

Bombay High Court reserves order on Rahul Gandhi plea in PM Modi defamation case

The complainant, a BJP worker, has alleged that Rahul Gandhi referred to PM Modi as 'commander-in-thief' while addressing a public rally in Rajasthan in September 2018.

Mumbai.(Agency) The Bombay High Court on Tuesday reserved its order on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's plea seeking the quashing of a defamation complaint pertaining to alleged remarks made by him against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018.



September 2018. Shrishrimal has alleged that the Congress leader also targeted the prime minister with the same term on social media as well. The complainant claimed that Gandhi's alleged name-calling amounted to describing all BJP

members and Indian citizens as thieves. The magistrate's court had issued a summons to Gandhi, who challenged it in the High Court, terming the complaint frivolous and vexatious, which deserved to be quashed. In his petition, the Congress leader said that the complaint was motivated by the sole purpose of furthering the complainant's latent political agenda. His counsel cited Section 199(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) - a provision which prescribes that a sessions court is required to take cognisance of an offence where the offence is alleged against a public servant in respect of conduct in the discharge of his public functions. Gandhi's lawyers argued that, in view of the aforementioned provision, a legal bar existed

on Shrishrimal against filing a complaint. It was also argued before the High Court by the petitioner that a political party is not identified as a group of persons eligible to file a defamation complaint in accordance with explanation 2 under Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code. Gandhi's legal team argued that this disbars Shrishrimal from filing a complaint in a representative capacity. The complainant opposed the petition, asserting that he had made out a prima facie case against Gandhi by depositing in support of his complaint and submitting evidence. It was further argued that Shrishrimal was an aggrieved person himself. He pointed out that the complaint was filed in the capacity of a member of BJP's Maharashtra unit.

Hope PM Modi mentions genocide in Gaza while addressing Knesset: Priyanka Gandhi

Her remarks came ahead of Modi's departure for Israel on a two-day visit, during which he is set to hold talks with the top leadership there and address the Knesset (Israeli parliament).

New Delhi .(Agency) Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday hoped Prime Minister Narendra Modi would mention the genocide in Gaza while addressing the Israeli Parliament and demand justice for them. The Congress MP from Wayanad said India must continue to show the light of truth, peace and justice to the world. Her remarks came ahead of Modi's departure for Israel on a two-day visit, during which he is set to hold talks with the top leadership there and address the Knesset (Israeli parliament). In a post on X, Gandhi said, "I hope that the Hon Prime Minister @narendramodi ji

mentions the genocide of thousands of innocent men, women and children in Gaza while addressing the Knesset on his



upcoming trip to Israel and demands justice for them." She asserted, "India has stood for what is right throughout our history as an independent nation, we must continue to show the light of truth, peace and justice

to the world." Modi's visit begins on Wednesday to shore up bilateral defence and trade cooperation between the two countries. It will be Modi's second visit to Israel in nine years. The India-Israel relationship was elevated to the level of a strategic partnership during Modi's first visit to that country in July 2017. The Congress on Tuesday alleged that the government has abandoned the Palestinians and said the prime minister was going to Israel despite that country's attacks on civilians in Gaza continue "mercilessly".

The party's general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, said the Modi government makes cynical and hypocritical statements on its commitment to the cause of the Palestinians, but, in reality, it has abandoned them.

Maharashtra's debt set to hit Rs 9.32 lakh crore as fresh budget demands raised

Mumbai .(Agency) Maharashtra's projected state debt is expected to rise to Rs 9.32 lakh crore, placing pressure on the state government's finances as it seeks additional funds to maintain essential services. On Tuesday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the finance portfolio, introduced supplementary budget demands worth Rs 11,995.33 crore in the state assembly. The latest proposal is significantly smaller than previous demands, as the government attempts to contain a widening revenue deficit that has already neared Rs 2 lakh crore following major spending approvals earlier in the fiscal year.

On Tuesday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the finance portfolio, introduced supplementary budget demands worth Rs 11,995.33 crore in the state assembly. The latest proposal is significantly smaller than previous demands, as the state government attempts to contain a widening revenue deficit that has already neared Rs 2 lakh crore.

Of the total proposed amount, Rs 5,748.10 crore has been earmarked for revenue expenditure to cover operational costs. Another Rs 6,003.79 crore has been allocated for capital expenditure aimed at infrastructure and long-term asset creation. The Industries and Energy Department accounts for the largest share, seeking Rs 5,840 crore. Within this, Rs 3,262 crore has been set aside for the power sector, while Rs 803 crore will go towards small and village industries. Other notable allocations include Rs 1,431 crore for water supply and sanitation. Smaller provisions have been proposed for medical education, rural development and OBC welfare. This conservative approach to spending comes after Fadnavis took over the

finance portfolio following the passing of Deputy CM Ajit Pawar. Unlike earlier assembly sessions, where demands running into tens of thousands of crores were



placed for new schemes, the current supplementary demands are limited to meeting existing commitments. With the state's debt burden reaching record levels, the government has shifted its focus toward fiscal discipline in an effort to prevent the revenue deficit from widening further.

Identity not spelling test: MP schools Shashi Tharoor over 'Keralamite' quip

Thiruvananthapuram .(Agency) Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's witty take on the renaming of Kerala to 'Keralam' - particularly his quip about what residents should now be called -- has drawn a sharp response from CPI(M) MP John Brittas, who retorted that a simple glide from 'Kerala' to 'Keralam' would hardly trigger an "identity extinction event". Tharoor, reacting on Tuesday after the Union Cabinet approved the CPI(M)-led state government's proposal to rename the state, wondered what would happen to terms such as "Keralite" and "Keralan" for the "denizens" of the newly named "Keralam". "Keralamite sounds like a microbe and Keralamian like a rare earth mineral," he joked, adding that the Chief Minister might want to launch a competition to coin new terms "resulting from this electoral zeal". Brittas responded sharply, urging Tharoor to "step away from the microbe-mineral anxiety" and pointing out that people in the state would continue to identify themselves as Malayalees or Mallus. "We've survived quite happily as Malayalees in polite society and Mallus among friends (and in JNU, where it was equal parts tease and term of endearment). A gentle glide from "Kerala" to "Keralam" is not going to trigger an identity extinction event," the Rajya Sabha MP, a JNU alumnus, said in a social media post. He also noted that people from other states -- such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bengal -- are commonly identified by linguistic identities like Telugu, Tamilian and Bengali. "No one panicked, coined 'Teluguite,' or set Twitter on fire," he remarked. "So if 'Keralam' makes you itch to invent new demonyms, feel free to clutch 'Keralite'. The rest of us will continue with Malayalee/Mallu, as we have for decades." Brittas, who is also from Kerala continued. The Left MP added, "Because identity isn't a spelling test. It's what survives when you're ordering biryani in Delhi and someone yells, 'Mallu dal!' -- with a grin. "On Tuesday, the Union Cabinet approved a proposal of the CPI(M)-led Kerala government to change the name of the state to Keralam. The decision came just two months ahead of the assembly elections in the state.

Amit Shah will review demography in Bihar

New Delhi .(Agency) Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a three-day visit to Bihar beginning Wednesday, during which he is scheduled to hold extensive deliberations with local authorities and security agencies, including the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) with regard to concerns related to alleged demographic changes, infiltration and unauthorised religious constructions in sensitive border districts, sources said. A key highlight of the tour will be high-level review meetings in Bihar's Seemanchal region, which are described by the sources as the first initiative of its kind at this scale. Shah is set to chair a comprehensive session involving District Magistrates (DMs) and Superintendents of Police (SPs) from seven districts: Kishanganj, Araria, Purnia,

Katihar, Madhepura, Saharsa, and Supaul, the sources said. These districts lie along or in close proximity to the India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh borders and have historically been regarded as sensitive due to cross-border movement and internal security considerations, they added. During the three-day engagements, Shah is expected to give focused attention to issues of demographic shifts, instances of illegal infiltration and the status of religious structures allegedly constructed without required approvals from the authorities, they said. The sources indicated that detailed presentations will be made by district administrations and police officials, incorporating intelligence assessments and ground-level reports. The deliberations aim



to assess the prevailing situation comprehensively and identify vulnerabilities that may require corrective measures, the sources said. The Home Minister is likely to stress on the need for close coordination between civil administration and law enforcement agencies to effectively address security

concerns. "Clear directives are expected on improving synergy between district authorities and policing units, particularly to tackle infiltration and unauthorised constructions," a source said. He said that Shah's direct engagement at the district level signals a more granular review of developments in the region, marking the first time he will chair such meetings focused specifically on demographic and infiltration-related issues at this administrative tier. The move is being viewed as an indication of the Centre's heightened focus on Seemanchal. Its geographical proximity to international borders, combined with a complex socio-economic landscape, has also made it an area of sustained strategic interest for both state and central authorities.

CM Bhagwant Singh Mann's Landmark Gift to Farmers, Canal Water Reaches 4 Districts of Malwa Region

The Sikh Times MAKHU, 25th February: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Wednesday inaugurated the first phase of the reconstruction and relining of the Ferozepur Feeder Canal, calling it a landmark gift to farmers and a decisive step towards securing Punjab's water future. Declaring the canal as the lifeline of the Malwa region, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the project will prove to be a boon for Ferozepur, Faridkot, Sri Muktsar Sahib and Fazilka districts, enhancing irrigation capacity and ensuring that canal water reaches deeper into the fields of Punjab. The ₹180 crore project has increased the canal's capacity from 11,192 cusecs to 13,873 cusecs, marking a sharp 2,681 cusec jump. CM Bhagwant

Singh Mann asserted that while previous governments failed for 74 years to increase the canal's capacity or undertake concrete lining, the present government has delivered structural reform on the ground. He highlighted that when his government assumed office, canal water reached only 21% of Punjab's fields, whereas today it reaches 68%, transforming irrigation coverage across the state. Reiterating that Punjab has no surplus water to share, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the interests of Punjab are supreme and not even a



single drop of water will be given to any other state. He stated that Congress and Akali Dal governments betrayed Punjab by signing agreements to divert water to other states, and took a swipe at the Akali Dal, saying a party that cannot find 11 members to form a committee is dreaming of winning 117 seats in Punjab. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Today is a historic and joyous day for the people of Punjab, especially for the Malwa region. The first phase of the relining of the Ferozepur Feeder Canal, considered the lifeline of several districts in the Malwa region, is being inaugurated today." He added, "With the relining, this canal will prove to be a boon for humans, livestock, and the agricultural sector by fulfilling the water needs of all." Highlighting the scale and speed of execution, the Chief Minister stated, "An expenditure of ₹180 crore has been incurred on this phase. I congratulate the engineers, government officials, and workers who completed 15 kilometers of canal lining within 35 days in war mode." He informed that a total of 126 government employees and 4,000 workers were deployed for the project. "With the inauguration of the first phase, the canal's capacity has increased by 2,681 cusecs. Earlier, the canal's capacity was 11,192 cusecs, which has now increased to 13,873 cusecs," he said. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann further stated, "The depth of the canal has increased from 18 feet to 21 feet and the width of the canal has increased from 163 feet to 180 feet." Contd.....page-3

News box

8 board exam centres in Nuh listed as highly sensitive, vigil intensified

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The district administration has enforced heightened security measures for the Haryana Board of School Education (HBSE) classes 10 and 12 annual examinations. The examinations will be held from Wednesday across 65 centres set up at 55 locations in Nuh. Of these, eight centres have been categorised as highly sensitive and seven as sensitive, with special monitoring arrangements in place to ensure the free and fair conduct of examinations. Meanwhile, the city has only 1 school centre listed as a sensitive centre.

Deputy commissioner Akhil Piani said, "In Nuh sub-division, govt senior secondary school Firozpur Namak and two centres at govt senior secondary school Tapkan (B-1 and B-2) were placed in the highly sensitive category, while centres including Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan Mev senior secondary school Nuh and govt girls senior secondary school Nuh were marked sensitive". He added that, in Tauru sub-division, govt senior secondary school Bissar Akbarpur, govt senior secondary school Hasanpur Tauru-1, govt girls high school Hasanpur Tauru-3, and govt senior secondary school Rathiwas were declared highly sensitive. In Punhana, govt senior secondary school (B-1) Punhana was kept in the highly sensitive list, while two other centres fell under the sensitive category. One centre in Firozpur Jhirka was also marked sensitive. Govt girls senior secondary school, Punhana was cited as a very sensitive centre following a paper leak incident last year. At Firozpur Namak centre, broken boundary walls were identified as structural vulnerabilities creating potential unauthorised access points.

Student slips into open pit filled with water in Gurgaon, residents come to his rescue

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A schoolboy narrowly escaped injury after falling into a water-filled pit dug for sewer line work in Jacobpura on Monday, raising concerns over safety arrangements at ongoing civic projects. The incident occurred in Saini Mohalla of Jacobpura (ward 27), where MCG has been carrying out sewer line installation work since Feb 18. According to residents and CCTV footage that surfaced online, the boy slipped and fell into the pit. He was pulled out by two residents, including another child. "Open pits without proper safety measures are dangerous. Sewer water accumulation makes it difficult



to judge the depth and also blocks the road," said Raj Singh, a resident. MCG chief engineer Vijay Dhaka did not respond to repeated calls. However, executive engineer Sandeep Dhundhwal said the site had been barricaded from the start. "When the work began on Feb 18, both sides were blocked using earthmovers and large sewer pipes to prevent movement. Residents are aware that work is underway," he said.

Ward 27 councillor Ashish Gupta said the project would take at least one-and-a-half months to complete. "Residents have been urging us to expedite the work, but they also need to cooperate, since the work is being executed for their welfare. Despite barricading, many people continue to use the stretch," he said.

Some families said access to their homes has been severely affected due to blocked pathways. They claimed they are using adjoining rooftops to enter and exit their houses. The situation worsens after dark because of the absence of proper lighting, residents added.

Elderly couple attacked with axe by son, his wife over property dispute in Ghaziabad

Noida.(Agency)

An elderly couple was allegedly attacked by their younger son and his wife over an ongoing property dispute in Modinagar. Police arrested the son and his wife on Tuesday. The couple is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Meerut and the woman is in a critical condition.

The couple, Ramashankar Singh (70) and his wife, Sushila Devi (65), lived in his 100-square-yard house in Harmukhpuri colony. His younger son, Manoj Kumar, his wife, Kiran Devi and their three daughters lived with the couple; and were their primary caregivers.

Police said Manoj had been pressing his father for the past three years to transfer the deeds of the house in his name. Disputes between Manoj and his parents would often turn violent. Manoj had even tried to drive his parents out of the house and claim ownership of the property. Family members and neighbours had intervened in the past to solve the conflict. On Monday morning, the dispute escalated once again. It is alleged that around 7am, Manoj and his wife assaulted Ramashankar and Sushila. Fearing another attack, the couple approached the Govindpuri police outpost around 11am and later went to the Modinagar police station at about 5pm. However, they were allegedly told to return later to file a complaint as there were no female officers on duty.

The couple returned home around 10pm and went off to sleep in their room. Late at night, Manoj and his wife attacked them with an axe and inflicted multiple blows. Hearing their screams, neighbours rushed to the house and managed to rescue the couple.

9 multi-storey buildings among 100 structures razed on KMP link in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Authorities carried out a five-day demolition drive to clear nearly 100 encroachments along a 1.5-km stretch of the Farrukhnagar-Daboda road, a key link to the KMP Expressway. The drive aimed to ease traffic congestion and restore the road to its sanctioned width of 60-66 ft, officials said. At several points, the corridor had narrowed to 35-40 ft, leading to frequent traffic snarls and safety concerns. Led by duty magistrate RS Bath, the drive continued for 8-9 hours daily and concluded on Tuesday. Officials said it followed demarcation by the revenue department and multiple rounds of outreach to shopkeepers and residents to seek cooperation. Authorities said the stretch is a critical link for surrounding villages and townships. Encroachment details were conveyed in advance, and demarcation was reverified during the operation to address objections from some property owners. Nearly 100 structures were removed, including nine



three- to four-storey buildings and around 30 double-storey constructions. In several cases, residents dismantled portions of their properties voluntarily and cleared materials from shops and rented premises. Some owners used heavy cutter machines to expedite the

process. Officials said about 35 ft of additional width was reclaimed along the stretch. More than 100 police personnel, including the SHO of Farrukhnagar, were deployed along with teams from the civic body, revenue department, fire brigade, ambulance services and depot authorities.

Two JCBs and a poclain machine were used in the operation.

Farrukhnagar civic secretary Rajesh Sharma, a municipal team of around 20 staff members, and revenue officials, including patwaris, remained present throughout the drive. Officials said groundwork for the drive began a month earlier when the nodal officer visited the site and urged residents to cooperate.

Officials said no protests were reported during the drive, despite initial concerns from some shopkeepers. Several residents later welcomed the action and called for similar measures in other congested areas. The Farrukhnagar civic body will now redevelop the stretch at an estimated cost of Rs 7 crore over the next 10 months. The project will include improved carriageways, footpaths, green verges and drainage to improve traffic flow and connectivity. Officials said the drive is expected to serve as a model for future anti-encroachment initiatives in the region.

Three of family die in crash on Del-Mum eway as car rams into divider and overturns

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A couple and their five-year-old son died after their car crashed and overturned on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway near Nuh early on Sunday. Their older son (8), who was also in the car and sustained injuries, is undergoing treatment at a private hospital, police said. A police officer privy to the probe said the exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained. "Prima facie, there could be multiple reasons. The front tyre on the right side of the car was flat when we found it but it is not clear whether the tyre burst led to the crash or if it burst due to the impact. Another possibility is that the husband, who was driving the car, may have dozed off," he said. The deceased have been identified as Naveen Soni (40), his wife, Madhuri (38), and their younger son, Vihansh (5), natives of Nainwa in Rajasthan's Bundi district. The family lived in Gurgaon, where Naveen was employed with Indian Bank. Some family members of the deceased claimed to have spoken to the

injured child, Krishna, who allegedly said a stray dog had suddenly come in front of the vehicle, forcing his father to swerve hard to avoid hitting it.

According to police, the accident occurred



around 2 km before the Hilalpur toll plaza under the Rojka Meo police station between 2 - 2.30am. The family was returning to Gurgaon after attending a wedding in Jaipur on Feb 19.

Investigators said the car first veered

towards the driver's side and hit a jersey barrier. The vehicle then overturned over the crash barrier, entered the median space, and struck another barrier at nearly a 90 angle. "The car appears to have travelled nearly 20 to 30 metres inside the median after the initial impact," the officer said.

A police team reached the site around 2.45am. By then, an emergency response vehicle and the highway patrol team had already arrived and shifted the victims to a nearby hospital. Doctors declared Madhuri and Vihansh dead on arrival. Naveen and Krishna were referred to a private hospital, where the former succumbed to his injuries on Monday. His post-mortem examination was conducted on Tuesday. Police said inquest proceedings have been initiated, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the sequence of events leading to the crash.

Stubborn jams force foreign officials to ditch their ride, walk to govt office

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city's everyday traffic misery spilled into an uncomfortable spotlight on Tuesday when a bus carrying senior bureaucrats from developing countries got trapped in a massive jam outside the mini secretariat, forcing the delegation to step out and walk to the complex. The visitors — chief secretaries, directors and secretary-level officers from Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso — were in the city to learn about good governance and public service delivery under a training programme organised by National Centre for Good Governance.

Instead, their first lesson was the city's most familiar one — the last few hundred metres can take the longest. For regular commuters, the gridlock is routine. Residents said the short stretch from Rajiv Chowk to the mini secretariat frequently

takes 30-40 minutes during office hours, with vehicles barely moving in a long queue. The approach road is a narrow lane that stays perpetually choked, even though it leads to one of the district's most important administrative hubs.

The mini secretariat houses key offices, including those of the deputy commissioner and DCP (west). Next door is the district court, drawing thousands of visitors daily. As a result, the combination of heavy footfall and the lack of organised parking space turns this access to the complex into a daily ordeal. "Getting in and out of the complex area is more difficult than getting work done inside the govt office," said Pravin Sharma, a resident of Sector 15. Sharma also alleged poorly planned construction around the premises. According to him, "strange platforms" have come up inside and

outside the complex, with no clarity whatsoever on their purpose. "Space that could have been used for parking has been blocked off, and the area remains dirty through the year," he said. Others warned that the congestion is not just an inconvenience but a safety risk. "If there is a fire, a tender won't be able to reach the building so easily," said Sumit Kumar, a resident of Sector 40. He added that even senior officials can find it hard to leave the premises quickly in an emergency. Deputy commissioner Ajay Kumar said the administration will try to find a solution and streamline traffic movement. On what the delegation was briefed about, Kumar said the foreign bureaucrats were informed about the govt's family ID card scheme and its delivery, and Antyodaya Saral portal, which has moved citizen services online.

Bid deferred for doorstep waste collection contract in Gurgaon as MCG seeks ULB clarifications

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The process to appoint two private agencies for door-to-door collection, segregation and transportation of municipal solid waste in the city is set to face further delay. A scheduled opening of bids on Monday did not take place due to pending clarifications on key provisions of the tender. On Feb 17, MCG had sought these clarifications from the Haryana urban local bodies (ULB) department. Until they are received and formally issued as part of the tender record, the bids cannot be opened, officials said.

The tender, floated by MCG, seeks to select agencies for two clusters under a five-year contract aimed at streamlining waste collection across the city. A pre-bid meeting was convened on Feb 9, during which participating firms raised several technical and financial queries regarding provisions in the request for proposal (RFP). Following the

meeting, the MCG had formally sought clarifications. On the revised date for opening the bids, MCG executive engineer Sunder Sheoran said, "We are expected to get the clarifications by this weekend, so subsequently bids will open." Clarification is sought on two key issues — the rate mechanism for deploying dedicated vehicles to collect wet waste from bulk waste generators (BWGs) and approval of the proposed wholesale price index (WPI)-linked annual escalation formula, including its 70:20:10 cost weightage for diesel, electricity and commercial vehicles.

The RFP requires that if the corporation enters into agreements with bio-gas processing facilities or other organic waste treatment plants, the selected contractor is required to deploy separate dedicated vehicles for collection and transportation of wet waste from establishments

such as condominiums, hotels, restaurants and other large commercial units. However, agencies want clarity on the rate mechanism for such additional deployment, arguing that the pricing framework for BWG-related collection is not clearly defined in the RFP issued by the ULB department. Another significant issue pertains to the annual price escalation mechanism linked to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). While the RFP provides that yearly escalation in the quoted price is linked to WPI and that in case of negative WPI neither escalation nor deduction applies, bidders sought a clearer methodology for calculating such revisions. The contract allows the payment to the selected agencies to increase every year based on changes in the WPI, which tracks inflation in goods like fuel and equipment. However, if the WPI turns negative (meaning prices fall), the

contractor's payment will not be reduced. To calculate the yearly increase, MCG proposed a formula that assumes most of the contractor's costs come from diesel (70%), followed by electricity (20%) and commercial vehicles (10%). The corporation is now seeking approval to use this specific formula before moving ahead. In public procurement, a pre-bid meeting is typically held before the bid submission deadline so that ambiguities can be clarified and formally notified through corrigenda, ensuring a level playing field for all participants. However, with clarifications still pending days before the scheduled opening, the Feb 23 bid opening could not proceed. This waste management contract is considered crucial for improving collection efficiency and segregation practices in the rapidly expanding city, and any further

postponement may impact the pace of planned reforms in municipal solid.

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Editor-in-Chief
Gurcharan Singh Babbar
Mob : 9654077232, 9971359517
Website : www.thesikhimes.in
Email : sikhimesindia@gmail.com
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CM Bhagwant Singh Mann's Landmark Gift to Farmers, Canal Water Reaches 4 Districts of Malwa Region

Contd.....Front page
Originating from Harikere Headworks, he said, the canal provides irrigation facilities to areas falling under four districts of Ferozepur, Faridkot, Sri Muktsar Sahib, and Fazilka. "A total of 14 blocks including Gidderbaha, Makhlu, Mamdot, Balluana, Jalalabad, Guru Har Sahai, Arniwala, Khuiyan Sarwar, Lambi, Malout, Fazilka, Muktsar, and Ferozepur in these four districts will directly benefit from the relining of this canal," he added. The Chief Minister said, "With the relining of this canal, irrigation water will be provided to 6,45,200 hectares. Water will now be supplied to border areas adjoining the international border, especially Fazilka and Jalalabad, through the Ferozepur Feeder." He pointed out that earlier water was supplied from

the Hussainiwala Headworks to Pakistan through the feeder and polluted water is being discharged into the Sutlej River near Kasur city in Pakistan, which re-enters the country. "The border villages get polluted water but now a water recharge system has been introduced to enhance the ground water and supply clean water to the villages," he said. Referring to earlier works, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Last year, the lining work of the Sirhind Feeder, which is part of the Ferozepur Feeder system, was completed. With the relining of the Ferozepur Feeder, the capacity of the Sirhind Feeder will increase, permanently resolving the issue of water shortage." He added that the canal was constructed in 1952 and in the past 74 years previous governments did

not take steps to increase its capacity or undertake concrete lining. "The existing structure of the canal had deteriorated over time, leading to a shortage of approximately 1,000 cusecs of water during the Kharif season, and canals had to be operated on a rotational basis. This project will make a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of farmers in the Malwa region," he said. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann added, "The state government has spent ₹6,500 crore for rejuvenating the canal system and for the first time 1365 villages of the state have got canal water." The Chief Minister said that when the AAP government assumed office, only 21% canal water was being used in the state for irrigation purposes. "Today, 68% of the canal water is being used for irrigation purposes and this

will be enhanced to 85% by the coming paddy season," he said, adding that 6,900 km long 18,349 water courses have been revived to provide water at tail ends. Taking a swipe at previous governments, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Those leaders at the residence of whom the canals used to stop earlier had never bothered about this thing. Such decisions can be taken only by those leaders who are acquainted with ground realities and not by those who have studied in the convent schools at hills." He further said, "These traditional political parties were traitors who have never been loyal to the state and its people." He reminded the people, "Those who had signed the agreement on Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal and had given permission for its survey have big resorts in Haryana,

whereas the other who offered the silver spade to the then Prime Minister is today a self proclaimed 'saviour of water'. These people ignored the interests of the state for their vested political interests and that is why they were completely rejected by the people of the state." Taking a jibe at the Akali Dal's 'Punjab Bachao Yatra', he said, "The real name of this gimmick is 'parivar bachao yatra'. After looting the state for 15 years, from whom are they trying to save the state?" Reaffirming his government's commitment to border residents, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "The Punjab government is making every effort for the well being of the border residents, who are true patriots of the country." He informed that

in a major relief for farmers in Punjab's border belt, the Central Government has given in principle approval to shift the Border Fence closer to the International Border, which will clear the way for unhindered cultivation of thousands of acres of farmland currently trapped beyond the fencing. "Farmers have long been forced to cross the fence with identity cards and under BSF escort to reach their own fields, facing daily hardship and uncertainty along the 532 km India Pakistan border where fencing lies deep inside Punjab's territory," he said. Reiterating his stand on water sharing, the Chief Minister affirmed, "Punjab has no spare water to share with any other state and no one will be allowed to take even a sin-

gle drop of water from the state." He added, "The issues of Satluj Yamuna Link can be resolved only through Yamuna Satluj Link, which will ensure judicious use of Yamuna water. Punjab has no spare water to share with any state and there is no question about it." CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Despite being a riparian state, Punjab ignores its own water requirement and gives about 60% water to meet the requirements of non-riparian states in which Ravi-Beas and Sutlej rivers do not pass. The waters of

Punjab's rivers are shared among partner states, while flood-related damages are borne solely by Punjab, imposing a heavy annual financial burden." He asserted, "The interest of the state and its people is supreme and no compromise can be made in this regard." Coming down heavily on the Akali leadership, he said, "Those who cannot find even 11 members for constituting a committee of their party are day dreaming to win 117 seats in the state."

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

The Sikh Times
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 identi-

fied 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.

NAME CHANGE
I, SUNIL KUMAR NISHAD S/O BINDESHWARI PRASAD NISHAD residing at Khasra No. 296 / 270, House No.-170, Gali No.-3, Ishu Bihar, Mukund Pur Extn., North West Delhi, Delhi-110042 have changed the name of my minor Daughter POOJA AF aged 13 years and shall hereafter be known as PUJA.

NAME CHANGE
I, Naveet Kaur Panaser W/O Jatinderpal Singh, H-123 Vikas Puri, New Delhi-110018 have changed my name to Naveet Kaur for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, ANNUPAL SINGH R/O Village and post office basai Gurugram Haryana have to change my name tarun kumar for all purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, manya Noor W/O Farhan Ahmad R/O 1649, Gali Sayyadan, Pahari Bhoja, Chilli Qabar, Jama Masjid, Delhi G.P.O., PO: Delhi G.P.O., Dist: North Delhi, Delhi-110006, changed my name to Manya Noor.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as RAKESH S/O Chhedi Lal R/O B-2530, Phase 2, Metro Vihar, Holambi Kalan, North West Delhi, Delhi-110082 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAKESH KUMAR.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as AYUSHI SAINI D/O VIKAS SAINI W/O ANMOL CHAUDHARY residing at 274, NH Nagar Ashram, Jangpura, Defence Colony, South Delhi, Delhi-110014 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AYUSHI CHAUDHARY.

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PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that my client Mr. Rajesh Kumar S/O Late. Rajendera Singh R/O H.No. H-111-A, Gali No. 04, Sitapur Part-2, New Delhi-110045 hereby debarred and disowned her daughter Ms. Aditi from her all moveable and immovable property as she is disrespectful, cruel and not obedient towards my client therefore my client has severed with all relation with her. Anybody deals with her shall be at their/his/her own risks, costs and responsibility for which my client shall not be responsible. Now onwards Aditi cease to be his legal heir for all purposes whatsoever.
ANURAG SRIVASTAVA
ADVOCATE

NEWS BOX

Matter Of Life And Exam: Why Indian Students Are Stuck In Iran Amid US Threat

Tehran. (Agency)

Amid soaring geopolitical tensions between Washington and Tehran, India has advised all its nationals, including students, in Iran to leave by any available transport as soon as possible. But for many students--torn between seeking safety and facing academic setbacks--departure is not an easy option. Missing crucial examinations scheduled in early March could delay their graduation and even jeopardise professional recognition of their degrees. According to estimates, there are around 1,000 to 1,500 Indian students-- a large proportion of them medical students from Jammu and Kashmir -- enrolled at Iranian universities. Some of them have appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for intervention after the advisory, which clashed with their university examination schedule.

The Plea

"We want to come back home. Our families are worried," Bilal Bhat, an Indian medical student in Iran, said while talking to news agency ANI.

"But our exams are scheduled in March, and there is no clarity on postponement. If we miss exams, it will affect our academic year...If our exam gets postponed, we will leave as soon as possible," he said.

According to Bhat, while day-to-day life continues and flights are still operating, uncertainty about how the situation may unfold has left many students and their families concerned. Another student, Musafid, shared similar apprehensions, stating that they are constantly monitoring the situation. "Flights are operational, but we don't know what may happen next. Our only concern is safety and our studies," he said, highlighting the dilemma faced by many pursuing professional degrees abroad. The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the All India Medical Students Association (AIMSA) has also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention to ensure the safety and academic future of Indian students currently in Iran. Speaking to ANI, Mohammad Momin Khan, President of the Jammu and Kashmir unit of AIMSA, highlighted the concerns following a recent travel advisory from the Indian High Commission in Tehran, which has asked citizens to return.

"The Indian High Commission in Tehran issued an advisory, in which they have asked their citizens to return. However, we have received information from students that their exams are scheduled for March 5. Some students have already arrived in India, so it is not possible for them to return. The current situation is very tense, and their parents are also very worried," Khan said.

UK Imposes New Travel Permit Requirement On These Foreign Visitors

World. (Agency)

Starting on Wednesday, visitors to Britain from 85 countries must obtain an electronic permit in advance of their trip or they will be barred from travelling, the UK interior ministry said. The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme requires all visitors who do not need a visa to enter Britain to purchase a pre-travel permit online at a cost of 16 pounds (\$21.57). It was introduced in 2023 and extended to European visitors in April last year, but has not been strictly enforced. However, from February 25, it will be mandatory for visitors to the UK to have obtained an ETA to travel. This means that airlines will prevent passengers from boarding if they do not have an ETA, eVisa or other valid documentation, the interior ministry said. British and Irish citizens, including dual citizens, as well as those with the right to live in the UK, are exempt from needing an ETA. The ETA scheme is a vital part of our work to strengthen the UK's border security, helping to deliver a more efficient and modern service that works for both visitors and the British public," migration minister Mike Tapp said.

In October last year, the European Union (EU) began rolling-out its much delayed post-Brexit border security checks for UK nationals entering the bloc. Britain formally left the EU in 2020.

Trump's 'Dalilah Law' Demand After Girl Injured In Crash By Indian Driver

Amsterdam. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump called on the American Congress to pass the so-called 'Dalilah Law', aimed at preventing states from issuing commercial driving licences to illegal immigrants. The American commander-in-chief said the law was named after Dalilah Coleman, a first grader who was severely injured in a car accident caused by an illegal immigrant from India who was driving a semitruck with a commercial driver's licence. "Many, if not most, illegal aliens do not speak English and cannot read even the most basic road signs," Trump said in his State of the Union address. "That's why tonight I'm calling on Congress to pass what we will call the Dalilah law, barring any state from granting commercial driver's licences to illegal aliens."

About Dalilah Coleman

According to the White House, Dalilah Coleman's injuries from the semi-truck accident include a traumatic brain injury and cerebral palsy, and she will need lifelong care and therapy. The driver who caused the accident, Partap Singh, is an illegal immigrant in the US from India. He crossed the border in 2022 and was released into the country by the Biden administration. Dalilah was left nonverbal after her family vehicle was struck in a 2024 wreck by an 18-wheeler driven by Singh. She is now relearning how to walk, according to a report by the New York Post. Singh had been given a commercial driver's licence by the state despite his immigration status. He had entered the US illegally through the southern border in October 2022 and was released by the Biden administration. He was again arrested by ICE in August 2025 to face deportation proceedings under the Trump administration

Cartel violence fuels doubts about FIFA World Cup games in Mexico

GUADALAJARA. (Agency)

Mexico: Hugo Alejandro Pérez was in his house a few miles from the Mexican stadium that is slated to host FIFA World Cup games when gunfire and explosions erupted just outside his door.

The 53-year-old restaurant owner was already skeptical about his city, Guadalajara, hosting the international sporting event. He saw a government that failed to fix basic things, like water service to his home, along with cartel violence in the surrounding state of Jalisco and shook his head. The surge of bloodshed this week following the Mexican military's killing of the country's most powerful cartel boss offered more confirmation of his doubts.

"I don't think they should host the World Cup here," Pérez said. "We have so many problems, and they want to invest in the World Cup? With all the violence, it's not a good idea." Pérez joined other people Tuesday in questioning Guadalajara's capacity to be a host city for the summer soccer competition, even as the Mexican government vowed that the international

event — hosted jointly by Mexico, the United States and Canada — will not be affected. President offers 'every guarantee' for World Cup President Claudia Sheinbaum was asked at her daily news briefing what guarantees there are that World Cup matches will be held in Jalisco. "Every guarantee," she said, adding that there was "no risk" for fans coming to the tournament. Jalisco Gov. Jesús Pablo Lemus said he had spoken with local FIFA officials, who have "absolutely no intention of removing any venues from Mexico. The three venues remain completely unchanged."

The same day, the Portuguese soccer federation said it was "closely monitoring the delicate situation" in Mexico. Its national team was scheduled to play Mexico's team in a friendly on March 28 at the newly renovated Azteca Stadium in Mexico City, which is scheduled to host the opening World Cup match on June 11.

Jalisco, in western Mexico, was already facing scrutiny. The state has been plagued by some of the starkest examples of cartel violence in recent years, including the

Oseguera Cervantes, or "El Mencho," was killed Sunday in a capture attempt by the military. The operation and waves of violence killed 70 people. Cartel gunmen

set fire to cars to block streets in states across the country, namely Jalisco, and fought with Mexican forces into Monday as the government said the conflict was under control. The death of Oseguera Cervantes came as Mexico's government has stepped up its offensive against cartels in an effort to meet demands by U.S. President Donald Trump to crack down on criminal groups. The cartel, also known as CJNG, is one of the fastest-growing criminal networks in Mexico. The White House confirmed that the U.S. provided intelligence support to capture the cartel leader and applauded Mexico's army for taking down a man who was one of the most wanted criminals in both countries.



discovery of a cartel killing site at a ranch last March and a crisis of disappearances. The state, with Guadalajara as its capital, is the central hub for the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, whose leader Nemesio

Trump claims Iran working on missiles that could hit US

KATHMANDU. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday claimed Iran is seeking to develop missiles that can strike the United States and accused Tehran of working to rebuild a nuclear program that was targeted by American strikes last year.

The United States and Iran are engaged in high-stakes negotiations over Iran's atomic program and other issues including missiles, with Trump saying he prefers diplomacy but is willing to use force if talks fail. "They've already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas, and they're working to build missiles that will soon reach the United States of America," Trump alleged during his State of the Union address.

In 2025, the US Defense Intelligence Agency said Iran could potentially develop a militarily viable intercontinental ballistic missile by 2035 "should Tehran decide to pursue the capability," but did not say if it had made such a decision.

Tehran currently possesses short- and medium-range ballistic missiles with ranges that top out at about 1,850 miles (3,000 kilometers), according to the US Congressional Research Service. The continental United States is more than 6,000 miles from Iran's western

tip. Washington and Tehran have concluded two rounds of talks aimed at reaching a deal on Iran's nuclear program to replace the agreement that Trump tore up during his first term in



office. "Preference" is diplomacy The United States has repeatedly called for zero uranium enrichment by Iran but has also sought to address its ballistic missile program and support for armed groups in the region -- demands Iran has rejected. Iran has also repeatedly rejected that it is pursuing nuclear weapons. Trump ordered strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites last year, claiming afterward that Tehran's atomic program was obliterated. On Tuesday, he said Iran wants "to start all over again," and that it is "at this moment again pursuing their sinister

nuclear ambitions." Trump has sent a massive US military force to the Middle East, deploying two aircraft carriers as well as more than a dozen other ships, a large number of warplanes and other assets to the region. He has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran if negotiations fail to reach a new agreement. Talks with Tehran are currently set to continue on Thursday.

"My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy but one thing is certain: I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon," Trump said. The US president's speech primarily focused on domestic issues, making no mention at all of China -- Washington's primary military and economic rival -- and only briefly referring to Russia. Trump said he was working to end the bloody conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and repeated his inaccurate claim that he had brought eight other wars to an end since returning to office in January 2025. He also hailed NATO's decision to spend five percent of gross domestic product on defense -- a move made under heavy pressure from Trump and his administration.

Man kills four in stabbing spree near Tacoma, shot dead by police

SEOUL. (Agency)

A man fatally stabbed four people before being shot by a sheriff's deputy outside a home northwest of Tacoma, Washington, on Tuesday, authorities said. The Pierce County Sheriff's Office said deputies initially responded to reports made at around 8:40 a.m. Tuesday that a 32-year-old man was violating a no-contact order. They obtained a copy of the order, learned it was not valid because it had not been served on the suspect and headed to the scene to provide it to him.

While en route, additional reports came in that the man was stabbing people outside the home, the sheriff's office said. The first deputy arrived within about three minutes and shot the

suspect, who was pronounced dead at the scene, according to Officer Shelbie Boyd, a spokesperson for the Pierce County Force Investigation Team.

Three of the stabbing victims were dead at the scene and another died while being taken to a hospital. The stabbings occurred in a cul-de-sac on the Key Peninsula, northwest of Tacoma. Pierce County court records show that a woman who lived at the address last May obtained a one-year protection order against her 32-year-old son. She wrote that he had mental health and substance abuse issues, had previously pushed her, and more recently had threatened her by saying that her "grave has been already dug up." The son had been "threatening me,

abusing me both mentally and emotionally. Doing witchcraft/occult behavior and doing rituals in my home," the woman wrote. "Damaging personal belongings. Hurting my cat. ... I am an elderly disabled woman and he is taking advantage of me and my health."

"The records show that the son had notice of a hearing before the issuance of the restraining order but did not appear for it. The protective order required him not to possess dangerous weapons; to stay 1,000 feet (305 meters) from his mother, her vehicle and her address, which they had shared; and to comply with a previously prescribed mental health treatment plan, including medication.

US Man Stabs 4 To Death, Cops Were On Way To Serve Him Restraining Order

SEATTLE. (Agency)

A man fatally stabbed four people in Washington state on Tuesday morning as sheriff's deputies were on their way to hand him a domestic violence protection order, authorities said. The suspect died after being shot by an arriving deputy.

The Pierce County Sheriff's Office said deputies initially responded at 8:40 a.m. to reports that a 32-year-old man was violating a no-contact order at a home on the Key Peninsula, northwest of Tacoma. They obtained a copy of the order, learned it was not valid because it had not been served on the man and headed to the address to provide it to him. While they were en route, at about 9:30 a.m., additional reports came in that the man was stabbing people outside the home, the sheriff's office said. The first deputy arrived within about three minutes and shot the suspect, who was pronounced dead at the scene, according to Officer Shelbie Boyd, a spokesperson for the Pierce County Force Investigation Team. Three of the stabbing victims were dead at the

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her vehicle and her address, which they had shared; and to comply with a previously prescribed mental health treatment plan, including medication.



It was not immediately clear why the attacker had not previously been served with the protection order. Typically in Washington state, someone who obtains such an order

can request that law enforcement deliver it to the subject of the order or hire a private investigator or "process server" to do so. Not knowing the location of the subject of the restraining order can delay that.

Chris Cardenas, who lives just a couple minutes driving from the street where the stabbings occurred, said he was washing his truck in his driveway when he heard the gunfire. "All of a sudden I just heard like a series of gunshots," he said. "You could really hear it echoing through the trees."

Sirens then sounded nonstop for about 40 minutes, he said. "I immediately knew something was up because I've never heard gunshots out here," he said. He went over to the cordoned-off scene and saw ambulances, a forensics bus and dozens of police vehicles, he said, adding that he couldn't have braced himself "for how tragic the news would be."

US women's ice hockey team declines to attend Trump address

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The Olympic gold-winning US women's ice hockey team said Tuesday it had declined an invitation to Donald Trump's State of the Union address, after the president joked he would be "impeached" if he did not ask them to attend. Both Republicans and Democrats traditionally bring guests to watch the president's annual address to Congress. Trump welcomed most of the US men's ice hockey team to the White House ahead of his speech Tuesday, after they also won gold at the recently concluded Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

But a statement from USA Hockey, the sport's national governing body, sent to AFP Tuesday said the female players would be "unable to participate" in the State of



the Union address due to prior commitments. Team USA's women's team won gold for the first time since 2018 when they beat the Canadians 2-1 on Thursday. The US men's team followed that up Sunday with their own ice hockey gold for the first time in 46 years, also beating Canada 2-1.

In a video shared online soon after the win, Trump can be heard on speaker phone in a call with the men's team, inviting them to the address before saying: "We're gonna have to bring the women's team, you do know that?" to which the players laugh.

"I do believe I would probably be impeached, OK?" the president added. Some 20 members of the men's team arrived at the White House Tuesday afternoon, ahead of that evening's speech at the Capitol, wearing Team USA sweaters and their gold medals. Trump hosted them in the Oval Office. The statement on behalf of the women's team said: "We are sincerely grateful for the invitation extended to our gold medal-winning U.S. Women's Hockey Team and deeply appreciate the recognition of their extraordinary achievement." "Due to the timing and previously scheduled academic and professional commitments following the Games, the athletes are unable to participate." "They were honored to be included and are grateful for the acknowledgment." "At least five members of the men's team also did not attend, according to US media reports. Kyle Connor of the Canada-based NHL franchise Winnipeg Jets told reporters including The Athletic that he was "just getting ready" for his team's Wednesday clash with the Vancouver Canucks.

NEWS BOX

Youngster arrested for assaulting senior citizen in Bengaluru

BENGALURU. (Agency)

A youth has been arrested for allegedly assaulting a 65-year-old man on RR Layout Road in the city after an argument over honking. The victim has been identified as D Nanjundappa of Vinayaka Layout in Nagadevanahalli. The accused has been identified as Naveen of Nagadevanahalli. The incident happened between 5.50 pm and 6.10 pm on Saturday in front of the accused's house. Naveen, who was driving his car, started honking to alert the motorcyclists who had parked their vehicles in front of his house. Assuming that he was blocking the road, Nanjundappa, who was walking in front of the accused's house, moved aside. When Naveen kept honking, Nanjundappa told him that the stretch was wide enough for his vehicle to go. Soon, an



argument broke out between them when Nanjundappa advised Naveen to proceed further. Naveen, who got out of his car, allegedly started abusing Nanjundappa even as he kept walking on the footpath. Naveen followed him in his car for a few metres where he got out of his vehicle and allegedly assaulted Nanjundappa. Based on a complaint from Nanjundappa, Kengeri police arrested Naveen. "The police, who checked the CCTVs in the vicinity, found the accused assaulting Nanjundappa for no fault of his. Despite Naveen's parents trying to stop him, he pushed them aside and assaulted Nanjundappa," said the police.

Cybercrime police raid call centre, arrest two on cheating charges in Bengaluru

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Cybercrime police of Central division raided a call centre in Jayanagar 9th Block in the city and arrested two persons for cheating the public by claiming they could provide big profits if they invested in the stock market. The accused lured people through calls and induced them to transfer money online. The accused had hired around 15 out-of-state customer care executives for work. These executives operated from the call centre. After the complaint was registered at the Cyber



Crime Police Station, a raid was conducted on Multiwave Business Solutions Private Limited in Jayanagar 9th Block, and the two accused, identified as A K u m a r Y o g e s h

Amararam, a resident of Jayanagar 8th Block and native of Gujarat, and Y Imran, a resident of BTM Layout 2nd Stage and native of Delhi, were arrested.

"The accused had hired around 15 out-of-state customer care executives who operated from the fake call centre setup and made calls to members of the public, convincing them they would earn profits if they invested in the stock market. Believing this, the public responded positively. The accused provided a bank account, and under the pretext of investment, got money transferred online.

Train cancellations on Chennai Beach-Chengalpattu section draw political criticism



CHENNAI. (Agency)

DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, in a post on X, said the cancellation of services over the past few days on the Chennai Beach-Chengalpattu section, used by lakhs of commuters, has caused severe inconvenience and is deplorable.

"While 40 services had already been cancelled, additional cancellations have further affected office-goers, school and college students, and daily-wage workers. With the Plus Two examinations approaching, the railways should not show negligence in train operations," she said.

TNCC president K Selvarunthagai, in a post on X, urged the authorities to restore the cancelled services immediately. DMK MP P Wilson has written to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav expressing deep concern over the ongoing disruption, noting lakhs of commuters have been put to hardship as the disruption entered its fifth day.

Virudhunagar MP Manickam Tagore, in his post on X on Tuesday, urged the railway minister to provide immediate answers on the repeated cancellations, why alternative transport arrangements were not planned in advance, and why commuters were not given timely information about the disruptions.

'Richest civic body least bothered': Bombay HC questions BMC, other authorities over lack of early alerts for Mumbai traffic, flooding

Bombay High Court asked BMC to depute experts to study how developed countries deal with various civic issues and prepare comparative reports on such advanced civic systems.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday asked the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) if officers of the "richest municipal corporation in Asia" were concerned about the citizens' lives and queried if they would study how developed countries deal with various civic issues.

The HC said the civic body should depute experts to study and prepare comparative reports on such advanced civic systems.

A bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Aarti A Sathe, while hearing a plea raising concerns over handling of waste at Kanjurmarg dumping site and poor odour in the vicinity, said that "other states are going far ahead".

The judges said the civic body officers and experts can also visit Ahmedabad city in a "progressive state" of Gujarat to study the types of civic facilities. The judges orally questioned why BMC and other authorities cannot give "advance

through electronic systems/indicators or dedicated FM channels to alert citizens on issues, including flooding, traffic jams, as 4-5



kilometres long queues of vehicles are seen after mishaps. Justice Kulkarni orally remarked, "For example, if you start from Fort area (in South Mumbai)

and after you cross J J Hospital/bridge, there is a very heavy rainfall, and you come to know all the roads are closed. The indication/intimation should come when you are in the Fort area. Everyone's time is important. Or if you are on Coastal Road, and if there is any mishap, then there is a long line of vehicles of 4 kilometres. But you will not be told (in advance). You will be required to wait at the toll booth in Worli. There are hundreds of cars (stuck). This is because you (authorities) do not want to implement any electronic system (for alerts). And then you go and see developed countries..." The judge said that senior citizens and other people with ailments cannot be asked to sit in a car for long hours. "No Commissioner has applied mind. During the 2005 floods, it was like when Rome was burning, Nero was fiddling, and all the FM channels were playing cinema music. We suffered for two days. You (civic authorities) are least bothered," the judge added.

Row over Suman School venue in Surat: BJP issues showcause notice to corporator

Surat. (Agency)

BJP corporator Narendra Pandav was issued a showcause notice by Surat city BJP President, Paresh Patel, asking him to explain his 'indiscipline' on Tuesday. Pandav, who is the corporator from ward no. 7 in Katargam, had challenged senior leaders and Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) officials over the construction of SMC's Suman School in Katargam.

The notice issued to Pandav said, "You have been posting on social media for a long time. Your unethical behaviour in the ward has placed the party in a tricky situation. Please clarify in seven days or else action will be taken."

Speaking to the Indian Express, Pandav said, "I am at my native place in Saurashtra for the last two days, and I have come to know that Surat city BJP president had issued a show cause notice to me. I will return to Surat on Wednesday to meet our party president and ask him what my mistake was. I have not posted

anything on social media which defames the party. As a municipal corporator, I have taken up the issues of the public, and I take down their complaints in writing. I have raised issues



against SMC officials, not against our party senior leaders or any other community. The local public has raised the issue of the Suman school on social media, not me. I will give a reply to our party's higher-ups on Wednesday."

The SMC had proposed to build a Suman High School (from 9th to 10th class) at a site in Katargam (Ward no. 7) with the Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil laying the foundation stone of the school at the proposed site. The Standing Committee had approved the proposal for the construction of Suman School in Ward No. 7, on 17th July 2025, and the contract was given to Gaurav Builders. No proposal was sent to the Standing Committee regarding the change of site of the school to Ward no. 8. However, construction at the site did not commence, and later the SMC officials changed the site to Ved road (Ward no. 8).

The MLA of Katargam, BJP's Veenu Moradiya, had written to the SMC commissioner and the Mayor to shift the Suman School from Ward no. 7 to Ward no. 8, claiming that students from 'lower economic groups and the middle class' would benefit from the decision.

In bid to scale up business at Surat Diamond Bourse, 'over 100' traders, brokers open new offices

Surat. (Agency)

THE SURAT Diamond Bourse (SDB) authorities have adopted a new measure to attract traders to the "world's largest" office space: getting a Jain priest to "bless" the traders and brokers.

The Jain priest, Gachhadhipati Abhaydevsuriji, and his disciples visited SDB with Jain traders and brokers taking him to their diamond trading offices on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, sources in the SDB claimed that a hundred diamond traders and brokers opened new offices on Tuesday. This is in addition to hundred traders and brokers who had already opened new offices starting from February 18. The development follows a meeting Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi had with the diamond traders of Mahidharpura on January 20 where several of them assured him that they would shift to SDB by February 18. Sources said the business activities at SDB had slowly started to pick up as a large number of diamond traders and

brokers started visiting it daily. According to sources in the SDB big firms like Dhanera Diamonds, P Hitesh, Anju Gems, and a few others, have completely shut down their offices in the trading hub of Mahidharpura, Surat and opened new offices at SDB. This has caused medium-sized traders,



who have offices in Mahidharpura, to open offices at the SDB as well.

SDB vice chairman Lalji Patel said, "The diamond brokers on Tuesday formed the Surat Diamond Brokers Association at SDB and also made a WhatsApp group where different information related to the diamond industry and SDB will be provided. More

people will be added to the group, and it will be expanded further, making the business activities stronger."

Rajya Sabha MP and SDB Chairman Govind Dholakia also paid a visit to the SDB and met those who had recently opened their offices and congratulated them. Known as the DREAM (Diamond Research and Mercantile) City located in Khajod on Surat's outskirts, the SDB has nine interconnected towers, with over 4,500 offices, and a customs clearance house. Spread over 67 lakh square feet of floor area, it was built with the aim of converting Surat, a manufacturing hub of gems, into a global diamond trading hub. Traders with whom The Indian Express had spoken to last month had listed one of the major problems being the distance - 18 km - from the diamond trading hubs of Mahidharpura, Varachha and Katargam which made the transporting of diamonds to Khajod, "risky"

Haryana mid-day meal scheme covers over 14L students annually

Haryana Mid-Day Meal Scheme benefits over 14.8 lakh students annually, with Mewat recording the highest district-wise coverage and allocations peaking in 2023-24.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

The Haryana government on Tuesday reported that more than 14.80 lakh students annually, on an average, have benefited from the Mid-Day Meal scheme since 2019, with financial allocations and disbursements witnessing significant fluctuations over the years. The details were tabled in the House by School Education Minister Mahipal Dhandra in response to a question raised by Kaithal MLA Aditya Surjewala in the ongoing budget session of Haryana Vidhan Sabha, here today.

Data tabled in the minister's reply shows that total beneficiaries under the scheme stood at 14,47,990 in 2019-20, rising to 17,65,992 in 2021-22, before declining to 14,80,150 in 2025-26. The highest number of beneficiaries was recorded in 2021-22, coinciding

with post-pandemic normalization in schools.

Among districts, Mewat consistently recorded the highest number of beneficiaries. The district reported: 1,53,415 students in 2019-20;



1,96,185 in 2021-22; and 2,28,018 in 2024-25 (highest during the period). Other districts with large beneficiary counts include Hisar, Karnal, Gurugram, Sirsa, Faridabad, and Palwal.

The highest allocation was made in 2023-24, when ₹83,800 lakh was sanctioned.

Crackdown on illegal Bangladeshis? BMC order review of all birth records since 2016

After FIRs against two BMC officers over fake birth certificates for illegal Bangladeshi migrants, civic body orders review of all records.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has launched a sweeping scrutiny of birth records issued since 2016, a day after lodging police complaints against two Medical Officers of Health for allegedly issuing fake birth certificates. Civic officials said the certificates in question were granted to individuals who were not born in any Mumbai hospital. The two officers had been suspended prior to the complaints being filed.

Officials clarified that under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, all births occurring in civic, government or private hospitals

must be registered irrespective of nationality. However, applications from adults require background verification before certificates are issued.

"The Registration of Birth and Deaths (RBD) act mandates that any infant born in a civic, government or private hospital needs to be registered irrespective of their nationality. However, if the certificate is issued to a grown up then background verification of the applicants are carried out before issuing the certificates," an official told.

"In this case, during our verification process, we found out that the certificates were issued to

individuals who were not born in Mumbai. The certificate is issued on the basis of information fed by the hospital where the childbirth takes place. So in this case, the hospital administration is also at fault," the official added.

Officials described the review of records dating back to 2016 as a mammoth exercise and said the process is also being guided by complaints and tip offs received by the department.

On February 13, Mumbai Mayor

Ritu Tawde had announced that 237 false birth certificates were allegedly issued to illegal



infiltrators to facilitate illegal businesses in the city. Civic sources said the certificates were issued over the past two years by

the M East ward offices in Govandi and Mankhurd, the M West ward in Chembur and the L ward in Kurla.

Officials said the bulk of the certificates were issued by the two officers against whom police complaints have now been registered. The accused, Dr Sanjay Funde and Dr Pradeep Kashale, are former Medical Officers of Health in the M East ward, which covers Govandi and Deonar. The area, along with Malvani in Malad, has previously been under scrutiny over allegations of sheltering illegal immigrants.

Four officials suspended as 96 per cent of e-khatas issued were found illegal in Mandya's Induvalu

BENGALURU. (Agency)

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mandya Zilla Panchayat suspended four officials, including three Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs) and a Second Division Assistant, for issuing 1,844 illegal e-khatas in Induvalu Grama Panchayat.

The move was based on the order passed by the Upa Lokayukta Justice B Veerappa. Only 85 e-khatas were found legal, which constitutes just 4 per cent of the total 1,929 e-khatas issued. The remaining 96 per cent were found illegal.

Exercising the powers under the Karnataka Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeals) Rules, 1957, the CEO suspended former PDOs of Induvalu GP. The three Panchayat Development Officers suspended are A S Siddaraju, Dayananda, and Marilingaiah S, who were working in different GPs and the Second Division Assistant who was suspended is Rani H R. A departmental enquiry is pending against them. On record, Justice Veerappa directed the CEO to furnish the details of how such a number of illegal e-khatas belonging to private and public properties were issued between 2021 and 2025. He was also directed to submit a report.

"The authorities should verify the same and produce the relevant records regarding how many e-khatas are made in respect of government or gomal land without any grant or sanction by the government", he ordered.

"The issuance of 1844 illegal e-Katas is a serious matter. Initiating a departmental enquiry by the CEO is not sufficient; criminal action against them should be taken. Executive Officer, Mandya Taluka Panchayath, is directed to bring the same to the notice of the CEO, who should ensure initiating criminal action against the erring officials for illegally effecting 1844 e-Khatas", the Upa Lokayukta ordered.

When the only thing constant is a job crisis

We live in a wild world. Gone are the days when life at work was predictable. Today, nothing is. One day there is a tariff war. Then there is peace, with a treaty to boot. And celebration of a win on both sides of the trade border. The next day, there is a tumult once again as the US Supreme Court turns it topsy-turvy again.

Uncertainty is the norm. Nothing is permanent. But permacrisis is here for sure. A term that elevates crisis to a state of deep permanence. We might as well get used to it. A lot of crazy things have been happening. Apart from the tariff war, gold, silver and copper prices have run amok. Indians who traditionally saved gold and silver under the guise of festive splurges, women's cravings, wedding gifts and other excuses are today laughing all the way to their bank lockers, or to their 'Godrej bureaux'. All of a sudden, the personal wealth of gold- and silver-conscious Indians has gone up. This applies to the great Indian middle, lower and upper income groups—in that pecking order.

And then there is the permacrisis in the job market. Everyone is suddenly insecure about their jobs. In the old days—that is, five years ago—it was the middle manager in the organisation who was worried. He or she had put in some 20 years of work and was in their late forties or early fifties. Youngsters and new recruits in their early thirties were replacing them. The jobs could be done at cheaper salaries and lower employee-carrying costs. Voluntary retirement schemes were the talk of the town once again. A whole host of the challenged took this option and sat on the bench. This time in their homes, trying to dabble with other forms of earning to supplement the VRS corpus. The young employee who replaced this middle manager was laughing all the way to the bank. Their salaries looked good and their jobs secure. Come 2026, and all this is challenged. Permacrisis is here in the jobs market for the young as well. In fact, the current crisis challenges the young more than the old. The remaining older folks in organisations are much more secure. They are happily not in the middle anymore. They are the decision-makers at the top. Their jobs are secure till the devil of sentient artificial intelligence enters the game.

As of now, the most insecure people in jobs across realms of work are in back-end data generation, sales and customer service. The entry-level is reducing in numbers and jobs at the back-end of sales, logistics, finance, legal and a whole host of verticals are being shaken, stirred and replaced by AI-enabled enterprise strategies. Add to it the fact that organisations big and small are using the bogey of AI to foreclose a whole host of jobs they found unsustainable, and the permacrisis for the young is complete. The status of jobs is what we witness in your refrigerator. Eggs waiting to be beaten and chicken waiting to be eaten. Not as rough as that yet—but wait. The future will be tougher still. Even as Vinod Khosla talks straight and loud, everyone else in the IT market is talking a language best understood by those with twin-tongues. It looks almost as if no one knows of the permacrisis ahead, or everyone knows and wants to present a comfort-façade that all is well. I wonder why. The young are, therefore, challenged all across. This job insecurity is not only in engineering and technology enterprises. It is there in every allied territory. And which piece of work is unaliated to technology today? Even the Uber driver is worried of income drop as people use smart apps to compare prices and crunch cab-sharing schemes to book the cheapest ride

The brat pack must be reined in

It's time the authorities realised that ordinary people are as much citizens of this country as the rich and the powerful.

SHIVAM Mishra, the son of a Kanpur tobacco tycoon, is in the news for the wrong reasons. He was allegedly involved in the Lamborghini crash that left several persons injured on February 8. Shivam was arrested almost a week later and granted bail within hours. In May 2024, a Porsche car allegedly driven by a 17-year-old boy under the influence of alcohol had fatally knocked down two IT professionals in Pune. Instances of juveniles or young men from well-heeled families, pampered by their parents or grandparents and permitted to drive luxury cars — even if they don't have a driving licence — have been reported from cities across India. Another common factor in most such cases is that the brats and their friends spend money extravagantly in bars, pubs and night clubs, indulge in drunk driving and cause mayhem. They expect their parents to extricate them from the clutches of the police, and the cops are often ready to oblige. The rich and the powerful are a privileged lot in our country. When they break laws, their parents, instead of taking the brats to task, go to any extent to get them off the hook. Political pressure, legal manoeuvres, money — everything is put to use. Their sense of entitlement engenders blatant disregard for the law. In an effort to combat this menace, senior officers should be tasked with visiting the spot promptly. As a newly recruited IPS officer in charge of a subdivision, I was expected to visit the scene of crimes like murder, dacoity and rape to ensure that the local police did not shield the guilty persons.

The ASP/DSP (assistant/deputy superintendent of police) would receive a telegram, which had to be acted upon instantly. The ASP would leave all other matters in hand and take off for the scene of the crime in his car. No delays were tolerated since the DIG (deputy inspector general of police) kept a hawk's eye on the young officer's movements. The ASP's record of his findings was submitted to his own SP and simultaneously to the DIG of the police range. This ensured that supervision was exercised in the interest of justice.

The Police Manual that mandated such visits by the ASP or the SDPO (subdivisional police officer) should now be revised to include car accidents in which young members of affluent families are suspected to be involved. By sending a senior officer to the scene early, the possibility of the local police being influenced by money power is considerably reduced. The rich have become even richer since the Modi government came to power. Many families flaunt four or even more luxury cars. Their children never tire of mentioning the prices of these vehicles. This gives them more heft with their friends. Since parents have little time to devote to their kids, the brats are left in the company of drivers. The



latter teach them to drive, even if they have not legally reached the age for getting a licence. Television channels showed the Kanpur tycoon's son being lifted from the driver's seat by two hefty men, who were obviously his private security guards. Some passersby were among the witnesses. Yet, the family's lawyer felt that the truth could easily be manipulated by greasing a few palms. Inevitably, family drivers become scapegoats. Influential people look after them and their families in case they have to spend time in jail. The authorities need to prevent such a travesty of justice. One solution that comes to mind is to add a clause in the list of punishments, other than the usual terms of imprisonment or fines. This punishment, which the magistrate or the judge should be permitted to impose, would require parents to attend a workshop for a month or even longer at the traffic training institute. The importance of inculcating respect for the law of the land should be drilled into them. The young offender should also be made to attend this workshop. If such punishment is introduced, the chances of doting parents spoiling their young ones will be

reduced. Tycoons usually value their time more than anything else. If they know that pampering their children will result in their going back to "school", it may prompt them to look within and do course correction.

Earlier this month, a 23-year-old man was killed in Dwarka (Delhi) after a speeding SUV driven by a 17-year-old boy — who was filming a video to be posted on social media — collided with a motorcycle and a taxi. The car had been challaned several times in the immediate past for violation of traffic rules, mostly for speeding. This should have alerted his father, who obviously took no notice of the son's activities.

The father of the accused apologised to the victim's mother, saying that he was "ready to abide by the judiciary's decision", but she was not keen to forgive him. And the boy was granted interim bail to appear in the Class 10 board exams, even though he was responsible for the death of a fellow human.

It's time the authorities realised that ordinary people are as much citizens of this country as the rich and the powerful, who do not seem to value the lives of the poor.

Faith goes green: Hola Mohalla set for eco-friendly langar

The initiative for eco-friendly langar marks an important moment where faith and environmental governance intersect

PUNJAB's push to make Hola Mohalla plastic-free marks an important moment where faith and environmental governance intersect. The recent initiative by the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), in collaboration with the Sikh clergy, to ensure plastic-free langar during Hola Mohalla reflects a recognition that mass religious gatherings must align with sustainability goals. Hola Mohalla, held annually at Anandpur Sahib, draws lakhs of devotees. The scale of the langar (community kitchen) operations inevitably generates enormous waste, particularly single-use plastic plates, cups and packaging. In recent years, concerns over littered riverbanks and clogged drainage systems have grown, especially given the town's proximity to ecologically sensitive zones. The PPCB's move to promote eco-friendly containers and coordinate with religious authorities is significant for two reasons. First, environmental regulation often falters at large gatherings due to political sensitivities. Second, Sikh institutions have historically



demonstrated environmental leadership — from tree plantation drives to earlier bans on plastic bags by the

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee at the Golden Temple in 2018. There is also a behavioural dimension. Langar symbolises equality and collective responsibility. Extending this ethos to environmental stewardship can create a powerful model. Religious messaging from clergy can reinforce compliance far more effectively than regulatory warnings alone. However, execution will determine impact. Announcements must translate into strict enforcement, adequate supply of biodegradable alternatives and proper waste segregation and composting. Without a robust collection and processing mechanism, even "eco-friendly" materials risk ending up in landfills. Punjab's plastic challenge is not limited to festivals. But if Hola Mohalla 2026 sets a precedent for green religious events — with monitoring, transparency and post-event waste audits — it could become a template for other mass gatherings across India. Faith-based environmentalism, when matched with administrative will, can transform public behaviour at scale.

India's AI vision lofty, capability limited

AI has its own 'brain' that can learn on the job, even as it executes various tasks

THE AI Impact Summit held in Delhi (Feb 16-20) is a commendable achievement for India (notwithstanding the organisational glitches on the first day and the Galgotias University fiasco) and burnishes the image of the Modi government in convening summit-level events that relate to global governance in critical domains. Investment commitments of over \$250 billion are welcome. The first such mega AI event to be held in the Global South, it was structured around a unique governance architecture built on three guiding Sutras (principles) — People, Planet and Progress — and seven operational Chakras (pillars) that framed the contours of global cooperation in artificial intelligence.

The preamble to the Delhi Declaration noted that "the advent of AI marks an inflection point in the trajectory of technological evolution. The choices that we make today will shape the AI-enabled world that future generations will inherit." Endorsed by 88 countries/ international organisations, the declaration called for further international cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement along the seven Chakras — development of human capital; broadening access for social empowerment; trustworthiness of AI systems; energy efficiency of AI systems; use of AI in science; democratising AI resources; and use of AI for economic growth and social good. The statement added: "In complementarity with existing international and other initiatives, we will work to foster shared understanding, while respecting national sovereignty, on how AI could be made to serve humanity, noting the initiatives across the seven Chakras (pillars) of the Summit." AI is a distinctive capability and stands out among technologies, because it is the first general-purpose technology in history that can learn and improve at tasks

that previously required human-like understanding, rather than merely executing fixed instructions created by humans. In short, AI has its own 'brain' that can learn on the job, even as it executes various tasks.

In essence, AI is the first technology that can routinely surprise its creators with new capabilities, rapidly absorb almost any cognitive skill when given enough examples and produce open-ended creative output at superhuman



volume. The ubiquitous use of ChatGPT and AI-generated text and images (often fake) across the world is but one example of the spread of AI and this is just the beginning. Further, this AI output is generated while improving quickly, year after year through relatively predictable scaling. No previous technology wave combined those properties at the same time. This combination makes AI qualitatively different and points to the immense potential for consequential outcomes — both positive and negative; and hence, the global focus

on trying to evolve norms, principles, regulations and an ethical framework that would benefit all of mankind. This normative inclusivity was at the heart of the Delhi summit objectives. The AI domain is dominated by the US and its hi-tech ecosystem that comprises the private sector, academia and government agencies. Thus, it was instructive that despite the lofty aspirational rhetoric in the Delhi Declaration, the US distanced itself from any form of global governance. The US representative at the summit, White House technology adviser Michael Kratsios reiterated this on February 20, asserting: "As the Trump administration has now said many times: We totally reject global governance of AI." He added that the technology cannot lead to a brighter future if it is controlled by bureaucracies and central authorities.

Regulating new technologies has been central to the distribution of global power and the Cold War is illustrative, where nascent nuclear capability was strictly controlled by the major powers led by the US and the former USSR (now Russia). The civilian strand of nuclear power was strictly regulated and monitored under UN aegis (the IAEA) and the military domain remained a closed club — of the five nuclear powers: the US, the USSR, the UK, France and China. The NPT (nuclear non-proliferation treaty) was imposed on all other nations, who were forbidden to acquire nuclear weapon capability and this was an iniquitous treaty, but it maintained a certain degree of stability in the global strategic framework. Paradoxically, India in the 1960s, despite its limited nuclear capability, with PM Nehru at the helm, was able to contribute to the deliberations on the management of the apocalyptic nuclear weapons. With

US support, Delhi was finally accorded a special niche in the global nuclear framework in late 2008. AI and the nuclear domain are very different, but India has been able to articulate a normative vision of how AI should be harnessed for the larger global good — and this is a lofty, altruistic vision. Global power politics, however, operate in a more contested realist framework and technology denial or strict regulation and limited dissemination is the underlying principle. AI could become the critical determinant in shaping global power and prosperity in this century. While India seeks to play a significant role in the global AI pursuit, it has a very modest capability and does not rank among the top five AI-capable nations. Yes, India is a major adopter of AI and the crowd surge at the Delhi summit reflects the enthusiasm of the younger Indian demography that comprises entrepreneurs, researchers and startups that are waiting to blossom.

Creating an ecosystem that is enabling and empathetic to nurturing AI in the long term will be the abiding Indian challenge. As Professor Arogyaswami J Paulraj of Stanford University and a global AI leader cautions: "India's heavy reliance on imported information technology — spanning communications, computing and artificial intelligence, from hardware platforms to intellectual property — poses a threat to both its economic health and national security."

Investing in data centres (which need vast amounts of water and electricity) is laudable but this remains at the lower end of the AI ladder. As in the case of acquiring design capability in critical military inventory, what matters in AI is 'compute dominance' and here, the US is at the top of the pack, with China as a distant second. India is invisible. This gap must be bridged if India wants to be an effective AI sherpa for the Global South.

Mexican couple marries in Kashi on a boat in the Ganga following Vedic rituals

Varanasi.(Agency)

A Mexican couple solemnised their marriage according to Vedic rituals on a boat in front of Assi Ghat on Ganga in Kashi on Tuesday evening. Amid chants of mantras, the foreign couple, dressed in Indian attire, tied the knot for their seven lives. Mexicans Ruiz Cabol and Gonzalo Miguel were deeply influenced by Indian art, Sanatan culture, and Vedic traditions. They decided to begin their married life in Kashi. Their deep devotion to Mother Ganga brought them to Kashi. This is why they chose a boat on the Ganga for their wedding ceremony.

Acharya Deepak Pandey, who performed the wedding ceremony, said that the groom, Gonzalo Miguel, and the bride, Ruiz, contacted him through a group of people. The wedding was completed according to Hindu customs with a 'havan' (fire sacrifice), the exchange of garlands, and the donation of vermilion.

Woman stabbed by man succumbs to injuries in Jammu hospital

Jammu.(Agency)

A 32-yr-old woman critically injured after she was stabbed by a man succumbed today during a treatment here in a hospital.

A woman namely Rafia Bano, wife of Arif Jamal, of Gangyal, Jammu was inflicted multiple grievous stab injuries, including critical wounds to the neck and other vital parts of the body in a park on February 23.

"Injured in stabbing at Rajiv Gandhi park on Feb 23, woman has expired during treatment here at Government Medical College and Hospital," said police.

During the course of investigation, the accused identified as Amarjeet Singh alias Kaka, of Model Town, Gangyal, Jammu was arrested for attacking a woman with a knife.

Lucknow nursing school organises lamp lighting & oath ceremony

Agartala.(Agency)

Harbilas Nursing School in Lucknow organised a lamp lighting and oath ceremony on Monday. Students of the nursing school presented cultural performances highlighting the life and contributions of Florence Nightingale, issues of social harassment, and the theme of "Beti Bachao" (Save the Girl Child). Addressing the gathering, Ajay Shankar Rai, former IPS officer and honorary secretary of the Motilal Memorial Society thau runs the school, stated that nursing services form the backbone of society. He emphasized the growing need for well-trained and compassionate healthcare professionals and highlighted the institution's significant contribution in this direction. He advised students to adopt discipline, dedication, sacrifice, and confidentiality in their professional lives.

In his address, chief guest Kunwar Ujjwal Raman Singh, MP and chairman of the Motilal Memorial Society, remarked that nursing is not merely a profession but one of the highest forms of human service. He urged students to remain prepared for emerging global challenges, including those posed by new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). On this occasion, he honored teachers, students, and staff members for excellence in education, training, and service. Principal Prachi Shukla expressed her gratitude to all the dignitaries and attendees.

The school run by the Motilal Memorial Society was founded by late Uttar Pradesh chief minister Chandrabhan Gupta.

Seven-day ultimatum, missing reasons: CHB demolition notices spark outrage

Chandigarh.(Agency)

A demolition drive meant to enforce structural safety in Chandigarh Housing Board flats has instead triggered sharp questions over due process, transparency and fairness, particularly the seven-day deadline imposed on residents and the absence of detailed reasons in the notices.

Across sectors including 41-A, 45 and 39, residents have received notices from the Chandigarh Housing Board (CHB) demanding amounts ranging from about Rs 55,000 to over Rs 3.16 lakh. The sums are described as "estimated costs" for removal of alleged violations and restoration of structural safety. Allottees have been directed to deposit the amount within seven days or demolish the alterations themselves, failing which the Board may proceed with demolition at the occupant's risk and cost, without further notice. For many residents, however, the core concern is not only financial liability but what they describe as a virtual ultimatum.

One week's notice: "Like putting a gun to the head" Several allottees questioned the seven-day compliance window. What if a resident is travelling? What if an elderly allottee is hospitalised? What if documents need to be consulted or an engineer engaged to verify the alleged violations? Residents say a week's time to either arrange lakhs of rupees or dismantle parts of one's home amounts to coercion rather than compliance.

Rs 180 cr penalty in 'Vanishing Hills' Case

Jalandhar .(Agency)

In a landmark ruling aimed at halting ecological degradation in Punjab's fragile Shivalik belt, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered the closure of 13 stone crushing units in Hoshiarpur and Rupnagar districts and directed the recovery of over ₹180 crore as environmental compensation for violations of environmental laws.

The judgment, delivered on February 4, 2026, disposes of Original Application No. 624/2023, which the Tribunal had taken up suo motu following media reports highlighting rampant illegal mining in the region. The proceedings were triggered by a September 2023 investigative report published in media.

The report detailed how hills in the Beet area of Garhshankar (Hoshiarpur) and the Kheda Kalmot cluster (Rupnagar) were allegedly being leveled, with some formations reportedly flattened up to 200 feet. Affected villages included Kalewal-Beet, Khuralgarh Sahib and Algran.

The Shivalik range forms Punjab's primary groundwater recharge zone and serves as a natural barrier against flash floods. Environmental experts have long warned that

deep excavation in this geologically fragile sub-mountainous terrain can destabilize slopes, increase erosion and compromise long-term water security.

During the course of hearings, the Tribunal



expressed dissatisfaction over what it termed "vague" and non-specific reports submitted by authorities. It subsequently directed the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) to conduct inspections, identify violators and assess environmental damages.

Jaskirat Singh of Public Action Committee, Mattewara a group that has fought many environment battles of Punjab and recently launched Shivalik Morcha to protect Shivalik

Hills, said that it is a landmark order to save the Shivalik hills. He said that the order is of February 4, but it has been uploaded just a couple of days back with complete information.

Following inspections, the PPCB assessed environmental compensation exceeding ₹180 crore against 13 stone crushing units found to be operating in violation of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act. Some of these stone crushers have even facing environmental compensation recovery up to Rs 85 crore, Rs 24 crore, Rs 18 crore, Rs 14 crore, Rs 7 crore, Rs 6 crore. The Tribunal ordered that all 13 units shall remain closed, Environmental compensation must be recovered as per law. Criminal complaints already filed against violators must be pursued. And the source of raw materials for other crusher units in the area must be verified. The bench, headed by Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, has given the PPCB a strict 90-day timeline to complete verification of raw material sourcing under the Punjab Regulation of Crusher Units Act, 2025 and the Punjab State Minor Mineral Policy, 2025.

Kaithal MLA corners BJP govt over health infra: Over 1,069 medical officers, 570 pharmacist posts vacant

Demanding action, Aditya Surjewala urged the BJP government to launch immediate special recruitment drives for all vacant posts, speed up the process for 450 MOs and issue notifications for the remaining 619 posts.

Chandigarh.(Agency)

In the Haryana Vidhan Sabha's ongoing budget session, today, Congress MLA (Kaithal) Aditya Surjewala launched a sharp attack on the health services' ground reality. Speaking during the Question Hour, Surjewala cited official government figures and highlighted severe staff shortages at Primary Health Centers (PHCs), Community Health Centers (CHCs), and district hospitals.

During his address in the House, Aditya Surjewala said: "Today, I am placing before the House the reality of the Health Department that the government is trying to hide." He pointed out that, according to official data, "health services in Haryana are crumbling: Medical Officers (MO) - Out of a total sanctioned 4,040 posts, only 2,971 are filled. 1,069 posts are vacant - i.e., about 26.5% vacant.

The highest vacancies are in Karnal (136), Hisar (101), Ambala (91), Jind (89), Yamunanagar (96), Bhiwani 49, Charkhi Dadri 13, Fatehabad 77, Faridabad 17, Jhajjar 23, Karnal 136, Kaithal 81, Kurukshetra 64, Nuh 24, Panipat 61, Palwal 33, Rewari 16, Rohtak 6, Sonapat 59, Sirsa 58, Yamunanagar 96 vacant posts. Similarly the Dental Surgeons - Out of 725 sanctioned, 561 filled, 164 vacant (22.6%). Kaithal has 21, Sirsa 19, Hisar and Jind 18-17 vacant, Ambala 5, Bhiwani 17, Charkhi Dadri 4, Fatehabad 14, Karnal 8, Kurukshetra 3, Narnaul 6, Nuh 8, Palwal 2, Panchkula 2, Panipat 9, Rewari 1, Rohtak 2, Sonapat 2, Yamunanagar 5. Tell us, in these districts, who will treat patients' dental issues?"

"Pharmacy Officers (Pharmacists) - The most alarming situation! Out

of 1,167 sanctioned posts, only 597 filled. 570 vacant - i.e., 49% vacant. Ambala 50, Karnal 46, Sonapat 44, Jind 33, Bhiwani 26,



Charkhi Dadri 17, Faridabad 12, Fatehabad 29, Gurugram 22, Hisar 27, Jhajjar 22, Kaithal 18, Kurukshetra 14, Mewat 16, Narnaul 35, Palwal 27, Panchkula 12, Panipat 28, Rewari 24, Rohtak 12, Sirsa 44, Sonapat 20, Yamunanagar 36 vacant. The BJP government should explain: Who

will dispense medicines? When patients go to hospitals for medicines, they find the pharmacy closed!"

Surjewala questioned the government. Raising the vacancies of Technical officers, Surjewala pointed out - Out of 1,338 sanctioned, 913 filled, 425 vacant (32%). Ambala 33, Bhiwani 30, Charkhi Dadri 20, Faridabad 22, Fatehabad 17, Gurugram 39, Hisar 9, Jhajjar 11, Jind 2, Kaithal 7, Karnal 32, Kurukshetra 35, Mewat 19, Narnaul 32, Palwal 27, Panchkula 2, Panipat 9, Rewari 24, Rohtak 3, Sirsa 31, Sonapat 3, Yamunanagar 28 vacant posts. He also raised the vacancies of Radiographers (Out of 409 sanctioned, 270 filled, 139 vacant - 34%); Nursing Officers/Staff Nurses (Out of 5,039 sanctioned, 653 vacant - 13%) and so on.

More Than 100 Trips of Holi Special Trains To Be Run Over NFR

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 25th February: In order to facilitate smooth and comfortable travel during the forthcoming Holi festival and to effectively manage the expected surge in passenger traffic, Indian Railways will operate a total of 14 pairs of Holi Special trains over the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) for 128 trips. These special services will augment the existing regular train operations and provide much-needed additional capacity during the festive rush. Eleven pairs of trains are already running from this February 2026 as Holi Special trains. In addition three more special trains will run between Tata Nagar-Katihar-Tata Nagar, Agartala-Guwahati-Agartala & Kishanganj-Lalkuan-Kishanganj. The details of these trains are as follows: Special Train No. 08181 (Tata Nagar- Katihar) will run every Monday from 2nd March to 30th March 2026, departing from Tata Nagar at 13:00 hrs reaching Katihar at 07:30 hrs the next day. In the return direction, Special Train No. 08182 (Katihar-Tata Nagar) will run every Tuesday from 3rd March to 31st March 2026, departing Katihar at 10:30 hrs and arriving at Tata Nagar at 04:30 hrs next day.

Both the trains will run for 05 trips each. March to 27th March 2026, departing



Similarly, Special Train No. 05628 (Agartala-Guwahati) will run every Thursday from 5th March to 26th March 2026, departing from Agartala at 19:00 hrs reaching Guwahati at 09:00 hrs next day. In the return direction, Special Train No. 05627 (Guwahati-Agartala) will run every Friday from 6th

Guwahati at 13:15 hrs and arriving at Agartala at 04:25 hrs the next day. Both the trains will run for 04 trips each. Further, Train No. 05741 (Kishanganj-Lalkuan) will run every Thursday from 5th March to 26th March 2026, departing Kishanganj at 08:30 hrs reaching Lalkuan at 15:40 hrs next day.

In the return direction, Train No. 05742 (Lalkuan-Kishanganj) will run every Friday from 6th March to 27th March 2026, departing Lalkuan at 20:40 hrs and arriving at Kishanganj at 02:00 hrs on Sunday. Both services will operate 04 trips each. Besides operating special trains, NFR has undertaken added comprehensive measures at major stations over the zone to manage increased passenger footfall during the festive season. Additional arrangements have been made to ensure availability of safe drinking water, strengthened security deployment, systematic crowd management at platforms and circulating areas and enhanced passenger assistance through help desks and additional on-ground staff. These initiatives are aimed at ensuring safe, orderly and comfortable travel for passengers during the festive rush. The detailed schedule, stoppages and timings of these special trains are available on the IRCTC website and at railway enquiry counters. Passengers are advised to verify train details prior to commencement of journey and to book tickets only through authorised channels. NFR remains committed towards providing efficient, reliable and passenger-friendly services across its network.

Death on overbridge, 33-year-old its latest victim: Banned 'Chinese' manja continues to flood UP markets

Lucknow.(Agency)

On the afternoon of February 4, Mohammad Shoaib (33), a medical representative, died in a freak accident on Lucknow's Haiderganj overbridge after a "Chinese manja" (kite string) got entangled around his neck, causing his motorcycle to skid abruptly.

He was rushed to the trauma centre of King George's Medical University (KGMU) where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. A preliminary inquiry by the Lucknow police revealed that banned Chinese manja had slit the arteries in Shoaib's neck, resulting in fatal injuries. Police have so far been unable to identify the person who was flying the kite using the prohibited string. Shoaib's death is the latest addition to a growing number of accidents linked to the use of Chinese manja - a kite string banned in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere, and whose sale has also been prohibited by various courts. The Allahabad High Court recently reprimanded the Uttar Pradesh government for its failure to curb the manufacture, sale

and use of deadly synthetic kite strings, observing that the authorities appear to act only after fatalities and serious injuries are reported.

The court said, "If such sale and use of so-called Chinese manja continues, then, we may be compelled to consider ordering payment of compensation by the State to victims, in addition to the cost of treatment etc."

In the wake of Mohammad Shoaib's death, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed that all cases involving deaths caused by kite string be registered under charges of murder. He also ordered that officials concerned be held accountable and action should be initiated against them for failing to effectively check the sale of the hazardous kite string.

In a drive against the synthetic manja in the state, a total of 117 warehouses and 11,899 shops were inspected, leading to the seizure of a large quantity of illegal kite string, estimated to be worth Rs 1,93,960, according to the government. As part of the crackdown,

14 FIRs were registered and 13 people were arrested. The 'Chinese' label While most "Chinese manja" sold in India today is manufactured locally, the label "Chinese" remains in use as early versions or key raw



materials like synthetic polymers and polypropylene were imported from China, or the technology was associated with Chinese manufacturing. Markedly different from traditional kite strings in use for decades, Chinese manja is used by kite flyers during

competitions to cut the strings of rival kites mid-air. Traditional manja is typically made from cotton thread coated with natural adhesives such as rice glue or tree gum, along with mild abrasives like powdered glass or alum. Prepared manually by skilled artisans, these strings are considered relatively safer as they tend to snap under stress.

In contrast, Chinese manja, made from synthetic materials such as nylon or plastic monofilament and often coated with finely ground glass, metal dust or other sharp abrasives, is significantly stronger, sharper and far more dangerous. Unlike cotton strings, the synthetic manja does not snap easily and can remain stretched across roads and open spaces for days, posing a serious risk to the public. The nearly invisible thread can prove fatal for unsuspecting commuters - particularly those riding two-wheelers. The string also poses a serious threat to birds when they come into contact with it.

Two arrested in Coast Guard exam cyber fraud

Chandigarh.(Agency)

The Cyber Crime Police of Chandigarh has arrested two accused in connection with an alleged organised racket linked to online government examinations, including the Coast Guard recruitment test.

According to the police, the arrests were made in FIR No. 56 dated March 29, 2022, registered under Sections 409, 420, and 120-B of the IPC along with relevant provisions of the IT Act at the police station in Sector 34, Chandigarh.

DSP (Cyber Crime and IT) A Venkatesh said that the accused have been identified as Pawan Kumar, 39, a resident of Kaithal, Haryana, and Pawan, also from Kaithal district, Haryana.

According to police, the case originated from a complaint by the Head of Administration of a private school where irregularities were detected during the conduct of a Coast Guard examination and other online tests. The examination process had reportedly been outsourced to a private firm based in Sector 34/A, Chandigarh.

During the probe, police collected records from both the examination centre and the outsourcing agency. Technical analysis, including scrutiny of Call Detail Records (CDRs) and Customer Application Forms (CAFs), helped investigators trace individuals suspected of involvement in organised cheating activities, Inspector Eram Rizvi, SHO, Cyber Police Station, Chandigarh, said.

Police said that one of the accused, Pawan had taken premises on contract where the examination was conducted. During the interrogation, the other accused, Pawan Kumar, allegedly disclosed his role in facilitating unfair means in online government exams in collaboration with others. He reportedly admitted that candidates were charged hefty amounts in exchange for assistance during examinations through compromised computer systems.

Delhi teen named in Goa Thar crash case, claims of seat swap to save woman driver

A speeding Mahindra Thar allegedly driven by a teenager crashed into a car in Goa, killing a 65-year-old man. Locals claimed that after the accident, he switched seats to shield a woman.

New Delhi.(Agency)
Goa Police have filed a case against a 19-year-old man from Delhi after investigators identified him as the driver of a speeding Mahindra Thar that ramed a car, killing a 65-year-old man earlier this week. The development comes amid claims by locals that the driver was swapped after the crash, with the teenager allegedly taking the wheel to shield a woman who was driving at the time.

The accident took place on Monday at a North Goa location. The victim, Bhagat Ram Sharma from Bhopal, died on the spot. Two other passengers in the car sustained minor injuries, while a five-month-old infant travelling with them escaped unhurt. Impact of the collision was severe, leaving the front portion of the

Hyundai i20 completely mangled and crushed. **CLAIMS OF DRIVER-SWAPPING**
Eyewitnesses alleged that the red-coloured rental Thar, carrying four occupants -- one man and three women -- was speeding and approaching from the opposite direction when the crash occurred. Some locals claimed that a young woman was initially driving the SUV and that the man later moved into the driver's seat after the accident in an attempt to shield her from police action. However, police have now

rejected these allegations, naming him as the driver in the FIR. Videos recorded shortly after the crash have surfaced on social media, showing a young man stepping out of the SUV and making a phone call, purportedly to his parents, explaining the incident. Three women are seen seated inside the vehicle. The footage also appears to show the man attempting to drive the SUV away before being stopped by locals, to whom he reportedly said he was only moving the vehicle to the roadside.



As PM Modi Begins Israel Trip, A Much-Awaited Defence Deal In The Works

New Delhi.(Agency)
As Prime Minister Narendra Modi leaves for Israel, NDTV can confirm that the next big defence deal between New Delhi and Tel Aviv is likely to be for six mid-air refuelling aircraft for the Indian Air Force. This deal, sources have said, will involve an Israeli government-owned corporation partnering with India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to convert six second-hand Boeing 767 passenger jets into military refuelling aircraft for the Indian Air Force. The Rs 8,000-crore deal is crucial since the Indian Air Force has long required tanker jets and has been forced to rely on leased aircraft as a backup. This deal, sources have said, is still being negotiated and is likely to be signed sometime in 2026.

This deal would be significant if it eventually goes through. The Indian Air Force is currently dependent on six old Russian-made IL-78 tanker aircraft and has failed to procure new tankers for two decades now. Prime Minister Modi left for Israel on a two-day visit this morning. During this trip, the Prime Minister will hold discussions with his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, address the Israeli parliament, Knesset, and interact with the Indian diaspora. In his departure statement, the Prime Minister said India and Israel share a robust and multifaceted strategic partnership that has witnessed remarkable growth and dynamism, and he is looking forward to his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Prime Minister Modi said he is visiting Israel at the invitation of his "dear friend Prime Minister Netanyahu." "I look forward to my discussions with Prime Minister Netanyahu aimed at further strengthening our cooperation across various domains, including science and technology, innovation.

Navy to commission 'dolphin hunter' INS Anjadip in major defence boost

INS Anjadip is a state-of-the-art platform designed to operate effectively in the complex littoral combat environment -- coastal and shallow waters that are critical to India's maritime security.

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Indian Navy is set to commission its advanced warship INS Anjadip, dubbed a 'Dolphin Hunter', in Chennai, in a move that will significantly strengthen India's coastal defence capabilities. The vessel is the third of eight ships being built under the Navy's Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) project. Constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, INS Anjadip is a state-of-the-art platform designed to operate effectively in the complex littoral combat environment -- coastal and shallow waters that are critical to India's maritime security -- according to an official release issued on Wednesday. The 77-metre-long warship is equipped with a high-speed water-jet propulsion system, enabling it to achieve a top

speed of 25 knots. This allows for rapid response and sustained operations close to shore. The vessel has been engineered as a "Dolphin Hunter", with

armed with lightweight torpedoes and anti-submarine warfare rockets, significantly enhancing its effectiveness against underwater threats. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi is scheduled to preside over the commissioning ceremony on Friday. The warship is named after Anjadip Island, located off the Karwar coast in North Karnataka in the Arabian Sea. Its induction is expected to enhance the Navy's capacity to safeguard India's extensive maritime interests, particularly along the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts.



Apart from its core anti-submarine warfare role, INS Anjadip is also capable of undertaking coastal surveillance, low-intensity maritime operations, and search-and-rescue missions, making it a versatile addition to the Navy's fleet.

We're perturbed: Supreme Court on 'corruption in judiciary' chapter in NCERT book

New Delhi.(Agency)
In a sharp response to a reference to "judicial corruption" in a Class 8 NCERT textbook, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) termed the move a "calculated and deep-rooted" attack on the judiciary, saying the Supreme Court would not allow anyone to defame or question the institution's integrity. Taking note of the issue on his own, the CJI said he had been receiving numerous calls and messages, including from High Court judges, expressing concern. The CJI's remarks came in response to senior advocate Kapil Sibal bringing up the matter in court this morning and saying that senior members of the Bar were "very disturbed" by the inclusion of "judicial corruption" in school textbooks. "We as senior members of this institution are very disturbed at 'judicial corruption' being part of the Class 8 books," Sibal said.

At this point, the CJI, responding that he was already aware of the issue, said, "I'm getting a lot of calls and messages about this, also from judges of the Hcs." "I will not allow anyone to defame and question the integrity of the judiciary," CJI Surya Kant added. The CJI asserted that action would be taken regardless of how high the matter reached, and added that the court would not permit any attack on the judicial institution. "It seems to be a calculated and deep-rooted attack on the judiciary. We will not allow anyone to target the judicial institution," the CJI further said.

Meanwhile, another senior advocate, Abhishek Singhvi, who was present in court argued that it appeared as though one institution was being singled out. "It's as if corruption exists only in the judiciary. There is no word about politicians, ministers, bureaucrats or anyone else," Singhvi told the bench.

"The selectivity, my Lord. The selectivity... It is there in other areas also but judicial corruption," said Singhvi, to which Justice Joymalya Bagchi replied, "Constitutional integrity to the basic structure is missing in the structure of the book."

WHAT IS THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT?
At the heart of the row is a new NCERT Social Science textbook for Class 8 students that includes a section on corruption in the judiciary and the judicial backlog crisis in India. The revised book, with a chapter titled 'The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society', is set to hit the market soon. The chapter explains that the Supreme Court is burdened with around 81,000 pending cases, citing reasons such as a shortage of judges, complex legal procedures and inadequate infrastructure. Its focus on how corruption affects judicial credibility has set the cat among the pigeons.

Uttam Nagar station sees second death on metro track in a month

Train services on the Blue Line were delayed briefly due to the incident but were later restored.

New Delhi.(Agency)
A 45-year-old man died on Tuesday morning after he allegedly jumped onto the metro tracks at Uttam Nagar East station on the Blue Line, police said. According to police, information was received from the station controller at 10.12 am regarding a person jumping onto the tracks. Train services on the Blue Line were delayed briefly due to the incident but were later restored. "The man had climbed down from the platform onto the tracks and was run over. The body was later extracted from the tracks," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Metro) Kushal Pal Singh said. The deceased was identified as Maharaj Singh, a resident of Karauli in Rajasthan. He worked as a house painter and had come to Delhi to attend the wedding of his elder brother's daughter, who lives in Uttam Nagar, a senior police official said.

"It was revealed that he had been suffering from depression for several years and was undergoing treatment at RML Hospital. He had visited the hospital on Monday for treatment," the DCP further said.

He is survived by his wife, an 18-year-old daughter, and two sons aged 17 and 20 years. The body has been shifted to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, and inquest proceedings under Section 194 of the BNSS have been initiated, an official said, adding that family members are being questioned.

This is the second such incident reported at Uttam Nagar East metro station in the past month. Earlier, on Friday, a 17-year-old coaching student died after jumping in front of a metro train at the same station. Police said he was distressed due to personal reasons.

(If you are having suicidal thoughts, or are worried about a friend or need emotional support, someone is always there to listen. Call Sneha Foundation - 04424640050, Tele Manas - 14416 (available 24x7) or iCall, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences' helpline - 02225521111, which is available Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 10 pm.)

No black box on Jharkhand air ambulance that crashed makes probe complicated

New Delhi.(Agency)
The mystery surrounding the air ambulance crash that killed all seven on board in Jharkhand's Chatra district is set to deepen, as initial findings reveal that the aircraft did not have a black box -- comprising a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) or Flight Data Recorder (FDR). Redbird's Beechcraft C90 (VT-AJV), a twin-turboprop aircraft, was exempt under existing regulations. The aircraft had a maximum take-off weight of 4,583 kg and was manufactured in 1987. Its first Certificate of Airworthiness was issued the same year -- prior to January 1, 1990 (applicability date for FDR norms) and January 1, 2016 (applicability date for CVR norms). Accordingly, there was no mandatory requirement for



installing a CVR or FDR at the time of its certification. Under regulations, CVRs are mandatory for aeroplanes with a maximum certificated take-off mass of over 5,700 kg issued airworthiness certificates on or after January 1, 1987. Similarly, as per DGCA's Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) Section 2, Series I, Part V, para 4.1.2, multi-engine

turbine-powered aeroplanes of 5,700 kg or less issued certificates on or after January 1, 1990, must be equipped with an FDR recording of at least the first 16 specified parameters. The crashed aircraft did not fall within these mandatory brackets.

The aircraft had departed Ranchi round 7:11 pm on February 23 for Delhi and lost communication and radar contact roughly 23 minutes after take-off, after requesting a weather deviation. The wreckage was later found in a forested area near Simaria in Chatra district. With no black box data available, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) will have to rely heavily on the last communication with Air Traffic Control and material.

BSNL official in trouble over lavish Prayagraj visit, government says unacceptable

The Centre has issued a showcause notice to a BSNL director after an elaborate protocol plan for his proposed Prayagraj visit, involving deployment of 50 staff for personal and religious tours, sparked widespread outrage.

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Centre has initiated disciplinary action against a senior Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) official following a controversy over elaborate protocol arrangements prepared for his proposed visit to Prayagraj, with top government sources calling the episode "completely bizarre and unacceptable". The row erupted after an internal office order detailing extensive preparations for BSNL director Vivek Banzal's planned Prayagraj visit surfaced online, triggering criticism over alleged misuse of public sector staff and resources for what appeared to be a largely personal religious itinerary. **SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE ISSUED, ACTION LIKELY**

Government sources said a show-cause notice has been issued to the director, seeking a reply within seven days, adding

that the matter "will not be let off easily."

According to them, the conduct reflected in the protocol plan was viewed as "highly condemnable", prompting immediate intervention. Officials said further action would be decided after examining Banzal's response to the notice.

"The government considers the episode completely bizarre and unacceptable. Accountability will be fixed based on the explanation submitted," sources said, stressing that such instances damage institutional credibility.

OVER 50 OFFICIALS ASSIGNED DUTIES

According to the protocol document, more than 50 BSNL officers and staff members were assigned specific responsibilities to ensure the visit



proceeded smoothly. Separate teams were tasked with managing movement, hospitality arrangements, bathing logistics and post-visit coordination.

Officials were instructed to arrange multiple 'snan' kits containing towels, undergarments and personal care items, besides refreshments and escort services throughout the itinerary, including during the proposed visit to the Triveni Sangam

and nearby temples in Prayagraj. The plan also required vehicles used for local movement to be stocked with water bottles, snacks and other amenities, while designated personnel were assigned duties ranging from photography to managing personal belongings after bathing rituals.

DETAILED PROTOCOL SPARKS BACKLASH

Communication issued on February 19 at the deputy general manager level outlined a detailed minute-to-minute schedule covering reception at the railway station, temple visits, holy dips, meals, transport and daily personal logistics. The document began circulating widely on social media soon after, drawing sharp criticism over what several users described as a "royal protocol", reigniting debate around VIP culture and use of public resources within government-run entities.

NEW

Trust Hardik Pandya: Kumble says promote India all-rounder in case of another collapse

New Delhi. (Agency)

What happens if India suffers another batting collapse in the T20 World Cup 2026? Well, Anil Kumble has the solution, saying that India needs to promote Hardik Pandya up the order in such a scenario. The Indian team has struggled for consistency with the bat during the tournament, suffering collapses in their innings during the first five matches. In the loss to South Africa, India were left reeling at 26 for three and decided to send in Washington Sundar. The experiment flopped as Sundar was unable to counter the pressure, scoring 11 off 11 and by the time he was dismissed, India slipped to 43 for four in 7.2 overs while chasing 188. Speaking to the broadcasters, Kumble said that it is time India trusts Hardik in the role instead of going for a stop-gap option. The former India coach feels that the all-rounder has the skill to counter the pressure and take



India into a winning position. "God forbid, if India gets into the same position as to how they sort of started off against South Africa, I would like to see Hardik Pandya walk in there at that point, rather than somebody else as a stop-gap to take the pressure off." "Hardik Pandya is capable of managing that pressure and also taking the game into a winning position. So I think those are some of the points that I think India should look at in case they do get into that kind of a situation against Zimbabwe or against West Indies, but they must play their A game," said Kumble. Kumble does have a point as Hardik has a fantastic record coming in at No.4 and No.5 for India. The all-rounder has scored 131 runs in six matches while batting at No.4 with an average of 43.66 and a strike-rate of 238.18. At No.5, the 32-year-old has scored 1208 runs at an average above 30 and a strike-rate of 154.47. Are India yet to bring A-game? Kumble also suggested that India are yet to bring their best game to the tournament, pointing out to how they let South Africa off the hook after having reduced them to 20 for three.

Bodo/Glimt knock Inter out of Champions League as Newcastle, Atletico reach last 16

New Delhi. (Agency)

Norway's Bodo/Glimt pulled off one of the most remarkable results in modern Champions League history on Tuesday, beating last season's runners-up Inter Milan 2-1 at San Siro to reach the last 16 with a 5-2 aggregate triumph, while Newcastle United, Atletico Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen also went through. Bodo/Glimt, the modest outfit from north of the Arctic Circle, were looking to follow up their stunning 3-1 win last week



in Norway in the first leg of their knockout phase play-off tie. Inter, the three-time European champions who are currently 10 points clear at the top of Serie A, were expected to pummel their visitors in an attempt to turn the tie around. But Bodo/Glimt survived at the back before finishing off the tie in the second half.

Jens Petter Hauge, who played for AC Milan in 2020/21, gave his team the lead just before the hour mark after a mistake by Manuel Akanji had allowed Ole Blomberg in for an initial shot which was saved. Hakon Evjen made it 2-0 on the night and 5-1 on aggregate, leaving Inter with too much to do, even if Alessandro Bastoni pulled one back with a shot that just crossed the line.

Bodo/Glimt, who had won four Norwegian Eliteserien titles in five years before finishing as runners-up last season to Viking Stavanger, are the first side from the country to go so far in Europe's elite club competition since Rosenborg reached the quarter-finals in 1997. "For us it's been unbelievable. We knew it would be very hard against Inter who are a very strong team and played in the final last season," said Hauge. They will find out their last-16 opponents on Friday but already know it will either be Sporting of Portugal or Manchester City next -- they defeated City 3-1 at home last month during the league phase. What makes their success all the more striking is that Kjetil Knutsen's team are currently in their off-season, with the Norwegian league ending in late November and the new campaign not beginning until mid-March.

PAK vs ENG, Super 8s: Shaheen Afridi in awe of Harry Brook's heroics in Pallekele

PAK vs ENG, T20 World Cup 2026:

Pakistan pacer Shaheen Afridi praised Harry Brook's match-winning century as "the best innings of his life" after England secured a thrilling semifinal berth in Pallekele.

LONDON. (Agency)

Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi hailed England captain Harry Brook for playing "the best innings of his life" after the skipper's sensational century powered England into the T20 World Cup semifinals with a thrilling two-wicket victory on Tuesday, February 24.

Brook smashed a 51-ball 100 to guide England to a successful chase of 165 at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium. The innings marked England's fifth consecutive T20 World Cup semifinal appearance and eliminated Pakistan's direct route to the last four. Shaheen, who claimed four for 30 in four overs, walked across to shake Brook's hand during the match in a rare show of

appreciation for an opposition player. The gesture came moments after the left-arm pacer had bowled Brook with a yorker, one ball after the England captain completed his maiden T20I century. "HE DESERVED IT"

"I think this will be the best innings of his life. He should be credited for playing a proper cricketing shot. The wicket was not easy," Shaheen said at the post-match press conference.

"If we look at his batsmen, they were all struggling. But if we look at his knocks, he should be credited," the pacer added, reflecting on Brook's masterclass that came while England slipped to 58 for four in the chase. Shaheen explained his decision to acknowledge Brook's brilliance mid-match. "He deserved it; it was a world-class innings. Harry and I had a very good friendship as well when we played together in PSL. He played with us for Lahore Qalandars," he said. Brook's 100, which featured 10 fours and four sixes, is the highest individual score by an England captain in T20 World Cup history. He batted at number three for the first time and

anchored the chase single-handedly before falling in the 18th over with England needing



just 10 runs. PAKISTAN'S SLIM HOPES

Pakistan's chances of reaching the semifinals now hang by a thread. England have already qualified from Group 2, leaving New Zealand, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka fighting for the second spot. For Pakistan to advance, they must beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eight match and hope New Zealand lose their remaining fixture. The equation has slipped out of Pakistan's control. "These things

happen in cricket. But we are still in the tournament; anything can happen. We are thinking that we get this one opportunity -- firstly, we should win this match (against Sri Lanka)," Shaheen said.

"Hope New Zealand loses their match. Yes, you said I dropped out, but my focus is to work on my bowling, how to come back, how to work on my bowling, and maintain my normal things, so that I can give good results in the match."

SHAHEEN'S RETURN

Tuesday's match marked Shaheen's comeback after being dropped for Pakistan's previous two games. Despite his four-wicket haul that included three wickets in his opening spell, Pakistan failed to defend 164.

Sahibzada Farhan top-scored for Pakistan with 63 off 45 balls, but England spinner Liam Dawson's three for 24 restricted the total. Brook then took control, finding an able ally in Will Jacks (28 off 23 balls) as they added 52 runs for the sixth wicket to seal England's passage.

Axar or Sundar Why not both says Shastri ahead of India's do-or-die Super 8s clash

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former India cricketer and head coach Ravi Shastri has called for defending champions India to field both spin all-rounders Axar Patel and Washington Sundar in their crucial T20 World Cup 2026 Super Eight clash against Zimbabwe on Thursday, February 26, at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. India faces a must-win situation after suffering a 76-run defeat to South Africa at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. The loss ended India's 12-match winning streak across the last two editions of the tournament and has put pressure on the team ahead of their remaining Super Eight fixtures against Zimbabwe and the West Indies in Kolkata on Sunday. The team management's decision to bench vice-captain Axar Patel in favour of Sundar against South Africa drew heavy criticism from experts and fans. Sundar bowled just two overs, conceding 17 runs without taking a wicket, and scored 11 off 11 balls at number five.

TACTICAL MATCHUP BACKFIRES

Captain Suryakumar Yadav explained at the toss that Sundar's selection was a tactical call aimed at countering South Africa's three left-handed batters in their top five. The right-arm off-spinner was expected to turn the ball away from the left-handers,

unlike left-arm spinner Axar, who would have been easier for them to attack. However, the strategy failed to deliver results. Varun Chakravarthy's struggles compounded India's bowling woes, leaving the team short of options on



the day. SHASTRI BACKS DUAL SPIN ATTACK "I think they have to bring him (Axar Patel) back. You need that experience," Shastri told ICC Review, advocating for the vice-captain's return to the playing XI. "I would say play both (Patel and Sundar). Give yourself that extra option. Because on a given day, you're bound to have one bowler who's going to have an off day. Like, for

example, Varun Chakravarthy on Sunday. He was not at his best, and he paid the price for it," the former coach added.

Shastri outlined a batting order that could accommodate both spinners. With Hardik Pandya at number five, Shivam Dube at six, and Sundar at seven, Axar could slot in at number eight or even move up to five if needed.

RINKU SINGH'S ABSENCE OPENS DOOR

The selection equation has been complicated by batter Rinku Singh's absence due to a family emergency. The left-hander is unlikely to be available for Thursday's match against Zimbabwe.

"Now, if eight batters can't do the job in T20 cricket, then something's wrong, especially with that kind of firepower," Shastri told ICC Review. "Where you're missing out is you're not giving yourself that extra option of a bowler, which I think is important. Rinku Singh might have to miss out. But if he has to come in, he has to come in place of a specialist batter." Rinku's absence could allow India to directly replace him with Axar, giving the team the extra bowling option Shastri advocates for without disrupting the balance of specialist batters.

NZ vs SL, Super 8 preview: Sri Lanka look for redemption after England horror

New Delhi. (Agency)

ISri Lanka and New Zealand face off in an all-important Super 8 match on Wednesday with the race for T20 World Cup semifinals heating up. On Tuesday, England sealed one of the two semi-final spots from Group 2 with their two-wicket win over Pakistan, leaving only one more up for grabs and three teams fighting for it. The Super 8 Group 2 match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka will be played at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. The match will get underway at 7 pm IST. JioHotstar and Star Sports will provide livestreaming and TV coverage of the match.

For Sri Lanka, the game has become a do-or-die situation as a defeat would knock them out of the competition. New Zealand, on the other hand, won't want to keep it all too late and would want to keep one foot inside the



door as far as semi-final qualification is concerned. Pakistan would also watch the match closely as their chances of going through will depend on the clash.

CAN SRI LANKA BOUNCE BACK?

Sri Lanka won the title back in 2014, but since then they have had a tough time, failing to qualify for the semis even once. Sri Lanka started the ongoing edition with three wins

on the bounce and looked threatening. Their momentum was halted when Zimbabwe beat them by six wickets. But the 51-run loss against England was particularly disappointing as they were bowled out for 95 while chasing 147. However, Sri Lanka are determined to respond. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Dunieth Wellalage said the co-hosts would give everything against the Black Caps in a bid to make the nation proud.

"If you look at our recent performances, we have won several matches convincingly as a team, and the players have been performing well individually too. This World Cup is extremely important for our country," Wellalage said. "As a unit, every player is determined to give more than 100 percent for the nation whenever we step onto the field."



Brook. WHY DID BROOK MOVE TO NO.3? Brook has enjoyed a great time playing against Pakistan in all formats of the game. In T20Is, the England skipper has 376 runs in 11 matches with an average of 62.66 and a strike-rate of 159.32. Brook attributed his record against Pakistan as the main reason to move up the order and put pressure on them.

"Well, I think partly because of my past and history against Pakistan, but like I said, to try and maximise the power play and put them under pressure early on. I know we were losing wickets, but my job was still to try to go out there and put them under pressure throughout," said Brook. When asked to rate his innings, Brook said that this knock was certainly high up on the list of his best white-ball knocks.

Turning the tide in Chennai: Inside India's 4-hour grind against absence of pace

New Delhi. (Agency)

"I have a soft spot for leg-spinners. In Under-15 cricket, I once fielded a side with four of them," said Srinivasa Rao, one of Chennai's most respected coaches. India knew exactly what they required; the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association knew exactly whom to call. Tuesday evening at the MA Chidambaram Stadium became a trial by spin. With their second Super 8 fixture of the T20 World Cup against Zimbabwe looming on Thursday, India submitted themselves to nearly four hours of deliberate slow-bowling examination. Rao's boys, alongside India's own spin arsenal, ensured the batters confronted the very condition that had undone them. This batting order, heralded as an invincible juggernaut capable of scaling the 300-run peak in T20s, had been unceremoniously dismantled the moment South Africa took the pace off the ball. Chasing 188 on Sunday, they subsided for a haunting 111. The diagnostic was clear: in

Chennai, the test would be one of patience and manufactured power. Could they dominate when the ball refused to come onto the bat? All 14 available squad members trained. Only Rinku Singh was absent, having flown home due to a family emergency. The intensity was unmistakable. While the arithmetic of semi-final permutations swirled in the outside world, India's interior world at Chepauk was one of clinical execution—refining match-ups and auditioning roles should Rinku remain unavailable for Thursday's fixture. Training began around 6pm. A gentle February evening settled over Chennai. The sun dipped behind the stands; birds drifted overhead. Beyond the ground, water slapped rhythmically in the swimming pool at the venue as local athletes trained, the sound carrying into the open stadium. Calm held Chepauk briefly, like the sea pausing between tides. Then India finished their warm-ups, and the stillness

gave way to the sharp, unmistakable crack of bat meeting ball. Zimbabwe, who had lost to West Indies in Mumbai on Monday, arrived in Chennai on Tuesday but chose not to train.



Chepauk belonged entirely to India. ABHISHEK JOINS THE SPIN-BOWLING GROUP

The first group walked in. Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav took one net. Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson the

other. Abhishek Sharma was not among the batters. He had the ball in hand. In a week when batting positions had been dissected endlessly, his absence from the first lot carried its own quiet intrigue. But this was not new. Throughout this World Cup, Abhishek has eased into sessions by rolling his arm over first, entering the rhythm of training before stepping into the scrutiny that awaits him with the bat. Three ducks and a laboured 14 had shaped his tournament so far. His routine, however, has remained unchanged. Until recently, it appeared a straight Samson-versus-Abhishek call. Rinku's absence, however, has altered the arithmetic; against Zimbabwe, there may be room for both against Zimbabwe on Thursday. Abhishek bowled his full quota before even considering the pads. He joined a spin core of Axar Patel, carrying the quiet steel of a man controversially benched. Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, and Washington Sundar.

Domestic solar companies' stocks drop over new US Commerce Department tariffs

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Indian solar and renewable energy companies plunged in early session on Wednesday after the US Commerce Department imposed preliminary countervailing subsidies of about 125.87 per cent on solar cell and panel imports from India. Waaree Energies fell as much as 14.6 per cent to Rs 2,580.50, hitting the lower circuit, and later regained to Rs 2,724, down 9.90 per cent. Premier Energies dropped 4.57 per cent to Rs 741.55 after earlier dipping to an intra-day low of 666.90. Vikram Solar slid nearly 7 per cent, Waaree Renewable Technologies dipped over 6 per cent, Solex Energy slipped about 5 per cent, Saatvik Green Energy dropped nearly 3 per cent, and Borosil Renewables lost just over 1 per cent. According to a fact sheet issued by the US Commerce Department, the countervailing subsidies were imposed to unfair subsidies by exporting nations. The import subsidy rates were set at 125.87 per cent for India, 104.38 per cent for Indonesia and 80.67 per cent for Laos, following a petition by the Alliance for American Solar Manufacturing and Trade, which includes Hanwha Qcells, First Solar and Mission Solar. The Commerce Department is working on another decision in March on whether exporters from the three countries sold products in the US at prices below production costs and an affirmative finding could trigger additional anti-dumping duties. Solar panel imports from India, Indonesia and Laos were valued at about \$4.5 billion last year, amounting to around two-thirds of total US solar imports in 2025, the data cited by the US department said. The White House last week clarified that India would face a 10 per cent tariff temporarily from February 24. The Trump administration has indicated that additional tariff authorities may be invoked in the coming weeks.

India's support measures in auto, renewable energy sectors fully compliant with WTO norms: Official

MUMBAI.(Agency)

India's support measures to promote manufacturing in the automobile and renewable energy sectors are fully compliant with World Trade Organisation norms and the country will strongly defend them at the WTO's dispute settlement panel meetings, an official said. Following a request by China, the WTO dispute settlement body on Tuesday announced the setting up of a panel to hear the case. The official said that India regrets China's decision to proceed with panel establishment despite extensive bilateral consultation on the matter in good-faith, during which India provided detailed explanations and clarifications on the measures. "India is of the view that China's request for panel establishment reflects an incorrect understanding of both the design and operation of the measures at issue. India maintains that the measures challenged by China are fully consistent with India's rights and obligations under the WTO Agreements, including the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) 1994 and the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures," the official said. The country will participate constructively in the panel proceedings and will "vigorously" defend its measures and it is confident that the panel will find the measures to be consistent with WTO rules, the official added. In October last year, in a complaint to the WTO Beijing alleged that certain conditions in India's Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for advanced chemistry cell batteries, automobiles and the policy to promote the manufacturing of electric vehicles violate global trade rules by discriminating against Chinese goods and exporters.

US announces preliminary 126% countervailing duty on imports of certain Indian solar goods

New Delhi.(Agency)

The US has announced preliminary countervailing duty of 125.87 per cent on imports of certain Indian solar goods alleging that the products are unfairly subsidised by New Delhi.

The US has also announced different duties on the imports of 'Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells, Whether or Not Assembled into Modules' from Indonesia and Laos. "On February 24, 2026, the US



Department of Commerce announced its preliminary affirmative determinations in the countervailing duty investigations of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells, whether or not assembled into modules (solar cells), from India, Indonesia, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos)," a US order has said. These duties are different from the 10 per cent tariffs announced by the Trump administration on all countries from February 24. According to the order, solar imports from India into the US increased to USD 792.6 million in 2024 from USD 83.86 million in 2022. "Unless postponed.

Poverty and inequality worsen in Pakistan, raising serious concerns about social cost of recent reforms: Report

After a long period marked by twin deficits, currency instability and falling foreign exchange reserves, even a small primary surplus is being seen as a sign of improved fiscal discipline.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Even as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Pakistan for stabilising its economy under the ongoing support programme, fresh data shows that poverty and income inequality have sharply worsened, raising serious concerns about the social cost of recent reforms. While key macroeconomic indicators such as fiscal balance and the current account have improved, millions of citizens are facing rising hardship -- highlighting a growing gap between economic stabilisation and everyday reality, according to a report by Dawn. After a long period marked by twin deficits, currency instability and falling

foreign exchange reserves, even a small primary surplus is being seen as a sign of improved fiscal discipline. The improvement in the current account balance has eased some external pressure, although analysts point out that it was mainly driven by lower imports, higher remittances and bilateral debt rollovers rather than strong export growth. Despite these gains, concerns remain. Revenue shortfalls continue to challenge the government's finances.

While a recent super tax ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court has provided some temporary relief, economists argue that long-term fiscal stability will require widening the tax base instead of depending on one-time measures. More worrying is the slow progress on structural reforms and other key targets under the IMF programme, as per the report. These reforms are considered crucial for turning short-term stabilisation into sustainable economic growth. The IMF's

Governance and Corruption Diagnostic has also highlighted that macroeconomic stability depends heavily on strong institutions and credible governance. At the same time, new data has revealed the



heavy social cost of the stabilisation measures. According to recent poverty estimates, nearly 70 million Pakistanis are now living below the monthly poverty line of Rs 8,484, an amount that does not cover even basic needs. Planning Minister

Ahsan Iqbal, while releasing official survey findings, said the poverty rate has risen to almost 29 per cent, the highest level in 11 years, compared to just under 22 per cent in 2019. Income inequality has

also worsened sharply. The inequality index has climbed to 32.7, the highest level in nearly three decades, as real incomes and household consumption declined due to high inflation and economic slowdown. The labour market situation has also deteriorated, with unemployment rising to 7.1 per cent, the report stated. Analysts warn that the burden of economic adjustment appears to have fallen more heavily on lower- and middle-income groups. Without a parallel strategy focused on growth, employment and social protection, they say, the current stabilisation may not be sustainable in the long run, according to the report.

Gold prices jump to Rs 1,61,180 per 10 grams over global trade uncertainty, dollar dip

MCX gold April futures gained 0.76 per cent to Rs 1,61,180 per 10 grams around 11.30 am on an intraday basis. Meanwhile MCX silver March futures gained 3.20 per cent to Rs 2,69,075 per kg.

New gency)

ManGold and silver prices surged significantly on Wednesday, amid rise in global trade uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and decline in US dollar. MCX gold April futures gained 0.76 per cent to Rs 1,61,180 per 10 grams around 11.30 am on an intraday basis. Meanwhile MCX silver March futures gained 3.20 per cent to Rs 2,69,075 per kg. International gold prices including US futures also climbed as investors rushed for safe-haven buying amid

persisting US-Iran tensions and uncertainty over US tariffs. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday, called Iran, "the world's no 1 sponsor of terrorism", adding that he wants to



resolve the issue with Iran diplomatically. Iran and the US are expected to hold the third round of nuclear talks in Geneva on February 27. The dollar continues to fall in the aftermath of persistent trade uncertainty as the US Supreme Court struck down high tariffs imposed by President Trump last week. The dollar index eased by 0.17 per cent to 97.68, making greenback-backed bullion cheaper for buyers in overseas currencies. The US is currently collecting the uniform 10 per cent

tariffs on imports, even as White House official said tariffs will be increased to 15 per cent soon, according to multiple reports.

Analysts noted that the People's Bank of China (PBOC), purchased gold for the fifteenth consecutive month in January and continued central bank purchases will support precious metals prices in near term.

The broader uptrend in COMEX gold remains intact, with the current sideways phase reflecting a healthy pause following earlier volatility and profit booking, they

said. Strong buying interest is evident in the \$70-\$75 support zone for COMEX Silver and the medium- to long-term outlook is buoyed by industrial demand and structural supply constraints, market participants said.

"Gold has support at Rs 1,58,800 and Rs 1,56,300 while resistance at Rs 1,61,400 and Rs 1,63,000. MCX silver has support at Rs 2,54,400 and Rs 2,48,800, and resistance is at Rs 2,66,000 and Rs 2,71,000," an analyst said.

Tax treaty tweak may dim France's appeal as investment hub; funds eye restructuring

New Delhi.(Agency)

The proposed amendments to the India-France tax treaty would force global investors, routing funds into India through French holding structures, to reassess their investments in India.

After India curtailed capital gains exemptions under its treaties with Mauritius and Singapore, France had become a preferred jurisdiction, with relatively favourable tax treatment for Indian equity investments. Tax experts noted that several French banks and investment platforms over the years have built sizeable businesses taking advantage of the French tax treaty with India, including offshore derivative instruments (ODIs), participatory notes and other synthetic exposure products

linked to Indian securities. However, with the amendments being implemented, France may lose some of its relative appeal as a treaty-driven holding or ODI-issuance jurisdiction.

"The amendment is likely to prompt many investors and fund sponsors to take a fresh look at how their French investment vehicles are structured - and, in some cases, consider restructuring. This is particularly true where the original choice of France as a platform was heavily influenced by treaty-based capital gains exemptions on investments in Indian equities," said Suresh Swamy, Senior Partner at PwC.

Currently, capital gains arising from share transfers by investors holding less than 10% are generally taxed in the country

of residence. The amendment shifts taxing rights to the source country and raises the dividend withholding tax for such small shareholders to 15%. Thus, French portfolio investors with sub-10% stakes are likely to face higher Indian tax exposure on both capital gains and dividends.

Tax experts said the withdrawal of capital gains relief for portfolio investors would mean exits by French shareholders are taxed under India's domestic law, with long-term capital gains currently taxed at 12.5% rate plus applicable surcharge. "Lack of any grandfathering of prior investment makes the exit expensive across the board in these cases," said Sumit Singhania, Partner, Deloitte India.

Venezuela sends mega 2-million-barrel oil cargoes to India as exports surge

New Delhi.(Agency)

Venezuela is sending its oil to India on a much bigger scale — literally. Super-sized tankers carrying up to 2 million barrels of crude are now heading toward Indian shores, marking a sharp shift in trade flows after a Caracas-Washington supply deal reopened the taps.

According to a Reuters report, "trading houses and buyers of Venezuelan oil have chartered the first very large crude carriers (VLCCs) to export from the South American country since a Caracas-Washington supply deal began, a move that will boost deliveries to India."

The use of VLCCs — the giants of global shipping — signals confidence that Venezuela's crude exports are back in business. These vessels can carry roughly double the volume of Suezmax tankers and nearly four times that of Aframaxes, cutting freight costs and speeding up shipments. At least three VLCCs chartered by Vitol and Trafigura — Nissos Kea, Nissos Kynthos and Arzanah — have been assigned March loading slots at Jose terminal, operated by state oil firm PDVSA. All three are bound for India,



sources told Reuters. Another supertanker, Olympic Lion, is also signaling Venezuela as its destination. The bigger cargoes are expected to reduce transportation costs and accelerate the pace of deliveries starting next month, Reuters reported, potentially draining the millions of barrels currently sitting in Venezuelan storage.

INDIA BACK IN THE VENEZUELAN OIL GAME

For Indian refiners, the development comes at a strategic moment. India was once the third-largest buyer of Venezuelan crude before US sanctions in 2019 choked supplies. Now, with Washington easing restrictions under a new licensing framework, trade is rebounding.

US major Chevron recently sold its first Venezuelan crude cargo to Reliance Industries since December 2023. The Boscán heavy crude shipment marks the first such sale in nearly six years. Reliance

has also bought a 2-million-barrel cargo from Vitol and is exploring direct purchases from PDVSA, sources said. Trading houses have also sold Venezuelan heavy crude to Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corp and HPCL Mittal Energy, as India looks to diversify crude sourcing and reduce dependence on Russian supplies. India's refiners are drawn to Venezuela's discounted Merey heavy crude, although traders have noted that price dynamics — particularly backwardation in global markets — have narrowed margins. Still, larger cargoes may ease freight pressures and improve economics. Most Venezuelan crude exports earlier this year moved in medium-sized tankers to US refineries or Caribbean storage hubs. The shift to VLCCs represents a logistical upgrade. Venezuela's oil exports rebounded to about 800,000 barrels per day in January after sanctions relief, up from roughly 500,000 bpd in December. However, the rapid surge has left millions of barrels unsold in storage — volumes that India's refiners could help absorb.

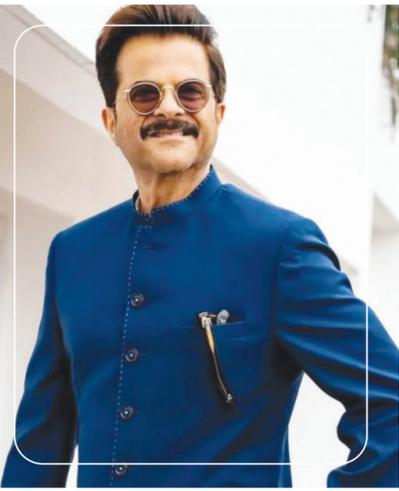
Radhikka Madan

On Working With Anil Kapoor In Subedaar: 'We Were Either Angry Or Crying'

Radhikka Madan has steadily carved a niche as one of the most promising and versatile actors of her generation. Over the years, she has delivered acclaimed performances in films like Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota, Pataakha, Angrezi Medium, and Shiddat, consistently showcasing emotional depth and individuality in her roles. Now, she steps into the role of Shama in Subedaar, where she plays the daughter of Subedaar, portrayed by Anil Kapoor. The film promises a powerful father-daughter dynamic at its core, blending intensity with vulnerability.

At the trailer launch of the film, the team emphasised that while Subedaar is mounted as a large-scale, action-driven entertainer, its emotional strength lies in the deeply moving relationship

between a father and his daughter. The narrative combines drama and action with a strong emotional undercurrent, ensuring that the spectacle is grounded by heart. Speaking about her character, Radhikka shared, "I got the power after seeing her. She's so fierce and almost



looks unbreakable. And at the same time, I know that she's got a very special bond with her father. This one's for the daughters and the fathers."

She added that Shama carries her father's blood in her veins, and audiences will see his reflection in her. Addressing the film's emotional depth, she added, "I'm sure you're thinking that our film is definitely action-packed and commercial. But it has a lot of soul. The father-daughter bond is so special. I think it grounds our film. It is really emotional."

Recalling her time on set, she revealed, "Anil sir and I were either angry or crying these were very intense characters for both of us." Calling it a privilege to share screen space with him, she described him as kind, generous, and the most energetic person on set, from whom she learned immensely. Subedaar will be released on March 5, 2026.



Avika Gor Finds Healing After Losing Pet Dog: 'Some Souls Never Really Leave'



Avika Gor shared a deeply emotional note on social media as she remembered her beloved pet dog, Shiroo, on his death anniversary. Alongside her tribute, the actress opened up about how a rescued kitten named Sheree unexpectedly helped her heal from the loss, bringing comfort and renewed love into her life.

Avika Gor Shares Heartfelt Instagram Post With Pictures

Avika took to Instagram to share two touching images. The first photograph showed her cuddling Sheree, the kitten she recently rescued, while the second was a monochrome throwback of the actress lovingly kissing her late dog Shiroo, who passed away last year.

Avika's Emotional Note for Her Pet

Pouring her heart out in the caption, Avika wrote, "Shiroo ki Sheree. Some souls never really leave... they just change the way they love us." She went on to recall how February remains a particularly emotional month for her family. She added, "On 21st Feb last year, my little angel Shiroo crossed the rainbow bridge. My tiny shadow, my heartbeat in a fur coat, my forever baby." Avika revealed that earlier this year, on February 1, a rescued kitten unexpectedly entered her life when they couldn't find a permanent home for her.

A Rescued Kitten Becomes a Source of Healing

Avika explained that adopting Sheree was unplanned and initially meant to be temporary. However, circumstances seemed to guide the decision. "We even thought of just fostering for a while. But somehow, it felt... guided," she wrote, adding that love often returns in new forms.

Reflecting on Shiroo's passing, she shared, "His passing broke us... my Shiroo knew we would need something to hold before this month arrived." Avika concluded the note by expressing gratitude for Sheree, calling her "the cutest, naughtiest kitten," and thanking life for a "second chance at love."

The emotional post drew warm reactions from friends and fans alike. Actor Swara Bhasker commented, "Adorable." Avika's husband Milind Chandwani also reacted with a heartfelt, "Awwwww." One fan wrote, "Lots of love to the new family member... the universe always knows who needs what."

Nakuul Mehta Celebrates Parents' Anniversary: 'Building A Life Together Since 1978'



Nakuul Mehta won hearts on social media with a heartfelt tribute to his parents, Pratap Singh Mehta and Shail Mehta, on their wedding anniversary. On February 23, the actor shared a cherished photograph of the couple, praising them for "building a life/family/village together since 1977." The post celebrated not only their marriage but also the love and resilience they have nurtured for nearly 50 years. It quickly resonated with fans, many applauding the family's deep-rooted values and the rare longevity of the bond Nakuul highlighted.

'Building A Life/Family/Village Together Since 1978'

Taking to Instagram, the actor shared a set of images to commemorate his parents' marriage anniversary with the phrase: "Building a life/family/village together since 1978. Happy anniversary to our roots." The first image showcases Nakuul with his parents, alongside his wife Jankee Parekh and their children. The second slide shows Pratap Singh Mehta and Shail Mehta posing for the camera, and the third image exhibits their extended family members.

Fans and social media users flocked to the comments section to praise the family camaraderie. "The bestest of all. Happy Anniversary to the lovely @shailmehta58 and @captain_pratap_mehta Mehta duo! To many beautiful years," a user wrote. Another commented, "Happiest anniversary to the sweetest uncle aunty ever."

Legacy of Love and Service

Nakuul's father, Pratap Singh Mehta, is a decorated veteran of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, which the actor has often and proudly mentioned. With a long history of military service and regional leadership, the Mehta family hails from a prominent royal heritage in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Laxmilal Mehta, Nakuul's great-great-grandfather, was a military commander in the Mewar area, upholding a heritage of honour and service that now shapes the family's identity. Now a father, Nakuul and Jankee have two children: daughter Rumi (born 2024) and son Sufi (born 2021). The couple regularly shares their experiences as parents on their podcast, 'The Indian Parent Pod', providing open perspectives on contemporary family life while maintaining a strong sense of heritage.

Kareena Kapoor

Hilarious 'No More Math' Post Leaves Fans In Splits

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan has once again proved that even celebrities deal with everyday struggles – including math homework. The actress recently took to her Instagram Stories to share a humorous quote that read, "Please don't ever bring up math to me. I overcame. I healed. I moved on. Let me have peace." She added laughing emojis and heart symbols, clearly hinting at the joke behind it. The light-hearted post quickly caught attention, with fans finding it instantly relatable. While Kareena did not add a detailed explanation, many believe it could be a playful nod to helping her sons, Taimur Ali Khan and Jeh Ali Khan, with schoolwork.

A Relatable Parenting Moment?

Kareena, who often shares glimpses of her family life, has previously spoken about balancing work and motherhood. With Taimur now growing up and attending school, it would not be surprising if homework sessions are part of her daily routine.

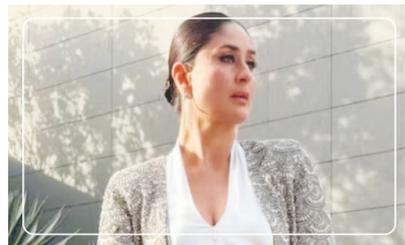
The post feels like a classic parent reaction – confidently surviving school math once, only to face it all over again while helping children with assignments.

Kareena's Fun Social Media Presence

Over the years, Kareena Kapoor Khan has

built a reputation for being effortlessly honest and witty on social media. Whether it is sharing workout snippets, family moments or cheeky captions, she keeps her posts authentic.

This math-related message, though brief, fits perfectly into her playful online personality. It shows that behind the stardom, she is just another mom



navigating school calendars and probably scratching her head over tricky equations.

About Kareena And Saif's Family

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Saif Ali Khan tied the knot in 2012 after several years of dating. The couple first worked together in LOC Kargil (2003) and later in Omkara (2006), but it was during the filming of Tashan (2008) that their romance blossomed. Over the years, they have become one of Bollywood's most loved power couples.



Hot wedding Food trends

Culinary trends take a sophisticated turn at the Great Indian Wedding with tasting stations, vegan, sushi platters and push pops for dessert.



Alavish spread is a thing of the past. This season, you'll dig into larger dessert stations, sit in for a familystyle dining experience, or get your culinary fix from food trucks to sushi carts and personalised cocktails at weddings. Modern couples and experimental chefs are coming together to make wedding food fare the most exciting part of D-Day. Here are a few ideas for your nuptials that'll get everyone talking about your wedding day.

GET BRUNCHY

Brunch spreads are perfect for morning weddings. Wedding planner Sonali Thakore says, "Earlier, morning weddings began with breakfast and moved to lunch. These days, brunches are taking over. They are classier, have far more options and are economical since you are cutting one meal out." From pancakes to egg stations, truffle burgers to pancakes, omelette stations to croissants, there's a bevy of options to choose from. And these foods can be enjoyed at any time of the day.

FAMILY STYLE DINING

Buffet is out. Classy family-style dining is in. Cosy, comfortable and more intimate, this dining style echoes a more inclusive atmosphere. No more queues. Your guests have a sit-down comfortable meal. Says chef Michael Swamy, "Fine dine

plating is when a prominent chef's menu is created and exclusively used for the family dinner at weddings. Usually caterers want to put all cuisines on the menu and make a mess of everything. But this season, less is more classy."

TASTING STATIONS

Tasting stations are perfect for creative couples who want to give a different food experience to their guests. A popsicle cocktail station instantly cools you down at a summer wedding. You can have a tandoori tasting station, cheese on

wheels, or a soup shooter station.

THINK FRESH

Farm-to-table is the new slogan. If you haven't gone totally regional and organic, you haven't got it right. The menus include bajra, ragi and jowar and makki-ki-roti served with brown rice and rajma. Says chef Michael Swamy, "You can win the guests' hearts instantly by putting light and 'goodfor-stomach' options on the menu, like a green salad or dal-rice. With more people choosing vegan and gluten-free options, wedding food fares are also becoming health-conscious affairs. No more popping antacids before attending a wedding.

SHRINK IT DOWN

Miniature is the buzzword. Mini versions of your favourite meals are making a huge statement. A single meatball topped with spaghetti, a bite-sized pizza or a bite of Amritsari fish, dipped in chutney, are just some of the one-bite options that guests are being served. Says chef Bharat, "Indian weddings now have one or two classy dishes being served rather than 10 usual dishes that people anticipate."

DIM SUM, SUSHI DELIGHTS

Dim sum allows guests to sample different fillings without filling up. Carts of dumplings and sushi can be wheeled around from one corner to the other. Ask your caterer to pair the dim sums with mini sake shots. Food blogger Nikhil Merchant says, "Gone are the days of flash stirfrys and curries. Now, we have steamed



disappointed anyone. Invite a dessert chef to whip up flambe to impress everyone. There's also an option to tell the caterers to create a 'tea party' room, where different flavours of tea (ange pekoe, black tea or green tea) can be served with lemon cakes. Chef Bharat says, "Coffee and tea spaces are getting priority at weddings. Right now, we see top coffee chains of the country put up their stalls at big weddings."

That apart, you can also see a line-up of top dhabas, say from Delhi to Amritsar, created with the same ambience to give an authentic experience. So, you have dancers, the traditional chulha, charpais etc.

GOING RUSTIC

The food served here is usually family style, depending on the region the couple belongs to.

If the bride and the groom belong to different regions, the wedding is the perfect occasion to display their culinary heritage with aplomb. From homemade jams and honey to tribal food, the humble regional dishes get a classy make-over and the guests get a lesson in India's rich history of food.

dumplings and molecular gastronomy.

Asian techniques such as steaming and hand-pulled noodles could be the next big thing," he predicts. "And don't be surprised if there is more smoke created by a nitrogen machine for that frozen ice-cream or cocktail than the wedding pyre."

FOOD WITH DRAMA

A little bit of flamboyance has never

As the temperature steadily escalates in Nashik and across India, one of the few delightful consolations of this season is the arrival of the king of fruits — mango.

Mango obsession has just begun

From a mango flavoured drink to the modest aamras prepared at home — Nashik is already drooling over the mangoes available in the market. Here's a lowdown on what can be done with this royal fruit.

Mango Silk

'40 Mango silk is a unique dessert and has recently been discovered by Nashikites. It

is an impeccable combination of condensed milk, cream and mangoes with a topping of melted chocolate. Doesn't this sound mouth-watering?

Mango Mastani

'100 The mastani is a famous drink available in the city during summers. Pallavi Pandit, a housewife, said, "I was mesmerised with the dessert-drink because I had never imagined of having something so delicious made up of mangoes. It is so filling that we generally skip our dinner after having it and it is also heavenly to relish the taste before going to bed. I even prepare the same at home with a topping of cashews, cream and strawberry pieces."

Mango Milkshake

'30 Mango milkshake is one of the most sought after milkshake recipe in India. When you are looking to beat the summer heat, mango milkshake with lots of ice is the best anyone can offer you.

Mango Mousse

'45 Mango mousse is made using a quick recipe of mangoes and cream blended together to give a creamy, light and airy texture to it. Mousse can be served with freshly cut pieces of mango to make a delightful dessert using this king of fruits.

Ice-cream

'40 Dig into a scoop of mango ice-cream to regularise your body temperature in the scorching heat of summer. Though mango ice-cream is available throughout the year but it is the most relished during this season.

Aamras

The most famous and mouth-watering delicacy of mangoes is aamras, prepared entirely with mango pulps and with no preservatives so as to improve on the taste. Indulge in the most loved combination of aamras and pooris this summers to take your tastebuds on a delightful journey. Tina Pavan Narang, a homemaker, says "This is quintessentially the most desired delicacy that our guests love. So when summers arrive, this is a must-have item on our food menu."

Panna `10 per glass

Panna is a refreshing raw mango drink renowned for its heat resistant properties. It has a wonderful balance of flavours - sweet, sour and savoury. Poonam Saraf, an architect from the city, says, "It is one of the most delicious drinks I relish during summer. With a dash of cardamom powder, it has the most extraordinary taste. Panna should be served chilled as its coolness adds on to its rich flavour."

Ambadi

'650 per kilo Ambadi is a mango barfi that is easily available in city markets. It can also be prepared at home with mangoes and coconut to attain the most desirable taste of it.

Mango cakes `450

Mango flavoured cakes are a big hit in the summer season and are easily available now. The subtle taste of this cake is what makes people obsess over this dessert in these hot months.

Mango Kulfi `30

Kulfi in Nashik is not all about malai and gulkand. Come summer and the markets are flooded with the all-time favourite mango kulfi. All the goodness of the juicy alphonso mangoes in a sinfully rich and creamy kulfi gives your tastebuds a treat. Shops even add nuts to give it a fancy look.

Mango Flavoured Drink

'20 per bottle This drink, manufactured in Nashik, is made of mango. It is as refreshing as it gets. From being a thirst quenching drink on a summery afternoon to the ideal sipper in parties, the drink has many takers.

Amrakhand

'240 per kilo A popular variation of the mango flavoured shrikhand is the amrakhand. It is one of the easiest mango desserts that can be prepared in no time. It is thick, creamy soft, supple, delicious and a total melt-in-your-mouth delicacy.

Mango Juice

'30 Home-made mango juice prepared from organic alphonso mangoes tastes incredibly good. It is most preferred over mango pieces because it naturally gives the factual taste of mangoes.

3 must-try burger recipes

Easy burger recipes you must try!

PESTO BURGER

- Ingredients
- Ground meat - 1 kilo
- Salt - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mozzarella cheese - 3 slices
- Pesto - ½ cup
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Roasted red peppers - ½ cup
- Burger buns - 4

Method

Pound the meat, season with salt and pepper and shape it into rounds. Fry them in hot oil until each side cooks really well. Take a bun add the burger to it, along with a leaf, the cheese. Spread some pesto onto it. Add it to the hot pan and simmer for a minute until the meat is reheated and the cheese gets melted.

Pizza burger

- Ingredients
- Ground meat - ½ kilo
- Pizza puree - 2 cups
- Onion - ½, diced
- Capsicum - ½, diced
- Mozzarella cheese - ¼ cup
- Mushrooms, roasted - ½ cup
- Oregano - 1 tsp
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat a skillet and add some oil to it. Cook the meat till it is well done. Add the pizza puree and cook. Add the oregano as well. Also stir fry the

peppers and onion and add it to the meat mixture. Take a bun, add the lettuce leaves to it as well as the cooked meat mixture.

RED BEAN BURGER

- Ingredients
- Red beans (rajma), cooked - 1 cup
- Ground zeera - 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala - a pinch
- Onions - 1, sliced
- Mayonnaise - 3 tbsps
- Dry bread crumbs - ½ cup
- Oregano - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mint leaves - a few, chopped
- Vegetable oil - 2 tbsps
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat oil and saute the onion. Add the garam masala and zeera to it. Add the boiled rajma beans to this and saute. Now blend together the bread crumbs, mayonnaise, pepper and oregano to it. Spoon the mixture into the buns and place the burgers in a skillet. Serve with salsa sauce.

