compared to Pakistan's nine. The



Anticipation is high, but attention is focused as much on the unpredictable Colombo weather.

**PAK vs NZ, SUPER 8: COLOMBO WEATHER FORECAST**

The weather in Colombo remains a significant concern ahead of the fixture. Local forecasts indicate rain is expected before and during the match, with showers possibly causing a delayed start if the ground is damp. The scheduled start time is 7 PM local, and the temperature is predicted to hover between 24 and 26 degrees Celsius, with humidity surpassing 80 percent. According to the latest update on AccuWeather, rain is expected from 2 to 4 pm local time and then the conditions remain cloudy throughout.

**South Africa will expose under-pressure India: Coach Conrad ahead of Super 8 clash**

New Delhi. (Agency)

India and South Africa meet again in a high-stakes clash on February 22 in Ahmedabad, a rematch of the 2024 T20 World Cup final. Both sides enter the Super 8 stage unbeaten, but Proteas head coach Shukri Conrad believes the defending champions may be carrying the heavier burden.

Ahead of the Narendra Modi Stadium showdown, Proteas coach Shukri Conrad, leading his first major ICC white-ball event, said South Africa will embrace and exploit the pressure, not be rattled by it. Speaking to reporters after South Africa's training session in Ahmedabad, Conrad suggested that while both teams face pressure, India, as reigning champions, will feel it more intensely. "There's so much scrutiny, especially a side like India. They're going to be under a lot of pressure to make the semi-finals and obviously go on and make the finals as well," Conrad said. "Hopefully we can expose them and make them vulnerable under that pressure."

ABHISHEK SHARMA NOT WRITTEN

OFFWhile referencing India's scrutiny, Conrad made it clear that he was not dismissing Abhishek Sharma as a threat despite his three ducks in the group stage.



The South Africa coach insisted that individual lean patches do not automatically translate into vulnerability. "Pressure is a big thing, but it's pressure both for us and them," Conrad said. "I think we all talk about the pressure of playing against the top side, but we're not quite aware of what the pressures they are

under. I'm not, for one, suggesting that a guy that has three ducks in his last three matches comes under pressure for his place in his side. No." India have publicly backed Abhishek, and the left-hander remains central to their plans at the top. Conrad's comments indicated respect rather than dismissal, even as he pointed to the broader expectations surrounding the Indian side.

**DIFFERENT STAGE, DIFFERENT TEST**

Recent history favours India. During South Africa's tour of India in December 2025, the hosts won the T20 series 3-1, with one match washed out. However, Conrad hinted that bilateral form does not define World Cup contests.

South Africa possess tools to challenge India's weak spots. With Keshav Maharaj, George Linde and Aiden Markram offering spin options, the Proteas could test India's occasional struggles against finger spin. Their batting unit, featuring Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickelton, Markram and Tristan Stubbs, has also looked sharp.

**Australia cares about Tests more than T20Is? Adam Zampa shuts down notion**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Adam Zampa has dismissed the notion that Australia cares only about Test cricket and don't give a lot of attention to T20Is after their T20 World Cup 2026 campaign came to an end on Friday, February 20. Australia finished the campaign with wins against Oman and Ireland but failed to make it out of their group for the first time since 2009. They suffered defeats against Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe as the Aussies crumbled with the bat and ended up not being able to get key breakthroughs with the ball.

Since the end of the 2024 edition of the T20 World Cup, Australia has played eight T20I series, winning five of them, losing two, and drawing one. The results in the ongoing edition started a dialogue among fans on social media that the current Australian side cares more about the longer format of the game than the shorter ones. Pat Cummins hinted that the reason for missing the tournament was to keep his focus on helping Australia qualify for the World Test

Championship final in 2027. Speaking after the win over Oman, Zampa said that the



notion about Australia caring more about Tests is completely false, saying that the team management and coaches put more time into the shorter format than the red-ball one. Zampa said that competition in T20Is is tighter than in Tests, with Australia and the other top-three sides more dominant. "It's totally false, yeah. The time that the coaches and the staff put into how we're going to

play our T20 cricket and who's going to play each role and our preparation is, I think they'd probably put as much time into that than they would Test cricket. I think, potentially even more. I don't know, but potentially even more time, because T20 cricket, one-day cricket, everyone's a lot tighter in the world, whereas Test cricket, Australia and top two or three teams are quite dominant, so I don't think the work is needed as much, whereas with this format in particular, it's a lot tighter," said Zampa.

The leg-spinner said that the fans don't get to see the Australia T20I side in action a lot as they play most of their games away from home. "So the work is definitely there. It's just - I think the Australian public struggle with the fact that they don't get to see much of what much white ball cricket play. We play like three to six games in the summer.

**Another year, same story Why Arsenal may be bottling Premier League title again**

**Arsenal's title race seems to be faltering again under pressure from Manchester City, a familiar script that their fans have become accustomed to. With 11 games left, including a trip to City, will Arteta and his men remain as bridesmaids once again**

New Delhi. (Agency)

That must have been the thought running through the minds of many Arsenal fans after the game at Molineux against Wolverhampton Wanderers, where Mikel Arteta's men let a 2-0 lead slip and had to settle for a 2-2 draw. And this wasn't the Wolves side of the past, featuring Raul

Jimenez, Adama Traore or Ruben Neves. This is a team being labelled by some as one of the worst to have played in a Premier League season since its inception in 1992. Arsenal legend Thierry Henry seemed to sense it before the final whistle. While fellow pundits Jamie Carragher and Micah Richards reacted to Wolves' stoppage-time equaliser, Henry maintained that he saw it coming.

**"It can only be one thing."**

"When we beat them at the Emirates, it was two own goals. It was going to be difficult for us today. This is exactly what I said. The only one who called it was me.

I said to you, this game was always going to be difficult, always." To many fans, the result felt predictable given how the Gunners have slipped in recent weeks. The stalemate at Wolves followed another draw against Brentford. In the context of a title race, those results carry serious weight. Arsenal have recorded just two wins in their last seven Premier League outings. According to



ESPN, only West Ham United and Crystal Palace (8) have dropped more points than Arsenal (7) in that period. Paul Merson was blunt in his assessment on Sky Sports. "It's disappointing," Merson said on Sky Sports. "You can't play in second gear. When Wolves went to 2-2, there was an urgency. They didn't have that before. You can't play like that. Every game is a cup final to the end. It's going come on full blast now, being bottle jobs, melting. It's full-on now -- drawing

away at Brentford and then being two goals up against the worst team in the league." Arsenal had the chance to stretch their lead over Manchester City to seven points and gain a psychological edge over Pep Guardiola's side. Instead, the gap now stands at five points, with City holding a game in hand. With 12 games remaining, if Guardiola's side win them all - including the home fixture against Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium - they will be champions.

The same scenario technically applies to Arsenal. But recent history does not favour the North London club.

**HISTORICALLY BOTTLING**

Over the last three seasons, Arsenal have been in control of their own destiny only to see City produce stronger finishes and pip them to the title. While there is still plenty of football to be played in the 2025-26 campaign, Arsenal have collected fewer points than City from this stage onward in each of the last four seasons.

## Gaudium IVF IPO: 90% subscription on day 1; see GMP and other details

New Delhi.(Agency)

Gaudium IVF IPO had decent success on Feb 20, the first day of the bidding window. It collected 0.90 times subscription — 1.42 times in the retail category, 0.00 times in QIB (Ex Anchor) and 0.91 times in the NII category. Clearly the retail investors have reposed faith in the company. However, the QIB portion is of particular significance since they consist of banks and mutual funds who have the skills to analyse an issue threadbare and the deep pockets to invest.

Gaudium IVF IPO is going to raise Rs 165 crore through a book built issue of 2.09 crore shares — a fresh issue of 1.14 crore shares and offer for sale of 0.95 crore shares. The face value of a share is Rs 5, and the price band is Rs 75-79. The minimum investible lot for retail investors is 189 shares and for it a person will need an application money of Rs 14,931.

Gaudium IVF IPO GMP

According to investorgain, Gaudium IVF IPO GMP on the morning of Feb 21 is Rs 8. In early morning of Feb 20, it was at Rs 8.50. Considering a price of Rs 79, the estimated listing price of Gaudium IVF shares will be Rs 87 and the listing gain will be 10.13%. However, one should remember that GMP is an unofficial indicator which is volatile and cannot guarantee any listing gain. Gaudium IVF is headquartered in New Delhi. Apart from the national capital, it functions from as many as 30 locations in Mumbai, Ludhiana, Srinagar, Patna and Bangalore. The structure includes seven hubs and 28 spokes.

## Peak XV raises \$1.3bn with focus on Indian startups

Mumbai.(Agency)

Nearly three years after splitting from its Silicon Valley parent Sequoia Capital, Peak XV Partners (formerly Sequoia Capital India and Southeast Asia) has raised \$1.3 billion for a clutch of funds to bet on startup founders building in India and the Asia-Pacific region.

The capital will be deployed across three funds-India seed, India venture which will largely cover early stage startups and Apac. The cheque amount for seed or very early-stage funding will be in the range of up to \$5 million, while India venture fund will make investments in the range of \$5-15 million, in cases going up to \$20 million. The fresh capital sits alongside large portions of uninvested funds from its \$1-billion growth fund raised in 2022, giving the company room to invest in startups across scale and sizes. "We have an existing growth fund that is about half uninvested. We are continuing to invest from that



fund wherein we can fund up to \$75-100 million at the top end," Shailendra Singh, MD at Peak XV Partners told TOI in an interview on Friday, even as he added that for growth investing, India still is one of the world's most expensive markets.

"What is happening in tech globally is that the dollars are concentrating into fewer and fewer companies and those very few companies are becoming enormous in scale. The phenomenon is also playing out in startups that are becoming big. In growth equity, we have to find the very few companies that will become very big and I think that's one way in which tech investing is changing quite a bit," Singh said.

## Govt announces measures to boost exports

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government on Friday launched seven measures under the export promotion mission (EPM), a Rs 25,060-crore initiative aimed at boosting exports by easing finance, compliance and logistics hurdles faced by MSMEs.

Of the 11 proposed interventions under the scheme, 10 are now operational. Three measures were already implemented in Jan this year, namely, market access support, interest subvention for pre- and post-shipment credit, and collateral support for export credit.

"Our effort is that new products go from India, new



services go across continents, new markets are captured and new exporters are promoted," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said at the launch of the measures, calling on industry to "embrace cross-border business".

He said the mission is designed to encourage young entrepreneurs to take Indian products and services to global markets and to make life easier for MSMEs through easier credit, compliance support and risk-sharing mechanisms. The Export Promotion Mission is focused on two pillars: financial enablers and strengthening the trade ecosystem.

# How Good news for employees of THIS company: Variable pay climbs to 80% after cutsbiryani b

**Earlier, IT major Infosys rolled out performance bonus payouts averaging around 85 per cent for the quarter ended December 31, 2025 (Q3FY26). This marks the strongest variable pay outcome for eligible employees in at least the past three and a half years.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's largest software exporter, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), has reportedly increased quarterly variable payouts for mid- to senior-level employees, offering up to 80% for the third quarter. This marks a notable turnaround after nearly two years of relatively low payouts, signalling improving sentiment within the company, according to Moneycontrol report. According to Moneycontrol, the hike comes after a long phase when variable pay for mid- and senior-level

employees was restricted to around 20-50 per cent. The increase also comes at a time when the company is reshaping its workforce to strengthen AI-driven capabilities, while management continues to remain optimistic about a demand recovery in 2026. Earlier, IT major Infosys rolled out performance bonus payouts averaging around 85 per cent for the quarter ended December 31, 2025 (Q3FY26). This marks the strongest variable pay outcome for eligible employees in at least the past three and a half years. Variable Pay Sees Strong Comeback

After a prolonged period of cuts, variable pay has seen a noticeable recovery. According to employees familiar with the development, most mid-level staff received around 80 per cent of their variable compensation for the October-December quarter. One employee, who requested anonymity, said the payout is now closer to the variable component mentioned in offer

letters. For senior-level employees, payouts reportedly ranged between 40 per cent and 80 per cent. Another employee also confirmed receiving the October-December quarter variable pay



in January. Earlier, TCS had said that over 70 per cent of its workforce received 100 per cent of their quarterly variable pay. However, sources suggested that this benefit was largely limited to junior-level employees.

Leadership Confident About Deal Pipeline

The company's leadership has expressed strong confidence in its deal pipeline. In the December quarter, TCS reported a total contract value (TCV) of \$9.3 billion, beating market expectations. Speaking at the company's earnings conference on January 12, CEO K Krithivasan said, "If this trend continues, we will be somewhere closer to about \$38-39 billion for the year, which will be one of the highest. We believe this order book will help us in growing in FY27 as well. We are now quite comfortable with the order book itself." Despite global uncertainties such as geopolitical tensions, US tariff pressures and visa policy changes, the management remains optimistic. "As far as Q4 international revenue is concerned, we are optimistic, and we will take every step that is required to see we reach the aspiration of having a revenue better than FY25," the CEO added.

## Indian stock market posts mild gains this week amid AI-related IT losses

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Indian equity benchmarks posted mild gains on a weekly basis, despite several sessions of sharp declines in the IT index. Nifty added 0.39 per cent during the week and added 0.46 per cent on the last trading day to settle at 25,571. At Friday's close, Sensex was up 316 points or 0.38 per cent at 82,814. It advanced 0.38 per cent during the week. Sectoral performance remained mixed during the week, with all major indices ending in the red. Nifty media was the worst performer, down 2.46 per cent on a weekly basis, followed by capital markets, down 2.44 per cent and IT, down 2.07 per cent. Global risk sentiment has improved meaningfully after the US Supreme Court struck down a majority of President Donald Trump's tariffs that were implemented under emergency powers. The development buoyed global markets, with GIFT Nifty rising over 1 per cent, indicating the possibility of a gap-up opening for

the Nifty at the start of the next week, analysts said. Continued institutional support and improving momentum indicators will be critical in determining whether the current



rebound evolves into a sustained uptrend. On the domestic front, India's Manufacturing and Services PMI climbed to 59.3 in February, marking the strongest reading in three months, driven by robust output growth and new orders, reflecting resilient demand conditions.

Further, India signed the US Pax Silica

agreement, marking a notable development on the trade and strategic front. Analysts said that immediate support for Nifty is seen at 25,350, followed by 25,200, and resistance is placed at 25,650 and 5,720. Broader indices showed divergence from the benchmark indices during the week, as the Nifty Midcap100 gained 0.13 per cent, while Nifty Smallcap100 lost 0.18 per cent. Globally, rising US-Iran tensions elevated geopolitical risks, pushing Brent crude higher to \$71.8 per barrel, extending its three-day gain to 6.6 per cent and triggering risk-off sentiment across markets. This will be the key monitorable event in the near term and will provide direction to the market, market participants said.

The stock market is likely to consolidate next week, tracking the geopolitical development along with the key US tariff ruling, India-US trade deal and Q3 GDP data.

## Led by foreign currency assets, forex reserves rise \$8.6bn, hit high of \$725.7bn

Mumbai.(Agency)

In the end, it was not a whistleblower, a Foreign exchange reserves rose by \$8.66 billion to a record \$725.73 billion in the week ended Feb 13, reflecting valuation gains in gold and non-dollar foreign currency assets amid global market volatility and a softer US dollar.

Gold reserves rose by \$4.99 billion to \$128.47 billion following a surge in international gold prices. The increase in reserves followed a decline of \$6.71 billion to \$717.06 billion in the week ended Feb 6. The latest level surpassed the previous peak of \$723.77 billion recorded in Jan.

Foreign currency assets increased by \$3.55 billion to \$573.60 billion. These assets are valued in US dollar terms and include holdings in currencies such as

the euro, pound and yen. Special Drawing Rights increased by \$0.10 billion to \$18.92 billion. India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund rose by \$0.02 billion to



\$4.73 billion. TNN Higher forex reserves aid Re stability The increase reflects India's external buffer amid volatile global foreign exchange markets. The reserves provide around 12 months of import

cover. Higher reserves support currency stability and enable market interventions to manage volatility. A softer US dollar contributed to valuation gains in non-dollar assets. Appreciation in currencies such as the euro and a rise in gold prices supported the increase in reserves. Reserve levels remain sensitive to global currency movements and shifts in US economic conditions.

The increase in the reserves provides RBI the policy flexibility to manage both external shocks and domestic liquidity. Reserves had dipped to below \$700 billion last year after heavy intervention by the RBI to defend the rupee in the wake of volatility described by market persons as "tariff tantrums". The reserve buffer supports external debt servicing and helps maintain investor confidence in India.

# Old tax regime gets a boost. Does it work better for you than the new regime

**If you have moved on to the new income tax regime, should you give the old one another look after the proposed benefits? Read on to see what the changes could mean for your tax savings.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The old income tax regime has received a quiet but meaningful upgrade in the Draft Income Tax Rules 2026. The draft expands the list of cities that qualify for higher metro-level HRA exemption, raises limits for children's education and hostel allowances, boosts meal voucher values, and updates rules for employer-linked perks, giving the older system renewed relevance for certain taxpayers. The question for most taxpayers is simple. Do these updates make the old regime a better choice than the new one, or should you continue with the simplified tax structure the government has been nudging everyone toward? The short answer is that the new regime still works

better for most salaried Indians. But the long answer is where things get interesting. This is because the old regime now clearly benefits a specific slice of taxpayers who rely heavily on exemptions linked to rent, children and employer-provided benefits. CA (Dr.) Suresh Surana calls the government's move "a transitional approach", one that updates long-standing exemptions in order to provide equitable relief while both regimes coexist. In other words, the old regime is being polished, not resurrected.

**WHY DID THE OLD TAX REGIME GET A FRESH BOOST?**

When the new tax regime was introduced, the intention was to simplify taxation by removing the maze of exemptions and offering lower slab rates. It caters to people who do not want the burden of documentation and compliance. Gaurav Makhijani, Tax Head at Makhijani Gera and Associates, explains the original purpose clearly. "The introduction of the new tax regime was primarily aimed at simplification. A large section of taxpayers found it difficult to manage

documentation and compliance requirements associated with multiple exemptions and deductions under the old regime," Makhijani tells IndiaToday.in.



Over the past five years, however, taxpayers repeatedly flagged that several exemption limits had become outdated. Rents in cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad have risen sharply. School and hostel expenses are much higher than before. Even basic meal costs have changed dramatically. Makhijani says the proposed changes should not be misread as a policy U-turn.

"This should not be seen as a reversal or an attempt to strengthen the old regime. Rather, it reflects a long-overdue adjustment to align thresholds with current economic realities," he adds. Dr. Surana adds that the government is trying to balance taxpayer preferences while keeping the long-term direction toward a simpler new regime intact.

**WILL THE CHANGES ACTUALLY BENEFIT YOU?**

The biggest shift is the expansion of cities eligible for the 50% HRA calculation. Earlier, only Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai qualified. The draft rules now include cities such as Pune and Ahmedabad, along with Bengaluru and Hyderabad. This instantly increases HRA exemptions for thousands of renters.

Dr. Surana notes that by recognising these cities as metro equivalents, "the proposed rules enhance the tax efficiency of the old regime for a broader segment of urban employees." Child-related allowances have been updated as well. The limits for children's education and hostel allowances have been stagnant for years.



Ahaan Panday

# Sharvari Wagh

## To Kick-Start Ali Abbas Zafar's Next From March: Report

Ahaan Panday became a household name following the success of Saiyaara. Now, the actor is gearing up for his next with Ali Abbas Zafar. Ahaan and Ali's next is touted to be a romantic actioner, and an update has it that the film will go on floors in March. Ahaan Panday will be joined by Sharvari for a 24-27-day-long first schedule in Mumbai. As per Variety India, the makers are eyeing the last week of March to kick off the shoot, and a source close to the development confirmed, "Ahaan will kick off the London schedule in May 2026 with a massive action sequence that will be shot over five days. He has been vigorously preparing for the role and has undergone intense hand-to-hand combat and weapon training. This film will present him in a completely different avatar from 'Saiyaara.'"

The makers are expecting to wrap the shoot for the yet-to-be-titled film by July 2026, with a target to release it by early 2027. Ahaan and Sharvari will play the leads in the movie.

Meanwhile, Aaishvarya Thackeray, who made his Bollywood debut with Anurag Kashyap's Nishaanchi, is reportedly coming on board to play the antagonist in the film.

Ali Abbas Zafar's collaboration with Ahaan Panday will mark his return to YRF after a nine-year hiatus. The ace director has delivered some of his most loved films earlier in collaboration with the production house, including Mere Brother Ki Dulhan, Gunday, Sultan, and Tiger Zinda Hai.

Earlier, Pinkvilla reported, "Ahaan will need to prep in action for over 60 days to perfect the kind of raw action that Ali wants him to do on screen. It is a pure coincidence that the date when he starts action training is his birthday! So, it's no days off for Ahaan as he will have a working birthday this year."

### About Ahaan Panday's Saiyaara

Saiyaara is a romantic drama directed by Mohit Suri and produced by Yash Raj Films. Loosely inspired by the 2004 Korean hit A Moment to Remember, the film stars newcomers Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda in the lead roles. It tells the story of Krish Kapoor, a troubled musician who forms a profound emotional connection with Vaani Batra, a reserved poet, exploring love, vulnerability, and destiny.



## Shanaya Kapoor On Shelved Debut Film With Karan Johar: 'I'm Glad About The Whole...'



Shanaya Kapoor, daughter of Sanjay Kapoor and Maheep Kapoor, was all set to make her debut under the wings of Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. Her debut project was announced with much fanfare. Karan and Shanaya had revealed that she would be making her debut with Bedhadak, alongside Lakshya and Gurfateh Pirzada. Posters of the film were also released. However, fate had other plans, and the film got shelved. In a recent interaction with SCREEN, Shanaya addressed her shelved films and reflected on how that incident helped her become a better actor. Shanaya said, "I feel everything happens for a reason. What's meant to be will be. I'm glad about the whole experience now that I sit here and look back at it. It's shaped who I am today. The film getting shelved, and certain projects happening and then not happening, made me who I am today. It made me work on my craft much more during the time I wasn't facing the camera."

Besides Bedhadak, Shanaya Kapoor was also confirmed for Vrusshabha with Mohanlal, which also didn't happen. Shanaya shared that her father encouraged her to focus on becoming a better actor, rather than worrying about her shelved projects. Sanjay advised Shanaya to keep working and told her that there was no point in worrying about things which were beyond her control.

"So what's in your hands is that you can keep working and make yourself a better performer, a better actor. Working with a director like Bejoy sir, an actor like Adarsh (Gourav), and with Aanand L Rai sir backing a project I'm a part of makes you overwhelmed and helps you understand that the universe had its own plans and that it was supposed to happen the way it did," Shanaya said, referring to Tu Yaa Main.

Tu Yaa Main centres on a modern couple fighting for survival against a deadly creature. The film is directed by Bejoy Nambiar, known for Wazir (2016), Taish (2020), and Dange (2024). From a business standpoint, his previous projects have seen modest returns, and it remains to be seen whether this latest outing can stage a turnaround in the coming days.

## Pushpa To Animal: 8 Rashmika Mandanna Films You Must Watch



Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda's marriage rumours are all over the internet. While neither of them has confirmed anything yet, the buzz is that the wedding might happen on February 26. While we wait for them to officially confirm the news, why not take a trip down memory lane with some of Rashmika's most loved films? Here's a list of her top performances to watch in the meantime.

### 1. Geetha Govindam, 2018

Won't it be absolutely perfect to watch the film that actually started it all for Vijay and Rashmika? Geetha Govindam was the first time the two stars teamed up for a project. This love story, helmed by Parasuram, won the hearts of audiences and became a very massive hit.

### 2. Dear Comrade, 2019

After the success of Geetha Govindam, Rashmika and Vijay reunited in 2019 for Dear Comrade which was a romantic drama directed by Bharat Kamma. Their chemistry once again captivated audiences in this intense and emotional story.

### 3. Pushpa: The Rise, 2021

We're pretty sure you've already watched this one, but if not, you really should. While Allu Arjun stole the spotlight as Pushpa Raj, Rashmika Mandanna also left a strong mark with her role as Srivalli, who went on to become one of the most loved characters from the film.

### 4. Mission Majnu, 2023

A spy action drama starring Sidharth Malhotra alongside Rashmika Mandanna, this film impressed audiences with its gripping storyline and intense chemistry between the leads. In the film, Sidharth plays an undercover spy, while Rashmika portrays a blind Pakistani woman who falls in love with him.

### 5. Animal, 2023

Directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, Animal turned out to be a massive blockbuster. Starring Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, and Rashmika, the film shattered all records at the box office. The chemistry between Rashmika and Ranbir was particularly praised as well.

If you're a fan of period dramas, this historical action epic is a must-watch. Vicky Kaushal takes on the role of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, while Rashmika portrays Yesubai Bhonsale. The film also features Akshaye Khanna as the antagonist.



# Swara Bhasker

## Slams Taliban Legalising Domestic Violence, Calls Them 'Absolute Monsters'

In a development that has sparked international outrage, Afghanistan's Taliban regime has formalised a new penal code that critics say effectively permits domestic violence under certain conditions. The move has drawn strong reactions from public figures, including actor Swara Bhasker, who sharply condemned the provisions in a series of social media posts. Sharing media reports about the newly introduced law on February 20, Swara Bhasker expressed her anger in unequivocal terms. Reacting to the provisions, she wrote, "Unfucking-believable!!!! Honestly among the worst specimens of the human race, relentlessly cruel and brutal, absolute monsters the Taliban. An insult to humanity and to the religion they claim to represent. Absolutely despicable."

Actor and host Gauhar Khan also responded to the reports, writing, "Disgusting." Actor Nandish Sandhu questioned the rationale behind the law, stating, "What sense does this make?"

The backlash follows the Taliban's formal adoption of a 90-page penal code, signed by its supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. According to multiple reports, the document consolidates several restrictive measures introduced since the group regained control of Afghanistan and has raised fresh concerns among human rights organisations regarding the protection of women and children. As reported, the code permits husbands to physically discipline their wives and children, provided the punishment does not result in broken bones or open wounds. Human rights advocates

argue that such language effectively legalises domestic violence. The legislation also reportedly distinguishes between individuals classified as free and those considered slaves, thereby embedding inequality within the justice system.

The penal code does not explicitly criminalise psychological or sexual violence. It sets a maximum punishment of 15 days' imprisonment for abuse, and



only in cases described as involving "obscene force," such as visible fractures or serious injury. Even in such instances, a conviction requires the wife to present proof of injury before a judge.

Further provisions state that women must appear in court fully covered and accompanied by a husband or male guardian including in cases where the husband himself is the accused. Reports also indicate that a married woman may face up to three months in prison for visiting relatives without her husband's permission, even if she is attempting to escape abuse.



# England's

## Great landscapes

England is home to some of the most beautiful and inspiring landscapes in the world. Here are few of them:

**Lake District**

Everyone has their favourite Lake District panorama, but from the summit of Haystacks you have god-like views over the valleys of Buttermere and Ennerdale and the glittering waters of Crummock Water. On a clear day, you can even glimpse the Irish Sea.

**North Cornwall**

The rocky coast of North Cornwall contains some of England's most magnificent, surf-washed beaches. Watergate Bay, near Newquay, has two miles of golden sand, pounded by Atlantic rollers and backed by cliffs and caves. Peregrine falcons, gulls and fulmars wheel overhead and you can spot strawberry anemones and crabs among the rock pools.

**Cotswolds**

The lovely market town of Chipping Campden is quintessential Cotswolds, all golden stone, mullioned windows and gracious houses. The High Street, with its 17th century covered market house, is particularly lovely—summed up in the words of the English historian G.M. Trevelyan as, "the most beautiful village street now left on the island".

**North Norfolk**

There is a haunting quality to the creeks and salt marshes of North Norfolk, set under vast dome-like skies. Explore them safely by walking from Burnham Overy Staithe along a causeway to a vast dune-backed beach, or by taking a boat trip from Morston to see the resident seal colony at **Blakeney Point**.

Exmoor National Park Exmoor National



Park, which extends across north Devon and west Somerset, contains wonderfully varied landscapes of wild heather moorland, heath and deep wooded combs of ancient oaks.

From windswept Dunkery Beacon, the highest point, you can see swathes of south west England laid out below you—moors, rolling fields and the glittering sea beyond. Look out for Exmoor ponies and red deer,

and on a clear night, the stars shine like diamonds.

**London**

"Earth hath not anything to show more fair," wrote William Wordsworth of the view from Westminster Bridge. Over 200 years later, it is still one of the great scenes of London, both by day and night, though the view from neighbouring Waterloo Bridge is perhaps even more impressive. On one side are the Houses

of Parliament, Big Ben and the London Eye, on the other, the towers, domes and skyscrapers of the city. It's a reminder that that London is one of the most exciting cities in the world.

**Northumberland**

Although the coast of Northumberland provides countless magnificent views, the interior is just as impressive. There is something special about standing on Hadrian's Wall, at the top of Housesteads Fort, knowing that nearly 2,000 years ago Roman soldiers walked this very turf. Through summer and winter, they'd have stared out across this same landscape to the Tyne Valley and Scottish borders, perhaps longing for the olive groves and cypress trees of home.

**Settle Carlisle railway**

The Settle Carlisle railway offers some of the best countryside views of any train journey in England. Get off at Dent Station and you can see the Yorkshire Dales national park spread out below you. Wild moorland drops to a zigzag valley dotted with the occasional cottage. Cloud shadows race across the hilltops and the cry of sheep drifts on the wind.

**New Forest**

The New Forest is a mix of heath and moor, bogs and ancient pasture, but walk or cycle among the dappled glades, arching tunnels of beech trees and stands of redwoods and ancient trees to see it at its most beautiful. Especially in spring, when leaves are soft, vibrant green, ponies and foals graze in clearings and bluebells and rhododendrons bloom in Roydon Woods.

**Peak District**



Kinder Scout and the high moorland of the Dark Peak are the images that come to mind when you think of the Peak District. But as viewers of BBC's The Village will have seen, it's the region's green roller-coaster hills studded with sheep and the steep valleys dropping to splashing rivers and streams that are every bit as beautiful.

'Soul warming' is the expression that comes to mind when talking about the beaches of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and it's definitely the result of something more than the tropical sun. It's the crystal clear sea with a tinge of aqua blue, schools of iridescent fish that dart in sudden movements across the corals, and the soft bone white sand where one can lay the whole day. Even though there has been an influx of tourists over the last few years, you can still manage an isolated spot amongst the many beaches of the archipelago. Your island hopping itinerary could plug in some of these beaches.

**Corbyn's Cove Beach, Port Blair**

Corbyn's cove doesn't really qualify as a lazy enticing beach amidst the many that you will find in the Andamans, but it does offer a welcome relief from Port Blair's city life. If you have a day's stop in Port Blair, this could be a small induction into the sandy stretches that await you on your trip.

**Radhanagar Beach, Havelock Island**

The Radhanagar beach has won many accolades in the travel world—an evening of sunset watching here and you will understand why. A sprawling, flat, soft bed of sand, it can accommodate hundreds of people during high season. There are a few pavilions to sit at, with the buzz of beach sellers and a small market leading up to it. But to avoid the entire bustle, walk towards the far end on the right.

**Elephant Beach**

One of the most coveted and isolated sandy spots, Elephant beach is a pit stop for snorkellers. You'll need to take a boat to get here, but once you arrive, expect pristine water and untouched white sand. There is a bit of infrastructure here too, so carry food and water if you are planning on spending the day. Boats are available from Havelock Island.

**Long Island Beach**

An unspoiled magical island in the Andamans, Long Island beach is strictly for the intrepid. A couple of restaurants and a paltry local population make this island less touristy, which is good news if you're looking for some isolated spots to yourself. Long island is 82 km from Port Blair, and a boat service to and fro runs only four times a week.

**Ross and Smith Island Beach**

A boat ride of 25 minutes off Diglipur gets you to the serene twin islands called Ross and Smith. The beaches here promise uncluttered vistas and soft waves sweep up along the shore. The islands are actually separated by a narrow stretch of sand, technically making it a single beach.

**Lalaji Bay Beach, Long Island**

For an unhurried experience, visit Lalaji Bay beach in Long Island. If nothing else, you are bound to see dolphins leaping up out of the sea. The beach lies six km from the main jetty, and can be reached by a short

hike or small dinghies.

**Wandoor Beach**

Wandoor is one of the closest beaches with tourist access, since it lies in Port Blair. Expect a splash of colour during high season, with tourists dotting the pale sand. Boats to Jolly Buoy Island leave from here.

**Aamkunji Beach, Rangat**

The Aamkunji beach in Rangat is known as a popular turtle nesting ground. So if you are a keen environmental enthusiast, this is the place you should be heading. A long boat ride

through the islands (or with multiple crossings if you take the ferry) is the only way to get here from Port Blair.

**Mayabunder**

Avis and Karmatung beaches in Mayabunder are situated in the north part of Middle Andaman. Relatively quiet, you will not find the buzz of Havelock here—which is a blessing if you want to avoid the tourist clutter.

**Casurina Beach, Diglipur**

# Beach hopping in the Andamans

