

PM Modi launches nationwide HPV vaccination drive for girls in Rajasthan

The programme will target approximately 1.15 crore girls aged 14 years every year across all States and Union Territories. The vaccine will be provided free of cost at designated Government health facilities.

New Delhi.(Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched the nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme in Rajasthan's Ajmer. The move is aimed at strengthening preventive healthcare against cervical cancer. Following the launch, the Prime Minister addressed a rally in the state and claimed that the NDA government is determined to ensure development across all levels, and the launch of the HPV vaccine is testimony to



that. "Our government is committed to all-around development. In line with this, today in Ajmer, we had the privilege of launching the nationwide HPV vaccination campaign along with the inauguration

and foundation stone laying of several projects, and the distribution of appointment letters to the youth," PM Modi said. The programme will target approximately 1.15 crore girls aged 14 years every year across all States and Union Territories. The vaccine will be provided free of cost at designated Government health facilities. Vaccination will be conducted at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Primary health centres), community health centres,

sub-district and district hospitals, as well as government medical colleges and hospitals. The medical sessions will be supervised by medical officers and adequate healthcare teams. The medical sites will have functional cold chain points (CCPs) and will be linked to 247 government health facilities to ensure immediate medical support and management of any rare adverse events following immunisation(AEFI). The move came amid the

country's existing struggle with cervical cancer. The disease is the second most common cancer, with more than 1 lakh 20 thousand new cases and over 80,000 deaths being registered as per the GLOBOCAN 2022 data. Scientific evidence establishes that almost all cases are caused by persistent infection with high-risk types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), particularly types 16 and 18, which account for more than 80% of cervical cancer cases in India.

Rahul Gandhi urges Nirmala Sitharaman to withdraw tax on disability pensions, boost ECHS funds

Gandhi noted that the ECHS, designed to provide the best healthcare to veterans, is in dire straits due to inadequate budget allocation.

New Delhi.(Agency) Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, urging the withdrawal of newly introduced income tax provisions on disability pensions and calling for adequate funding for the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS). In his letter to Sitharaman, Gandhi sought immediate action on two critical issues affecting armed forces personnel: adequate funding to the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) and withdrawal of newly introduced income taxes on disability pensions," said Gandhi. Gandhi noted that the ECHS, designed to provide the best healthcare to veterans, is in dire straits due to inadequate budget allocation. "ECHS is suffering from

severe funding shortages. Over ₹12,000 crore in medical bills remain pending, budget allocation is nearly 30% below requirement, and hospitals are opting out due to non-payment. Veterans are being forced to pay from their



own pockets, or even delay treatment for serious diseases like cancer, he pointed out. "Those who served the country are feeling neglected in their hour of need," Gandhi wrote. Referring to the Finance Bill 2026, Gandhi said the proposal to tax disability pensions

for personnel retained in service marks a historic shift. "This is the first time since 1922 that disability pensions are being taxed. Disability pensions are meant to provide relief to servicemen who suffer injuries, and should not be thought of as income," he said. He further said it is insulting to tax what should be praised. "When a disabled serviceman chooses or is requested to continue in service, he or she is selflessly serving India despite sustaining injuries. It is insulting to tax what should be praised," he added. Gandhi said a delegation of ex-servicemen had recently met him and raised these concerns. "It was painful to hear their feelings of being let down by their own government. Our brothers and sisters who serve in the armed forces deserve every support from a grateful nation," he wrote, urging the Finance Minister to clear pending ECHS liabilities with adequate budgetary support and restore full income tax exemption on disability pensions.

Cooperative Bank Case Closure Report Accepted, Ajit Pawar, Others Cleared

Mumbai.(Agency)

A court in Mumbai has accepted the closure report given by the police in a case linked to an alleged scam worth Rs 25,000 crore in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB). With the closure report of the police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW), former deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, who had served as a director of one of the district banks, wife Sunetra Pawar, and other individuals have been cleared in the case. Sunetra Pawar is the new Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The EOW told the special court that it found no criminal offence in the alleged case. The investigators also said they found no irregularities in sanctioning loans and recoveries too. The court, after accepting the closure report, dismissed the petition filed by activists seeking an investigation into the alleged scam. The closure report's acceptance comes a month after Ajit Pawar died in a plane crash in Maharashtra's Baramati. Mahesh Jadhav, special judge, rejected protest petitions filed by activist Anna Hazare and others challenging the closure report. A detailed order of the court is awaited. The alleged scam is linked to loans given to cooperative sugar factories, spinning mills and other entities by district and cooperative banks, allegedly without following norms. The MSCB is Maharashtra's top cooperative bank. The investigation began in 2019 as directed by the Bombay High Court. Besides Pawar, who was then a director of one of the district banks, the

The court, after accepting the closure report, dismissed the petition filed by activists seeking an investigation into the alleged scam

first information report (FIR) named government officials, the then directors and officials of the MSCB, and others. The EOW initially alleged the state suffered



losses of Rs 25,000 crore between January 2007 and December 2017 due to irregularities in disbursement of loans. The case saw multiple twists since 2020. During the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government (in which Ajit Pawar was the finance minister) the EOW filed a closure report stating that no criminal offence.

Alliances Involving BJP Likely To Be Finalised By March 10 In Assam

Guwahati.(Agency)

In an important political development, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hinted that the AGP and BJP alliance is likely to be finalised on March 10 for the assembly election. The AGP is a longtime partner of the BJP in the northeast state and a founding member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). There are chances of friendly fights between the two allies in a few seats in Assam in order to meet aspirations of local workers of both parties,



sources added. The BJP is also expected to finalise seat-sharing with the BPF by March 10. In the last assembly election, the BPF was with the Congress, but this time it has come to the NDA-fold. While the seat-sharing talks of the BJP with its other partner party from Bodoland region UPPL are stuck, Himanta Biswa earlier said UPPL will not go with the Congress. The Congress faces the prospect of an alliance hassle over seat-sharing with Rajgor Dal, a regional outfit led by MLA Akhil Gogoi. Sources said talks are going on for an alliance with Rajgor Dal, but somehow things are not going well with the Congress. Congress sources told NDTV that seat-sharing with the regional party Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Left parties are almost finalised, and they are waiting for an announcement from the Congress high command.

Shah meets Bihar officials on border, special probe committee announced

Patna.(Agency)

Hours after Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a high-level meeting on issues related to Indo-Nepal border with senior state administrative officers in Patna, Bihar deputy chief minister Vijay Kumar Sinha announced setting up a special probe committee to look into allegations of encroachment of land by 'outsiders' in Kishanganj district. Sinha, who is also the revenue and land reforms department minister, said that a special committee would be formed to investigate reports of encroachment of land



by 'outsiders' in Kishanganj district, a part of Seemanchal region. Sinha made the announcement on the concluding day of Budget session of Bihar legislative

Assembly on Friday.

JD(U) MLA from Thakurganj Neeraj Agrawal raised the issue of illegal infiltration and encroachment of land belong to local residents by 'outsiders'. He said that land allotted to the landless from Dalits, ST and Muslims under government's 'Bhoodan' scheme in Dighalbank block of Kishanganj district had been encroached upon by 'outsiders.' The MLA claimed that some people from West Bengal's Malda and Murshidabad districts have 'purchased' land of the poor. Kishanganj's Thakurganj area is strategically sensitive from security point of

view. He claimed that 90 per cent of such land has been encroached upon. Ownership of 'Bhoodan' land can not be transferred, according to rule, he added. Besides Nepal, Seemanchal shares borders with West Bengal and is seen as a gateway to the strategically important Silliguri Corridor, often referred to as the 'Chicken Neck'. New strategy formulated Earlier in the day, Shah chaired a meeting on issues related to the India-Nepal border with senior administrative and police officers in Bihar's Patna as a new strategy.

New Cargill unit to boost farmers' income, enhance milk yield & dairy productivity in Punjab: CM Mann

The Sikh Times

CHANDIGARH, 28th February: In a major stride for Punjab's dairy and agro economy, the Bhagwant Mann Government has brought into operation Cargill's ₹300 crore cattle feed plant at Industrial Park, Wazirabad in Mandi Gobindgarh, the largest of its kind in South Asia. The commissioning of this mega facility marks a significant industrial achievement ahead of the Progressive Punjab Investors' Summit 2026 and reflects the growing faith of global investors in Punjab. The state-of-the-art plant strengthens Punjab's agro-industrial ecosystem, generates employment, and delivers direct benefits to farmers through improved milk yield and higher dairy productivity. The project underscores the

Punjab Government's firm resolve to accelerate industrial growth, deepen agri-processing capacity and rebuild a vibrant 'Rangla Punjab' through sustained investment and policy-driven development. On this occasion, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Set up with an investment worth ₹300 crore, this plant reaffirms the Punjab Government's firm commitment to industrial growth and investor facilitation. The state-of-the-art plant of Cargill Private Limited has started its operations at the Industrial Park, Wazirabad in Mandi Gobindgarh. Punjab is witnessing substantial industrial investments through the Invest Punjab initiative, and these investments are generating employment

opportunities for the youth and accelerating Punjab's overall economic development." The Chief Minister further stated that the growing investor confidence clearly reflects that Punjab is emerging as a preferred destination for investments, particularly in the agriculture and food processing sectors. "The Punjab Government

is fully committed to providing every possible support and ensuring a business-friendly ecosystem through progressive policies and a peaceful industrial environment," he said. Highlighting the scale of the project, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Spread over 15 acres, the Cargill plant has an annual production capacity of 4.5 lakh metric tonnes and is the largest cattle feed plant in South Asia." The Chief Minister added that after Bathinda, this marks Cargill's second major unit in Punjab, further strengthening the agro-industrial value chain of Punjab. "The project will offer direct benefits to farmers by ensur-

ing the local availability of high-quality cattle feed, thereby improving milk yield, quality and farmers' income. The scientifically developed feed will enhance animal health and productivity, helping Punjab's dairy sector scale new heights," he said. Sharing a video clip on X, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann stated: "The South Asia's largest animal feed plant of Cargill, built at a cost of ₹300 crore, has been inaugurated at Wazirabad (Mandi Gobindgarh). This major project will boost the income of our dairy farmers and create hundreds of new employment opportunities for the youth of Punjab. Ahead of the Progressive Punjab Investors' Summit 2026, this stands as a significant achievement of our government in the industrial sector. We remain fully committed to rebuilding a 'Rangla Punjab'."



News box

11-year-old boy falls into water booster tank in Haryana, dies; FIR filed

Gurgaon.(Agency)

An 11-year-old boy died after falling into an uncovered water booster tank in Palwal on Thursday evening. On Friday, a case was registered after Reena — mother of the boy, Shivam — submitted a written complaint. The FIR was registered at Camp Palwal police station against the agencies responsible for constructing and operating the booster — Horikam Engineers and Silpa Horikam JV Hyderabad — and an engineer under sections 106 (causing death by negligence), 282 (rash navigation of vessel) and 290 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down, repairing or constructing buildings) of the BNS.

A police officer said, "We are examining the role of the contractor, engineers and the agency to ascertain whether mandatory safety protocols were followed." Shivam stepped out to play around 5.30pm on Feb 26. He was playing near the Govind Nagar water booster in Kailash Nagar, when he fell into the tank around 6.30pm. The tank didn't have a protective mesh or proper covering. Reena alleged that the absence of adequate safety measures led to her son's death.

Man on remand escapes from police station in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 25-year-old man, accused in a mobile-snatching case, escaped from a police station while being brought back from a city court on a day's remand.

A manhunt has been launched to trace Ravi, a resident of Shanti Colony in Delhi's Mandi village. Ravi was arrested along with a resident of Bheem Basti, Aditya, in connection with a case registered on Feb 25.

Police said both accused were produced before the court. After the proceedings, when they were brought back to Sector 29 police station, Ravi allegedly pushed a police personnel inside the premises and fled. Police immediately lodged Aditya in the lock-up.

Based on a complaint filed by head constable Pradeep Kumar, a fresh FIR was registered under Section 265 (resistance or obstruction to lawful apprehension) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhit. Police said Ravi and Aditya were involved in multiple mobile-snatching incidents. "They would travel from Delhi to Gurgaon on a motorcycle, target pedestrians or commuters, snatch mobile phones and flee to Delhi," an officer said.

Investigators said the duo was arrested in one such case earlier this week and were being interrogated to ascertain their involvement in other incidents.

Officers said that departmental action may be taken if any lapses are found on part of authorities.

In Dec last year, another accused had tried to escape from the clutches of police in Civil Hospital in Sector 10. He was nabbed.

Men in helmet stab Ghaziabad businessman multiple times, FIR against 5



Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Two men wearing helmets barged into the office of a 55-year-old man and stabbed him multiple times on Friday. He was rushed to a nearby hospital, which referred him to GTB hospital in Delhi. He is in a critical condition.

The victim, Saleem Wastik, is a businessman who often posts videos on social media on religious practices. He lives with his family in a two-storeyed house at Ali Garden, Loni and uses the ground floor of his residence as his office. In several media interviews and talks, he has questioned orthodox ideas. Loni ACP Siddharth Gautam said around 6am, they were informed by Wastik's neighbour that he had been stabbed and was lying in a pool of blood in his office. A police team reached the spot and took him to a nearby hospital. He was later referred to GTB hospital. "He received multiple knife injuries to his abdomen and throat and is critical," the ACP said.

He added that an initial investigation has revealed that two people came on a bike and parked it outside Wastik's office. They were wearing helmets. The men asked some children who were loitering outside the office to go home. They, then, went into the office where Wastik was sitting on his chair. They started beating him and later stabbed him multiple times with a knife. When his family members came running, the men fled.

"We have formed teams to nab the men. One of the teams is reviewing CCTV footage from nearby areas. Police are questioning the neighbours as well," Gautam said.

Wastik's son, Usman, told the cops in his complaint that he suspects five people to be behind the attack. ACP Gautam said an FIR has been registered at Loni police station naming the men for attempt to murder and common intention under BNS.

Road dust, construction drive PM10 spike': NGT notice to Haryana on plea

Gurgaon.(Agency)

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notices to Haryana govt and other authorities on a plea alleging that road dust is the biggest contributor to PM10 pollution in the city and that no effective steps were taken to control it. The tribunal said on Tuesday the applicant raised concerns over what he described as a "worsening air pollution crisis" in the city, driven mainly by dust from roads and construction-related activity. The applicant told the tribunal that authorities "failed to implement meaningful measures on the ground" to curb rising dust levels. An affidavit filed by the applicant on Feb 20 said to the best of his knowledge, the issue was not pending before Supreme Court. The matter in the current plea was also posted for further hearing on March 18. A bench comprising Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member Dr Afroz Ahmad directed the issuance of notice to the respondents. The applicant was asked to serve them and file an affidavit of service at least one week

before the next date of hearing. The order comes against the backdrop of a TOI report earlier this month that said nearly one in three roads in Gurgaon was also earmarked for redevelopment because of 'poor surface quality and high dust generation'. Official records show that about 30% of the city's 2,400km road network — over 700 km — was listed for upgrades under a new road dust control plan for 2026-27, with a projected outlay of Rs 1,971 crore. The documents highlight how broken and poorly maintained stretches continue to undermine the city's air pollution control efforts. According to the order, the applicant also submitted that agencies were not taking effective remedial action to control dust emissions, which substantially add to fine particulate matter in the air. Pankaj Yadav, a resident



of Sector 22, told TOI, "Road dust remains the biggest contributor to PM10 pollution in Gurgaon, yet authorities did not take any effective steps to control it. Ensuring smooth roads, proper greening and maintaining pavements are all basic, doable tasks, but civic agencies are not doing them. We are suffering because of their inaction." TOI also consistently reported on how Gurgaon's road dust

problem deepened in the absence of sustained enforcement. Earlier this month, TOI highlighted a separate plea heard by NGT on Feb 24, where another applicant flagged road and construction dust as the biggest contributor to PM10 levels and alleged that authorities did not take "effective steps" to control it. The tribunal then issued notices to the Haryana govt and civic agencies in the matter. According to the pollution board, dust particle size determines the potential hazard to human health. Particles larger than 10 µg/m³ and 2.5 µg/m³ are not breathable and thus can only damage external organs, while finer particles may penetrate the lower respiratory tract and enter the bloodstream, affecting internal organs and potentially triggering cardiovascular disorders.

The driver could have taken him to hospital': Former RPF DSP out for morning walk dies in hit-and-run accident in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 75-year-old retired senior officer of Railway Police Force (RPF), who served as deputy director of crime, died after an unidentified vehicle hit him from behind while returning home from his morning walk in Sector 39 on Friday. The deceased, Dhanwant Singh Yadav, a resident of Sector 39 Housing Board, left home around 5am with his wife for a walk at Tau Devi Lal stadium. Police said the couple walked separately inside the stadium and, after an hour, Yadav started heading back home alone. The incident happened around 6am opposite PNB office on the main road. "The stretch does not have a CCTV. We are scanning footage from GMDA cameras in the nearby areas to identify the vehicle involved," an officer said. Two passersby found Yadav lying injured on the road 15 minutes later. "He was conscious at the time and shared his wife's phone number with them. The men informed her about the accident. She rushed to the spot and took him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival," the officer added.

Yadav is survived by his wife, daughter and son. He received the President's medal for distinguished service in 2004. "He retired in 2010 as deputy director crime from Delhi. My parents routinely went to the stadium for walks since we moved to Gurgaon in 2019. He always came back before my mother; she spent 20 minutes more at the stadium, while my father came home sooner for yoga. He was a senior commandant and DSP in RPF," his daughter Meenakshi said. "My world collapsed in front of my eyes. The driver could have stopped and taken him to the hospital. When I received a call past 6am, he was conscious. By the time we reached the hospital, he died," his wife Susheela said. Police received information about the incident around 8.45am. A case was registered at Sadar police station under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the BNS. The exact vehicle involved in the accident is yet to be ascertained. Police added that the postmortem was conducted and the body was handed over to the family. In a separate accident, a 30-year-old truck driver died after his vehicle rammed into a truck ahead of him near a railway crossing

in Garhi village on the Pataudi-Gurgaon road on Thursday morning. The deceased was identified as Sanjay, a resident of Sonapat. Police said the accident took place around 10.30am when a truck moving ahead applied a sudden brake. Sanjay failed to stop in time and crashed into the vehicle. The impact left him severely injured inside the cabin. Locals informed police, who reached the spot and shifted him to a nearby hospital. He died during treatment. Police said the body was sent for postmortem and then handed over to Sanjay's family. In a similar accident, a 36-year-old man died after his bike rammed into a stationary tractor-trolley near Silani village on the Sohna-Palwal road late on Thursday night. The deceased was identified as Ravinder of Palwal. He worked as a labourer and is survived by his wife and five children. Police said the accident occurred around 11pm in Silani village. "Ravinder was returning home from a cousin's wedding when his bike crashed into a tractor-trolley parked on the road. The driver of the tractor-trolley was not present at the time of the incident," an officer said.

HSVP notifies biggest land-buy plan in Gurgaon, to launch new sectors

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Haryana govt has decided to procure 17,358 acres from 36 revenue villages in Gurgaon to carve out new, fully planned sectors with proper roads, utilities, public amenities and green buffers. The digital procurement drive will be carried out by HSVP, and could well become the biggest such exercise for the city once completed. The push is part of a wider statewide target of 1.7 lakh acres, aimed at creating new residential sectors, commercial districts and institutional zones for the next cycle of urban expansion. The state govt has shifted the process to a single online route — e-Bhoomi portal (ehboomi.jamabandi.nic.in) — making it the official entry point for villagers to voluntarily offer land. On Friday, the



Shots fired at fashion designer's office on Golf Course Road in Gurgaon; 4 held

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Multiple gunshots were fired at the Golf Course Road office of a leading fashion designer on the evening of Feb 18 — the latest in a series of extortion threats targeting businessmen, musicians, realtors, and others in the city. Angster Deepak Nandal claimed responsibility for the firing outside designer Mayank Chawla's office on social media and issued warnings to others. TOI has learnt that Nandal sought Rs 5 crore from the designer. Three men were arrested on Thursday by the special task force — Devender (41) and Naveen (30), both from Parnala in Jhajjar, and Sandeep (44) from Silana in Sonapat. Police also seized two automatic pistols, seven live cartridges, and a vehicle. Separately, crime branch Sector 40 in-charge inspector Lalit Kumar arrested Ravikant (30) of Patel Nagar on the same day for his involvement in the case. Sources said the



shots were fired in the air. Chawla's staff informed him about the incident. "Mayank lives in Delhi and initially approached Delhi Police. But as the incident happened here, he was asked to contact Gurgaon police, following which he lodged a complaint at DLF Phase 1 police station on Feb 21. A case was registered," a police officer said. "Following a detailed analysis of CCTV footage and intelligence inputs, the shooter was identified as Devender. During sustained interrogation, the trio

disclosed that they planned to target Chawla at Nandal's behest. A fresh case on organised crime was registered and is being investigated by the STF unit, which shared key inputs related to the Golf Course Road incident with Gurgaon police," a senior Haryana Police officer said. Chawla could not be reached for a comment. Nandal earlier worked with the Himanshu Bhaugang but is now operating independently, sources said. Police added that Devender was the suspected shooter, and Ravikant accompanied him to the spot. The exact number of shots fired will be ascertained after interrogation. Two of the arrested men have prior criminal records: three theft cases are registered against Devender, while Sandeep faces around nine criminal cases, including charges of murder, attempted murder, and violations under the Arms Act. Police said Sandeep was also convicted in the 2008 Mandothi murder case.

govt, through HSVP, notified the schedule. The govt has also drawn a clear line between land acquisition and procurement. Acquisition is a compulsory process where the govt takes land under law and compensation is determined through statutory awards — often leading to objections and litigation. Procurement, as designed here, is a voluntary, agreement-based purchase where landowners choose to participate and the transaction is concluded through consent and documentation. For landowners, the next step is to check whether their village is notified and, if so, submit land details on e-Bhoomi within the prescribed window for verification and further processing. The rollout will be phased. In the first stage, around 40,000 acres have been earmarked for procurement in 13 cities through direct agreements with landowners.

No 'good', 'satisfactory' days: Gurgaon sees most polluted February in 10 years

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city recorded its most polluted Feb since air quality monitoring began in 2016. There were no 'good' or 'satisfactory' days and the monthly average AQI touched 256, placing the entire month in the 'poor' category this month. Data compiled from daily readings between 2016 and 2026 shows this Feb overtook all previous years. The earlier Feb peak stood at 236 in 2020, followed by 231 in 2017 and 231 in 2023. This year's 256 also marked a steep rise from Feb 2025's average of 186.5 and last year's 201. Two days slipped into the 'very poor' bracket, with AQI crossing 300 multiple times. Feb 4 recorded 334, while Feb 24 logged 307. Mid-month too saw sustained elevated levels, with readings hovering close to or above 300 on consecutive days. Feb averages over the years show how sharp this spike was. The city recorded about

215 in 2018, dipped to nearly 167 in 2019, climbed to around 237 in 2020, settled near 226 in 2021, dropped to about 211 in 2022, rose again to roughly 231 in 2023, fell to around 202 in 2024, declined further to about 186 in 2025, before jumping to 256 this year. For residents, the numbers mean winter pollution did not ease even as temperatures began to rise. Feb is typically a transition month when improving wind speeds and higher daytime temperatures help disperse pollutants. This year, however, poor air persisted well beyond the peak winter period. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. Central Pollution Control Board guidelines say that when AQI is in the 'moderate' category, there can be breathing discomfort for people with asthma and lung or

heart disease. Health experts flagged the implications. Critical care and pulmonology head at CK Birla Hospital (Gurgaon) Dr Kuldeep Kumar Grover said, "Sustained short-term exposure (hours to days) to elevated AQI primarily induces respiratory distress, asthma exacerbations, acute cardiovascular events and hospital admissions, particularly in children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing lung conditions." Meanwhile, Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) officials said the suspension of road dust due to vehicular traffic and waste burning was a special concern in the city. Gurgaon: The city recorded its most polluted Feb since air quality monitoring began in 2016. There were no 'good' or 'satisfactory' days and the monthly average AQI touched 256, placing the entire month in the 'poor' category this month. Data compiled from

daily readings between 2016 and 2026 shows this Feb overtook all previous years. The earlier Feb peak stood at 236 in 2020, followed by 231 in 2017 and 231 in 2023. This year's 256 also marked a steep rise from Feb 2025's average of 186.5 and last year's 201. Two days slipped into the 'very poor' bracket, with AQI crossing 300 multiple times. Feb 4 recorded 334, while Feb 24 logged 307. Mid-month too saw sustained elevated levels, with readings hovering close to or above 300 on consecutive days. Feb averages over the years show how sharp this spike was. The city recorded about 215 in 2018, dipped to nearly 167 in 2019, climbed to around 237 in 2020, settled near 226 in 2021, dropped to about 211 in 2022, rose again to roughly 231 in 2023, fell to around 202 in 2024, declined further to about 186 in 2025, before jumping to 256 this year.

THE SIKH TIMES

Edited, Printed, Published
Owned by Simmi Babbar
N - 31, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar
Delhi-110009
Printed at Qaumi Patrika Printing
Press, A-4/A-144, Tronica City
(Loni), Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)
Corporate Office:
5, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,
Press Area, ITO, New Delhi
Editor-in-Chief
Gurcharan Singh Babbar
Mob : 9654077232, 9971359517
Website : www.thesikhimes.in
Email : sikhimesindia@gmail.com
RNI No. DELENG/2008/25465

Cybercrime trail drains Rs 30 cr in 2.5 years in Delhi

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: Reeling under an unrelenting wave of cybercrime, residents of Southwest Delhi have already lost about Rs 30 crore in a span of more than two-and-a-half years, with online trading scams and fake job offers emerging as the biggest traps for unsuspecting victims aged between 18 and 44 years. Police data also highlights key cybercrime hotspots across the country that continues to fuel frauds in Delhi. The Mewat region, covering Bharatpur and Mathura, is notorious for sextortion rackets and hotel-booking scams. Jharkhand's Jamtara and Deoghar districts are infamous for KYC and credit card reward-point scams. Rajasthan's Jodhpur and Barmer, along with parts of Gujarat, West Bengal

and Madhya Pradesh, are identified as major centres for supplying mule accounts used to channel stolen funds. According to the data, the cyber police in Southwest district has registered 90 cases this year till September 4, with fraudsters duping people of Rs 5,07,68,452 (Rs 5.07 crore). Police said 56 of these cases have been solved, leading to the arrest of 147 accused and recovery of Rs 2,27,45,256 (Rs 2.27 crore). Out of these, 42 cases pertain to incidents reported in 2025, while some older cases dating back to 2021 and 2022 have also been worked out. The trend of rising cybercrime was reflected in previous years as well. In 2024, police recorded 112 cases and solved 57. The victims lost Rs 15.8 crore that year,

while an amount of Rs 4.83 crore was recovered. In 2023, 100 cases were lodged and 42 solved, with losses amounting to Rs 9.05 crore and a recovery of just Rs 36 lakh. Arrests too have risen steadily — 185 people were held in 2024, compared to 105 in 2023. Police said of the 90 cases registered so far this year, online trading scams account for the maximum with 25 instances, followed by 12 cases of fake job offers. There have also been nine cases of debit and credit card frauds or SIM-swap frauds, seven incidents of "digital arrest" scams and six each of cyber bullying and electricity bill-related frauds. Other categories include fake profiles on social media, impersonation, matrimonial frauds and identity theft. "The most vulnerable people are young adults aged between 18 and 44 years, who are frequently targeted through investment fraud, online job offers, phishing, adware and social-media frauds," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Amit Goel said. Minors aged 12 to 17 years are increasingly facing cyber bullying and sextortion, though

such cases often go unreported due to social stigma, he added. Women, the



DCP said, are targeted through harassment involving fake social-media profiles, morphed images and fraudulent work-from-home offers. Senior citizens are soft targets for "digital arrest" scams, where callers impersonating police or enforcement officials threaten victims with arrest to extort money, and electricity-bill frauds. Explaining the modus operandi, officials said fake job offers, phishing e-mails and malicious mobile applications (APK

files) are among the most common tools deployed by cybercriminals. Sextortion



accounts."Funds are often transferred via UPI or IMPS into accounts of unemplyed youth, students, daily-wage workers or those whose accounts have been compromised. These account holders, or 'mules', receive a commission of five to 10 per cent for allowing their accounts to be used," the officer added. Once deposited, the money is either withdrawn in cash or converted into crypto currency, such as USDT, through Indian peer-to-peer exchanges. To erase traces, the funds are broken into smaller

amounts, routed through mixers or moved across different blockchains, such as Ethereum and Tron. Eventually, the crypto currency is transferred to digital wallets controlled by international syndicates operating out of hubs in Dubai, Myanmar and Cambodia, police said. In Southwest Delhi, the cyber police currently operate with 10 dedicated teams, each led by a sub-inspector. Investigations rely heavily on technical support,

such as open-source intelligence, IP-address tracking and advanced financial-fraud-analysis tools. Assistance is also taken from specialised agencies like the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations Unit (IFSO), the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and national-level platforms like the NATGRID. "Fraudsters are constantly adapting and finding new ways to target unsuspecting citizens."

Man swept away in Yamuna while rescuing cow

New Delhi: A 45-year-old man, Ombir, was swept away by the strong currents of the Yamuna while trying to rescue a cow tied at a house in Northeast Delhi's Garhi Mendhu village on Wednesday. His body was recovered on Friday, the police said. Ombir used to run dairy business in the area. Family members of the deceased said the water level of the Yamuna increased in the village on Wednesday morning, following which they took the cattle to a safer place. However, a cow was unfortunately left behind. When Ombir tried to rescue the cow, he was swept away by the strong currents of the Yamuna. According to the police, Ombir was last seen around 8:30 am on Wednesday while travelling from Pusta Road towards the village. However, no one actually saw him drowning. After getting information, the police, along with District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, carried out a search operation, but Ombir could not be located. The police and rescue teams resumed the search operation around 11 am on Friday and recovered the body of the deceased from an area near Garhi Mendhu village. The body was shifted to GTB Hospital for post-mortem examination. Legal proceedings have been initiated, and further investigation was underway, an official mentioned.

Taj Palace receives bomb threat via e-mail, declared hoax after Delhi Police searches premises

New Delhi: A bomb threat received through e-mail on Saturday sent Taj Palace staff here into tizzy which was later declared a "hoax" following an extensive search by the Delhi Police, an official said. "After a thorough security check authorities have declared the threat a hoax. The safety and security of our guests and employees is of paramount importance to us and we continue to remain vigilant," a Taj Palace spokesperson said. Upon receiving information, multiple teams of the Delhi Police including a bomb disposal squad (BDS), dog squad, and a quick reaction team (QRT) immediately rushed to the spot, the official said. The mail mentioned that there were improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on each floor of the hotel. "We reached the hotel and launched an extensive search operation. All public areas, parking zones, lobbies, and rooms were thoroughly checked with the help of bomb detection equipment and sniffer dogs," he further said. However, nothing suspicious was found and the threat was declared a hoax, a senior police officer said. Police said the e-mail is being traced to determine its origin with cyber teams at work to identify the sender. This incident comes a day after the Delhi High Court received a similar bomb threat via e-mail, following which the entire court complex was evacuated. Earlier this week, bomb threats were also sent through e-mail to the Delhi Chief Minister's Secretariat, Maulana Azad Medical College and University College of Medical Sciences (UCMS), which were later declared to be hoaxes.

Police bust terror module, arrest 5 operatives

New Delhi: Delhi Police have busted a major terror module being run in the guise of an NGO and arrested five operatives, an official said on Thursday. The NGO was being managed by a Pakistan-based handler, and it was trying to recruit youths by brainwashing them, he added. The mastermind, identified as Ashar Danish, was apprehended from Jharkhand's Ranchi, while two suspects—Atfab and Sufiyan, both residents of Mumbai—were arrested from Delhi on Tuesday. Muzapa was held from Telangana, while one more operative, Kamran, has also been arrested, the official said. Danish, the kingpin of the module, used to be known under different names such as CEO, Gazba and Professor, he said. "The raids were carried out after intelligence inputs indicated that a module was planning a major terror attack in the country. We have been tracking them for the last six months," the official said. Searches at multiple locations have led to the recovery of a large quantity of chemicals, ball bearings and other materials used in making Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) were recovered, he said. "Police teams recovered components and electronic equipment used in making IEDs. Several chemicals, including sodium bicarbonate, along with gas masks, electrical cables, fuse points, wires and other electrical equipment were seized," he added. In Ranchi, a raid at Danish's hideout led to the recovery of chemicals and other materials suspected to be used in making explosives, police said. "Preliminary investigation suggests that the module was in touch with Pakistan-based handlers and was preparing for a large-scale attack," police said, adding that the handlers used only social media platforms for communication. The suspects are being interrogated and efforts are under way to ascertain their network, funding and potential targets. The Central agencies are analysing the digital devices seized from the suspects to track their contacts and possible international links, police said. The arrests have averted a possible terror strike in the country, they added.

Four held for killing stray dog in Gurugram

Gurugram: The Gurugram police have arrested four accused, including a minor, for allegedly killing a stray dog in the Partap Nagar area while it was asleep outside a park. According to the police, on Sunday early morning, one of the suspects threw a huge boulder at the dog while the remaining three assaulted the dog using sticks. The suspects then wrapped the dog's body and took it away. Based on a complaint filed by residents on Monday, the police registered an FIR against the four suspects under Section 325 (causing the death or permanent injury to any animal) of the BNS at New Colony police station.

Nagaland woman arrested for providing support to China-origin cyber fraudsters

Gurugram: Gurugram Police, in a joint operation with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, arrested a Nagaland woman for allegedly providing call support to China-origin cyber fraudsters. Seven mobile phones, one WiFi modem, three SIM cards, and one broken laptop were recovered from her possession. The woman was identified as Kung Panmae (30), a native of Dimapur in Nagaland, and presently residing at Sector 28, Gurugram. A senior police officer said the arrested woman, along with her husband, was actively involved in providing call support to Chinese-origin cybercriminals by installing a virtual SIM box at a rented accommodation

in Gurugram to facilitate cyber fraud. According to the police, it was on February 10 when the team of the cyber police station, east, got secret information that a man, along with his wife, had installed a virtual SIM box at a rented accommodation in Sector 28 and was operating a parallel illegal telephone exchange for cyber fraud activities. During raid, three mobile phones were found in active condition, operating automatically. The mobile phones were found making automatic calls to different Indian numbers. After disconnecting one call, the phone automatically dialed another number. "During police interrogation, the

accused woman revealed that her role was to keep the mobile phones continuously charged and connected to the network. Through this virtual SIM box, cyber fraudsters based in China would place calls to Indian citizens to carry out digital arrest scams, gaming frauds, investment frauds, and other cybercrimes.

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM
 Ref: Tender Notice No. 761/2025-2026 dated 03.01.2026
 (i) Tender No. 15255237 due on 13.03.2026 (S. No. 04)
 In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 27.02.2026 to 13.03.2026. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. The Corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 686/26

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

NAME CHANGE
 I, SIDDHARTH RANA S/O BHAGWAN RANA residing at H No-1074, SIRASPUR, DELHI-110042 have changed my name to SIDDHARTH RANA for all future purpose.

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

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

NAME CHANGE
 I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
 I Manoj Ram S/o Ram Bilash Ram R/o Flat No-6, Tower-8, Hamella Street, IRIS, Vaitika City, Sector-49, Gurgaon, Haryana-122018, Have Changed My Name To Manoj Kumar For All Purpose

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

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

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

NAME CHANGE
 I, Sushma D/O Sushanti Prasad Dhamana W/O Vinod Kumar R/O B-6 Police Colony Mandir Marg New Delhi 110001 Have changed my name to Sushma Badola for all future purposes.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE
 It is for general information that I, Rahul Vishwakarma S/o H.P. Vishwakarma R/o J-4, Ground Floor Gandhi Market, Mir Dard Road, Minto Road, Indraprastha, Central Delhi, Delhi-110002 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Rahul Kumar Vishwakarma in my minor daughter namely Anika Vishwakarma aged 5 years in his School Records. The actual name of mine is Rahul Vishwakarma.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE
 It is for general information that I, CHANDER VEER S/O RAM JI LAL R/O Q-157 Vikas Vihar Uttam Nagar West Delhi Delhi-110059 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as CHANDER PAL in my minor daughter namely KIRTI aged 15 years in her birth certificate No.MCDOLIR-0110-004425168. The actual name of mine is CHANDER VEER which may be amended accordingly

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS! MORE HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2026

In order to clear extra rush of passengers during the upcoming Holi Festival, Railways have decided to run the following additional Holi Festival Special Trains as per details given below:

02877/02878 Ranchi Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) - 03 Trips			
Ranchi Jn. Holi Special Train			
Train No. 02877		Train No. 02878	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	16:25	Ranchi Jn.	19:10
18:00	--	Anand Vihar (T)	19:30

Days of Run: 02877 Ex Ranchi Jn. on 07.03.2026 (Sat) and 02878 Ex Anand Vihar (T) on 01.03.2026 & 08.03.2026 (Sun).
 Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier & Sleeper & General.

Stoppages: Mesra, Barkakana, Khalari, Tori Jn., Latehar, Daltonganj, Garwa Road Jn., Nagar Untari, Renukut, Chopan, Sonbhadra, Chunar, Mirzapur, Subedarganj, Govindpuri, Tundla Jn. & Ghaziabad Stations.

04654/04653 Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri - 08 Trips			
Amritsar Jn. Superfast Special Train			
Train No. 04654		Train No. 04653	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	08:35	Amritsar Jn.	16:20
17:45	--	New Jalpaiguri	06:45

Days of Run: 04654 Ex Amritsar Jn. from 04.03.2026 to 25.03.2026 (every Wednesday) and 04653 New Jalpaiguri from 06.03.2026 to 27.03.2026 (every Friday)

Accommodation: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.
 Stoppages: Saharanpur Jn., Moradabad, Sitapur Jn., Gorakhpur Jn., Chhapra, Muzaffarpur Jn., Samastipur Jn., Katihar Jn. & Kishanganj Stations.

04823/04824 Jodhpur Jn. - Mau Jn. - 10 Trips			
Jodhpur Jn. Special Train (Weekly)			
Train No. 04823		Train No. 04824	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	17:00	Jodhpur Jn.	08:40
13:25	13:35	Lucknow Jn.	11:35
23:20	--	Mau Jn.	04:00

Days of Run: 04823 Ex Jodhpur Jn. from 01.03.2026 to 29.03.2026 (every Sunday) and 04824 Ex Mau Jn. from 03.03.2026 to 31.03.2026 (every Tuesday).

Accommodation: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier & Sleeper & General.
 Stoppages: Pipar Road Jn., Gotan, Merta Road Jn., Ren, Degana Jn., Makrana Jn., Kuchaman City, Nawa City, Phulera, Jaipur Jn., Bandikui Jn., Mandawar M Road, Kherli, Nadbai, Bharatpur Jn., Mathura Jn., Hathras City, Kasganj, Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur Central, Lucknow Jn., Ayodhya Cantt, Ayodhya Dham Jn., Shahganj Jn., Khorason Road, Azamgarh & Muhammadabad Stations.

05101/05102 Gorakhpur Jn. - New Delhi - 10 Trips			
Gorakhpur Jn. Special Train			
Train No. 05101		Train No. 05102	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	18:00	Gorakhpur Jn.	23:45
07:30	--	New Delhi	09:45

Days of Run: 05101 Ex Gorakhpur Jn. from 05.03.2026 to 14.03.2026 (every Tue, Thu, Sat) and 05102 Ex New Delhi from 06.03.2026 to 15.03.2026 (every Wed, Fri, Sun).

Accommodation: Sleeper & General.
 Stoppages: Khallilabad, Basti, Gonda Jn., Burhwal Jn., Sitapur Jn., Shahjehanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad & Ghaziabad Stations.

04684/04683 Amritsar Jn. - Ayodhya Dham Jn. - 02 Trips			
Amritsar Jn. Special Train			
Train No. 04684		Train No. 04683	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	14:30	Amritsar Jn.	16:30
10:35	--	Ayodhya Dham Jn.	17:30

Days of Run: 04684 Ex Amritsar Jn. on 05.03.2026 (Thursday) and 04683 Ex Ayodhya Dham Jn. on 07.03.2026 (Saturday).
 Accommodation: Sleeper.
 Stoppages: Jalandhar City Jn., Ludhiana Jn., Dhuri Jn., Patiala, Ambala Cantt. Jn., Saharanpur Jn., Moradabad Jn. & Lucknow Stations.

09019/09020 Banda Terminus - Gorakhpur Jn. - 02 Trips			
Banda Terminus Unreserved Special Train			
Train No. 09019		Train No. 09020	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	08:35	Banda Terminus	09:45
14:48	14:53	Lucknow Jn.	05:10
20:40	--	Gorakhpur Jn.	23:35

Days of Run: 09019 Ex Banda Terminus on 01.03.2026 (Sun.) and 09020 Ex Gorakhpur Jn. on 02.03.2026 (Monday).

Accommodation: General.
 Stoppages: Borivali, Palghar, Dahanu Road, Vapi, Valsad, Navsari, Udhna Junction, Surat, Sayan, Bharuch Junction, Vadodara Junction, Godhra Junction, Dahod, Ratlam Junction, Nagda Junction, Ujjain Junction, Maksi Junction, Shujalpur, Sehore, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Bina Junction, Virangana Lakshmbai Jhansi Junction, Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Barabanki Junction, Gonda Junction, Manikpur Junction, Basti & Khallilabad Stations.

09713/09714 Phulera Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla - 06 Trips			
Phulera Jn. Unreserved Special Train			
Train No. 09713		Train No. 09714	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	11:40	Phulera Jn.	02:30
18:05	--	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	19:10

Days of Run: 09713 Ex Phulera Jn. and 09714 Ex Delhi Sarai Rohilla from 02.03.2026 to 04.03.2026 (Monday & Wednesday)

Accommodation: General.
 Stoppages: Renwal, Ringas Jn., Shri Madhopur, Kanwat, Nim Ka Thana, Maonda, Dabra, Namaul, Ateli, Kund, Rewari Jn., Pataudi Road, Gurgaon & Delhi Cantt. Stations.

05089/05090 Chhapra Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) - 08 Trips			
Chhapra Jn. Special Train			
Train No. 05089		Train No. 05090	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	20:00	Chhapra Jn.	15:30
18:10	--	Anand Vihar (T)	19:40

Days of Run: 05089 Ex Chhapra Jn. from 05.03.2026 to 14.03.2026 (every Thursday & Saturday) and 05090 Ex Anand Vihar (T) from 06.03.2026 to 15.03.2026 (every Fri & Sun).

Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.
 Stoppages: Mashrakh Jn., Dighwa Dubauli, Thawe, Padrauna, Roorkee, Kaptanganj, Gorakhpur Jn., Khallilabad, Basti, Gonda, Burhwal, Sitapur, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad & Ghaziabad Jn. Stations.

05071/05072 Chhapra Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) - 06 Trips			
Chhapra Jn. Special Train			
Train No. 05071		Train No. 05072	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	15:00	Chhapra Jn.	08:15
10:20	--	Anand Vihar (T)	11:30

Days of Run: 05071 Ex Chhapra Jn. from 02.03.2026 to 16.03.2026 (every Monday) and 05072 Ex Anand Vihar (T) from 03.03.2026 to 17.03.2026 (every Tuesday).

Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.
 Stoppages: Mashrakh Jn., Dighwa Dubauli, Thawe, Padrauna, Roorkee, Kaptanganj, Gorakhpur Jn., Khallilabad, Basti, Gonda, Burhwal, Sitapur, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad & Ghaziabad Jn. Stations.

For any kind of information and detailed time-table etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTESS App.

Please join us on **NORTHERN RAILWAY**
 Your Convenience-Our Concern
 Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)
 Sr. DMM, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the president of India invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Modified Brief Description	Qty.	Closing date
01	93265247	Premium AC comforter Printed, Lined Design, Size 220 x 123 cm with ties as per IS 18739:2024 (or latest) Details in Tender	7050 Nos.	25.03.2026

Note :- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS websites i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained. Sr. DMM/NLS/LP/93265247/2026 Date:-27.02.2026 697/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NEWS BOX

"Stop Taking Hostages, Release All Americans": US Puts Iran On New Blacklist



ISLAMABAD. (Agency)

The United States on Friday designated Iran a "state sponsor of wrongful detention," its first such move under a new blacklist that could eventually result in a travel ban. The step comes as the United States builds up its military near Iran and threatens to strike over concerns led by its disputed nuclear programme.

"The Iranian regime must stop taking hostages and release all Americans unjustly detained in Iran, steps that could end this designation and associated actions," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement. If Iran makes no progress, Rubio said that the United States could eventually decide that US passports are invalid for travel to Iran. The United States only forbids its nationals from traveling to one country -- North Korea -- and many Iranian-Americans routinely travel to Iran, ruled since 1979 by clerics after the overthrow of the pro-US shah.

President Donald Trump in September signed an executive order that created the blacklist on wrongful detention, similar to designations by the United States on terrorism.

Iran becomes the first country to be placed on the blacklist. The Islamic republican has detained a number of Americans in recent years, usually dual nationals whom the government considers Iranian citizens.

"No American should travel to Iran for any reason. We reiterate our call for Americans who are currently in Iran to leave immediately," Rubio said.

What's Driving Pakistan-Afghanistan War Islamabad's Never-Ending Cycle Of Insecurity



ATLANTA. (Agency)

Long-simmering tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have now spilled into open confrontation along the contested Durand Line. What was once a theatre of proxy maneuvering is, at least momentarily, being shaped by direct state-to-state hostility. On February 21, Pakistan launched airstrikes on alleged militant sanctuaries in Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost, claiming to target Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-K elements. Kabul responded on February 26 with ground offensives against Pakistani positions across six provinces. Islamabad escalated further with "Operation Ghazab Lil Haq", striking targets in Kabul and Kandahar, as Defence Minister Khawaja Asif declared that Pakistan's "cup of patience has overflowed".

Casualty figures remain contested and unverifiable - Islamabad claims 274 Taliban fighters have been killed and 12 soldiers lost, while Kabul asserts 55 Pakistani soldiers are dead and 13 of its own fighters have been killed. Yet, beyond the numbers lies a more consequential reality: a structurally unstable frontier has entered a new and potentially dangerous phase. Durand And Its Discontente

The crisis cannot be reduced to episodic violence. Its roots lie in the unresolved question of the Durand Line - the 2,600-kilometre boundary drawn in 1893, never formally recognised by successive Afghan governments. The line bisects Pashtun tribal lands, embedding a historical grievance into the geography of the modern state system.

Kim Jong Un's Daughter Takes Centre Stage Again, This Time Behind A Rifle

world. (Agency)

North Korea released a rare image on Saturday of leader Kim Jong Un's teenage daughter firing a rifle at a shooting range, adding to speculation that she is being groomed as his successor.

Kim's daughter Ju Ae has long been seen as the next in line to rule the secretive, nuclear-armed state, and took part in a string of recent high-profile outings, including this week's military parade marking the closing stages of North Korea's key party congress.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) released a photo of Ju Ae shooting a rifle at an outdoor shooting range, peering through a rifle scope with her finger on the trigger, smoke rising from the barrel. She was wearing what appeared to be a leather jacket, a garment often worn by both her and her father at major political events, symbolising authority and legitimacy. KCNA reported on Saturday that Kim presented new sniper rifles to senior party and military officials, describing the move as a gesture of appreciation and "absolute trust," without mentioning Ju Ae.

He then visited a shooting range with the officials, where he fired the rifle and took a group photo, it added.

NASA Shakes Up Artemis Moon Programme Amid Technical Delays

HAVANA. (Agency)

NASA on Friday abruptly said it was shaking up its Artemis lunar programme that has suffered multiple delays in recent years, a bid to ensure Americans can return to the Moon's surface by 2028. That goal remains unchanged, but the US space agency is shifting its flight lineup to include a test mission before an eventual lunar landing to improve launch "muscle memory," NASA administrator Jared Isaacman said. That strategic revision comes amid repeated delays to the Artemis 2 mission, which was originally due to take off as early as February, but now will not launch before April. It is meant to see the first flyby of the Moon in more than half a century. Earlier this week that mission faced another setback when NASA rolled back its towering SLS rocket and Orion spacecraft off the launchpad to investigate problems and make necessary repairs. The announced changes mean that Artemis 3, which was meant to send astronauts to the Moon's surface, will now have the different test goal of "rendezvous in low-Earth

orbit" of at least one lunar lander. The next phase, Artemis 4, will aim for a lunar landing in early 2028. Isaacman said he hoped that mission could be followed relatively quickly by a second landing within the year. "We're not necessarily committing to launching two missions in 2028," he told a briefing, "but we want to have the opportunity to be able to do that." Back to basics' The announcement comes two days after NASA's independent Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel said in its annual report that the Artemis 3 Moon landing plan carried "significant risk" including for the number of "firsts" it was attempting. The NASA chief said Friday speeding up the cadence of Artemis launches would allow for building more institutional knowledge in the model of the Apollo program, which originally put Americans on the Moon. "Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, through the shuttle programme -- I don't think it would

surprise many of the folks in the room that our average launch cadence was closer to three months throughout all those programs, not three years," he said. "We

some realistic and necessary decisions." But Clayton Swope of the Center for Strategic and International Studies told AFP it left him with "a lot of question marks," namely in terms of both the SLS rocket or the SpaceX landing system being ready according to NASA's timeline.

Still, with the revised architecture, "you will potentially be buying down some risk that we would have carried all the way to the Moon had we gone straight to the Moon with the original plan," he said. "Space race?" During his first term President Donald Trump announced he wanted Americans to once again set foot on the lunar surface.

NASA hopes to put humans back on the Moon as China forges ahead with its own effort, which is targeting 2030 at the latest for a first crewed mission.



need to start getting back to basics and moving in this direction. "Launching every three years, your skills atrophy, you lose muscle memory." Scott Pace, director of the Space Policy Institute, told AFP at first glance it seemed Isaacman was "making

I get along with Pakistan very well: Trump praises PM Sharif, Army Chief Munir amid rising Afghanistan tensions

world. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump on Friday praised Pakistan, its Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, even as tensions between Islamabad and Kabul escalated following cross-border strikes. "I get along with Pakistan very well, very, very well. They have a great Prime Minister, a great General, and two of the people I really respect a lot. Pakistan is doing terrifically well," Trump told reporters, while responding to a question on whether he would intervene to stop the ongoing conflict. The remarks come after Pakistan launched airstrikes targeting Taliban-controlled cities in Kabul, Kandahar, and Paktia, describing the situation as an "open war" against militants allegedly harboured across the border. Afghan forces had earlier conducted strikes into Pakistan, prompting Islamabad to respond. Both sides have reported casualties, though figures could not be independently verified. Pakistan claimed 12 of its

soldiers were killed, while Afghan authorities reported 13 Taliban fighters dead. Each side has also claimed higher losses on the opposing side. According to a report by The Associated Press, Pakistan's army spokesperson Lt. Gen. Ahmed Sharif



Chaudhry said Pakistani air and ground operations killed at least 274 members of Afghan forces and affiliated militants and wounded more than 400, while 12 Pakistani soldiers were killed and 27 others were wounded. One Pakistani soldier was missing in action. Afghan government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid rejected the claims of the high number

of Afghan casualties as "false." He said that 55 Pakistani soldiers were killed, with the bodies of 23 of them taken to Afghanistan. He also said "many" Pakistani soldiers were captured. Thirteen Afghan soldiers had been killed, he said, and another 22 wounded, while 13 civilians were also wounded.

Later on Friday, the Afghan government said that 19 civilians were killed and 26 others injured when Pakistan struck the provinces of Khost and Paktika in southeastern Afghanistan.

Despite the escalation, the Taliban administration signalled its willingness to hold talks. Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said the group prefers dialogue to resolve disputes. The

US State Department said it was closely monitoring the situation. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker conveyed condolences to Pakistan for the lives lost in the recent clashes. Hooker reaffirmed Washington's support for Pakistan's right to defend itself against Taliban attacks.

Cargo plane carrying money crashes near Bolivia's capital, killing at least 15, official says

NEW YORK. (Agency)

A cargo plane carrying money crashed Friday near Bolivia's capital, damaging about a dozen vehicles on a highway, scattering bills on the ground and leaving at least 15 people dead, an official said.

Fire Chief Pavel Tovar did not clarify if the dead were in the plane or in the cars on the highway near the airport in La Paz. He said there were people injured.

The aircraft struck vehicles in the city of El Alto, which is adjacent to La Paz, before coming to rest in a field, according to images circulating on social media. There were conflicting reports of whether the plane was taking off or landing when it

crashed. Debris from the aircraft, destroyed cars, and bodies littered the road. According to Tovar, at least 15 vehicles were involved. Firefighters



managed to extinguish the flames engulfing the aircraft. The plane, a Hercules aircraft belonging to the Bolivian air force, was

Fire Chief Pavel Tovar did not clarify if the dead were in the plane or in the cars on the highway near the airport in La Paz. He said there were people injured.

transporting new banknotes from the Central Bank to other cities and a large number of bills scattered on the ground at the crash site. Images circulating on social media showed people rushing to collect the bills while police in riot gear tried to disperse them

Authorities temporarily suspended all flights to and from the terminal.

2 Killed, Dozens Injured After Tram Derails, Smashes Into Building In Italy

BASSETERRE. (Agency)

A tram derailed and smashed into a building in Milan on Friday, killing two people and injuring at least 38 others, police told AFP.

One of the dead was hit by the tram as it derailed and the second victim was a passenger, the city's mayor Giuseppe Sala told reporters at the scene. Firemen wrapped survivors in emergency blankets while ambulances took the more seriously injured to hospital. The accident came only days after Milan finished hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics. It is preparing to host the Paralympics and is currently staging Milan Fashion Week. "There was a man who was trapped under the tram, his arm was trapped," witness Valerio Gaglione told AFP. "There were lots of people injured inside the tram, I saw an old man completely covered in blood," he said.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed "deepest condolences" over the deaths. Transport Minister Matteo Salvini, who is from Milan, said he was "grieved" by the accident and called for answers.

Devastating! Prosecutor Marcello Viola, the lead investigator, said the impact between the tram and the building was "devastating". One victim was an Italian in his 60s, Sala said. The other was a Senegalese man who died on the way to hospital, media reported.

An initial investigation suggested the driver had not activated a track switch. He had also run through the last stop on the line before the accident, Sala said. The tram was new and the driver had years of experience. His shift had only begun an hour before the accident, Sala said. "It doesn't look like it was a technical issue, but was connected to the driver," he added. The driver, hospitalised but not seriously injured, said he had "felt ill" before the crash, according to media



reports. A video widely shared on Italian media from a car cam showed the tram leaning over to one side as it raced into a curve towards the building, before lurching to the other side and crashing. As the tram careens past, a delivery man can be seen leaping to safety from his bicycle, while a passerby also races out of

the way. "Enormous bang! "I just heard an enormous bang," a 27-year-old called Anna, who was in her office nearby when the crash happened, told AFP. The yellow and white tram, which is 25 metres (80 feet) long and seats 66 people, could be seen slung across the road.

It was not immediately clear if it had been breaking the 50 kilometres (31 miles) per hour speed limit for trams. Witnesses said it smashed into a tree before crashing through the window of a restaurant. The Japanese Robatikan restaurant posted a photograph on its Instagram page of the damage caused and expressed its "closeness to all those involved". One passenger told the ANSA news agency "I thought it was an earthquake". "I was sitting and ended up on the floor, along with the other passengers.

NEWS BOX

'Crushed by 40 tonnes': Industrial machine falls from container, killing cab driver on Mumbai's BPT Road

Mumbai. (Agency)

A 28-year-old cab driver was crushed to death after an industrial machinery weighing 40 tonnes fell on his car from a moving container on Friday. The police said that the accident took place below the Eastern Freeway flyover at 12.55 am.

According to the police, the container, while proceeding from the Mumbai port to Gujarat, applied a sudden brake after suspected of having hit an uneven stretch on BPT Road, following which the iron machinery slipped off and fell on the cab.

The deceased driver, identified as Mohammad Siddiqui, had dropped off a person at Sewri and was heading to Chembur when the accident occurred, said an officer.

The BPT Road, which connects the port to the city, is uneven and is usually used by containers, he added. The container truck was heading from the port to Surat to deliver the piece of machinery.

"It took nearly six hours for three cranes to shift the machinery and extract the driver from the mangled car. The operation ended at 8 am. The driver was rushed to the hospital, where he was declared dead," said a police officer.

The body of the deceased was handed over to his family. Based on the family's statement, the police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) in the matter.

The driver of the container, who had initially fled from the spot, was later detained by the Wadala police, where the case had been registered.

Surat civic body engineer surrenders in bribery case

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

An executive engineer of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) surrendered before the Anti-Corruption Bureau on Friday, in connection with a bribery case registered against him and his aide, who had claimed to be a journalist.

The Surat ACB Assistant Superintendent of police, and supervision officer R R Chaudhary said, "We will extract information from the engineer, We will also try to locate his aide, Parvana, who is still at large. We will produce him before the court and obtain his remand on Saturday."

The engineer, Vipul Ganeshwala is accused of demanding a bribe worth Rs.15 lakhs from a builder through his aide Ismail Khan alias Parvana who claimed to run a vernacular online paper.

The builder had constructed a multistory industrial in Santosh Industrial Estate plot at Anjana in Salabatpura, last November. SMC officials demolished the property on 13th November 2025 after finding out that the builder had illegally constructed the fifth and sixth floors of the property which was against the approved plan. The builder was also forced to pay Rs. 1.70 lakh in demolition charges. Ismail contacted the builder and told him that he would sort out the issue and get him permission from SMC to carry out construction on the fifth and sixth floors.

After the builder filed a complaint against the accused with the Surat Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), officials laid a trap outside Parvana's office in Anjana, on 20th February hoping to catch him in the act of accepting a bribe. Khan allegedly accepted the bribe of Rs. 4 lakh from the builder after which he took the moped keys of the builder, promising him he would return in the next few minutes after storing the cash at home.

Land acquisition a major hurdle for Upper Krishna Project Phase 3

Vijayapura. (Agency)

One of the major stumbling blocks in completing the Rs.70,000 crore, third phase of the Upper Krishna Project (UKP) is land acquisition.

In September 2025, the state government decided to pay Rs. 30 lakh per acre for dry land and Rs. 40 lakh per acre for irrigated land to farmers as compensation for land to be acquired. Despite this, work on the project is yet to gather pace.

The Upper Krishna Project (UKP) was conceived in 1964 as a multi-stage programme to harness the Krishna for irrigation, drinking water and power generation in the drought-prone districts of north Karnataka. The project revolves around a vast network of dams, reservoirs and canals, with Almatti dam as its keystone structure.

The Phase-III of the project aims to increase the dam's Full Reservoir Level (FRL) from 519.60 meters to 524.256 meters. Officials estimate the additional storage of around 100 tmc ft could irrigate nearly six lakh hectares (about 15 lakh acres) across Vijayapura, Bagalkot and neighbouring districts.

At present, the existing storage supports irrigation to roughly three lakh hectares, meaning the project could nearly double the irrigated command area once completed.

The benefits come with heavy social costs. To execute the UKP-III, the government must acquire approximately 1.33 lakh acres of land. Of this, more than 75,000 acres will be submerged after the reservoir level rises, while additional land is required for canals and rehabilitation colonies.

Sanghavi's Dediapada visit: AAP's Praful Vasava, Cong leader Raj Vasava join BJP along with 700 supporters in Gujarat's tribal belt

BJP says big boost ahead of 2027 Assembly polls, Congress says Raj 'not an active party leader': AAP MLA Chaitar Vasava questions timing of political rally citing ongoing Assembly session, exams

Vadodara. (Agency)

Close to 700 workers of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress, including tribal leaders Praful Vasava (AAP) and Congress leader Raj Vasava, joined the BJP in presence of Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi at Dediapada in Gujarat's Narmada district at a party event, 'Adivasi Gaurav Abhivadan Samaroh', on Thursday.

On Thursday, Sanghavi began his visit to Dediapada by offering floral tributes to the statue of Birsa Munda and then holding a road show to the venue of the event at the Khokhrumar cricket ground in the Assembly constituency of AAP MLA Chaitar Vasava, who is currently prohibited from entering the taluka as part of his bail conditions in a case of alleged attempt to murder a BJP leader in the constituency.

Sanghavi, along with Bharuch BJP Lok Sabha MP Mansukh Vasava, Tribal Affairs Minister Naresh Patel, BJP general secretary Prashant Korat, Narmada district BJP president Neel Rao and president of BJP state Tribal Morcha

Ganpat Vasava, welcomed the tribal leaders into the party, putting a party scarf around their neck. Both Praful Vasava and Raj Vasava of the Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP) had joined the Congress after the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. While Raj Vasava, an alumnus of United College



in London, had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from the Chhota Udepur constituency on a BTP ticket through a crowdfunding programme, Praful Vasava had contested the 2017 Gujarat Assembly Polls from Waghodia Assembly constituency as a BTP candidate and

the 2022 Gujarat Assembly polls from the Nandod Assembly constituency as an AAP candidate.

BJP's plan

The inclusion of Praful Vasava and Raj Vasava into the BJP is expected to "boost the party's ground strength" in the tribal areas ahead of the 2027 Assembly polls, as it aims to further cement its hold in the region, especially the Dediapada Assembly constituency, which has eluded the BJP since the 2017 Assembly polls. The party had, however, emerged as a winner in the tribal belt of Gujarat in 2022, bagging 23 of the 27 seats, defeating the Congress in 14 of the 17 tribal seats it had won in 2017, in alliance with the BTP.

A senior BJP leader said, "The event at Dediapada was held in order to welcome the leaders into the party as well as to thank the tribal community at large for its constant faith in the BJP... The two leaders have a lot of influence in Narmada, Chhota Udepur and Bharuch districts, where Chaitar Vasava has become a force to reckon with, especially capturing the imagination of the youth..."

Cough syrup case: UP court issues attachment orders for kingpin's properties, declares him proclaimed offender

Lucknow. (Agency)

A district court in Varanasi has issued a notice for attachment of property of Shubham Jaiswal (33), the prime accused in the multi-crore codeine cough syrup racket, and declared him a proclaimed offender in the case, officials said.

"The court notice has been pasted outside his residence in Varanasi. Except for Shubham, all eight other accused in the case have been arrested," said Assistant Commissioner of Police, Varanasi, Sanjeev Kumar Sharma.

ACP Sharma said assets worth Rs 30.52 crore have been seized so far from Shubham and his family. These include eight immovable properties, including residential and commercial property and land in Varanasi, as well as three bank accounts.

Shubham has been absconding since his name surfaced in the case last year, with police suspecting he is currently hiding in Dubai. Police said they are in the process of obtaining a

Red Corner Notice against him through Interpol. The court issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him and directed him to surrender within a month. As he failed to



surrender, police moved ahead with legal proceedings to attach his property. "Once the process of property attachment is completed, we will initiate steps to secure a Red Corner Notice (RCN) against Shubham.

Attachment of property is a mandatory legal prerequisite before seeking an RCN," a police officer said.

Shubham's father, Bhola Prasad Jaiswal, who is also named as an accused in the case, is currently lodged in Sonbhadra jail. He was arrested by the Sonbhadra Police in Kolkata on November 30 last year while allegedly trying to flee the country.

After the multi-crore codeine cough syrup racket surfaced in Uttar Pradesh, several cases were registered against father and son. The investigation has since expanded, with authorities identifying and tracing properties and financial assets allegedly linked to the accused.

The case against Shubham and the other accused was registered at Rohania police station in Varanasi on November 19 last year under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

Around Town: Inside Cafe Madras, the Matunga institution that fed generations, including the Kapoors and Bachchans

One of Matunga's most sought-after Udipi eateries, the 86-year-old restaurant opens early and runs late, closing only for a brief afternoon break. Its podi, ground coarse and aromatic, has long been a point of distinction.

Mumbai. (Agency)

At 7 am, long before Mumbai fully wakes up, Cafe Madras is already in motion. Stainless steel plates clatter, filter coffee steams, and regulars make their way to familiar tables for podi idli soaked in chutney, crisp ghee dosas, and rasam vadas.

One of Matunga's most sought-after Udipi eateries, the 86-year-old restaurant opens early and runs late, closing only for a brief afternoon break. Its podi, ground coarse and aromatic, has long been a point of distinction.

Earlier this month, when we visited the eatery, a fresh coat of paint had brightened its interiors. Awards had been taken off the shelves, and parts of the restaurant were covered with plastic and newspapers. Greeting customers was Devavrat Kamath, 45, while his older brother Jai Prakash, 49, manned the cash counter, both representing the third-generation custodians of an

establishment that began in 1940. How an Udipi eatery came to be called Café Madras

Devavrat's grandfather, Gopal Kamath, came from Katapadi, a village near Udipi in Karnataka. "The 1920s and 1930s saw many people from in and around Udipi



coming to Bombay. He was among them," he said, adding that his grandfather went on to set up several restaurants. Cafe Madras was likely the third, launched in partnership with a Tamilian, Mr Subramaniam. "Which is why it is called Café Madras," he shared, adding that though Subramaniam gave up his share after five years,

leaving his grandfather as the sole owner, the family retained the name.

"It started as an eatery serving idli, vada, upma and four kinds of dosa—ulundu (made only from urad dal), sada, masala, and tupa (ghee) dosa. There was also Madras pakoda, round fritters made with flour, chopped onions and spices. And because he was very good with sweets, there would be malpua, jangri (similar to jalebi), Mysore pak and boondi laddoo." To commemorate Cafe Madras's 75th anniversary in 2015, the family recreated the original menu at original prices for one morning. "Coffee was 10 paise. Idli and vada were 15 paise.

The most expensive item was masala dosa at 40 paise. We didn't promote it, it was meant to be a surprise. But word travelled. By 4 pm, the street was packed. The phone rang for two whole months," he laughed.

'From coal to carbon-free': How Mumbai's fire brigades are poised to lead the city's race to net-zero energy

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has charted plans to install rooftop solar power systems across

Mumbai's fire brigades. 18 fire brigades will be selected in the first phase.

Mumbai. (Agency)

In a step towards achieving the net-zero energy target for municipal buildings, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has charted plans to install rooftop solar power systems across Mumbai's fire brigades.

Pegged at Rs 13.50 crore, the first phase of the project seeks to deploy solar systems across 18 fire brigades to transition the existing buildings to clean energy.

Data procured from the civic body shows that the 18 Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) stations earmarked for the first phase of the project include the fire stations in Colaba, Fort, Memon Wada, Gowalia Tank, Worli, Dadar, Mulund, Bandra, Nariman Point,

Gawa Pada, Borivali, Bandra-Kurla complex, Kurla-Kamani, Goregaon, Dindoshi, Dahisar, Mankhurd, and Kandarpada.

While the city is home to 35 fire stations, officers said that the 18 stations earmarked for the first phase were determined on the basis of space availability. Records show that of the total stations, the biggest space has been identified at Mankhurd station, followed by the Bandra fire station.

"The idea behind the project is to transition the building into net-zero energy by reducing dependency on coal to generate electricity. While the first phase entails installation of solar panels,

we will eventually look at upgrading equipment like replacement of lights to LED



lights," said a BMC officer. After fire brigades, the civic body eventually seeks to implement the

rooftop solar system model across the SWM garages in the second phase, followed by municipal schools.

According to officials, the installation of solar panels will be preceded by shadow analysis to determine maximum efficiency as well as structural stability studies. "We will look at the sunset and sunrise as well as shadow patterns to evaluate the efficiency of trapping sunlight. Meanwhile, structural stability will be carried out to ensure that the building is able to cater to additional weight load," a senior

Karnataka doctors plan phased shutdown from March 11; health minister warns of legal action

BENGALURU. (Agency)

With government medical staff associations planning to shut services in government health facilities from March 11, raising concerns about access to healthcare in government hospitals, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has warned that the government is examining legal options against those who abstain from duty.

Various medical staff associations have announced a phased shutdown of services over long-pending service demands. "We have waited for more than two-and-a-half years. There is no progress on promotions, cadre rules, or filling vacant senior posts. We have no other option," said Dr Ravindranath M Meti, president, Karnataka Government Medical Officers' Association (KGMOA).

According to the association, outpatient department (OPD) services will remain closed from March 11 to 15, while emergency care will continue. From March 16, doctors plan a complete boycott of duties, including emergencies, if the government fails to act.

Meti claimed the protest has wide backing. "Around 65,000 to 80,000 staff, including National Health Mission (NHM) personnel, are supporting this movement. Let the government take action against all of us," he said, adding that senior doctors are retiring without promotions due to long-pending vacancies.

The association has apologised for inconvenience to patients, but maintains that responsibility lies with the government. "We are not slaves. The government must take care of doctors as well as patients," he said.

Responding to the strike call, Gundu Rao described the proposed service boycott as a "very serious matter" and warned that strict action would be taken if patient care is affected.

He told TNIE that disrupting essential health services and putting patients' lives at risk cannot be taken lightly, adding that the government is examining legal options against those who abstain from duty.

Travelling Exhibition | A brush with art: Industrialist Praful Shah's paintings over 3 decades on show in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

ABSTRACT AND figurative works by Gujarat-based industrialist and self-taught painter Praful Shah is on view in the city, marking the final leg of a travelling retrospective that traces his practice from 1997 to 2025. Titled 'A Brush With Time', the exhibition brings together around 30 works selected from a larger corpus of nearly 90 paintings. The show opened in Mumbai on January 10 and travelled to Surat on January 31 before arriving in Ahmedabad. "It is a retrospective exhibition. Selective works from his 25 to 30 years of painting. He has not kept everything; these are curated works," said Kaushik Gajjar, who has overseen Shah's art and textile collections for four decades.

Shah joined his family's textile business in 1967 and went on to serve as Chairman and Managing Director of Garden Silk Mills Ltd. until 2021. His engagement with art ran parallel to his industrial career. In the late 1960s, he brought graduates from the Faculty of Fine

Arts, Baroda into textile design roles. This was a move that aligned industrial production with fine art sensibilities within Gujarat's textile ecosystem.

Over the years, Shah and his wife Shilpa also built the TAPI (Textiles & Art of the People of India) collection, a significant archive of historic Indian textiles that has been exhibited nationally. The current retrospective places his own painting practice, which was long pursued outside formal academic circuits, within a public frame.

"At the age of 88, he still has not lost his love for art and continues to paint," Gajjar said. The exhibition is not positioned as a commercial showcase.

"The paintings are not for sale. There is no need for him to sell them. He has done them for his own joy." For visitors, the abstract canvases have prompted extended viewing. "I can spend hours just looking at it... how the painter could imagine a name like 'Checkmate' for this painting," said P K Gupta, a visitor from Kolkata.

When the whole does not count all the parts

This past week, two developments brought India's Northeast back into focus. On February 23, Manipuri language film Boong, directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar, made every Indian proud by winning the prestigious British Academy of Film and Television Arts award in the children's and family film category.

The other incident, which happened on February 20 in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar, outraged the nation. A video of the incident, which went viral, shows the aggressive heckling of three women from Arunachal Pradesh living in a fourth-floor rented accommodation. They were insulted with racial slurs by a couple living in another flat below theirs.

The provocation for the verbal assault was the installation of an air conditioner by the girls in their room and the dust that was kicked up during the process. They were heaped with loud derogatory stereotypes that most from the Northeast in Delhi would be familiar with, having faced them silently almost daily—though mostly as racial micro aggressions—normalised so much as to inhibit complaining lest they sound trivial or else incredulous to others.

Interestingly, what happened in Malviya Nagar was almost a dramatic vindication of what Lakshmi Priya Devi flagged in her powerful acceptance speech in London: praying for the return of peace in her troubled home state Manipur but also calling attention to the continued neglect, undermining and unrepresentation of the Northeast region in the rest of India. Quite definitively, the Northeast is part of the Indian State. But unfortunately, the region is still struggling to fit into the larger Indian national identity, not so much on account of its own sense of alienation but because of the subliminal irredentist nature of the Indian identity and the unwillingness of those within this racial fold to accept the Northeast as it is within this fold. Communist Party of India (Marxist) ideologue Ashok Mitra anticipated this national blind-spot illustratively in a newspaper column titled 'A dose of heresy: Imagining alternative histories of the Northeast' years ago. Up until 1937, Burma was a part of British India. However, when the British decided to bifurcate India to be a separate colony that year, even though it was a time the Indian national movement was peaking, there was not even a squeak of protest. He also speculates that if the hill states of the Northeast, too, had been similarly separated that year, there probably would have been no protest either.

This nearly happened, too. Several British administrators posted in the Northeast noticed this psychological distance. Four of them had actually suggested that the 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' hill territories beyond Assam's Inner Line drawn by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, together with the contiguous hill regions of Burma, should be left as a separate 'Crown colony'—neither a part of India nor of Burma—when the British leave. The most elaborate of these suggestions came as a 22-page note from Robert Reid, who was the governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942. This plan came to be taken seriously, and as David R Snyiemlich notes in his book On the Edge of Empire: Four British Plans for North East India, 1941-1947, the then secretary of state for India, L S Amery, forwarded a copy of it to Oxford professor Reginald Coupland to be used in the third and final volume to be used in the constitutional problem in India that he was working on at the time. The professor did so, but lazy scholarship later resulted in this 'Reid's plan' coming to be also referred to falsely as the 'Coupland plan'. The plan was almost adopted before being ultimately dropped—not for any objection from Indian leaders, but because other British administrators felt such a place would be ungovernable.

Profit over miners' lives in Meghalaya

Coal from the state is a huge informal business — it is smuggled out in trucks to Assam from where it is dispatched to other destinations

The tyranny of distance was perhaps never more clearly emphasised than when India watched as a couple from Malviya Nagar in New Delhi were hunted down and arrested by the city police for abusing, threatening and using vile racist epithets at three young women from Arunachal Pradesh who were living above their flat. The incident, which went viral, was apparently triggered after some dust fell onto the couple's space while an air conditioner was being installed. But over 2,000 km away, when a furious blast in an illegal underground mine in Meghalaya blew away at least 34 men in one of the worst mining disasters in recent times, there were no loud protests, no massive media coverage. That incident happened on February 8 but it barely caused a ripple even in the region. What is more astounding is the flaccid response of the state government whose appointment of a judicial commission came under blistering criticism from the Meghalaya High Court. The court said the terms of reference were inadequate and the commission needed to examine the nexus between big money that pushed the entire process of supply and demand. This, it said, was the key.

What the court also found astonishing was that while the families of eight persons had received compensation (apparently, they were from the state), there were 15 from Nepal and 13 from Assam whose next of kin had not been notified or identified. So this is not just a local tragedy but an international disaster. One hopes the Nepal embassy in Delhi has been notified and the Assam government and relevant families too in the neighbouring state. Just think of it - more than two weeks after these deaths, the families may not even know that the bread earner has been killed. In any other part of India, perhaps the streets would have been packed with crowds demanding justice and also the government's resignation for inaction. But not in Shillong or elsewhere in the East Jaintia Hills, despite this being the second time in less than 10 years that something like this has happened in the district. The sense of outrage, so visible across Delhi and the country, on the racism incident was missing. The ugly and illegal behaviour of the Delhi couple was visible to all. They are facing punishment for their callous and cruel conduct. But the series of explosions that killed no less than 34 persons and wounded several others vanishes from the headlines within days. When businessman Raghuvanshi of Indore was killed in a conspiracy by his wife, her lover and others in Sohra or Cherrapunji in Meghalaya, the first finger of suspicion was pointed at local people. The metro media and others wasted no time in attacking the alleged criminal tendencies in the region before learning to their embarrassment that the reported masterminds included his wife. As these

incidents have shown, social media has positive uses -- the couple in Delhi found out to their cost and now I am sure those who were seen hurling vile abuse at staff in a resort in Arunachal Pradesh will too. They fade in significance though when compared with the thunderous explosion which ripped through the tiny tunnels underground giving little or no chance of escape as methane gas, the silent, odourless killer, ignited. The Meghalaya government under Chief Minister Conrad A Sangma announced compensation of two lakh rupees for each victim while his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma pledged five lakh rupees to each of the dead. That is little comfort for the families of those who have been killed in this brutal fashion, working desperately at the risk of life and limb in a banned "rat hole" procedure, for a measly few hundred rupees every day. In 2022, the Government of Meghalaya set up a one-



man commission to review and recommend measures to stamp out illegal mining. Justice BP Kakety, a former judge of the Gauhati High Court, has been at it doggedly, seeking to fix responsibility and pushing the government to move on issues. The fact that the state government, despite as many as 35 reports by Justice Kakety, has failed to act on the matter shows that it does not really care about the issue.

In a statement, Sangma said that accountability would be fixed and that "those responsible will face strict legal action. There will be no compromise when it comes to the safety of lives." What is missed in all this in the mainland/metro media is that the chief minister himself has held the mining portfolio since 2023, seeking to develop a transition from illegal to "scientific mining". In December 2018, water flooded a mine killing 18 persons in the same district where the latest tragedy struck. A commentary described it as a "shocking reminder that a fast-growing economy such as India

continues to allow Dickensian mining practices." There were mine disasters in the Garo Hills district in 2012 and 2014. Yet the practice was never really stopped, some say, because too many stand to profit from the gravy train. These mines are referred to as rat holes, underlining both the indignity of the process as well as the inherent dangers accompanying it. Men who are thin and small statured are preferred to work here because they can crawl into the low tunnels, scrape and cut coal, place it on trays or sacks to take it out. No modern equipment is used. The miners come from wretchedly poor families which are struggling to survive. Those from Assam are mainly of Bengali Muslim origin, there are workers from Nepal and local districts. Their employment is not just a violation of labour laws but flies in the face of a complete ban issued by the National Green Tribunal.

It is a blatant violation of human rights. By failing to act against the coal miners and mafia barons who control the business, the Government of Meghalaya is complicit in the continuance of these death traps. There is much demand for coal as an energy source and there are many avaricious eyes on the region's natural resources. Indeed, Meghalaya is one of India's top 10 states with regard to coal reserves. Coal from the state is a huge informal business - it is smuggled out in covered trucks to sites in Assam from where it is dispatched to other destinations. The names of political leaders reportedly involved in the murky process are whispered from time to time. The power wielded by these networks is substantial. Huge money purportedly funds campaigns as well as networks that assure protection and help maintain their dominance in the coal producing areas.

In addition, numerous disturbing issues come up alongside with the obvious ones. The first is that there is very little outcry in the local communities or in civil society in general on such matters. Part of the rationale for local silence is a mixture of dependence for livelihoods that these mines represent and fear of what activists call the power of the mining mafia. There appears to be a bias towards the workers who are seen as outsiders.

This shows up in different ways: in the 2018 tragedy, the mine was flooded after a worker cut through the narrow wall separating the mine from the river bed. A surge of water rushed into the breach, catching the miners unawares. What was worse was the rank incompetence of the Meghalaya government at the time in mobilising a lifesaving campaign. Hydrologists are trained to understand the flow and dynamics of water underground. A hydrologist was brought in two weeks after the event. The Indian Air Force flew in a 15-member expert navy diving team from Vishakhapatnam. Powerful pumps were airlifted from Guwahati.

A heavy toll: HP's transport tax will hit industrial momentum

A negotiated solution with transporters and industry is economically necessary

THE protest by truck operators against the proposed toll hike in Himachal Pradesh's industrial belt is more than a sectoral grievance; it is a warning about the fragile balance between revenue generation and economic growth. The increase, scheduled to take effect from April 1, has triggered strong opposition from transport unions operating in the Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh (BBN) corridor, the state's principal manufacturing hub. For an industry dependent almost entirely on road transport, logistics costs determine competitiveness. Any sharp escalation in toll charges raises freight expenses, which are ultimately passed on to manufacturers, traders and consumers. Pharmaceutical units, small manufacturing enterprises and ancillary industries located in the BBN region already operate under geographical disadvantages typical of hill states, including higher fuel consumption and longer transit times. Higher transport costs risk eroding the very industrial attractiveness that Himachal has painstakingly built through policy incentives over the past few



decades. The impact extends beyond industry. Thousands of workers commuting daily from the neighbouring Punjab and Haryana will face higher travel expenses,

while increased freight rates could quietly push up prices of essential goods and raw materials. What appears to be a targeted revenue measure thus risks becoming an economy-wide burden with inflationary consequences. States grappling with fiscal stress understandably seek new revenue streams. Yet infrastructure financing cannot rely on abrupt user-charge increases without stakeholder consultation and transparent cost justification. Excessive tolling may yield short-term gains but it weakens long-term investment confidence, particularly in regions competing with better-connected plains. Himachal's economic future depends as much on industrial stability as on fiscal prudence. Policymaking must therefore move beyond immediate revenue considerations toward a calibrated approach that protects logistics efficiency while ensuring sustainable infrastructure funding. A negotiated solution with transporters and industry is economically necessary.

Military funding merits long-term planning

THE Indian defence budget announced for 2026-27 has been broadly welcomed by the armed forces and the industry. Defence allocation, at Rs 7.85 lakh crore, has increased by 15.19% over the previous year's estimates of Rs 6.81 lakh crore. In a push for modernisation, the capital budget is almost 22% higher than last year, with 75% spending earmarked for the domestic defence industry. Approximately 20% of the total defence budget is earmarked for revenue expenditure on sustenance and operational preparedness. Although revenue expenditure is often viewed as not contributing to modernisation, it is critical to ensure the readiness of forces deployed on our unsettled borders and in the maritime spaces that are vital for India's economic growth.

While the government's focus on national security is clear, we must ask the larger question: how is defence spending contributing to the development of our military power? This question is important because we often equate military capability with inputs, assuming that higher defence spending automatically translates into better capability. While budgets matter, outputs are the real measure — what is our readiness status today? And there are some concerns here. The Indian Air Force (IAF) is down to 29 squadrons, the lowest figure since the 1960s. A total of 180 Tejas Mk1A are on order, but deliveries have not yet commenced. Media reports indicate that some pending issues remain before the IAF can accept the aircraft, but assuming these are resolved, the delivery of 180 aircraft will be completed by 2033.

The government has approved a deal to procure 114 Rafale fighter aircraft at a cost of about \$36 billion. Eighteen aircraft will be procured in fly-away condition from France, and 96 are to be manufactured in India with 60% indigenous content. Considering the current backlog of orders with Dassault Aviation, the first aircraft is likely to arrive in India after three years. The shortfall in air-to-air

refuellers will be made up by converting six second-hand Boeing 767 airframes into tankers by Israel Aerospace Industries, in partnership with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. Also approved are six additional Airborne Early Warning & Control Systems, based on the Embraer aircraft. Both these projects are likely to see completion by 2032.

There is justifiable pride in the Indian Navy's indigenous shipbuilding capacity. Project 17A, which aims to equip the Navy with seven advanced stealth frigates, is on track with four frigates commissioned and the remaining three to be delivered this year. Project 15B, which was to provide the Navy with four stealth guided-missile destroyers, was completed in 2025.

The challenge before the Navy is the induction of a new class of frigates and destroyers. Project 17B, the next-generation frigates, was approved in 2024, but the Request for Proposal has yet to be issued. Project 18, the next-generation destroyers, is in an advanced planning stage, but formal approval is pending. Therefore, it appears unlikely that any new frigate or destroyer will be inducted into the Navy in the next five years.

There is a similar situation with Project 751 for six advanced diesel-electric submarines with Air-Independent Propulsion technology. Approved in 2019, the project is in advanced negotiations, and the first submarine is expected to be commissioned in 2032.

The Army is also seeking replacements for its existing infantry fighting vehicles and battle tanks. Both projects have experienced numerous delays, and the earliest induction is unlikely before 2030. Due to delays in the procurement of new equipment, the Army has initiated projects to upgrade existing infantry fighting vehicles, air defence guns and artillery. India ranks among the top five

spenders globally on defence. There are voices in India's security establishment that regularly call for increasing the defence budget to at least 2.5% of the GDP, up from the current 2%. However, the central challenge is not the amount of funds, but the effectiveness of the ecosystem and processes that support military capability development. In this regard, three recommendations are



made. First, the military must be funded in accordance with a long-term plan. Each service prepares a 10-year Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) that the Chief of Defence Staff harmonises. The ICDP is approved by the Defence Acquisition Council in the Ministry of Defence. However, since there is no approval of this plan by the Ministry of Finance, annual budgetary allocations reflect funding for annual requirements rather than a long-term plan. The government must approve the ICDP and ensure a regular flow of funds to ensure its completion. One problem plaguing the modernisation of the military is that decision-making is hesitant and personalised. There are numerous examples,

from fighter aircraft to submarines to tanks, which took decades from initiation to approval. A well-defined long-term capability plan can help mitigate this problem by making decisions more structured, predictable and institutionally anchored. Second, the procurement process requires structural reform. While some corrective steps have been taken, including updated acquisition manuals, the underlying culture remains overly compliance-driven, procedurally cumbersome and risk-averse. As Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh observed in June 2025, the real bottleneck is the acquisition cycle itself, with the purchase of weapon systems stretching five to six years. Such delays mean that systems risk obsolescence by the time they enter service and also undermine private-sector participation, since firms wait for years with no clear idea of orders.

Third, India must invest more in research and development (R&D). India's spending on R&D is about 0.65% of the GDP, well below the global average of 2%. Roughly two-thirds of R&D funding comes from the public sector, with the private sector contributing the balance. In most advanced economies, the situation is reversed, with private industry accounting for the bulk of R&D spending. Under-investment in R&D has left India import-dependent on critical technologies.

The real challenge facing India is not about how much it spends on defence, but how it converts resources into usable combat power. That will require reform in procurement, greater investment in critical technologies and a stronger alignment between long-term planning and execution. Otherwise, India will continue to spend heavily while remaining short of the military capability its strategic ambitions demand.

Court restrains HP govt from hiking electricity duty for industries

Shimla.(Agency)

Himachal Pradesh High Court has restrained the State government from collecting electricity duty beyond 16.5 per cent from medium and large industrial consumers, observing that the steep enhancement appears prima facie contrary to statutory provisions. In the order passed (CWP No. 2102 of 2026, titled M/s Verma Stone Crusher vs. HP division bench comprising Justice Vivek Singh Thakur and Justice Ranjan Sharma took note of the petitioner's grievance regarding electricity duty. The bench said in an order issued to media here on Saturday that duty fixed at 11 per cent with effect from July 20, 2017, had been enhanced to 25 per cent through a notification dated September 1, 2023, and further increased to 37.50 per cent vide notification dated January 18, 2024. The petitioner contended that the successive hikes were in violation of Section 11(2) of the Himachal Pradesh Electricity (Duty) Act, 2009, which permits revision of electricity duty rates by notification without exceeding 50 per cent at any one time of the rates earlier specified under Section 3 of the Act. The Bench observed that the increase from 11 per cent to 25 per cent and thereafter to 37.50 per cent prima facie appeared contrary to the statutory cap. Consequently, the Court restrained the respondents from collecting electricity duty beyond 16.5 per cent in respect of medium and large industries. The matter has been directed to be listed on April 23, 2026, along with CWP No. 15413 of 2024, as the legal issue involved is stated to be similar.

Candidates move Himachal Pradesh HC over Para Pump Operator appointments

Shimla.(Agency)

Two Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates have approached the Himachal Pradesh high court challenging the appointments made to the posts of Para Pump Operators by state of Himachal Pradesh alleging irregularities in the selection process. The petition, titled Naresh Kumar and others vs State of Himachal Pradesh and others (CWP No. 13847 of 2025), came up for hearing before Justice Ajay Mohan Goel on February 24, 2026. The petitioners, Naresh Kumar and Budh Singh told UNI that they belong to Scheduled Caste category, contended that candidates selected under their category had secured higher marks than certain candidates selected under the General category, yet were overlooked in the final appointments. Initially, four candidates had jointly filed the writ petition, including individuals from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories. However, the Court observed that since the petition was supported by an affidavit filed by Naresh Kumar, it could be maintainable only with respect to candidates belonging to the Scheduled Caste category. As the claims of the EWS and OBC petitioners could not be sustained on the same affidavit the counsel for the petitioners sought permission to restrict the plea to the two SC candidates and withdraw the petition on behalf of the other two petitioners, with liberty to file separate petitions. The Court allowed the prayer and directed the Registry to strike off the names of the EWS and OBC petitioners from the memo of parties.

Suspect killed in encounter fired at policemen on Feb 22, claims accused

Palampur.(Agency)

Punjab Police Friday arrested a third accused for his alleged involvement in the murder of police personnel in Gurdaspur on February 22. While Inderjit Singh (21) was nabbed Friday, police had earlier arrested Dilawar Singh (19) and Ranjit Singh (19). Meanwhile, while Dilawar was being taken to the Civil Hospital in Gurdaspur for medical examination Friday, he told reporters that Ranjit and Inderjit allegedly fired at the two policemen. The two men, he claimed, took him along for it. Assistant sub-inspector Gurnam Singh and home guard Ashok Kumar were found dead on Sunday with gunshot wounds inside a checkpoint in Adhian village, about 2 km from the border with Pakistan. Earlier on Wednesday, Ranjit, a resident of Adhian village, was shot dead in an encounter after he fled from police custody. His family and political leaders have raised questions about the encounter, some calling for a judicial probe into the matter. Speaking to reporters in Gurdaspur Friday, Dilawar also demanded a fresh post-mortem by PGIMER, Chandigarh. Ranjit's family has refused to accept his body for cremation. His uncle Gurinder Singh demanded a CBI probe into the death. Ranjit's mother Sukhwinder Kaur had earlier said that her son was picked up by police on Tuesday for questioning but later she came to know that he was shot dead. The family had also alleged that the CCTV cameras were taken away by police from Ranjit's village. Political leaders continued to meet the family of Ranjit at his residence in Adhian village.

NFR Ensures Comprehensive Holi Preparedness Across All Stations

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 28th February: In view of the upcoming Holi festival and the anticipated surge in passenger traffic, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has implemented a series of comprehensive and passenger friendly measures across its entire zone to ensure safe, smooth and comfortable travel for all passengers. With a strong focus on teamwork, vigilance and a passenger-first approach, NFR is fully geared up to provide a safe, efficient and pleasant festive travel experience. As part of the overall festive preparedness plan, Indian Railways will operate 14 pairs of Holi Special trains over NFR for a total of 128 trips to manage the additional rush during the peak travel period. These special services will supplement regular train operations and provide additional capacity, significantly benefiting passengers travelling to and from key destinations across the region. All major railway stations under NFR jurisdiction have

been comprehensively prepared with enhanced festive arrangements to manage the anticipated rush. Dedicated holding areas

comfort. For enhanced safety and crowd regulation, additional RPF, GRP and Commercial staff have been deployed round-the-

clock. Queue management, regulated entry and continuous monitoring of platforms and circulating areas are being undertaken to prevent overcrowding and ensure smooth movement of passengers. Technological support has further strengthened preparedness efforts. Real-time CCTV surveillance, drone monitoring at sensitive locations, automatic ticket vending machines for faster ticketing, Segway scooters for rapid response and dedicated war rooms at divisional offices and headquarters are ensuring 24x7 operational oversight and swift response to any contingency. Intensified cleanliness drives are being carried out across stations and trains to maintain high standards of hygiene during the festive season. Close coordination among Operating, Commercial, Security and Engineering departments is ensuring seamless execution of the preparedness plan. With a strong focus on vigilance, coordination and passenger-first service, Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to delivering a safe, secure and pleasant travel experience during the Holi festival.



have been set up at major stations to manage passenger flow efficiently, equipped with real-time Passenger Information Systems, clean drinking water, hygienic toilets, adequate seating and proper ventilation to ensure

comfort. For enhanced safety and crowd regulation, additional RPF, GRP and Commercial staff have been deployed round-the-

HC stays withdrawal of benefits, says legislature cannot override judicial order

Shimla.(Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh High Court has held that a judicial verdict granting promotion and pensionary benefits cannot be nullified through a retrospective amendment in law, observing that while the legislature is competent to enact laws, it cannot render a court judgment ineffective by overriding it through fresh legislation. The observation came in Ashwani Kumar versus State of Himachal Pradesh and Others, decided on February 27 by a Division Bench comprising Justice Vivek Singh Thakur and Justice Ranjan Sharma. The petitioner approached the court after benefits extended to him pursuant to earlier judicial orders were sought to be withdrawn by the state by invoking "The Himachal Pradesh Recruitment and Conditions of Service of Government Employees Act, 2024."

The benefits had earlier been granted in compliance with judgments passed by the High Court and affirmed after dismissal of special leave petitions by the Supreme Court.

Recording the petitioner's submissions, the court noted: "It has been submitted on behalf of the petitioner that benefits have been extended to the petitioner in compliance of judgment passed by competent court which has attained finality after dismissal of SLPs preferred by the state in the Apex Court and, therefore, it is not permissible for the respondents to withdraw such benefits extended to the petitioner."

The court further took note of the argument that though the State has the authority to legislate retrospectively, it cannot overrule or nullify a judicial pronouncement.

The order records: "Though the state has every right to enact from retrospective dates by declaring that what shall be law deemed to have been on a particular date, the state has no right to render any judgment passed by the court ineffective or to overrule the judgment passed by Competent Court after exercising its jurisdiction in accordance with law, as held by the Apex Court in Janapada Sabha Chhindwara v.

2016 Jat quota violence: 56 accused acquitted in arson at ex-Haryana minister's residence

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Noting that the prosecution failed to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt, a special CBI court in Panchkula on Friday acquitted all 56 accused in a case of arson and vandalism at the Rohtak residence of former Haryana finance minister Capt Abhimanyu Singh during the 2016 Jat reservation agitation.

Special CBI Judge Rajeev Goyal acquitted Mohit and the other accused in the case. The court is yet to release a copy of detailed judgment.

According to the police FIR, a mob approached the minister's residence from the Delhi Bypass side and attacked his property. An FIR was registered in 2016 based on the statement of Abhimanyu's nephew Rohit. The Haryana Police initially conducted an investigation and booked 50 people in the case.



Later, the Haryana government transferred the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), citing "seriousness and sensitivity of the matter."

Based on its probe, the CBI booked 64 people, including four juveniles, in the case. The juveniles were tried before the Juvenile Justice Board in Rohtak, and they were acquitted.

After completing the probe, the agency filed a chargesheet against the persons involved.

In its chargesheet, the CBI alleged that a crowd armed with weapons and petrol bombs forcibly entered the premises, set vehicles on fire and carried out large-scale vandalism and looting. It was further claimed that petrol bombs

were thrown inside the house with the intent to harm those present, leading to a blaze that gutted the property and caused losses worth crores of rupees. During the course of the trial of another 60 accused before the CBI court in Panchkula, three of the accused, Vijender, Pardeep Hooda, and Bhagwan Singh, died, and the court abated proceedings against them. While one accused, Dharminder, was declared a proclaimed offender in May 2024, leaving 56 to face proceedings.

The court examined 127 witnesses, including four judicial officers, who had recorded statements under Section 164 of the CrPC. Senior officials, including the then Rohtak Deputy Commissioner DK Behera, the then Superintendent of Police, and a CBI Superintendent of Police, also deposed before the Court.

Mayor writes to Kataria, seeks complete ban on polythene

Shimla.(Agency)

Chandigarh Mayor Saurabh Joshi has urged the UT Administration to impose an immediate and complete ban on polythene bags across the city, stating that unchecked plastic use is posing a serious threat to the environment, animals and the identity of City Beautiful. In a letter to Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria, the mayor called for swift executive intervention to declare Chandigarh a "Zero-Polythene City."

Joshi said in the letter, "Despite existing restrictions, polythene bags continue to circulate widely, causing irreversible environmental damage and creating a pressing ecological and ethical concern."

Highlighting the issue of stray cattle, particularly cows, Joshi said, "It is distressing to see animals scavenging through garbage heaps and ingesting plastic waste. Such consumption often leads to fatal intestinal blockages, chronic illness and prolonged suffering. Protecting stray animals is not only a matter of civic responsibility but also a humanitarian obligation."

The mayor also drew attention to unregulated scrap-segregation activities in peripheral villages around Chandigarh, stating, "Plastic waste frequently gets scattered across open land during sorting. These lightweight materials are blown into agricultural fields, degrading soil quality, polluting groundwater and harming rural ecosystems."

To address the issue comprehensively, Joshi proposed a series of strict measures, including a total prohibition on the manufacture, storage and sale of polythene bags; mandatory enclosure and close monitoring of scrap yards, particularly in village peripheries; ensuring garbage collection points remain free of plastic waste to protect stray animals; and empowering the Municipal Corporation to impose stringent penalties on violators and unregulated scrap dealers. The mayor stressed, "Chandigarh was designed as a model city and must uphold its environmental standards. A decisive ban will help protect natural resources, safeguard animal life and preserve the city's aesthetic character."



Sukhu announces Rs1,000 crore cancer hospital, nursing and dental colleges at Hamirpur

Hamirpur (HP).(Agency)

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has announced that a modern cancer hospital, along with nursing and dental colleges will be developed at the Hamirpur Medical College complex. The project is estimated to cost approximately Rs. 1000 crore.

He inspected the ongoing construction works of the Hamirpur Medical College on Friday evening and also reviewed the proposed site for a state-of-the-art Cancer Care centre. He stated that the establishment of the medical college would ensure that quality healthcare services were made available to people closer to their homes.

The Chief Minister said that the State Government was strengthening the healthcare system across all medical colleges and major hospitals in Himachal Pradesh. Drawing inspiration from AIIMS Delhi, he said outdated machinery and equipment in health institutions across the state was being replaced with world-class technology and advanced medical facilities to provide better treatment services to the people in a phased

manner. He further noted that after the north-eastern states, Himachal Pradesh reports one of the highest numbers of cancer cases in the country. The establishment of a dedicated cancer hospital in Hamirpur will ensure accessible and quality cancer care for patients within the state.

He informed that 11 new specialist departments have recently been approved by the State Government for the Hamirpur Cancer Hospital.

These departments will cover different types of cancer treatment and support services, such as cancer medicines (Medical Oncology), cancer surgeries (Surgical Oncology), pain relief and supportive care, nuclear medicine, anaesthesia and critical care, laboratory testing (Pathology), treatment for children with cancer, radiology and imaging, treatment for women's cancers, stem cell and bone marrow transplants and radiation therapy.

With all these services available in one place within the state, cancer patients will not have to travel outside Himachal Pradesh for advanced treatment.

Confusion over Holika Dahan timing due to lunar eclipse; Holi likely on March 4

Varanasi/Lucknow.(Agency)

Confusion persists regarding the Holi festival due to the Lunar eclipse and about the timing of the Holika Dahan.

Eminent astrologers at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University have arrived at a conclusion after careful deliberation. They claimed that Holika Dahan would be done in the early morning of March 3 and Holi would be played on March 4.

Dr. Madhusudan Mishra, Assistant Professor of the Astrology Department at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University in Kashi, stated that the decision has been made based on evidence from scriptures, astrology, and the Dharmashastra.

According to the university, the Falgun Purnima Tithi will begin at 5:56 pm on March 2, 2026, and will last until 5:08 pm on March 3. Sunrise on this day will occur during the Purnima Tithi.

The scriptures clearly state that burning Holika during the Bhadra period on the full moon day of Phalgun is prohibited. According to Nirayasinidhu and Dharmasinidhu, it is appropriate to burn Holika after the Nishitha



period (during the Bhadra tail period), avoiding the Bhadra period. Based on local calendars and classical calculations, Holika worship and Holika Dahan will be in accordance with the scriptures on March 3, 2026 (Tuesday), from 3:24 am to 5:33 am (Bhadra tail and

Nishithotra period). It is noteworthy that due to the lunar eclipse on March 3, the Satak period will begin at 9 am. Evening celebrations or burning on the day of the eclipse are not considered scripturally appropriate.

Therefore, wearing Holika ashes and performing Dhulivandan (the main celebration of Holi) on March 4, 2026 (Wednesday), will be appropriate.

Astrologer S.S. Nagpal of Lucknow said this year, there is confusion regarding the Holika Dahan, whether on March 2 or March 3.

He said Holika Dahan should be performed during Bhadra Purnima on March 2, from 12:50 am to 2:02 am, or after Bhadra ends at 4:56 am (i.e., on March 3 morning). Holika Dahan is also best performed during the Bhadra-free period, which is on March 3 (early morning). Colorful Holi will be played on March 4.

The Lunar eclipse will last from 3:21 pm to 6:46 pm. On March 3rd, the Satak (Sunday) will last for nine hours, from 9:20 am to 6:46 pm. Due to the eclipse, no Holi-related activities will be performed during the period.

Astrologer S.S. Nagpal maintained that Holika Dahan could also be performed on Tuesday, March 3, during Pradosh, from 6:46 pm to 8:36 pm. However, Holi will be celebrated on March 4.

3 Bishnoi gang shooters fire at Haryana supplements shop, attack caught on camera

New Delhi.(Agency)

Three armed men linked to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi opened fire at a supplements store in Haryana's Sonapat on Friday, triggering panic among the people in the area. The brazen daylight attack, which was later claimed by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang in a social media post, was captured on CCTV cameras installed at the premises. Police sources said the shooters – two of whom were later identified through CCTV – arrived on a motorcycle and entered Pahal Nutrition, where the shooting occurred.

In the footage, a shooter hands a slip to the manager seated at the counter. Moments later, he then takes out his gun, aims at the manager and tries to shoot him, but the weapon malfunctions and the manager ducks for cover with the table. The attacker flees the shop.

In another CCTV footage, one of the attackers



is firing at the shop, which damages the shop's glass facade, while his second accomplice who flees the store is also seen while brandishing his gun. COPS SUSPECT FIRING LINKED TO GANG RIVALRY

Investigators said the firing appears to be linked to an ongoing rivalry between the Bishnoi gang and the Rohit Godara gang. Two months ago, the owner of Pahal Nutrition had reportedly received an extortion demand of Rs 2 crore under Godara's name.

Soon after the incident, a social media post surfaced claiming responsibility for the firing. The post, allegedly made by gangster Randeep Malik on behalf of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, asserted that the attack was orchestrated by him along with an associate identified as Anil Pandit, who is said to be based in the US.

The post accused the store owners of paying extortion money to rival gangster Rohit Gadara. Malik alleged that Pahal Nutrition was selling fake products and "corrupting the youngsters," and warned that anyone paying money to their rivals would be targeted.

The post also contained threats against Haryanvi singer Masoom Sharma, asking him to apologise to village sarpanches or face consequences. Police, however, have said they are yet to verify the authenticity of the post and its claims.

COPS IDENTIFY 2 SHOOTERS INVOLVED IN FIRING

Meanwhile, police have identified two of the shooters as Kapil and Ashish Malik, both residents of Sonapat. Officials said the attack was allegedly carried out on the instructions of Randeep Malik, who is believed to be operating from abroad. DCP (Crime) Narendra Kadian said police are examining the CCTV footage and the viral social media post, and assured that the accused would be arrested soon.

The incident has heightened fear among local traders and businessmen, with residents expressing concern over the growing influence of organised crime in the region.

UP woman throws daughter into Yamuna, then attempts to jump; saved by passerby



New Delhi.(Agency)

A woman threw her five-year-old daughter into the Yamuna River on Friday following a dispute with her mother and then tried to jump into the water herself before passersby stopped her, police said. A team from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) has been called in from Prayagraj to search for the girl in the river, they added. Circle Officer Saurabh Singh said the incident took place in the Marka police station area of Banda district around 5 pm on Friday, when Rubina Yadav (30) threw her five-year-old daughter Pinky into the Yamuna.

As she tried to jump into the river herself, some alert passersby stopped her, the officer said. During questioning, Rubina said she had been living at her maternal home in Usra Dera with Pinky and her seven-year-old son Chintu for the last five years after a dispute with her in-laws, the officer said. She allegedly took the step after an argument with her mother.

Maharashtra bus driver arrested for molesting Class 5 girl on school bus

New Delhi.(Agency)

A Class 5 student in Maharashtra's Badlapur was allegedly molested by her school bus driver on Wednesday. While returning from school in the evening, the bus driver allegedly indulged in a conversation with her and touched her inappropriately. Upon reaching home, the girl narrated the entire incident to her parents. They soon rushed to the police station and filed a complaint in the local police station against the bus driver, identified as Jayesh Mune.

Based on the complaint, the police acted swiftly and immediately arrested the bus driver, a resident of Wangani, on the same day. Following the arrest, the



police also presented the 38-year-old bus driver in the Kalyan Court, and the court ordered police custody for the accused till March 2.

Meanwhile, the incident also raised eyebrows at the violation of the Maharashtra government's safety rules. As per the rules, a female attendant must be present in vehicles transporting students. However, in this case, no female attendant was present on the bus, as she was on leave due to health reasons. The police summoned the bus owner and the school management for further questioning. They are also probing whether the bus driver shares a history of any such incident.

The incident has triggered anger among the inhabitants. A few days ago, a schoolgirl was raped in a school van. Following that, State Legislative Council Deputy Chairperson Neelam Gorhe visited Badlapur and hinted at implementing stricter rules for school vehicles. However, the locals alleged that the rules have not been implemented properly.

I'm hungry, tired to dictate: Allahabad High Court judge reserves judgment

New Delhi.(Agency)

A judge of the Allahabad High Court recorded his inability to dictate the verdict in a case after a long day of hearing, saying, "Since I am feeling hungry, tired and physically incapacitated to dictate the judgment, the judgment is reserved." This happened on Tuesday, when Justice Subhash Vidyarthi of the high court's Lucknow bench passed the order on a plea filed by Chandralekha Singh. As many as 235 cases, including 92 fresh ones, were listed for hearing before Justice Vidyarthi on Tuesday, and he could hear only 29 fresh matters till 4.15 pm.

But when he was informed about the current matter and remanded by the Supreme Court, Justice Vidyarthi started hearing of the case at 4.15 pm and continued till 7.00 pm. The petition was filed in 2025 against an



order of the DRT. The high court had, in May 2025, set aside the DRT order and directed it to decide the matter afresh after affording an opportunity of hearing to the petitioner. This order of the high court was challenged in the Supreme Court, which, on August 25, 2025, set it aside on the ground that the respondent concerned was not heard.

The apex court had also asked the high court to decide the petition afresh, expeditiously and preferably within six months. The six-month period was going to expire on Tuesday. After

a marathon hearing of the matter in which senior advocate Anuj Kudesia for the petitioner, senior advocate Sudeep Kumar for the respondents concerned and PK Srivastava for Canara Bank had argued at length, the judge expressed that he was completely exhausted and was not in a position to dictate the judgment then and there on the dais and hence he reserved the verdict.

While reserving the judgment, Justice Vidyarthi observed, "Today there were 92 fresh matters, 101 regular matters, 39 fresh miscellaneous applications and three matters listed in the additional/unlisted list – I, II and III. Only fresh cases up to serial number 29 could be heard today." "However, keeping in view the order passed by Hon'ble the Supreme Court, the hearing of this matter commenced at 4.15 pm, and it has concluded at 7.10 p.m.," he said.

Air India Delhi-Tel Aviv flight returns as Israel shuts airspace amid Iran attack

New Delhi.(Agency)

An Air India flight from India to Tel Aviv was forced to turn back mid-journey after regional airspace was closed following US strikes on Iran carried out in coordination with Israel, pushing the Middle East into another episode of full-blown military conflict. The airspace closure came as Iran reportedly began retaliating against Israel with a barrage of missiles. Israel has also suspended airport operations, and Iran also has closed its airspace.

IndiGo, meanwhile, said it is closely monitoring regional developments concerning Iran and its airspace. "We



are closely monitoring regional updates concerning Iran and its airspace. The safety and security of our customers and crew remain our highest priority. Our teams stand prepared to implement any necessary adjustments as the situation evolves," the airline

said.

Earlier today, the United States and Israel launched coordinated strikes in Tehran and other parts of Iran, targeting key government offices and military installations. One of the primary targets was reportedly linked to the office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is said to have been moved to a secure location. The extent of the damage and any casualties remain unclear. Meanwhile, Iran has reportedly launched retaliatory missile strikes. Amid the volatile situation, Delhi Airport issued an advisory stating that international flights to the West may experience disruptions.

Odisha woman raped by boyfriend during elopement plan, later killed by stranger

The woman was first raped by her boyfriend, who later abandoned her. She was then taken by a stranger to another location, where he raped her and pushed her from the fourth floor.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A 23-year-old woman was allegedly raped twice in separate locations by her boyfriend and then later by a stranger before being thrown off a four-storey building, leading to her death, in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur, police said.

The incident took place on February 22 after the woman left her home, planning to elope with her boyfriend, who had asked her to meet him at a temple on the promise of marriage, police added. Instead, he allegedly took her to a secluded spot, sexually assaulted her, and later abandoned her near a bus stand.

While the victim was waiting at the bus stand, another man, a Jharkhand native on a bike, approached her and offered help. However, he allegedly took her to the

rooftop of his rented accommodation in Paradip town, where he raped her again, senior police officer Ankit Kumar Verma told news agency PTI.

"The accused then pushed her off the roof of the building, resulting in her death. Her body was recovered the next morning," the officer added.

The victim's brother had filed a missing person complaint on the evening of February 22 after she failed to return home. An unnatural death case was registered on February 23 following the recovery of the body.

Subsequently, on February 25, the brother lodged another complaint alleging that his sister had been raped and murdered, after which a detailed investigation was



launched.

Both accused have been arrested and booked under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including charges of kidnapping, rape and murder, officials said.

Meanwhile, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president and Leader of the Opposition in

the Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik condemned the incident and demanded justice for the victim, while raising concerns over women's safety in the state.

In a post on X, the former chief minister said a series of recent crimes against women across Odisha reflected an alarming law and order situation.

"While the government delivers long-winded speeches on women's safety and law and order, the ground reality is extremely alarming. Even in broad daylight, an atmosphere of fear prevails," he said, urging the government to take stringent and proactive steps to ensure safety and uphold the rule of law. Police said further investigation into the case is underway.

Utmost caution: India issues advisory for citizens in Israel after strikes on Iran

Indian Embassy urges nationals in Israel to remain near shelters, avoid non-essential travel as regional tensions escalate following reported strikes on Iran.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India on Saturday issued a security advisory for its nationals in Israel, urging them to exercise the utmost caution and remain vigilant amid escalating regional tensions following reported US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

In an advisory posted on X, the Embassy of India in Tel Aviv asked Indian citizens to strictly follow safety instructions issued by Israeli authorities and the Home Front Command. Nationals were advised to remain close to designated shelters, familiarise themselves with protected spaces near their residence or workplace, and avoid all non-essential travel within Israel until further notice.

The embassy also urged citizens to continuously monitor local news, official announcements and emergency alerts. A 24*7 emergency helpline has been activated for Indian nationals requiring assistance, while officials said the mission remains in close contact with Israeli authorities and will issue further updates as required.

The advisory came after Israel said it had launched a pre-emptive strike against Iran, escalating tensions in the Middle East and raising fears of a wider regional confrontation. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the operation was aimed at removing threats posed to Israel.

A US official told reporters that American strikes targeting Iran were also underway. Reuters, quoting sources, said Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had been moved to a secure location outside Tehran following the attacks.

Following the attacks, Israel's Home Front Command issued nationwide alerts asking civilians to stay close to bomb shelters and avoid unnecessary movement as sirens sounded in several parts of the country.

The latest escalation follows an earlier 12-day aerial conflict between Israel and Iran in June and renewed warnings from the United States and Israel over Tehran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

NEW

Nervous New Zealand will have eyes on PAK vs SL: Mitchell Santner on semi-final hopes

New Delhi. (Agency)

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner admitted that his side will be watching Pakistan's final Super 8 clash against Sri Lanka with nerves after missing the chance to seal a semi-final spot themselves following their defeat to England on February 27.

England's four-wicket win over New Zealand in Colombo confirmed their unbeaten march into the semi-finals as Group 2 toppers. The result left New Zealand stuck on three points from three games with a strong net run rate of +1.390, while Pakistan stayed alive with one point from two matches and a mathematical route still open. Speaking at the post-match press



conference, Santner acknowledged that New Zealand's chances of qualifying for the semi-finals were no longer in their own hands. "Pretty nervous. But yeah, I mean, it's out of our control. We can't really do much. Just kind of wait and see, and we either get on a plane to India or New Zealand," Santner said. "Yeah, I guess we had it in our control. It would have made things a lot easier if we won tonight. But yeah, there'll be some nervous watching probably tomorrow just to see what happens," he added. With England already through, the spotlight now shifts to Pakistan's clash against Sri Lanka in Pallekele, which will determine whether New Zealand stay alive or are knocked out.

HOW NEW ZEALAND MISSED THEIR CHANCE

New Zealand had their fate in their own hands heading into the final Super 8 game but could not get past England in a high-pressure encounter. England restricted the Kiwis to 159, with Will Jacks playing a key all-round role by picking up 2 for 23 and later guiding the chase with an unbeaten 32 off 18 balls. The loss proved costly. A win would have guaranteed New Zealand a semi-final berth, but instead, they now depend on Pakistan slipping up in their final match. Santner admitted that the team had done several things right through the tournament but fell short in key moments.

2016 heartbreak in past, India look to return the favour to West Indies in Kolkata

MEXICO CITY. (Agency)

The wounds of that defeat still run deep, and this time, India will be eager to turn the tables in their Super 8 showdown on Sunday at the iconic Eden Gardens in the City of Joy.

INDIA AIM TO DEFY HISTORY

India's woes against the West Indies in T20 World Cups have been long-standing, and the defeat at Wankhede was far from a one-off. Historically, the Caribbean side has had India's number, holding a 3-1 edge over the 2024 champions. Memories of past clashes still linger vividly. In 2009, Dwayne Bravo's blistering 66 with the bat and four wickets with the ball at Lord's left India shell-shocked. The very next year, Chris Gayle tormented the visitors with a 98-run masterclass at the Bridgetown in Barbados. Then came 2016, when Lendl Simmons, Andre Russell, and Johnson Charles ensured India couldn't claim the upper hand. The only respite for India in this saga came in 2014 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, where Amit



Mishra stepped up with the ball after which Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli hit fifties, guiding India to a thrilling win with two balls left. Clearly, India have rarely had it easy against the West Indies in World Cup encounters. In the ongoing T20 World Cup, however, both sides are on relatively even footing, each suffering one big defeat out of six matches while winning the rest. India are being pegged as favourites in the upcoming game due to their familiarity with home conditions. Yet, the West Indies' explosive batting lineup means they cannot be underestimated by any stretch of the imagination.

CAN INDIA HALT WEST INDIES' EDEN RUN?

West Indies may have lost four out of seven games at the Eden Gardens, but Kolkata has always held a special charm for the Caribbean side. Remarkably, they have never lost a T20 World Cup match in the city, winning all three of their previous encounters. In this tournament, they beat Scotland and Italy, yet it's memories from the 2016 final that still linger - Carlos Brathwaite's unforgettable innings.

UP Kabaddi League takes cricket route to produce next-gen India stars

A cricket-style revolution is underway in Kabaddi as the UP Kabaddi League sets itself up to be the breeding ground to be the platform for the rise of new talent. With competition and fan following on the rise, the league promises to produce India's next big names in Kabaddi.

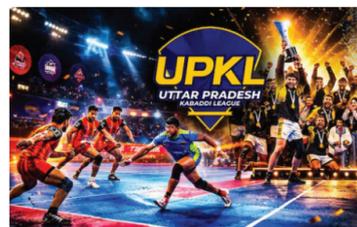
New Delhi. (Agency)

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is considered to be the benchmark when it comes to how a franchise league needs to be run in terms of competition, sustainability, and unearthing the next big stars of the sport. You had the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, and Varun Chakravarty, among others, just making their way through the ranks and becoming key players for India. This trend has continued in recent years in the IPL, with the spotlight being on domestic players. Priyansh Arya made heads turn with his aggressive batting, while Digvesh Rathi's nonchalant bowling and notebook celebration were the talk of the town. Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma were

talented enough to make Chennai Super Kings buck their usual trend of going for older and experienced players and invest Rs 14.2 crore each in these two young stars. When you look closely at these talents mentioned above, they have all come through the ranks of various domestic T20 leagues in the country. India has more than 10 domestic competitions across different states and cities that are now acting as scouting destinations for IPL teams to find the next big star. The Delhi Premier League, Tamil Nadu Premier League, Karnataka Premier League and others have consistently provided talent not just for the IPL but for India as well. Now, one may wonder if this is a model that can be used across various other sports. India is home to various franchise leagues across disciplines like kabaddi, table tennis, badminton, tennis and hockey, to name a few. Of these, the Pro Kabaddi League has been a success story of its own, being second only to the IPL in terms of sustainability alone.

The likes of Pardeep Narwal, Pawan Sehrawat and Naveen Kumar have become stars in their own right and have elevated the sport in the country. So can there be domestic leagues

in various states that can act as academies just like their cricket counterparts? Well, this is where the Uttar Pradesh Kabaddi League (UPKL) stands out. Formed in 2024 by Sambhav Jain in association with the UP



Kabaddi Association, the aim of the UPKL was to improve the grassroots-to-professional pathway for the sport in the country and bring in more talent. The league started as an eight-team affair and by 2025, interest was such that four more sides made their way into the league. The number of matches went from 55 to 66, with viewership on the rise. Awadh Ramdoot, Brij Stars,

Ganga Kings of Mirzapur, JD Noida Ninjas, Kashi Kings, Lucknow Lions, Yamuna Yodhas, Sangam Challengers, Kanpur Warriors, Aligarh Tigers, Purvanchal Panthers and Gazab Gaziabad battled for the title in 2025. Kashi Kings emerged as the champions, with Lucknow Lions finishing second. In the end, it was Kabaddi that was the real winner. When India Today got the chance to talk with the owners of various teams and asked them why they decided to invest in UPKL, the answer was more or less similar, yet simple: the love for kabaddi and the belief in the potential of players from UP. "Kabaddi has always been a sport I have been deeply connected with, not just emotionally but also in terms of its grassroots strength, especially in Uttar Pradesh. UP has historically produced some of the finest kabaddi talent in the country, and yet many players lacked a consistent, structured platform to showcase themselves at a professional level," said Kulwant Baliyan, the owner of Kashi Kings. For Ranvijay Singh, who owns Awadh Ramdoots, the standout feature of the league was the clear intent it had around player development.

Lionel Messi tackled by pitch invaders in Inter Miami's chaotic Puerto Rico friendly



Bayamon. (Agency)

Lionel Messi was caught up in a chaotic moment during Inter Miami's friendly against Independiente del Valle in Puerto Rico, after an overexcited fan ran onto the pitch and ended up taking the Argentine superstar down in the closing stages of the match. The incident unfolded in the 88th

minute at the Juan Ramon Loubriel Stadium in Bayamon. As the game was winding down, a shirtless fan broke through security and sprinted towards Messi near the centre circle. The supporter managed to reach him and wrapped his arms around the forward in an attempt to hug him. Seconds later, security rushed in to intervene. A guard

tackled the fan to the ground, but in the process also knocked Messi over. For a brief moment, the situation looked worrying as the Inter Miami captain was left on the turf amid the scramble. Messi, however, got back on his feet almost immediately and walked away calmly, appearing completely unharmed. The late drama came at the end of what had been a productive outing for Inter Miami. Messi had come on at halftime and made an impact by converting a penalty in the 70th minute, helping Miami secure a 2-1 win. Santiago Morales scored the other goal in a match that had originally been scheduled earlier but was postponed due to a minor leg issue Messi had picked up in a previous exhibition game. It was not the only pitch invasion of the night. At least two other fans had already made their way onto the field earlier, with one managing to snap a selfie while another got close enough for a brief interaction before being escorted away.

Inter Miami, who began their MLS season with a 3-0 defeat to LAFC, will now shift their focus to their upcoming clash against Orlando City next weekend.

England not obsessed with perfection in T20 World Cup: Will Jacks after NZ

New Delhi. (Agency)

England may not have ticked every box in their Super 8 clash against New Zealand, but they still got the result that mattered. After their four-wicket win in Colombo sealed a semi-final spot in the T20 World Cup 2026, Will Jacks made it clear that chasing perfection is not what drives this England side. England's Super 8 campaign has been defined by composure rather than perfection. Their wins over Sri Lanka, Pakistan and now New Zealand may have been narrow, but they have stayed unbeaten by consistently seizing key moments. Speaking after England's 4-wickets win over New Zealand, Will Jacks said the team's focus has been on winning crucial phases of games rather than striving for ideal performances every time. "We've won six out of seven games and we've qualified for a semi-final. At the end of the day no one really cares. We obviously want to play well in there, but we're not gutted that we haven't played the perfect game because we're

winning." Jacks said at the post-match press conference. He also pointed out how unrealistic it is to expect complete control in a format as volatile as T20 cricket.



sport. It's also incredibly hard to do that. You're playing against a very strong side who are prepared as well as you guys and they know what they're trying to do and they're also trying to play the perfect game." Jacks credited England's calmness in pressure situations as the defining factor

behind their run. "I think what we've done well is in the key moments we've kept a calm and clear head and we've managed to negotiate those well."

HOW ENGLAND DEFEATED NEW ZEALAND

England's victory over New Zealand was shaped by Jacks' all-round contribution. With the ball, he delivered a crucial spell of 2 for 23, removing in-form batters Finn Allen and Glenn Phillips to restrict the Black Caps to 159. His impact did not end there. During the chase, Jacks returned to finish the job with an unbeaten 32 off 18 balls, guiding England home with authority in the final phase.

The win ensured England topped Super 8 Group 2 with six points and entered the semi-finals unbeaten. More importantly, it underlined the approach Jacks spoke about. England may not have played a perfect game, but they controlled the decisive moments, and in tournament cricket, that is often what counts the most.

Delhi HC orders fresh Equestrian Federation of India polls, IOA to form Ad-Hoc Panel

GLASGOW, Scotland. (Agency)

The Delhi High Court has ordered the initiation of fresh elections for the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) following the expiry of its existing Executive Committee's tenure. The decision was delivered after deliberations in Court 14 by Justice Kaurav, responding to an application from the Union of India seeking the appointment of an ad-hoc administrative committee for the EFI. The request for an ad-hoc administrative committee came after the executive committee, which had been reinstated for the Paris Olympics, completed its tenure. The Rajasthan Equestrian Association emphasised the urgency of the situation, stating that the elections were long overdue. The Delhi High Court responded by outlining concrete steps to ensure the federation's compliance with the latest regulatory framework. A significant factor in the court's directive was the enactment of the National Sports



Governance Act, 2025, and the notification of the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026. Rule 18 of these new rules requires all National Sports Federations to amend their bye-laws in accordance with the 2025 Act, making compliance a legal obligation for continued operation. Under the court's order, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) will appoint an independent ad-hoc committee. The current Executive Committee has been instructed to transfer control to the ad-hoc committee within seven days to avoid any administrative gaps and ensure a smooth transition.

WHAT IS THE ORDER FROM DELHI HC?

1. In view of the above circumstances, and having regard to the statutory regime now in force under the NSG Act, this Court deems it appropriate to issue the following directions: The Indian Olympic Association shall forthwith appoint an Ad-Hoc Committee to take over the administration of EFI. The present Executive Committee of EFI shall hand over charge to the Ad-Hoc Committee within seven days from the date of its appointment.

Jammu and Kashmir's wait is finally over: Parvez Rasool ahead of Ranji Trophy glory

Jammu and Kashmir have moved within one day of winning their maiden Ranji Trophy title, and Parvez Rasool hailed the moment as a dream turned reality for the side. A dominant performance has put them on the brink of scripting history in Indian domestic cricket.

New Delhi. (Agency)

"Jammu and Kashmir are now just one day away from rewriting their cricketing history as they head into the final day of the Ranji Trophy final with a massive 477-run lead over Karnataka in Hubli. What once felt distant now stands within reach, with the side firmly in control of their maiden title charge. Former India cricketer Parvez Rasool, who has witnessed the region's cricketing journey



from close quarters, believes this moment is the result of years of perseverance finally coming together. Watching J&K tighten their grip on the final, he reflected on how far the team has travelled in his recent column for PTT. "Just when Yudhvir Singh got the final wicket in Karnataka's first innings, I couldn't stop smiling. Jammu and Kashmir are now

all set to become Ranji Trophy champions on Saturday. It is not a dream anymore but a reality." Rasool noted that this rise has been built over time, with the side steadily transforming from participants into genuine contenders. "We have all waited for this day for the past a decade and a half since the time J&K started becoming more than a decent

competitive side." He also singled out pace spearhead Auqib Nabi for his match-shaping contributions. "But what Auqib Nabi has done for us, it is beyond imagination. This is a kind of performance which no one can ignore and I think the day is not too far away when he would be donning the India colours."

J&K ON THE CUSP OF INDIAN CRICKET HISTORY

Jammu and Kashmir have dominated the contest across four days. After posting 584 in the first innings, they dismissed Karnataka for 293, largely thanks to Auqib Nabi's five-wicket haul of 5 for 54, which secured a commanding 291-run lead. In the second innings, despite slipping to 11 for 2 early, Qamran Iqbal's unbeaten 94 helped steady the innings. By stumps on Day 4, J&K had moved to 186 for 4, stretching their overall lead to 477. With Karnataka now facing a near-impossible chase on the final day, Jammu and Kashmir are within touching distance of a historic maiden Ranji Trophy title.

India to become \$4 trillion economy by next fiscal: CEA

New Delhi.(Agency)

India will have to wait for longer to achieve the \$4 trillion target. Earlier, the government had estimated that the target will be achieved by the end of the current financial year. However, the latest GDP estimates show that the nominal GDP of the country has declined from the Rs 357 lakh crore in the old series to Rs 345.5 lakh crore in the new series. At an average exchange rate of Rs 87, India's GDP in dollar terms would fall short of \$4 trillion.

"Based on current projections, India is expected to cross the \$4 trillion-mark comfortably in 2026-27, although relative global rankings will depend on external factors," chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran told media here on Friday.

However, he said that India is firmly on course to become one of the world's largest economies. "The exact timing of becoming the third or fourth largest will depend not only on domestic growth but also on exchange rate movements and the performance of other economies," he said. As per IMF estimates, the Indian economy was supposed to cross the \$4 trillion-mark in FY26 and reach around \$4.96 trillion in FY28. By FY29, India was projected to hit \$5.46 trillion, and surpass \$6 trillion by 2030. India was also supposed to become the 4th largest economy in the current financial year surpassing Japan. But with the new series and revised nominal GDP numbers, India is now unlikely to achieve this target as well. As per data released by MoSPI on Friday, Nominal GDP or GDP at current prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 345.47 lakh crore in the year 2025-26, against Rs 318.07 lakh crore in 2024-25, showing a growth rate of 8.6%.

These companies will pay dividends in March: Do you own any of these shares

New Delhi.(Agency)

As many as five companies are set to distribute dividends next month. Dividends have a special place in the hearts of investors and their importance has probably gone up in this season of prolonged volatility in the markets. In such a situation, dividend gifts may provide some relief. Have a closer look at the companies that are paying dividends and whether you own any of these shares.

Castrol India

The company has declared a final dividend of Rs 5.25 per share for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2025. It is part of the global brand Castrol and BP Group, a leading player in the lubricants market in India. It has fixed March 23, 2026 as its record date. The company has previously issued interim dividends. Since 2000, it has paid dividends as many as 53 times.

SBI Life Insurance Company

The company has declared an interim dividend of Rs 2.7 per share for the financial year 2025-26. The record date is March 6, 2026. It is one of India's leading private life insurance companies and a joint venture between the country's biggest bank SBI and BNP Paribas Cardif.

Engineers India

This Navaratna company is declaring its second interim dividend for the financial year 2025-26. The record date is March 6, 2026. The company provides EPC services in the hydrocarbon and infrastructure sectors.

Naperol Investments

At its board meeting on February 25, 2026, the company declared an interim dividend of Rs 3 per share. The record date is March 4, 2026. The company has a strong dividend track record and is an investment company associated with the Wadia Group.

New GDP series raises growth projection for FY26 to 7.6%

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's economy is estimated to grow at 7.6% in 2025-26, led by manufacturing and services as the country's statistics office released revised data series with a new base year of 2022-23.

The message from the revised numbers is that the economy has remained resilient against the backdrop of trade and geopolitical tensions, and India retains the tag as the fastest growing major economy in the world. The second advance estimates unveiled by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Friday showed growth in Asia's third largest economy for the current fiscal year was better than the 7.4% estimated in the earlier estimate released in Jan, based on the 2011-12 series. It was also above Reserve Bank of India's estimate of 7.4%.

The data showed that the economy grew by 7.8% during Oct-Dec, slower than the upwardly revised 8.4% in the July-Sept quarter, but still robust.

"Economic performance remains resilient despite global uncertainties. Three consecutive years of more than 7% growth signal macro resilience," said chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran, adding that the Economic Survey's projection for FY27 had been revised upwards to 7%-7.4% under the new series.

Revisions see improvement in health of mfg sector

The statistics office said the new data series captures structural changes in the economy, incorporates latest data sources, improves estimation methodologies and enhances coverage and accuracy, including the informal sector. "We have given more focus on having more granular data in this series. A base year revision exercise basically entails capturing structural changes in the economy more effectively, incorporating new data sources, use of better and improved methodologies, and aligning national accounts with international practices," said statistics secretary Saurabh Garg. The Centre has undertaken a revamp of several datasets and an upgraded retail inflation data with a new base year of 2024 was released earlier, while the index of industrial production data set will also be upgraded with new data sources and a fresh base year of 2022-23.

Warner Bros Discovery signs \$110 billion deal with Paramount Skydance

Warner Bros Discovery agreed to a \$110 billion acquisition by Paramount Skydance after Netflix declined to match the offer, creating a media powerhouse set to reshape Hollywood and streaming competition.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Warner Bros Discovery has agreed to be acquired by Paramount Skydance in a \$110 billion deal signed on Friday morning, according to an audio clip of a global townhall by the company, which was reviewed by Reuters.

"Netflix had the legal right to match the PSKY offer. As you all know, they ultimately decided not to do that. That then resulted in a signed agreement with PSKY as of this morning. So that's where everything stands," Bruce Campbell, Warner Bros' chief revenue and strategy



officer, said in the townhall. Paramount and Warner Bros did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The deal - which includes some \$29 billion in debt - is among Hollywood's biggest media shake-ups and will create one of the largest film studios in the world, allowing Paramount to tap Warner's trove of intellectual property, including franchises such as "Fantastic Beasts" and

"The Matrix". It will also allow Paramount to bolster its streaming efforts, with a potential combination of HBO Max and Paramount+, enabling it to gain market share and tussle with market leader Netflix. The agreement caps a bidding war after Netflix declined to match Paramount's latest \$31-per-share offer, which was deemed superior by Warner Bros to the streaming pioneer's

\$27.75-per-share agreement for its assets. Paramount was in pursuit of Warner Bros since late last year when it launched a hostile campaign to wrestle the company from the streaming giant by consistently raising its offer. The company, led by billionaire Larry Ellison's son David Ellison, enticed Warner's board back to the bargaining table by raising the possibility of an improved cash offer.

In its revised bid, Paramount raised the termination fee it would pay should the deal fail to gain regulatory approval to \$7 billion from \$5.8 billion. Activist investor Ancora Holdings, which owns a small stake in Warner Bros, had also stepped up pressure on the HBO owner to engage more with Paramount. Still, the merger is likely to draw antitrust scrutiny in Washington, foreign countries and US states, including California, despite the Ellisons' ties to President Donald Trump. Lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle have raised concerns that any deal to acquire Warner Bros could result in fewer choices and higher prices for consumers.

Personal Loan Or Credit Card: What works better for salaried employees

A personal loan provides a fixed lump sum that is repaid through structured EMIs over a set tenure. This makes it easier for salaried individuals to align repayments with their monthly income and maintain financial discipline.

New gency)

For salaried employees, choosing between a personal loan and a credit card often comes down to the nature of their financial needs rather than which option is universally better. A personal loan provides a fixed lump sum that is repaid through structured EMIs over a set tenure. This makes it easier for salaried individuals to align repayments with their monthly income and maintain financial discipline. Regular EMI payments can

also help build a stable credit history over time. In contrast, a credit card offers revolving credit, allowing users to borrow repeatedly within an approved limit. It provides flexibility and even an interest-free grace period if the outstanding balance is cleared on time. However, unpaid dues can



attract significantly higher interest rates, making it costlier if balances are carried forward. Credit cards are generally better suited for short-term needs such as emergency expenses, travel bookings, or routine purchases where quick access to funds is

important. They also come with added perks like rewards and cashback benefits. Personal loans, on the other hand, are often more suitable for planned or high-value expenses such as home renovation, education fees, or medical needs. Their structured repayment schedule encourages long-term financial stability despite requiring a commitment to regular EMIs. Both borrowing options impact credit scores differently. Timely repayment of personal loans reflects disciplined financial behaviour, while credit cards influence scores largely through credit utilisation levels. Excessive usage, even with timely payments, can negatively affect credit profiles. Ultimately, the choice between a personal loan and a credit card depends on suitability—whether the requirement is for short-term flexibility or long-term structured financing.

Mother of all MNCs East India Company will be relaunched before Christmas, says owner

New Delhi.(Agency)

Kolkata: The British East India Company, which landed in India in 1608 and paved the way for colonial rule in the land till 1947, is alive and kicking — Sanjiv Mehta, the current owner of the brand and its holding company has said. In fact, Mehta envisions "long-term stability and growth" for the company which wrote and rewrote India's history in the past few hundred years. In fact, the company is on boarding a new investor who has a long-term outlook.

Mehta was born in Mumbai and revived the historic brand in 2005, 131 years after it was dissolved in 1874. "East India Company (EIC) is very much alive; the brand-owning and holding company entities remain intact and all intellectual property and core brand

assets are fully preserved... The business is in the process of completing a comprehensive restructuring process, designed to position the brand for long-term stability and growth," Mehta told news agencies.

Luxury retail initiative

In its current avatar East India Company is in the business of luxury retailing. But it received a jolt during the Covid pandemic. It needed a restructuring and refocusing of strategy to move into higher growth markets including India.

"As part of this process, certain UK operating entities were placed into liquidation or dissolved... "New equity is now being committed by a new investor with a long-term strategic outlook. The previous shareholders remain on the board to support the

transition and work alongside the new investor and management team," Mehta underlined. He also said that the restructuring process could end by June. The operations would bear the new nerve and look before the key Christmas trading period. The old EIC was nationalised but left the brand behind. The new EIC will continue and take the good forward from the historical company and leave the bad behind. The storm was in a teacup, but the ship will continue to sail beyond the present hurdle with renewed energy and positivity," Mehta told the media.

Baton to a younger team

Mehta is now 65 but he has plans to withdraw from day-to-day operations and hand over various businesses of the brand to a younger team.

Amazon will invest \$50 billion in OpenAI as they announce strategic partnership

OpenAI and Amazon are jointly developing a Stateful Runtime Environment powered by OpenAI's models, which will be available through Amazon Bedrock. Stateful developer environments are the next generation of how frontier models will be used, seamlessly enabling models to access elements like compute, memory, and identity.

New Delhi.(Agency)

OpenAI and Amazon have announced a multi-year strategic partnership to accelerate AI innovation for enterprises, startups, and end consumers around the world. Amazon will also invest USD 50 billion in OpenAI, starting with an initial USD 15 billion investment and followed by another USD 35 billion in the coming months when certain conditions are met, according to a statement from OpenAI. OpenAI and Amazon are jointly developing

a Stateful Runtime Environment powered by OpenAI's models, which will be available through Amazon Bedrock. Stateful developer environments are the next generation of how frontier models will be used, seamlessly enabling models to access elements like compute, memory, and identity. A Stateful Runtime Environment allows developers to keep context, remember prior work, work across software tools and data sources, and access compute. They're designed to handle ongoing projects and workflows. These stateful developer environments will be trained to run optimally on AWS's infrastructure and integrated with Amazon Bedrock AgentCore and infrastructure services so customers' AI applications and agents run cohesively with the rest of their infrastructure applications running in AWS. The Stateful Runtime Environment is expected to launch in the next few months," the statement read. AWS will serve as the exclusive third-party cloud distribution provider for OpenAI Frontier, expanding access to OpenAI's most advanced enterprise platform as

demand for AI deployment accelerates across industries. Frontier enables organizations to build, deploy, and manage teams of AI agents that operate across real business systems with shared



context, built-in governance, and enterprise-grade security, without managing underlying infrastructure. As companies move from experimentation to production AI, Frontier makes it straightforward to integrate powerful AI into existing workflows quickly, securely, and at global scale. OpenAI and AWS are expanding their existing \$38 billion multi-year agreement by USD 100 billion over 8 years. The expansion includes OpenAI committing to consume approximately 2

gigawatts of Trainium capacity through AWS infrastructure, which will support demand for Stateful Runtime, Frontier, and other advanced workloads. This agreement lowers the cost and improves the efficiency of producing intelligence at scale. Under this structure, OpenAI secures long-term capacity while working with AWS to deploy purpose-built silicon alongside its broader compute ecosystem, enabling enterprises to consume intelligence on demand without managing underlying infrastructure. This commitment spans both Trainium3 and next-generation Trainium4 chips and will power a broad range of advanced AI workloads. Trainium4, expected to begin delivery in 2027, will provide another major performance gain, including significantly higher FP4 compute performance, expanded memory bandwidth, and increased high-bandwidth memory capacity to support increasingly capable AI systems at scale. "OpenAI and Amazon will collaborate to develop customized models available to Amazon developers to power Amazon's customer-facing applications.



To qualify for migration, SME-listed companies must meet certain criteria related to market capitalisation, profitability, shareholding pattern and compliance standards. For example, a company must have an average market capitalisation of over Rs 100 crore and an operating profit of more than Rs 15 crore for three consecutive years, without falling below Rs 10 crore in any year. It must also have operated in the same line of business for at least three years, with more than half of its revenue coming from its core activity, the report said. Sector-wise, textile companies have recorded the highest number of migrations, with 44 firms moving to the mainboard. This is followed by the machinery, equipment and components segment with 33 companies, and food and tobacco with 29 companies, according to the report.

The report also noted a steady rise in SME listings and fund raising since 2023. While 179 companies raised Rs 4,823 crore in 2023, as many as 268 companies raised Rs 12,105 crore in 2025, more than doubling the capital raised in just two years.

Akanksha Chamola

Reacts To Viral Video With Kunwar Amar, Ali Hasan: 'I Wasn't Comfortable'

Akanksha Chamola, who has been making headlines since her husband Gaurav Khanna won Bigg Boss 19, recently found herself at the centre of controversy after a promotional event clip went viral. The video featured her Dil Dhokha Aur Desire co-stars Kunwar Amar and Ali Hasan during a live performance segment. Now, addressing the incident, Akanksha has opened up about what really happened and why she felt uncomfortable on stage. "They should have acted more responsibly," she said.

'The Segment Was Pre-Decided'

Explaining the context, Akanksha clarified that the act was planned in advance. The trio had earlier shot a promotional reel and were asked to recreate the same performance live at the event.

Since it was a live show and the crowd response was overwhelming, the energy on stage was high. However, she revealed that her outfit restricted her movements, which added to her discomfort during the performance.



'The Skit Continued Longer Than Planned'

According to Akanksha, the original brief was simple: the actor playing her husband in the show was supposed to intervene with the help of a bodyguard, after which the skit would conclude.

However, things did not unfold exactly as planned. "I thought we

were already done with this skit, but then it continued because we had a lot of applause from the audience," she explained. She added that in the heat of the moment, her co-actors became "a little too excited," which caused the act to stretch beyond what was initially decided.

'I Wasn't Comfortable'

Akanksha stated that while her co-stars did not intend to make her uncomfortable, they momentarily forgot their moral responsibility toward their colleague during the live performance.

"They did not intend to do what they were doing, but I think they should have acted more responsibly. I wasn't comfortable," she said in an interview with Hauterfly.

She also emphasised that her lack of visible reaction at the time should not be misinterpreted as enjoyment. The segment, as it unfolded on stage, was not entirely aligned with what had been planned.

Parineeti Chopra

And Raghav Chadha Share Glimpse Of 'Little Sanctuary' For Son Neer

Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha are enjoying their parenthood phase. The actress often shares glimpses of her motherhood. And now she shared photos of a little sanctuary created for her son Neer. The actress has shared in detail what this means and how she created this.

Taking to her Instagram handle, Parineeti Chopra shared the photos of the little nursery and wrote, "Our little sanctuary for Neer. As first time parents, we wanted our nursery to feel calm and meditative from the moment you walked in. Soft sunlight, cool breeze, gentle tones, and a quiet, classic aesthetic that feels true to the both of us. We never wanted it loud or filled with too many shades for the initial months of Postpartum. Colours and chaos should come after 3 months. Just warmth, healing energy, and a space where the three of us could simply be together. Calm bhajans playing in the background, soft breeze from the window enveloping us - our idea of love. (with a view to die for! I cannot move forward without thanking those who brought this to life.



Love and peace, Parineeti and Raghav."

On February 21, Parineeti shared a bunch of pictures that featured glimpses from her trip to Delhi, Dubai, and Ambala. Some of the pictures also featured her baby

boy, Neer. Parineeti Chopra, or PC Junior as she calls herself, often shares moments from her vacations. Today, she posted a series of 'random tidbits' from different places that she visited during the winter. A few pictures featured Neer's sweet things. Without revealing her son's face, the actress dropped pictures of his BMW stroller and his 'garden mornings' in Delhi. She even gave a glimpse of her suitcase, which is filled with Neer's toys and clothes. She even offered a peek into her date night with Raghav. In her caption, she described her photodump without revealing much. On the work front, Parineeti is all set to return with a series titled Talaash: A Mother's Search. Directed by Renil D Sliva, the series also features Soni Razdan, Anup Soni, Tahir Raj Bhasin and Sumeet Vyas. It is slated to release on Netflix soon.



Why Karan Kundrra Feels A Happy Relationship Keeps Distractions Away



Karan Kundrra and Tejaswi Prakash continue to rule hearts as one of the most loved and visually adored couples in the Indian television industry. Having been together for over five years, the duo proves time and again that strong relationships can thrive even amid hectic shooting schedules and constant public attention. The couple never misses an opportunity to surprise each other and always finds moments to reconnect, no matter how demanding their professional lives become.

Karan Kundrra Opens Up About Rushing Back to Tejaswi After Work

In an interaction with IANS, Karan spoke candidly about how deeply rooted Tejaswi has become in his everyday life. He revealed that once work wraps up, his only priority is reaching her as quickly as possible. "As soon as I pack up, I am like, where is Teja, where are you,, should I come here, should I come there? Yeah, it's like this."

Karan on Staying Focused in a Relationship

Addressing the idea of distractions in the entertainment industry, Karan shared a grounded and heartfelt perspective on love and commitment. He explained how being genuinely happy in a relationship naturally keeps one centred. "Be it this industry, be it any other industry, once you are in a happy place, in a happy relationship, you just want to be with that one person who has become your world. You just get drawn towards each other because that's also your place where you want to be as soon as you finish work."

Karan further emphasised his belief in traditional romance, highlighting how finding the right partner brings clarity and emotional stability. "I feel at the end of the day, for us, love is still old school, once you find the right person, then there's no reason for you to get carried away and, you don't feel absolutely distracted infact you only feel more and more attracted to your person."

Karan Kundrra's Tejaswi Tattoo Sends Fans Into a Frenzy

Recently, Karan left fans stunned after he was spotted flaunting what appeared to be a portrait tattoo of Tejaswi Prakash on his chest. During a Ramzan celebration in Mumbai, the actor unbuttoned his purple-printed kurta, revealing an intricate image inked on the right side of his chest.

Karan Johar Calls Bollywood Actors 'Insecure', Says 'Nobody Is Loyal In This Business'



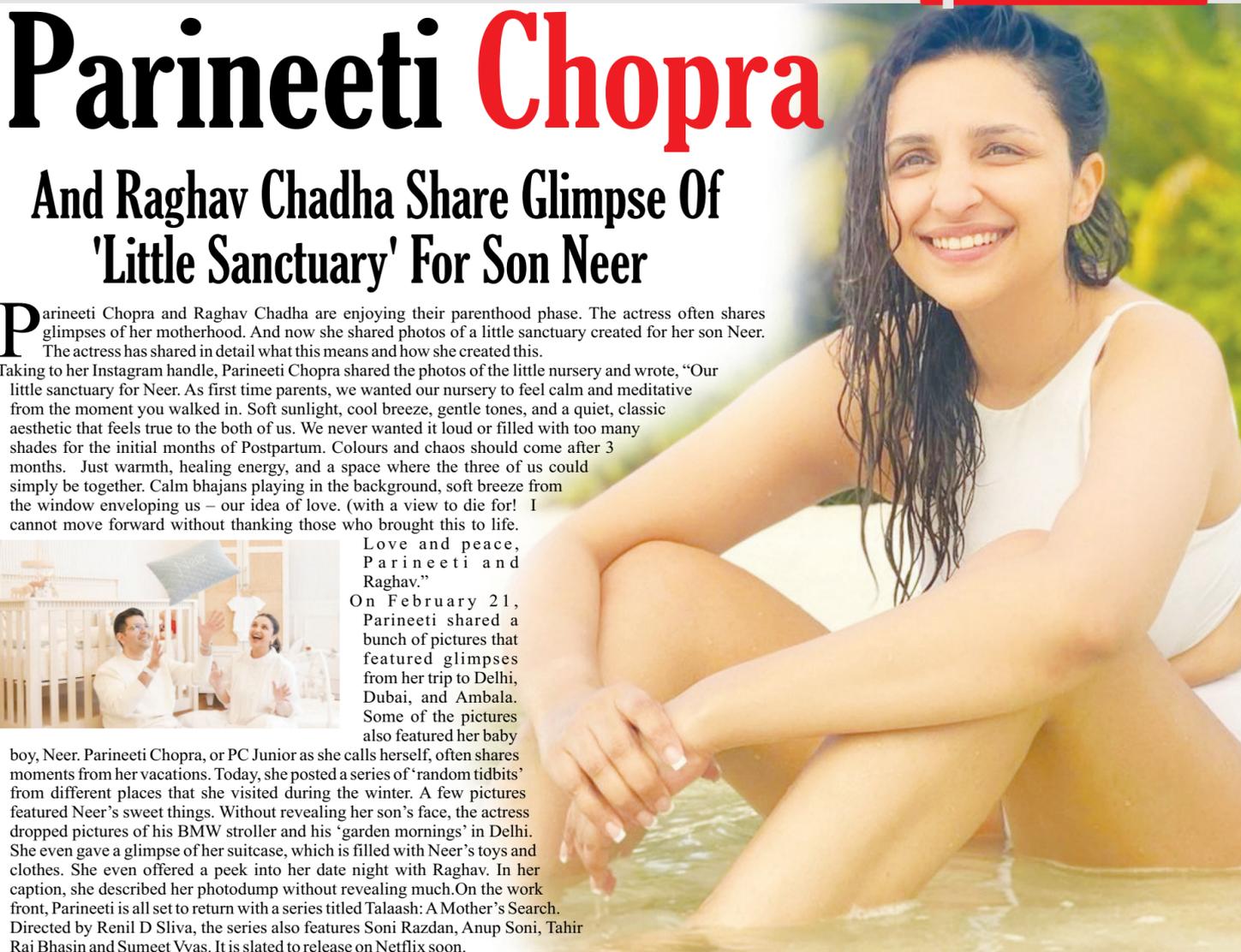
Karan Johar, who also owns Dharma Cornerstone Artist Agency (DCAA), has said that talent management is a 'thankless job'. In a recent interview, the filmmaker called the actor 'insecure' and explained how artists today keep moving on from one agency to another. Though KJo did not name anyone, he stated that "nobody is really loyal" in the showbiz world. "Every two years, people are shifting from one agency to another because they are so insecure that they feel we are time-bound. Nobody is loyal in this business; actors just keep hopping and skipping. So you put two years of your life into a talent and they suddenly move somewhere else and then they don't like it there and they want to come back to you. This is a vicious circle," Karan told Sarthak Ahuja, as quoted by SCREEN.

KJo went on to say that artist management is all about "handling people, egos, insecurities and it's not easy."

"If you look at talent management as a business opportunity, nothing is going to happen. After being in the business for 31 years, I have become zen about success and failure because I feel like my joy and sorrow cannot be the result of my success and failure, because then I will be in an ICU," he added.

Karan further claimed that it is difficult to make money by just artist associations and therefore, many agencies are now finding equity partnerships with their talent to monetise those partnerships. "Just commission on artists is going to give you nothing because artists are nobodies. They are absolutely nobodies, voh kisi ke nahi hain," he said.

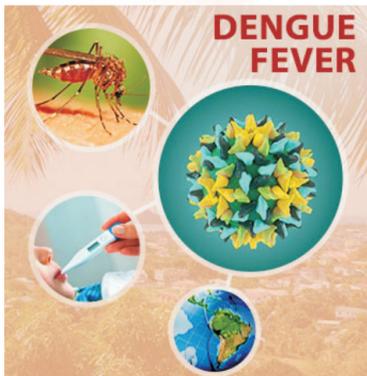
It should be noted that Karan Johar's comments come months after Janhvi Kapoor left his DCAA and moved to Collective Artist Network. For now, Karan's agency handles actors like Rohit Saraf, Sara Ali Khan, Shanaya Kapoor and Rasha Thadani, among others.





5 countries using method to keep

Dengue in check



hosts, VCRC director P Jambulingam said. "When female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes draw blood infected with the dengue virus from humans, these insects become potential transmitters of dengue. They can inject the virus into the next person they draw blood from," he said at the 13th Conference on Vectors and Vector-Borne Diseases held in Chennai on Monday. "Studies show *Wolbachia* retains the virus in the insect's abdomen and does not let it migrate to its salivary gland." The research institute will test the bacteria in its laboratory from March, with eggs of mosquitoes infected with *Wolbachia* from Monash University in Australia.

In 2016, more than 11 lakh people across the country tested positive for dengue and more than 200 died of the disease, data from the National Vector Control Programme shows. In the past six years, more than 30,000 people in Tamil Nadu tested positive and nearly 100 people died due to dengue. If the research is successful, the Union health ministry believes it could eliminate dengue from the country or at least out the brakes on the disease.

Research by the Australian scientists showed *Wolbachia* from fruit flies can block the dengue virus in mosquitoes. The Indian Council of Medical Research has signed a memorandum with Monash University to study the impact of the bacteria countering dengue.

"We have tried traditional vector control measures such as fogging, mosquito nets,

spraying insecticide and clearing larvae from breeding sources," ICMR director Dr Soumya Swaminathan said. "But they have largely been ineffective. We have not been able to bring down dengue. It's time we look for biocontrol mechanisms." In the first phase of the research, officials will allow breeding of bacteria-infected eggs in a cage with adult mosquitoes carrying the dengue virus. "We hope that in less than 10 weeks, the insects will be infected," Jambulingam said. "Then we'll check if the virus is retained in the insects' abdomen. If it is, we will launch these insects in the field."

At least five countries including Vietnam, Indonesia and Brazil are testing *Wolbachia*-infected mosquitoes to check the spread of dengue.

Dr Soumya said ICMR is keeping tabs on research by private company Oxitec, which uses advanced genetics to insert a self-limiting gene into mosquitoes.

The gene is passed on to the insect's offspring, so genetically engineered male mosquitoes released in the wild mate with wild females and their offspring inherit the self-limiting trait. The resulting offspring die before reaching adulthood and local mosquito populations decline.

Former ICMR director N K Ganguly said to control dengue, the country needs better disease burden assessment. "That requires a

better reporting system," he said. "We should strengthen evidence-based outbreak management. We still have a long way to go."



Here's the buzz for people in Tamil Nadu, a state in which mosquitoes infect an average of 5,000 people with dengue each year and 100 deaths have been recorded in the past six years.

Scientists at Vector Control Research Centre (VCRC), Puducherry, will soon induce *Wolbachia* bacteria from fruit flies in the primary transmitter of the dengue virus, the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, to slow or prevent the spread of the life-threatening ailment.

Once we introduce it in mosquitoes, the *Wolbachia* bacteria will hopefully block the dengue virus (flavivirus) from infecting new

Lowering systolic BP below 120 may prevent early death

Intensive treatment to lower systolic (top number) blood pressure to below 120 mm Hg can prevent 107,500 early deaths every year, according to a new study.

Systolic blood pressure refers to the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. The bottom number, diastolic, refers to the pressure between beats.

Current guidelines recommend keeping systolic blood pressure below 140 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury).

However, the results also revealed that there

was a 27 per cent reduction in mortality from all causes when systolic blood pressure was lowered to below 120, compared to the standard treatment of lowering blood pressure to below 140 mm Hg.

"If fully implemented, intensive lowering of systolic blood pressure could prevent about 107,500 deaths per year," said researchers at Loyola University in Chicago.

For the study, published in the journal *Circulation*, the team enrolled more than 9,350 adults aged 50 and older who had high blood pressure and were at high risk for cardiovascular disease.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a leading risk factor for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other health problems.

While saving lives, an intensive blood pressure regimen also would cause serious side effects, the researchers said.

The study estimated that approximately 56,100 more episodes of low blood pressure, 34,400 more episodes of fainting and 43,400 additional electrolyte disorders would occur annually with implementation of intensive systolic blood pressure lowering in US adults.

But most of these effects do not have lasting consequences and are reversible by lowering blood pressure medications, the researchers noted.



Smoking ban in public places may help improve health

places may help improve health

Researchers have found evidence that a ban on smoking in public places could be an effective measure to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke which has long been associated with negative health effects. "The study findings highlight the impact of smoke-free policies, which contradict the hypothesis driven by the tobacco industry that smoke-free legislation merely displace smoking from public to private places," said lead author Esteve Fernandez of the Catalan Institute of Oncology in Spain. The study of second-hand smoke exposure after two smoking bans in Spain showed that overall exposure can be decreased across all settings by comprehensive legislative efforts.

The researchers reviewed approximately 2,500 adult non-smokers' self-reported rates of tobacco smoke exposure in several public and private settings following smoking bans in 2006 and 2011.

While the 2006 smoking ban prohibited smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces (except in hospitality venues), in 2011, it was extended to all hospitality venues and selected outdoor areas (hospital campuses, educational centres, and playgrounds). The survey results, published in the journal *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, showed significantly lower exposure following the second legislation, with participants reporting their overall exposure falling from 72 per cent in 2006 to 45 per cent in 2011. Exposure decreased across all locations surveyed, beyond the workplaces and hospitality settings covered by the 2011 legislation.

For example, exposure also decreased in residences from 29 per cent to 13 per cent and in transportation spaces from 41 per cent to 13 per cent.

"Exposure to second-hand smoke in selected outdoor settings may be further reduced by extending smoke-free legislation," said senior author Maria J. Lopez of the Public Health Agency of Barcelona, Spain.