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Nation paying heavy price for substance, style of Modi's foreign policy: Congress

Jairam Ramesh accuses PM of moral cowardice after Khamenei killing, criticises India-US trade deal and handling of regional tensions

New Delhi.(Agency) The Congress on Sunday said the government's response to the war unleashed on Iran has been a betrayal of India's values, principles and interests, as it claimed that the nation is paying a heavy price for both the substance and style of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy.

himself. "Modi visited Israel on February 25-26, 2026, at a time when the entire world was aware that a US-Israeli military attack on Iran for regime change was imminent. The assault began just two days after Mr. Modi left Israel where his speech to the Knesset was a display of shameful moral cowardice," Ramesh said on X. "The Modi government's response to the war unleashed on Iran that has involved targeted assassinations has been a betrayal of India's values, principles, concerns, and interests," he alleged. Ramesh's remarks come after Iranian

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States. State media reported that the 86-year-old was killed in an air strike targeting his compound in downtown Tehran. In his post on X, Ramesh lashed out at the Modi government's foreign policy. "The US President continues his romance with Pakistan, applauding again and again the very man whose inflammatory remarks provided the backdrop to the terror attacks in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025. The US has also categorically come out in support of Pakistan's war



on Afghanistan," he said. The US President has, at last count, claimed a hundred times that he had intervened to halt Operation Sindoor on May 10, 2025 using the threat of increased tariffs on India's exports to the US, Ramesh said. "But the PM is

completely silent on these assertions of President Trump. The first announcement of the halt to Operation Sindoor was made by the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio at 5:37 PM on May 10, 2025," he said. Ramesh further pointed out that on February 2nd, 2026 President Trump declared that - at Prime Minister Modi's request - the India-US trade deal had been finalised and is coming into effect immediately. "That this was a desperate move by Mr. Modi who was attempting to divert the headlines from the issues raised by Rahul Gandhi in Parliament is clearly obvious," he claimed.

Judicial Council calls on UN security council to immediately intervene and stop escalating war

The Sikh Times

New Delhi ( News Varta) In an urgent appeal to the global community, the Judicial Council has formally written to the United Nations Security Council calling for immediate international intervention to halt the rapidly escalating military confrontation involving the United States, Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Council's letter emphasizes the catastrophic humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical consequences of the conflict, asserting that immediate action is essential to prevent further loss of life and preserve the framework of international law. The Judicial Council's appeal comes at a critical moment. On 28 February 2026, the United States and Israel launched a series of military

strikes against targets inside the Islamic Republic of Iran, Killing its supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei and military personnel leading to a dramatic escalation in hostilities across the Middle East. Iran responded with missile attacks against Israeli territory and U.S. forces in the region, marking a dangerous expansion of the conflict that now threatens global security and stability. These developments prompted an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council convened to address the situation and seek pathways toward de-escalation and diplomacy. In its letter to the Security Council, the Judicial Council stresses the urgent need for immediate ceasefire measures, robust diplomatic engagement, and a renewed commitment to international law. The council's appeal cites

the gravest concerns over the deteriorating



humanitarian situation, civilian casualties,

and the risk of the conflict expanding beyond the Middle East, undermining decades of efforts to secure peace and uphold the international rules-based order. "We are witnessing a moment of profound peril," said Rajiv Agnihotri Chairman of Judicial Council. "The world cannot afford to stand by while war engulfs entire regions. Our appeal to the United Nations Security Council is rooted in the conviction that international law, human rights, and peace must prevail over military escalation. We urge decisive action now to protect civilians, uphold legal norms, and restore avenues for negotiation." The Judicial Council's intervention highlights several key legal and moral imperatives: Violation of the UN Charter: The use of force by any state outside of clear self-defense or Security

Council authorization risks breaching the foundational principles of the United Nations Charter. The Judicial Council underscores that all parties must adhere to their treaty obligations to prevent further erosion of global legal norms. Humanitarian Protection: Thousands of civilians are already reported injured or killed, and the destruction of critical infrastructure is triggering deepening humanitarian distress. The Council calls for immediate measures to protect civilians and ensure unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. Risk of Wider Conflict: The escalation risks drawing regional and global powers into a broader confrontation, with unpredictable consequences for international peace and security.

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Advertisement for Tribes Art Fest 2026, a painting exhibition at Travancore Palace, K.G. Marg, New Delhi, on 02 March 2026. The ad features a collage of tribal art, a quote from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and details about the event including highlights like live painting, workshops, and guest appearances by Shri Jual Oram and Shri Durgadas Uikey.

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## News box

## Truck crashes into dumper after it brakes suddenly, driver dies

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 38-year-old truck driver died on Feb 22 after he got trapped inside the mangled cabin of his vehicle following a collision with a speeding dumper near Bilaspur Chowk a day earlier. Following the accident, the dumper driver fled the spot with his vehicle.

The deceased, Umesh Kumar, a native of Pratapgarh district in Uttar Pradesh, worked as a driver for transporter Praveen Yadav. Yadav filed a complaint on Friday and police registered a complaint under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the BNS against the unidentified dumper driver. The victim's employer told police that he and the victim's family were earlier traumatised due to Umesh's death and could not lodge an immediate complaint.

According to the complaint filed at the Bilaspur police station, Umesh was driving his truck from Delhi to Bhiwadi when the accident took place on Feb 21. Around 4.40am, when he reached Bilaspur Chowk, a dumper truck, moving ahead of him at a very high speed, suddenly applied brakes and came to a stop. Umesh could not control his vehicle and crashed into the rear of the dumper.

The impact left him trapped inside the cabin of the truck.

While trapped, Umesh called his employer and informed him about the accident, stating that his legs were severely injured. "After receiving the call, I immediately reached the spot where our truck was parked on the roadside but the driver was already being taken to a nearby hospital," Praveen, a Rajasthan resident, said. A passer-by informed the police control room about the accident. The victim was first admitted to a private hospital near Bilaspur Chowk and later shifted to hospitals in Rewari and Jaipur due to his critical condition. His family also reached the Jaipur hospital, where he died during treatment at SMS Trauma Centre in Jaipur on February 22. An officer said efforts are on to identify and trace the dumper driver involved in the accident through technical intelligence. Further investigation is in progress.

## Man crossing road mowed down by truck in Manesar

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 21-year-old factory staffer died after a truck hit him while he was crossing the road near IMT Manesar on Friday afternoon. The truck driver was arrested on the spot and the vehicle was seized. Nitesh Kumar, who was from Begusarai district of Bihar, recently started working as a helper at an industrial unit in Sector 7, IMT Manesar and lived with his elder brother in Bhangrola village. According to a complaint filed by his brother Avnish Kumar, the accident took place around 1pm when Nitesh was walking towards Baas village market to buy household supplies. A canter bearing registration number DL1LAQ2810, coming from Naharpur towards Sector 8, allegedly hit him while being driven at high speed near Bhangrola T-Point. Passersby informed the police control room following which an emergency response vehicle reached the spot and shifted the injured to Civil Hospital Gurgaon, where doctors declared him dead. The truck driver, Anuj Singh Rajawant (34), a native of UP Uttar Pradesh, was detained at the spot and his truck was impounded.

A case was registered under Sections 281 (rash driving) and 106(1) (causing death due to negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at IMT Manesar police station.

## Two offer jobs abroad & net Rs 70 lakh from aspirants; held in Noida

Noida.(Agency)

Two men were arrested for allegedly cheating jobseekers by offering fake overseas employment.

According to cops, the duo Niyaz Ahmad alias Armaan (43), a resident of Jamia Nagar in Delhi, and Raju Shah (33), a resident of Haryana, duped over 100 people across multiple states and netted more than Rs 70 lakh. The fraud came to light on Feb 27, when Tirumurthy, a resident of Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, approached Sector 126 police station,



claiming that some men had defrauded him of Rs 1.5 lakh by showing him fake job advertisements and were demanding more money. Manisha Singh, ADCP of Noida, said Tirumurthy called the accused on WhatsApp and was asked to come near Supernova Building in Sector 94. At 11.37pm, a white Tata Nexon car approached from the direction of Supernova—just as planned. When the complainant signalled, cops cordoned off the area and arrested the two accused and seized the vehicle. Police found nine Indian passports, four mobile phones, one laptop, several fake passports, airline tickets, forged visas and Rs 73,500 in cash in their possession. A case was registered under sections 318(4) (cheating), 61(2) (criminal conspiracy), and 340(2) (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record) of BNS and relevant sections of the IT Act.

# 7 police teams look for attackers of Ghaziabad YouTuber, no arrests yet

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

More than 24 hours after two men stabbed a 55-year-old businessman and YouTuber at his office in Loni, leaving him with life-threatening injuries, police are yet to make any arrests. DCP (rural) Surendranath Tiwari said on Saturday an FIR has been registered against two unidentified assailants for the attack on Saleem Wastik and five others, based on a complaint from Wastik's son under BNS sections 109 (1) (attempt to murder) and 3(5) (common intention) of BNS. Police are examining various possible motives, including personal enmity and ideological differences. Among those named by Wastik's son as suspects are Azgar Ali, who is believed to be a functionary of AIMIM. The others are Asfaq, Sonu, Shahrukh and Bhati. "We have formed seven teams and looked at footage from more than 150 CCTV cameras to identify the attackers. We have some leads and we hope to solve the case soon," Tiwari said. Wastik remains critical and his statement is yet to be



recorded. "The motive will become clear only after the accused are arrested," he said. Around 6am on Friday, the attackers arrived on a bike and parked outside Wastik's office. After asking children

standing nearby to leave, they entered the office, assaulted him and stabbed him multiple times in the abdomen and near the throat. They fled as family members rushed in. He was first taken to a nearby

private hospital and later referred to GTB Hospital in Delhi. Wastik was known for posting videos on social media questioning fundamentalist practices. Asked about the motive of the attack, his son Usman told TOI on Saturday some people were unhappy with his father's views and could be behind the attack. "He is still in the ICU. Doctors are concerned about the throat injury," he said. The exact reason behind the attack can only be revealed by my father. I suspect the five persons against whom I've filed a complaint of orchestrating the attack on him." Sources in Lucknow said chief minister Yogi Adityanath had taken cognisance of the attack and directed police to ensure speedy arrest and an impartial investigation in the case. Among locations searched for the suspects are two places in Delhi and two in Ghaziabad. "During the raids, certain important clues were obtained, on the basis of which further action is on," said a source.

## Thar driver flees pump in Badalpur without paying, drags staffer's bike for 5km

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 22-year-old man was arrested on Friday after trying to flee a fuel station without paying for diesel and then dragging a motorcycle for more than 5km after it became lodged in the bumper of his Thar during the escape bid. The accused, Harsh, a resident of Bulandshahr, had come to his uncle's house in Dujana village. According to RK Gautam, additional DCP (Central Noida), Harsh reached a fuel station near the NTPC cut in Badalpur around 6.30pm, driving a Thar without a number plate. "He asked the salesperson, Kuldeep Sharma, to fill the tank and said he would make an online payment. But after the tank was full and Kuldeep went to get the POS machine, Harsh started the vehicle and fled," Gautam said.

Sharma got on his motorcycle and chased



the Thar. On Dadri bypass, when Sharma tried to stop the vehicle, Harsh did not halt. During the attempt, his motorcycle collided with the Thar and he skidded off, falling onto the road at a distance. The

motorcycle, however, got stuck in the bumper of the SUV. The Thar continued moving, dragging it for about 5km, with sparks seen along the way.

Sharma was admitted to a private hospital. Police said his condition was stable and treatment was underway.

A police team cordoned off the area after receiving information and arrested Harsh about an hour after the incident. The Thar was seized, and police said they were checking CCTV footage from the fuel station. Based on Sharma's complaint, an FIR was registered at Badalpur police station under BNS sections 109 (attempt to murder), 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 324(4) (mischief causing damage of Rs 50) against Harsh.

## 1 killed, student injured in Aligarh shooting over 'ragging dispute'



Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 28-year-old man was killed and a college student injured after two men allegedly opened fire near a bridge outside Shri Varshney Mahavidyalaya in Aligarh around 12.45pm on Saturday, shortly after a Holi Milan function, with police

suspecting a dispute linked to ragging and past enmity as the motive.

Anshu Tomar, a factory labourer from Aligarh, died at the spot after sustaining a gunshot wound while Prithviraj Chauhan, 25, a third-year BA student, suffered a bullet injury to his leg and was admitted to

hospital, where doctors said he was out of danger. A case has been registered under BNS sections 103 (murder) and section 109 (attempt to murder).

DSP Kamlesh Kumar said, "We received information that Dheeraj Thakur and another individual identified as Golu Thakur arrived on a motorcycle and allegedly fired at the two. Anshu was shot in the back, while Prithviraj sustained a gunshot wound to the leg." Prithviraj alleged that Thakur, a student of DS College, had been harassing fellow students through ragging for some time. He claimed he had confronted the accused earlier, which led to a dispute between them.

He also said he had earlier implicated him in a false case, resulting in his imprisonment. Police said preliminary investigation also pointed to an earlier rivalry between the parties. "The accused and the victims knew each other and had an existing dispute," Kumar said.

## Vipul CEO held after probe as investors allege 6-crore fraud in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Puneet Beriwal, the CEO of real estate enterprise Vipul Limited, was arrested for allegedly cheating a group of lawyers of Rs 6 crore by promising quick and double returns on their investments.

In April 2024, Beriwal allegedly induced multiple lawyers from the Rohtak and Gurgaon Bar Associations to invest a total of Rs 6 crore in what he described as a new real estate project. Police said he promised to double the money within a short period and assured quick repayment. To build credibility, Beriwal allegedly executed multiple written agreements and issued cheques totalling more than Rs 4.1 crore. The FIR states he also verbally assured the investors that their dues would be cleared from the sale proceeds of V Club on Sohna Road. The FIR was registered on Oct 1, 2025, at Shivaji Nagar police station on a complaint by advocate Anil Kumar. Police alleged that after receiving



the funds, Beriwal stopped responding to calls, did not repay the investors, and failed to honour the cheques. In Aug last year, the lawyers staged a protest outside V Club, raising slogans and demanding strict legal action against him. A team from economic offences wing (EOW) arrested 62-year-old Beriwal from the city on Friday. Police said he is

originally from Malviya Nagar in Delhi and currently lives in Sector 42. An FIR was registered against Beriwal and others under IPC Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 420 (cheating) at Shivaji Nagar police station, after which the case was transferred to the EOW for investigation. The EOW has alleged that the funds were diverted to other projects

instead of being returned, leading to allegations of cheating, criminal breach of trust, and conspiracy. Police said they are examining financial transactions linked to the accused. The FIR also names Beriwal's associates, Sunil Bhandari and Praveen Gupta. "Beriwal was produced before a court in the city on Saturday, which sent

him to two days' police custody" said police.

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# 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" cases 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 appli-



names and photos to harass, defame or solicit indecent messages. A

tion of five to 10 per cent for allowing their accounts to be used," the officer

ferred 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 NAT-GRID. "Fraudsters are constantly adapting and finding new ways to target unsuspecting citizens. While enforcement is catching up, awareness among people is the strongest shield against cybercrime," the DCP said.

## 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.

## Bus catches fire in G'gram, none hurt

Gurugram: A moving bus suddenly caught fire in Gurugram on Thursday. The driver and conductor were able to escape in time. Firefighters were able to extinguish the flame, but the bus was completely gutted. The cause of the fire has not been ascertained yet but it is believed to have been caused due to a short circuit. The police are investigating the matter. According to the police, the incident took place in the Sector 59 area, this morning, when the bus was leaving a parking lot to ferry the employees of a private company. Suddenly, the bus caught fire and panic ensued.

Within moments, the entire bus was engulfed in flames. Soon, police and fire brigade teams reached the spot. The police said that the bus was registered in the name of Nitin Rathi of Bahadurgarh.

## Delhi's Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood inspects EWS flats at Bhalswa

New Delhi: Delhi's Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood on Monday inspected the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) flats at Bhalswa and reiterated the government's commitment to providing dignified housing to residents of jhuggi and slum settlements. After the inspection, the minister said, "The Delhi Government is fully committed to providing dignified housing to residents of jhuggi and slum settlements." He noted that nearly 7,400 EWS flats were constructed at the site, but due to delays in allotment, the buildings had fallen into a severely dilapidated condition. He said that the visit was aimed at assessing the condition of the flats and initiating reconstruction and repair work. Sood said that the issue had been a matter of concern for Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who remained committed to ensuring a better and more dignified life for families living in jhuggi settlements, particularly children. Emphasising accountability, the minister said the flats were built using taxpayers' money and that the government was considering proper redevelopment and transparent allotment to eligible beneficiaries. He added that the process was at a preliminary stage and that technical inspections of the existing structures were underway. The minister also clarified that no jhuggi resident would be displaced and that housing would be provided through in-situ development, redevelopment or rehabilitation plans.

## 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—Aftab and Sufyan, 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.

## Judicial Council calls on UN security council to immediately intervene and stop escalating war

In addition to legal arguments, the Judicial Council letter highlights a broader moral case for intervention. "History will judge us by the choices we make today," Sanjay Arora Honorary Secretary Judicial Council. "We call on the Security Council to act with courage and conviction, to defend international law, and to protect humanity from the horrors of unchecked war."

## Gurugram: Main accused in cab driver's murder held

Gurugram: The police arrested the main accused in the murder of a 25-year-old cab driver. The deceased was identified as Suraj, a native of Murena in Madhya Pradesh. The accused, also a cab driver, revealed that he, along with his other friends, booked the cab online. On the way, they strangled Suraj to death with a muffler. After committing the crime, they dumped the body in a field and fled with his cab. The police have recovered the car used in the crime from his possession. In a complaint, Suraj's family members alleged that he was kidnapped. Suraj left home on January 27 afternoon, but never returned. His mobile phone was also found switched off while his location was found in Delhi. The police registered a case at the Sector 9 police station. During investigation, they came to know that Suraj was murdered after being kidnapped. The police arrested the main accused from the Basai area on Thursday. He was identified as Shanu (21), a native of Purvabholl village, Auriya district in Uttar Pradesh. "Shanu revealed that he, along with his other accomplices, booked a cab online. After a short distance, they asked the driver to stop the car on the pretext of urinating. In the meantime, they grabbed Suraj from behind and strangled him to death with a muffler. They later dumped his body in a field in Farrukhnagar and fled with his taxi. We are trying to nab other accused," said a spokesperson for the Gurugram police.

## Police nab two accused wanted in elderly woman's murder case from Delhi

Amritsar: Days after the brutal murder of an elderly woman by her tenants, the Sadar police have nabbed the two suspects from Delhi. The arrested were identified as Gurdev Singh and Shamsheer Singh alias Shera, confirms Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar. Veena Rani (65), a retired employee of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), was allegedly murdered by her two tenants at Indira Colony on Majitha Road here, in the intervening night of January 28-29. According to police, the two tenants had organised a party and invited the deceased's son, Varinder, on the pretext of celebrating a visa approval for one of the accused. During the gathering, the accused allegedly served him spiked drinks before committing the crime. The incident came to light when another woman, living on rent on the upper floor of the house, raised an alarm after finding the woman lying in a pool of blood in her room, while her son was asleep in the nearby room. The accused decamped

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

**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, Harmela Street, IRIS, Vatika 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.

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

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG Wife of JC-355017 Rank-NB/SUB Name-MOGHAL MOHAMMAD BAIG Presently residing at 9-5-5, ANDHRA PRADESH, PERALAI, CHIRALA PRAKASAM DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH-523157, have changed my name from MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG to FATHIMA SHAIK for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 16/07/2025 before First Class Magistrate, Shillong, Meghalaya.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Jugal Kishor S/o Lila Dhar R/o H.No-196 S/F, Kh.No-619/21, Chatter Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110074 have changed the name of my minor daughter namely Kishna Devi aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as Priya.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Farman S/o Akeel Ahmed R/o B 272/27, Gali No 4, Subhash Mohalla North Ghonda, Garhi Mendu, Bhajan Pura, North East, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Farman Ahmed.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Atif S/o Manzoor Khan R/o 1/99-C, 4/F, Gali No-5, Guru Harkrishan School Wali Gali, Kabil Nagar, Gokal Pur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Atif Khan.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Akash S/o Samarjeet Gupta R/o E-400-D, Block E, Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave, East Delhi, Delhi-110096 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sonam Sav.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I hitherto known as Laxman Yadav alias Bhavikshan Yadav S/O Bechan Yadav R/O Gram Debra, Post Bela, Thana Babubarhi, Ward No-02, Bela, PO Bela, Dist Madhubani, Bihar-847224 Has changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhavikshna Yadav.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as ASHISH KUMAR RATHOR S/O PURAN LAL R/O C-48, RAJEEV NAGAR BEGUM PUR, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110086, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAZA AHMED.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY S/O LATE SH. LAXMAN CHAUDHARY Permanent R/o Parsauni Khrohdar, Sitamarhi, Bihar-843325 and Presently Residing at Plot No. B-20, Second Floor, Dass Garden, Baprola Vihar, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SANJAY CHOUDHARY in my minor daughter namely SHIWANGI CHOUDHARY aged 17 years in her 10th class Marksheet. The actual name of mine is SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY, which may be amended accordingly.

**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, SANTOSH KUMAR S/O VISHVA NATH PRADESH residing at PLOT NO-58859, FLAT NO-2, STREET NO-5, HAVENS GARDEN MATIALA, DELHI-110059 have changed my name to SANTOSH KUMAR GUPTA for all future purposes

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Anil Balakrishna Panicker s/o Angakattil Narayan Balakrishna Panicker R/o A-6/334-A, Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Anil Bala Panicker permanently.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, NIDHI AGGARWAL YADAV D/o VIRENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL, and Ex. Wife of AMIT YADAV, R/o H.No.E-12, Hauz Khas, South West Delhi-110016, declare that I got divorce from my Ex. Husband AMIT YADAV vide Court Decree HMA No. 603/2019 dated 30-04-2019, further I have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NIDHI AGGARWAL. I also have changed the name of my minor son namely AAYAN YADAV, aged 16 years and my minor daughter namely ARSHIYA YADAV, aged 13 years and they shall hereafter be known as AAYAN AGGARWAL and ARSHIYA AGGARWAL respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Jyoti pal W/O Sunil Kumar R/O WZ-125, Village Begumpur, North West Delhi, -110086, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Jyoti in my minor Daughter Shiksha aged 14 years in her school cords and birth certificate no MCDOLR0938299. The actual name is Jyoti Pal.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-320484W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VASUNDHARA, PO-MURSAN, DIST-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 has changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, S VANITHA W/o No. 14838283N Rank-HAV/MT Name-RAAMESH P R/O VILL-SEDRAMPUTTU, PO-SEDRAMPUTTU, TEH-POLLUR, DIST-THIRUVANNAMALAI, TAMIL NADU-632315, have changed my name from S VANITHA to VANITHA R for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 15/07/2025 before Notary Public, Kupwara.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SH AUTAR SINGH Father of JC-413677X Rank-SUB MAJ Name-BHAGAT SINGH presently residing at VILL-BILTIYA SUKOLI TALUK PO-DHAUNTYAL, DIST-PURRI GARHWAL, UTTARAKHAND, 246155 have changed my name from SH AUTAR SINGH to AVTAR SINGH for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 12/03/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

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

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

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Kulsum w/o Rozuddin R/O B-17, Gali No.3A, Near Mohalla Dildash Masjid, Old Mustafabad, Delhi-110094, have changed my name to Kulsom 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.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Tajinder Kaur W/o Jaspreet Singh Baweja R/o 5243 Ramjas Road Karol Bagh Delhi -110005 Have Changed My Name To Tajinder Kaur Baweja For All Purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Sarve Preet Kaur Kochhar W/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 Sarvepreet kaur and Surname Kochhar for all purpose.

NEWS BOX

## Israel says strikes target Iran missile, air defence sites

world. (Agency)

The Israeli military said it launched a fresh wave of strikes targeting Iranian ballistic missile and air defence sites on Sunday, while an AFP journalist in Tehran reported hearing loud explosions.

Tehran's enemies Israel and the United States began waves of strikes on Saturday, calling for regime change in Iran and prompting retaliation from the Islamic Republic.

A military statement said Israeli forces had begun "an additional strike wave targeting the ballistic missile array and the aerial defence systems belonging to the Iranian terror regime", without specifying any location. At least three explosions were heard in Tehran around 0030 GMT, the AFP journalist said.

Israel's military chief Eyal Zamir said on Saturday that the campaign against Iran comes after it "accelerated" its ballistic missile production and continued to promote nuclear weapon research.

"We now face a significant, decisive and unprecedented operation to dismantle the capabilities of the Iranian terrorist regime," he said in a televised statement.

## Death toll from Israeli strike that hit school in south now 108: Iranian Red Crescent



ATLANTA. (Agency)

The Iranian Red Crescent said the death toll from a strike on Saturday that hit a school in the country's south has risen to 108, after the US and Israel launched a wave of attacks on the Islamic republic.

"The number of student martyrs at Minab School has reached 108, and relief and debris removal operations are still ongoing," a spokesperson for the organisation said. AFP was unable to access the location to verify the toll or the circumstances surrounding the incident. When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military did not offer an immediate comment on the reports.

The Pentagon also did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but a CENTCOM spokesperson was quoted by The New York Times as saying: "We are aware of reports concerning civilian harm resulting from ongoing military operations. We take these reports seriously and are looking into them." "The protection of civilians is of utmost importance, and we will continue to take all precautions available to minimise the risk of unintended harm."

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said "this barbaric act is another black page in the record of countless crimes committed by the aggressors". Israel and the US launched a wave of strikes against their longtime foe on Saturday morning. The Iranian Red Crescent said on Saturday evening that at least 201 people had been killed and 747 injured in the attacks.

## Explosion, Gunfire In Kabul As Afghan Forces Shoot At Pakistani Aircraft

world. (Agency)

An explosion followed by multiple rounds of gunfire were reportedly heard in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul,



as fighting between Pakistan and Taliban entered its fourth day on Sunday. The Taliban government said Afghan forces were shooting at Pakistani aircraft.

"Anti-aircraft fire is being directed at Pakistani aircraft in Kabul; residents should not be alarmed," Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid posted on X. Pakistan on Friday bombed Taliban military installations and posts, some of them in Kabul and Kandahar, in one of the deepest incursions into its neighbour in recent years. The escalation came hours after Afghan forces attacked Pakistani border troops in what the Taliban government said was retaliation for deadly airstrikes earlier this week.

After the strikes, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said his country's armed forces can "crush" aggressors. "Our forces have the full capability to crush any aggressive ambitions," he said.

Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif declared an "open war" with the Taliban government.

"Our patience has reached its limit. Now it is open war between us and you," Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif posted on X as the Pakistani military launched operation 'Ghazab Lil Haq' against Afghanistan. Islamabad accuses the Taliban of harbouring the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group, who it says are carrying out attacks inside Pakistan, a charge the Taliban denies. The latest strikes mark the most serious escalation between Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent months, threatening a fragile ceasefire along the 2,600-km frontier.

# US, Israel defend strikes at emergency Security Council meeting as Iran alleges 'war crime'

## UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the council that everything must be done to prevent an escalation.

UNITED NATIONS. (Agency)

The United States and Israel clashed with Iran at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Saturday where the U.N. chief and many countries urged a halt to their attacks and a return to negotiations to prevent the conflict from spreading further into the region and beyond.

Secretary-General António Guterres told the council that everything must be done to prevent an escalation. "The alternative," he warned, "is a potential wider conflict with grave consequences for civilians and regional stability." Guterres said the U.S. and Israeli airstrikes violated international law, including the U.N. Charter. He also

condemned Iran's retaliatory attacks for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, insisted the U.S. military action was lawful. "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon," he told the council. "That principle is not a matter of politics. It's a matter of global security. And to that end, the United States is taking lawful actions." Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon defended the airstrikes as necessary to stop an existential threat. "We are stopping extremism before it becomes unstoppable," he said. "We will ensure that no radical regime armed with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles can threaten our people or the entire world." Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the U.N., told the council that the airstrikes have killed and injured hundreds of Iranian civilians, which he called a war crime and a crime against humanity. He blasted the U.N. and the Security Council, its most powerful body, for not heeding Tehran's warnings

about the "warmongering statements" by the U.S. in recent weeks and urged the council to act now. "The issue before the council is straightforward: whether any



member state may, including a permanent member of this council, through the use of force, coercion or aggression, determine the political future or system of another state or impose control over its affairs," Iravani said. During his speech, the Iranian diplomat did not mention or comment on President Donald Trump's statement that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

was killed in the strikes. The assassination of the second leader of the Islamic Republic, who had no designated successor, raised the prospects of a protracted conflict given Iranian threats of retaliation. Iranian and US ambassadors have tense back-and-forth in a rare exchange, the U.S. and Iranian ambassadors traded warnings and direct rebuffs toward the end of the emergency session as military aggression between their countries risked spilling into a regional war. After Waltz responded to Iranian claims that the U.S. had violated international law, Iravani asked to speak again to issue a warning: "I advise to the representative of the United States to be polite. It will be better for yourself and the country you represent." Waltz responded immediately, saying, "This representative sits here, in this body, representing a regime that has killed tens of thousands of its own people, and imprisoned many more, simply for wanting freedom from your entire tyranny."

## How succession works in Iran and who will be the country's next supreme leader

DUBAI. (Agency)

The death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after almost 37 years in power raises paramount questions about the country's future. The contours of a complex succession process began to take shape the morning after Khamenei's assassination.

Here is what to know:

A temporary leadership council assumes duties as outlined in its constitution, Iran on Sunday formed a council to assume leadership duties and govern the country. The council is made up of Iran's sitting president, the head of the country's judiciary and a member of the Guardian Council chosen by Iran's Expediency Council, which advises the supreme leader and settles disputes with parliament. Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian and hard-line judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei are its members who will step in and "temporarily assume all the duties of leadership." A panel of clerics selects a new supreme leader though the leadership council will govern in the interim, an 88-member panel called

the Assembly of Experts "must, as soon as possible", pick a new supreme leader under Iranian law. The panel consists entirely of Shiite clerics who are popularly elected every eight years and whose candidacies are approved by the Guardian Council, Iran's



constitutional watchdog. That body is known for disqualifying candidates in various elections in Iran and the Assembly of Experts is no different. The Guardian Council barred former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate whose administration struck the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, from election for the Assembly of Experts in March 2024. Khamenei's son could be a possible contender. Clerical

deliberations about succession and machinations over it take place far from the public eye, making it hard to gauge who may be a top contender.

Previously, it was thought Khamenei's protégé, hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, may try to take the mantle.

However, he was killed in a May 2024 helicopter crash. That has left one of Khamenei's sons, Mojtaba, a 56-year-old Shiite cleric, as a potential candidate, though he has never held government office. But a father-to-son transfer in the case of a supreme leader could spark anger, not only among Iranians already critical of clerical rule, but also among supporters of the system.

Some may see it as un-Islamic and in line with creating a new, religious dynasty after the 1979 collapse of the U.S.-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's government. A transition like this has happened only once before.

There has been only one other transfer of power in the office of the supreme leader of Iran, the paramount decision-maker since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

## Shipping Companies Tell Vessels To Steer Clear Of Gulf

Paris. (Agency)

Two major shipping groups on Saturday suspended navigation through the Gulf as conflict flared between the United States, Israel and Iran, piling onto a growing maritime slowdown in the region. The announcements came as Iran's Revolutionary Guards had warned several ships that the Strait of Hormuz, the vital waterway for oil from the Gulf, was "basically closed", Iran's Tasnim news agency reported.

France's CMA CGM issued a statement telling its vessels in the Gulf to "take shelter" and also suspended passage through the Suez Canal because of the regional conflict. "All ships currently in the Gulf, or on route to the Gulf, have received the instruction, with immediate effect, to take shelter," said

the statement from CMA CGM, the world's third-largest container shipping company. "Passage through the Suez is suspended until further notice and ships will be rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope," which would prolong the journey by thousands of kilometres, the statement added. Hapag-Lloyd, the world's fifth-largest container shipping company, said it was suspending all transit through the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Gulf to the open seas, "until further notice." Several shipping lines, including Danish giant Maersk, warned clients of possible delivery delays as ships re-routed. The United States for its part warned ships to stay away from the Gulf due to ongoing military activity. The strait, which

Iranian officials have often threatened to block in the event of a US attack, is a key transit point for global oil trade. According to data from maritime analytics site Marine Tracker, traffic through the trade artery has plummeted and a slew of oil tankers have turned around or been stopped at the strait. The EU's naval mission to the Red Sea confirmed that vessels had received radio messages from the IRGC saying the Strait was blocked to traffic, despite no formal closure order. The Strait of Hormuz is frequently the scene of ship seizures and attacks. The vital corridor links the Gulf to the Indian Ocean and is situated between Iran and Oman's Musandam exclave, situated at the tip of a peninsula.

## Questions cloud Trump's case for war against Iran

### Iran "rejected every opportunity to renounce their nuclear ambitions," Trump said in a roughly eight-minute video message posted on social media more than an hour after US strikes began.

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

President Donald Trump made his case for war against Iran early on Saturday as US and Israeli forces bombed the Islamic republic, saying conflict was required to eliminate "imminent threats" from Tehran.

Iran "rejected every opportunity to renounce their nuclear ambitions," Trump said in a roughly eight-minute video message posted on social media more than an hour after US strikes began. "They attempted to rebuild their nuclear program and to continue developing long-range missiles" that "could soon reach the American homeland," the US president said, also

calling on Iranians to overthrow their government. But Iran was said to have signalled in talks that it was willing to cease stockpiling nuclear material, while Tehran may still be years away from developing significant quantities of missiles with intercontinental range -- raising significant questions about Trump's rationale for the conflict. "President Trump did not make a strong case for an imminent threat posed by Iran that would justify the massive joint US-Israeli strikes," said Mona Yacoubian, director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. His call for the Iranian people to prepare to take control underscores that the ambitions here are more akin to regime change," Yacoubian said, also noting that according to intelligence assessments, Iran's nuclear program was "still not close to weaponizing." Trump had repeatedly claimed to have obliterated Tehran's nuclear program in June 2025 strikes, and the US military did not mention nuclear-related sites in a list of targets it had struck on Saturday.

Progress in negotiations? Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi,



who has been mediating talks between Tehran and Washington, said Friday that Iran had agreed to cease stockpiling nuclear material needed to make a weapon -- a major concession he said would have eliminated the nuclear threat. "If you cannot stockpile material that is enriched then there is no way you can actually create a bomb," Albusaidi told CBS's "Face the Nation." "If the ultimate objective is to ensure forever that Iran cannot have a nuclear bomb, I think we have cracked that problem through these negotiations," the foreign minister said. Trump's assertion

that Iranian missiles could "soon" strike the United States is meanwhile called into question by a 2025 Defense Intelligence Agency assessment that said Tehran did not have intercontinental ballistic missiles then, and that it could take until 2035 for it to develop 60 such weapons. Tehran currently possesses short- and medium-range ballistic missiles with ranges that top out at about 1,850 miles (3,000 kilometers), according to the US Congressional Research Service. Aside from nuclear and missile issues, Trump cited other sources of tension with Iran, including the 1979 takeover of the US embassy in Tehran, attacks by Iranian proxy groups on US forces and international shipping in the region, as well as Iran's deadly crackdown on protesters. But proxy attacks on American forces were not currently ongoing, and Trump had hailed a ceasefire last year as having halted attacks on shipping by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels. And while Trump had repeatedly threatened military intervention if Iran killed protesters, he pulled back from ordering strikes last month at the height of Tehran's crackdown on dissent.

## 'He Bet on Bombs': Mystery Trader Made Rs 4 Crore On Tehran Strike Before Missiles Hit

World. (Agency)

Three hours after bombs struck Tehran in a joint U.S.-Israel operation, one anonymous trader was already counting his winnings.

On Polymarket, a crypto-based prediction platform where users buy and sell "YES" or "NO" shares on real-world events, a wallet known as "Magamyman" turned a controversial wager into a windfall. According to blockchain data, the account collected \$431,146 after betting "YES" on a strike scenario weeks before the first missile was reported.

The trade was placed when markets priced the probability at 27 cents, implying just a 27% chance of military action. While diplomats were still negotiating and Oman's foreign minister was signaling that peace talks were within reach, the wallet poured in \$235,947 on the "YES" side.

When the market resolved, each winning share paid out \$1.

The payout wasn't a one-off. Crypto watchers claim the same account has made 88 Iran-focused predictions since October 2024: every



single one tied to escalating deadlines, strike scenarios, or geopolitical flashpoints. Not the Super Bowl. Not U.S. elections. Not Bitcoin. Just Iran.

In another instance cited by traders, the wallet allegedly won \$278,079 betting that Israel would strike Iran by January 31. Now, even as missiles reportedly continue to fly, the account has fresh positions open, including \$78,000 on a "US strikes Iran by March 1" market. The timing is what has triggered alarm. Separate X posts allege the account placed a key trade 71 minutes before news of the strike became public, turning roughly \$87,000 into more than half a million dollars overnight when odds were sitting at 17%. Polymarket itself operates as a decentralized prediction market. Users connect crypto wallets, deposit USDC stablecoins, and trade shares priced between \$0 and \$1. The price reflects crowd probability, 17 cents equals a 17% perceived chance. When an outcome is confirmed, winning shares pay \$1 automatically. Supporters argue prediction markets aggregate information efficiently and often outperform pundits.

NEWS BOX

### Voter count rises in 82 assembly seats despite deletion row, EC data shows

**Kolkata. (Agency)**  
At a time when the ruling All India Trinamool Congress has been alleging unchecked deletion of voters during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, official data released by the Election Commission of India shows that of West Bengal's 294 Assembly constituencies, voter numbers have increased in at least 82 seats compared to the draft electoral roll.  
After the completion of the 116-day-long SIR process, the Election Commission on Saturday published the first phase of the final electoral roll.  
The data shows that 5,46,053 names have been deleted from the draft list at this stage but constituency-wise figures reveal that there are 82 Assembly segments where the number of voters added is higher than the number of deletions, resulting in a net increase.  
Significantly, the list includes two politically sensitive constituencies—Singur and Nandigram.  
According to the Commission's figures, Singur recorded a net increase of 51 voters compared to the draft roll where as in Nandigram, the Assembly seat of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, voter numbers rose by 770.  
An increase in voters has also been recorded in three Kolkata constituencies—Ballygunge, Jorasanko and Beleghata.  
In Cooch Behar district, four Assembly seats have seen a rise, while Malda has five such constituencies. Murshidabad accounts for six, Nadia one, North 24 Parganas four and South 24 Parganas as many as 15 constituencies where voter numbers are higher than in the draft list.

### Siliguri marks National Science Day with tribute to ten pioneering women scientists

**Siliguri. (Agency)**  
Siliguri marked National Science Day with the unveiling of busts of ten pioneering women scientists at the North Bengal Science Centre in Matigara, Darjeeling district, on Saturday.  
The initiative honoured trailblazers such as Kadambini Ganguly, Bibha Chowdhuri, Asima Chatterjee, Kamal Ranadive and Anna Mani, whose contributions across medicine, physics, agriculture, meteorology, engineering and social sciences left a lasting impact on India's scientific progress.  
The occasion also commemorated the discovery of the Raman Effect by C V Raman on February 28, 1928. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930, the first such recognition for an Indian scientist in the field.  
Darjeeling MP Raju Bista attended the unveiling ceremony along with Col Meghna Dave, Dr Neela Bhattacharya and members of the scientific community.  
Expressing optimism, Bista said the installation would inspire visitors, particularly students and young women.  
"I hope those visiting the North Bengal Science Centre will learn about these scientists. It will encourage our youth, especially girls, to pursue excellence in STEM fields," he said.  
The scientists commemorated include E K Janaki Ammal for her work in plant breeding and cytogenetics; Darshan Ranganathan for molecular design; Irawati Karve for pioneering Indian sociology; Archana Sharma for chromosome research; and Rajeshwari Chatterjee for strengthening microwave engineering.

### Kashmir erupts in anti-US protests, MMU calls strike over killing of Iran's leader Khamenei

**Srinagar. (Agency)**  
Thousands of Shia Muslims on Sunday took to the streets in several parts of Kashmir against the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in US-Israel strikes.  
In Srinagar, thousands of demonstrators, many carrying portraits of Ayatollah Khamenei, converged at the iconic Lal Chowk, to protest the killing.  
The protestors chanted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans.  
Protests were also held in several parts of Srinagar, central Kashmir's Budgam and north Kashmir's Baramulla where men and women from the Shia community took out protests. The protests have been peaceful.  
Many protesters expressed deep grief over the death of the Iran's Supreme Leader.  
J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the authorities must ensure that those who are mourning in Jammu and Kashmir are allowed to grieve peacefully.  
"I'm deeply concerned about the unfolding developments in Iran, including the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. I appeal to all communities to remain calm, uphold peace, and avoid any actions that could lead to tension or unrest. We must also ensure that those who are mourning in Jammu and Kashmir are allowed to grieve peacefully. The police and administration should exercise utmost restraint and refrain from using force or restrictive measures," Omar said on X.  
The chief minister said the Government of Jammu & Kashmir is in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs,

# Bombay high court quashes CBI FIRs on 2 telecom group companies over bank loans

**Mumbai. (Agency)**  
In 2 separate judgments, the Bombay high court on Friday quashed 2 FIRs filed by the CBI. One was against GTL Infrastructure Ltd (GTLIL) and others, including unknown public servants, in a cheating and criminal conspiracy case over Rs 11,000 crore loans from a consortium of 19 banks and financial institutions. The other was an FIR against GTL Ltd, a telecom company, for an alleged cheating case for Rs 4,700 crore loans. GTLIL is a sister concern of GTL.  
Chief Justice Shree Chandrasekar-led bench said, "The machinery of the criminal justice system cannot be put in motion for making a roving inquiry. The CBI cannot be permitted to continue with the investigation in this matter in a hope that some day it may identify the offender where no offence is disclosed." The order, available on Saturday, said it has a "wholesome power and seeks to achieve a public purpose that a criminal proceeding ought not to be permitted where it shall amount



to miscarriage of justice".  
In the GTLIL judgment, after hearing CBI counsel Kuldeep Patil, the HC also disbanded the plea that banks colluded. The CJ and Justice Gautam Ankhad reasoned, "The preliminary enquiry continued for 24 months but no specific allegation of conspiracy between the bank officials and GTLIL is stated in the first information report... This is unimaginable that 18 private/public sector banks joined hands and hatched a conspiracy with GTLIL to cover up siphoning of funds."  
On the basis of July 14, 2021, information, a preliminary enquiry was initiated by the CBI into alleged financial impropriety by GTLIL in availing credit facilities. The enquiry said GTLIL was referred for corporate debt restructuring after it claimed an inability to raise equity. The CBI said GTLIL diverted loan funds through vendors which were not repaid, and goods were not supplied but written off.  
GTLIL, represented by senior counsel D P Singh and advocate Sajal Yadav, argued it was incorporated in 2004 and acted within legal bounds. The order said, "Whole case of the CBI seems to have been built on the forensic audit report which did not confirm any diversion of funds. The vendor-companies were registered...and...supplied goods. The income tax settlement commission recorded a categorical finding that the purchases were genuine... there was no fabrication of documents."

# Gujarat board resolves error in instructions for visually impaired students

**Ahmedabad. (Agency)**  
The Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board (GSHSEB) corrected an error in question papers for visually impaired students that caused confusion during last year's Classes 10 and 12 board exams.  
In the 2025 exams, instructions related to questions meant for visually impaired students were printed unclearly. The specific instruction was placed between two questions, making it difficult for students to identify which question was intended for visually impaired candidates. As a result, many students attempted whichever question they believed was applicable. Even invigilators present in the exam halls were unable to provide



clarification due to the ambiguity in the question paper.  
Following the issue on the very first day of the exam, the board decided that marks

would be awarded for whichever question a student attempted, in order to avoid unfair evaluation. However, similar errors were reported in subsequent exam as well, raising concerns about the clarity and accuracy of the question papers.  
Taking note of the issue, the board made necessary corrections for the ongoing exam this year. Clear and separate instructions are now printed before the relevant questions. The question meant exclusively for visually impaired students is clearly labelled as such, while the alternative question intended for general students also carries a distinct instruction.  
Due to these improved measures, students reportedly did not face any confusion this year, ensuring a smoother exam process.

# Summer rain, dip in temperature provide relief from forest fires in Kerala

**Kochi. (Agency)**  
Ending a two-month-long dry spell, summer showers started lashing Kerala this week bringing relief from the soaring temperature and concerns of a harsh summer. The brief spell also brought relief to the forest department which has been striving to control wildfire. Though the summer season starts normally on March 1, Kerala has been experiencing hot conditions from the last week of January in recent years.  
Kannur district had recorded 40.4 degree Celsius on February 25 last year. But the maximum temperature which crossed 35 degree Celsius in five districts on Monday recorded a decline on Thursday.  
The forest fire season in Kerala starts on January 1 and normally extends to mid-May. However, the state received intermittent summer rains during March and April during the past two years,



which helped reduce forest fires. The forest department hopes that the rain will continue for a couple of weeks. "This year there has been 115 incidents of forest fire which destroyed around 236 hectares of forest. This was only surface fire and the dense forest cover has not been affected. The two days of summer rains have helped reduce the temperature and sprouting of grass. If there is no rain for a week, the situation will turn grim.  
If we receive intermittent rain it will be a relief," said forest conservator M V G Kannan. On February 15, Kottamanpara under Ranni forest division had reported

an incident of wild fire which continued raging in the areas under Rajambara forest station. The residents of Seethathode had complained that the wild animals have started entering into human habitations after the incident. Another incident of forest fire was reported in Manakad area in Palakkad district on January 23. According to the India Meteorological Department, the light showers will continue for another week.  
A private weather observer said a cyclonic circulation is bringing moisture from the Arabian Sea. The moisture inflow is leading to cloud formation during evening hours. Meanwhile, easterly winds are also influencing the region. "We have divided the forest area into 1,129 blocks and prepared fire management plans for Highly Fire Prone, Moderately Fire Prone and Low Fire Prone areas.

# Snatched from death's grip: RPF heroes in Ahmedabad save man who slipped into platform gap trying to board moving train to get to son in Pune ICU

**Ahmedabad. (Agency)**  
A 36-year-old man travelling to Pune to attend to his son, who was in the ICU, was rescued by Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel after he got trapped between Platform No. 5 and a moving train while trying to board a train to Mumbai. The incident occurred around 10.30pm as the Pune-Duronto train was departing from the platform at Kalapur railway station. Officials said the passenger, whose identity was not disclosed, tried to climb into a general coach after another commuter already boarded the moving train. As the train picked up speed, he lost balance and slipped into the gap between the platform edge and the moving train.  
CCTV footage from the station captured the moment he fell and got trapped in the narrow space, with the train continuing to move forward. Within seconds, RPF personnel stationed nearby noticed the fall and

sprinted towards him. Constables Purnamal Samota and Chhotulal, part of the team deployed on the platform, pulled the man away from the gap and brought him to safety, preventing what could have been a fatal accident. Officials said the



rescue was carried out swiftly and without further injury to the passenger.  
During preliminary questioning, the man told authorities he was in a hurry because his son was undergoing treatment in the ICU at a Pune hospital. He stated that this was the train by which he could reach Pune in the morning.

# 'Rainbow' bridge adding colour to Perumbalam's tourism journey

**Panchayat president C R Girish said Perumbalam has already launched responsible tourism initiatives and has been declared a women-friendly tourism destination.**

**Alappuzha. (Agency)**  
After Kumbalangi and Kadamakudy, Perumbalam in Alappuzha district is gearing up to emerge as Kerala's next tourism village. Nestled in the picturesque Vembanad Lake and bordering Ernakulam and Kottayam districts, Perumbalam is the state's only island panchayat.  
With the inauguration of the state's longest bridge to the island on March 7, the 16-km-long waterfront is set to transform into a major tourist attraction. Plans are under way to promote homestays, resorts, Chinese fishing nets and other visitor facilities in the island. Perumbalam, just 20 km from

Kochi, is fast developing as a leisure destination on the outskirts of the Kochi metropolitan area.  
Panchayat president C R Girish said Perumbalam has already launched responsible tourism initiatives and has been declared a women-friendly tourism destination. "There are no major industries on the island, but traditional livelihoods such as coir making, mat weaving, clam processing and inland farming remain active. Around 10,000 people live on the 1,461-hectare island, which stretches 7 km in length and about 2 km in width," he said. The newly constructed 'rainbow' bridge connects Perumbalam to

Vaduthala in Arookutty and is seen as a milestone in the island's development. The panchayat is preparing comprehensive tourism development plans, including the establishment of more homestays and resorts. At present, three resorts and homestays are operational, while several new applications are under consideration. However, Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms remain a major hurdle, and the issue has been taken up with both the state and Union governments, Girish said.



Road infrastructure within the island remains limited, as all roads are owned by the panchayat and are narrow. With the bridge now completed, major roads are expected to be handed over to the Public Works Department for widening and

development. "There is immense potential for water sports and other recreational activities, which we plan to introduce without disturbing the fragile ecosystem of the lake," the panchayat president added.  
Designed as a bowstring arch structure, the 1,157-m-long bridge is 11 m wide and comprises 30 spans, including three navigation spans. While 27 spans measure 35 m each, the three central spans extend to 55 m. The arch bracings of the bridge are rainbow-coloured, prompting residents to dub it 'rainbow bridge'.

### 'Post DCPR 2034 construction rush is a public health hazard'

**Mumbai. (Agency)**  
Is Mumbai's new Development Control and Promotion Regulation (DCPR- 2034), which governs land use and building construction, triggering a public health crisis? With new laws permitting unusually tall towers due to excessive floor space index (FSI) in saturated wards, and unabated redevelopment and concessions in open spaces allowing five-foot distance between two buildings, medical experts warn of a potential health catastrophe.  
With large-scale road concretisation and loss of green cover, doctors said Mumbai is facing a slow but undeniable environmental and public health collapse. "We are witnessing a sustained increase in respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, heat stress, anxiety disorders, and pollution-related complications," they said.  
Senior architect Shirish Sukhatme, who has been talking to leading doctors about the correlation between the new DCPR and public health, said urban density in Mumbai already exceeds 20,000 persons per sq km in several wards, making it among the densest cities in the world.  
"Infrastructure capacity — drainage, road width, public transport, water supply — has not proportionately expanded. The result is environmental stress beyond carrying capacity," he said.  
Senior cardiologist Dr Dev Pahlajani from Breach Candy Hospital said indiscriminate redevelopment worsens pollution because of the building materials used. "Smog and other pollutants cause accumulation of toxic particles in the atmosphere. Anything over the WHO guidelines for PM 2.5 (fine particulate matter) causes heart attacks. These particles get inhaled through the lungs, travel to the arteries, injuring or damaging them," he said.  
Dr Arshad G Mohammad, ex-president of Indian Medical Association (Mumbai West), said unchecked redevelopment (where even solid buildings are demolished) and greed for more space is shrinking the city's greenery.

## Congress scores another own goal

DEMOCRACY is inconceivable without dissent and protests. These are not merely democracy's byproducts; they undergird the working of the system and maintain equilibrium between unchecked bedlam and authoritarian order. The challenges manifest in the form of debates or a forced entry into the Well of the House, the use of more robust instruments against the government such as a no-confidence vote, and demonstrations — perfunctory or spirited — in the public space. Parliament and state Assemblies are crowded with these manifestations that often test the mettle of a government. The uproarious scenes that inevitably erupted each time the Women's Reservation Bill was tabled are the stuff of parliamentary history and lore. The Bill was finally passed as the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act or the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in September 2023, but the prelude to its passage was often marked by violence.

In the December 1998 session of Parliament, when the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government made bold to bring in the Bill, Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Daroga Prasad Saroj tried to reach the Speaker's podium in the Lok Sabha and grab the papers, but Mamata Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress chief, caught him by the scruff of the neck.

In March 2010, when the Rajya Sabha passed the Bill (the Lok Sabha did not vote on it), every imaginable stalling tactic was deployed by leaders of the pro-Mandal parties: shattering glass tumblers, squatting and napping in the Well, pummelling and kicking the guards and even punching one in the stomach until the protesters were outnumbered by security reinforcements.

March 25, 1989, would be etched in Tamil Nadu's legislative history as the day when the roughnecks of the DMK government assaulted J Jayalalithaa, then the Opposition leader, and pulled the end of her sari. A tearful Jayalalithaa left the Assembly, vowing that if she returned it would be as the chief minister. Two years down the line, she unseated M Karunanidhi and claimed the throne. In the civic arena, perhaps the best remembered protest was staged by the "Mothers of Manorama" in Imphal in July 2004. These women assembled outside the Assam Rifles' headquarters to dare the personnel to come out and assault them. They protested against the torture, rape and killing of a young woman, Thangjam Manorama Devi, an alleged insurgent.

The legitimacy — or lack of legitimacy — of these demonstrations can be interminably argued. However, the spectacle mounted by Indian Youth Congress (IYC) activists on February 20 at Delhi's Bharat Mandapam, the venue of the government's prestigious national and international events, signified a new low in the history of protests, although the last word has not yet been said on its justness by the political class. The India AI Impact summit, which drew world leaders and corporate giants, was in progress. From the Modi government's viewpoint, it was as high-powered as the 2023 G20 show, if not more, because the idea was to exhibit India's leadership at the helm of cutting-edge technology and innovation. Politically, its importance lay in the government's effort to deflect attention and discussions from a stormy start to the Budget session that was overshadowed by the tricky India-US interim trade agreement. Other factors were also at play. The Epstein files allegedly emeshed a senior Cabinet minister. The summit began on a series of false notes, thanks to poor logistics and later a Chinese robotic dog that a private university close to the present regime tried to pass off as its own and was caught out. There was no way the PM could allow the event to be dragged to the rock bottom of history.

The "banian" protest came at the most opportune moment for the government. A handful of IYC men in vests waved white tees with uncomplimentary slogans about Modi printed on them and alleged that the trade deal was compromised. This was enough of a spur for his supporters to launch a pro-PM campaign and an anti-Congress tirade

## Bookended by melas and fests

A mela suggests not a trade fair for bookish audiences and writerly stars, but rural harvest festivals. In India, the traditions of the deadly-serious book fair and the entertaining festival have merged.

William Dalrymple recently sputtered like a lit fuse on X at an "irritating and ignorant article" in The Guardian that had asked why India has over 100 literary festivals but low book sales and no culture of reading. Is it because entertainments like Bollywood are included in festivals? Why did Dalrymple feel irritated when the argument about poor sales and low readership has been around for decades? The article by Amrit Dhillon only added the contrast between the smallness of the publishing industry in India and the boom in literature festivals, led by the Jaipur Literature Festival that Dalrymple co-founded. She offered supporting quotes from authors, booksellers and publishers. All of them affirm that the book trade moves slowly, but Indians like a nice jamboree. This rather harmless allegation burst like an inflamed boil. Blame the name. The literature (or literary) festival is a British creature of post-war provenance—the oldest is at Cheltenham, an annual feature from 1949, and the best-known is at Hay-on-Wye, established in 1988, which exported the concept and the name overseas. In India, JLF adopted the format in 2006, grew exponentially and encouraged entrepreneurs with literary leanings—and organisations which understand that literariness works like angel dust to get in on the game. Writing became performative. In the beginning, there were book fairs, not literary festivals. In medieval Europe, trade fairs at commercial centres like Leipzig attracted booksellers and printers, who then launched book fairs. The Frankfurt fair, the biggest business-to-business book expo, is purely a trade fair for the sale of international rights. It lets in retail buyers only as an afterthought. Interaction of readers with writers and publishers, a hallmark of literary festivals, is limited to the weekend.

In India, book fairs preceded literary festivals. The New Delhi World Book Fair opened in 1972 in conjunction with the Asia 72 trade show. Both were held at the Pragati Maidan exhibition complex, a classic design by architect Raj Rewal that the present government has demolished in a random act of vandalism to make room for Bharat Mandapam. India's biggest book event is the International Kolkata Book Fair, started in 1976, which draws over 20 lakh visitors. It's a very serious fair—rare titles like Revelations of Divine Love by the 13th century anchoress Julian of Norwich can be found there (I know, I bought a copy). The fair also features literary entertainments like readings and discussions by prominent writers and publishers, and Kolkata's significant set circulate freely. So do phalanxes of pamphleteers selling crank treatises proposing a geocentric universe or divination by observing crows



(Kak Charitra). It's a mixed bag, like a country mela, which is where it gets its Bengali name from—Boi Mela.

A mela suggests not a trade fair for bookish audiences and writerly stars, but rural harvest festivals. There's the Poush Mela in nearby Santiniketan, for instance, where highbrow and lowbrow mingle in a strangely uplifting cloud of food, music, poetry, handicrafts, activism and pot. In India, the traditions of the deadly-serious book fair and the entertaining festival have merged. People who don't like this say it devalues books. The rest say that it brings more people into the fold of readers. These are opinions, not facts.

The older allegations which started this thread—books don't sell in India and there's hardly a culture of reading—must be inconclusive because, invariably, the discussion is about publishing in English, which is a fraction of the Indian publishing landscape. The whole vista is very varied, from risk-averse publishers who print textbooks to offset speculative losses in literary publishing, specialists like Amitav Ghosh's publisher Ravi Dayal and Vikram Seth's publisher P Lal, and idealists running small presses, usually into the ground. Besides, in Indian publishing, for every fact there's an alternative. The industry formalised only recently and it is still normal for writers to submit a manuscript without a contract and to hand over rights

during a casual phone call, with no written record. Frames of reference also matter. In response to the article in The Guardian, which stated that Indian print runs are low and that 10,000 copies make a bestseller (a fact in English publishing), HarperCollins India CEO Anantha Padmanabhan pointed out that the Malayalam novel Ram C/O Anandhi by Akhil P Dharmarajan and Too Good to be True by Prajakta Koli sold 3 lakh and 2 lakh copies in a year (an alternative fact). The context: both are young social media phenomenons and Koli works in OTT cinema. Of course they'd have the numbers. Amish pioneered that strategy when he embraced digital media promotion.

Beyond English, on which the spotlight is fixed, Indian publishing is a vast landscape. If you consider sellers of used books—who often participate in trade fairs—you'll find the numbers climbing fast. And if you look into the darker corners of this world where the pirates are silently at work, you'll find hoards that go uncounted. That's why, when no one's looking, many writers ask the bootleggers at traffic lights how their novels are doing. The pirate estimate can be more revealing than formal sales figures. A market with such varied cultures of reading, and so many languages, styles and niches, can't be treated as a single, orderly entity bound by universal rules.

## Breather for AAP: Trial court verdict vindicates Kejriwal's stand

Meanwhile, the ED has stated that its "standalone" money-laundering probe linked to the excise policy case is on a firm footing

FORMER Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and his ex-deputy Manish Sisodia can afford to claim the moral high ground — at least for the time being. The trial court has discharged the duo and 21 others in the Delhi excise policy case registered by the CBI, throwing a lifeline to the beleaguered Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). In a scathing judgment, the court observed that the probe agency's case was incapable of surviving judicial scrutiny, describing it as speculative, inferential and devoid of legally admissible evidence. Left red-faced, the CBI has approached the Delhi High Court against the discharge order. Indeed, the battle is only half won for Kejriwal & Co. Allegations of corruption against the AAP top brass were the BJP's central plank in the Delhi Assembly elections last year. The saffron party left no stone unturned to convince the national capital's voters that Kejriwal's anti-graft stand was just a sham. Promising clean



governance, the BJP regained power in Delhi after 26 long

years, while AAP finished a distant second. Subsequently, the young party has focused largely on Punjab, the only state where it is in power at present. The trial court's order has presented AAP with an opportunity to reconnect with Delhi's electorate and reaffirm its anti-corruption credentials. The judgment raises uncomfortable questions about investigative overreach. The court's observation that the probe appeared to follow a "predetermined trajectory" indicates that due process was given short shrift. Meanwhile, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has stated that its "standalone" money-laundering probe linked to the excise policy case is on a firm footing. However, the legal sustainability of the prosecution by the ED might face fresh scrutiny if the discharge in the CBI case is upheld by the high court. Amid all the ifs and buts, the onus is on Kejriwal and Sisodia to give AAP a new lease of life.

# Trade corridors can rebuild Punjab

← Punjab has been severed from the overland trade corridors that historically powered its prosperity.

PUNJAB was once India's economic pacesetter. The Green Revolution secured national food supplies and built one of the country's most affluent rural economies. High farm incomes fuelled transport, small-scale manufacturing and commercial networks that rippled across north India, placing Punjab among the top states in per capita income. Today the state grapples with stagnation. Soil exhaustion, depleting water tables, subsidy distortions and double cropping dominate the diagnosis. These are genuine problems. But they do not fully explain why Punjab has fallen behind faster-growing coastal and southern states or why public debt has ballooned relative to output. The core issue is structural: Punjab has been severed from the overland trade corridors that historically powered its prosperity. For centuries, Punjab served as India's northwestern gateway to Central Asia and Europe. Caravans carried textiles, grains and other products across the region, sustaining vibrant trading towns. The Partition and subsequent border closures erased that advantage. The long-term economic cost has been profound but under-discussed. India's global trade footprint has shifted dramatically. The European Union is now its largest trading partner, with bilateral goods and services flows reaching roughly \$180 billion annually. The India-EU Free Trade Agreement, concluded in early 2026, promises to deepen ties further, with tariff cuts expected to double EU exports to India by the early 2030s and save European firms billions in duties. European buyers prize reliability, speed and cost efficiency in an era of global trade. North India ought to be ideally placed to capture more of this demand. Instead, exporters from Punjab and its neighbouring states face a built-in handicap. Goods must travel hundreds of additional kilometres to western seaports before

embarking on long maritime journeys. Perishables suffer the most: every added day in transit erodes quality and margins. Over time, this skews investment decisions towards coastal clusters with shorter, more predictable logistics. The impact is stark in agro-processing. Punjab ranks among India's top producers of wheat, rice and dairy, backed by skilled farmers and an established base. However, it has failed to build a world-class export-oriented processing sector. When raw or semi-processed output must endure lengthy domestic hauls before shipment, the economics of large-scale value addition near farms weaken. Processing hubs have proliferated, instead, in southern and western ports. A state with the raw material scale to lead India's branded food exports remains locked into low-value commodity production. Manufacturing tells a similar story. Clusters in Ludhiana (machinery and textiles), Jalandhar (sports goods) and Mohali (electronics) compete in global markets that reward precision and timelines. Overland routes to western markets, where feasible, routinely cut transit times compared with sea freight. Without them, northern producers absorb higher costs and greater uncertainty, while greenfield export investment flows elsewhere.

The result is a vicious cycle: poor connectivity deters industry; weak industry deepens agricultural dependence; skilled youth migrate abroad in search of opportunity; fiscal strains mount. Connectivity is not a side issue for Punjab — it is the linchpin of revival. Security imperatives along the western border remain non-negotiable. Modern trade corridors can incorporate safeguards: digital customs, non-intrusive scanning,

satellite tracking and restricted goods lists. Transit regimes for third-country trade function in other tense regions without compromising security. Across successive governments, there has been periodic recognition that connectivity underpins national strength. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's outreach initiatives reflected an understanding that economic logic cannot indefinitely be subordinated to political tension. Manmohan Singh articulated a strategic sequence in which



reconnecting the subcontinent would precede wider regional integration. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised rebuilding regional linkages as a component of India's growth strategy. Across administrations, the underlying principle has remained consistent: economic integration strengthens strategic resilience. The cost of inaction is mounting. Northern manufacturing stays tethered to distant ports. Food-processing

investment clusters elsewhere. Punjab's economy leans ever more heavily on volatile agriculture. Outward migration continues. A practical path forward lies in an Amritsar-Rajpura economic corridor. Amritsar, India's closest major land gateway towards Europe, anchors one end; Rajpura, a logistics node at major highway and rail intersections, the other. This spine could host agro-processing zones, turning Punjab's produce into globally competitive brands; industrial parks feeding machinery and consumer goods toward continental markets and integrated hubs with dry ports, cold chains and warehousing to slash turnaround times. Geopolitically, it would position Punjab as India's northwestern bridge to Central Asia and Europe, plugging northern industry into international supply chains. Think Singapore for maritime Asia or Rotterdam for Europe: a commercial gateway that lowers costs, widens access and generates cross-sector jobs.

Reopening regulated land routes is not wishful thinking; it is strategic pragmatism. As India's ambitions extend deeper into Europe and Central Asia, leaving its most direct western

gateway dormant is an anomaly. Punjab asks not for special favours but for policy alignment: match national trade goals with regional potential. Restore calibrated overland links, and a historically dynamic region can once again become a bridge linking northern India to continental markets and securing its own future in the process.

## Body of missing 22-year-old woman found in deep well in Moradabad; murder suspected

Shimla.(Agency)

Panic spread in a village in the Mainather police station area of Moradabad after the body of a 22-year-old woman was recovered from a 15-foot-deep well in Baghi Govardhanpur village, police said on Sunday. Children playing near the field on Saturday first noticed the body and raised an alarm, prompting villagers to inform the police. Senior officials, including the Superintendent of Police (Rural) and the Circle Officer of Bilari, arrived at the scene with forensic teams.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the woman may have been murdered elsewhere and her body dumped in the well to conceal evidence.

Within 24 hours, the deceased was identified as Sabrin (also known as Samreen), daughter of Babu, a resident of Kamalpur alias Kafarpur village in the Asmoli police station area of Sambhal district. According to family members, she had been missing under suspicious circumstances since Thursday.

The body was retrieved after significant effort, and a postmortem examination has been conducted. Police are investigating multiple angles, including the possibility of honor killing or a relationship-related dispute. Authorities are examining mobile call details and questioning suspects. A door-to-door inquiry is also being conducted to trace her movements and determine how she reached the forested area in Mainather. Officials stated that the exact cause of death will be confirmed after the postmortem report, and those responsible will be arrested.

## Kangra DC promises tough action against drug peddlers, illegal encroachments also under scanner

Dharamshala.(Agency)

Kangra Deputy Commissioner Hemraj Bairwa has stressed on the need to strengthen contact tracing in drug-related cases to reach the supply chain and ensure strict action against offenders.

Chairing a meeting of the National Narcotics Coordination Portal (NCORD) at the NIC Auditorium in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh on Friday, Hemraj Bairwa reviewed measures for drug prevention and enforcement.

He said firm action is being taken against drug suppliers and illegal encroachments linked to such individuals are also being removed. Government employees found involved in drug supply activities are facing stringent disciplinary proceedings, he added.

Emphasising the importance of community engagement, the Deputy Commissioner directed officials of the Education Department to activate 'Prahari Clubs' in schools and effectively implement the 'SAMVAAD' (Systematic Adolescent Management and Value Addition Dialogue) programme to conduct awareness and educational activities among students.

He instructed that all schools in the district should immediately inform the police if any drug-related activity is noticed within or around their campuses. The Education Department was also asked to organise regular workshops to sensitise students about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

He further directed that anti-drug awareness hoardings be installed in all panchayats to spread awareness at the grassroots level. He also called for periodic inspections of private de-addiction centres and the development of a robust mechanism to prepare monthly evaluation reports on their functioning.

## In major infra boost, PM launches Rs 2,700 cr projects in Pondy

Puducherry.(Agency)

In a major boost to infrastructure development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched various big ticket Railway and multiple developmental projects in this poll-bound union Territory to the tune of Rs 2,400 crores.

Earlier, after his whistle stop tour of Rajasthan and Gujarat, the Prime Minister landed in Chennai last night and was received at the airport by Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu and state BJP Leaders and AIADMK leaders including General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, heading the NDA alliance in this poll-bound State.

In his message, Mr Ravi said "the people of Tamil Nadu warmly welcome Prime Minister Thiru @narendramodi. From farmers and fishers to weavers, tribal communities, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders, his visit inspires confidence and renewed aspiration across all sections of Tamil Nadu."

"His vision, policy initiatives and resources allocation is transforming Tamil Nadu into a defining pillar of Bharat's growth story. Semiconductors, a strategic Defence Corridor, and the PM MITRA Park are shaping next-generation manufacturing and creating large-scale opportunities. Electronics, green mobility, and a vibrant startup ecosystem are turning Tamil talent into global success", Mr Ravi said in a lengthy post on X.

"New highways, ports, railways, and airports are strengthening connectivity, linking villages to markets and opening new avenues of opportunity for our youth. The momentum toward organic and natural farming is strengthening sustainable prosperity, enabling our farmers to take Tamil Nadu's produce to global platforms with pride.

## One killed, five injured as labourers fall from fifth floor at under-construction site in Chembur

Locals said that on the fifth floor, a temporary wooden plank had been placed over an open central portion of the slab. While labourers were at work, part of the plank gave way. Ramallu reportedly managed to cling to the remaining section for a few moments before it too collapsed.

Mumbai.(Agency)

One labourer was killed and five others were injured after they fell from the fifth floor of an under-construction building in Chembur's Subhash Nagar on Saturday afternoon. Later in the day, the police registered an FIR for not following the necessary safety precautions at the site.

According to officials, the accident was reported at 12.05 pm at Building No. 36 in Subhash Nagar. Six injured were rushed to Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar, where 55-year-old Ramallu was declared dead on arrival.

The other five injured were identified as Gunadhar Roy (22), Kush Roy (30), Ramesh Pratap Roy (25), Vijay Morya (35), and Sandip Gopal Roy (27).

Locals said that on the fifth floor, a temporary wooden plank had been placed over an open central portion of the slab. While labourers were at work, part of the plank gave way. Ramallu reportedly managed to cling to the remaining section for a few moments before it too collapsed. Without safety harnesses or protective



gear, he and others fell through the opening. As they plunged, loose construction material from above came crashing down. Ramallu was struck by falling debris and died from his injuries, while five others sustained varying degrees of trauma.

Outside the casualty ward of Rajawadi Hospital, Jaya Devi (45), also employed at the same construction site, sat anxiously. She came to Mumbai a year ago with her husband, three children, and brother-in-law to earn a living. "We are from Jharkhand's Dumka district,

Gondiya village. I was working on the floor above along with other women workers. Around 11 am, we heard men working below screaming that people fell. We rushed downstairs.

After some time, the ambulance and police came," she recalled. She said she knows Kush Roy, who remains critical and has been transferred to Sion Hospital. "Kush is my neighbour in Gondiya. He came here three months ago to earn better and support his family — his wife, four daughters and parents. Back home he has ancestral agricultural land. Who knew this would happen? My brother-in-law has informed his family."

Narendra Gaikwad, a resident of Khardev Nagar in Chembur and an autorickshaw driver, witnessed the incident while accompanying his wife to work. "I heard a loud noise and saw them falling. Six people fell down," he said, gesturing towards the upper slab. "The plank collapsed and they came straight down. There were no safety measures at the site, no safety attendant either," he said.

## Gujarat: Two students caught with electronic devices in board exams

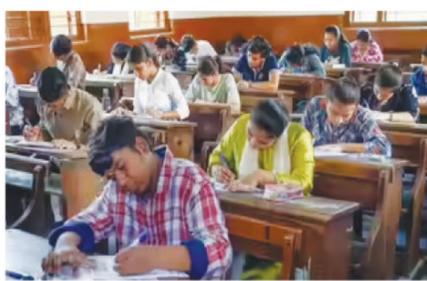
Ahmedabad.(Agency)

Two instances of alleged malpractice surfaced during board exams on Saturday. Both cases involved electronic devices barred inside exam halls. One student was found with a mobile phone during a chemistry paper in Ahmedabad city, while another was caught wearing a digital watch in Ognaj. Officials said copying cases have been registered in both matters.

In Ahmedabad city, a Class 12 science student was caught carrying a mobile phone during the

chemistry exam. The student, enrolled at Damubhai Shukla English Medium School in Paldi, had been allotted Ankur School, also in Paldi, as her exam centre. According to officials, the incident surfaced around 5.45pm, roughly 45 minutes before the paper was scheduled to end at 6.30pm. A supervisor became suspicious of the student's conduct and conducted a check, during which a mobile phone was found in her possession.

According to board rules, bringing a mobile phone



into the exam hall constitutes a serious violation. A copying case was registered against the student, and further action, including initiation of the

office, a student appearing for the Class 12 general stream business administration exam at Tatvamasi School was found wearing a digital watch. Officials said the student had concealed the device. The supervisor seized the watch, and a copying case was registered in this instance as well.

Board authorities reiterated that strict monitoring is in place across exam centres to curb unfair practices and ensure transparency and fairness in the ongoing exams.

## Gujarat high court slams couples for using kids as pawns in divorce wars

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

The Gujarat High Court pulled no punches in criticizing how couples are seeking a child's custody to use them as "a weapon and as a leverage" to get a favourable outcome in matrimonial disputes. While deciding a habeas corpus petition involving child custody, the bench of Justices N S Sanjay Gowda and D M Vyas said, "In far too many cases, including the present one, attempts are made by one of the parents to somehow secure the custody of the child and thereby exclude the spouse from exercising any custodial rights, which results in unseemly litigation." The court further said, "The custody over the child is basically sought to be used as a weapon and as a leverage to achieve a favourable outcome in a marital dispute. This recourse adopted by warring parents leads to unnecessary trauma to a minor child, who at times is not even able to discern what the litigation is all about and whether the fight is for her own good."



This case involved a couple from Palanpur, who got married in 2020 and separated in May 2024. The wife left with their then three-year-old daughter and moved into her parental home.

Things took a contentious turn when the wife filed a petition in the HC, claiming that a separation deed executed in July 2025 transferred custody of the daughter to the husband. She alleged that she had been forced to sign the deed under duress and that it was executed fraudulently, falsely presenting the handover as voluntary. After a detailed hearing, the HC raised doubt about the authenticity of the separation deed by pointing out the fact that the couple even agreed to a divorce decree from a court after the separation deed was executed.

The HC ordered the husband to hand over the daughter's custody to his wife, and permitted him to resort to the legal remedy available with the family court under the Guardian and Wards Act to claim the custody of the child.

## West Bengal: Nearly half of 60 lakh voters under adjudication from three minority-dominated districts

Kolkata.(Agency)

Nearly half of the over 60 lakh voters whose names are under adjudication following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) belong to just three minority-dominated districts of West Bengal—Murshidabad, Malda and Uttar Dinajpur.

This emerged when the Election Commission of India partially published the final electoral roll and later released district-wise data on Saturday evening.

According to the Commission, 5,46,053 additional names have been deleted in the latest phase of the SIR.

Even after this, the names of slightly over 60 lakh voters remain under consideration. The district-wise break-up shows that Murshidabad alone accounts for 11,01,145 such voters, followed by Malda with 8,28,127 and Uttar Dinajpur with 4,80,341. Together, these three districts account for 24,09,613 names—nearly half of the total voters currently under adjudication.

Apart from these, two other districts—North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas—also figure prominently. In North 24 Parganas, 5,91,252 names are under scrutiny, while South 24 Parganas has 5,22,042. The combined figure for the two districts stands at 11,13,294. Taken together, these five districts account for over 50 per cent of the names kept under adjudication, a trend many political observers describe as electorally significant.

The ruling All India Trinamool Congress did not issue any official reaction till late Saturday night.

However, sources said that the Camac Street office of Abhishek Banerjee has begun analysing the Commission's statistics. Several Trinamool leaders privately admitted to concerns after examining the district-wise numbers, particularly as the party remains organisationally strong across most of these regions. Barring the Bongaon subdivision in North 24 Parganas, Trinamool is dominant.

## Ramzan ration kits bring relief, nutrition and hope to Mumbai's poorest pockets

Mumbai.(Agency)

A group of burqa-clad women huddle in the ground-floor hall of Anjuman-i-Islam Saif Tayabji Girls' School on Belassis Road in Mumbai Central. Brief speeches by Yama Patel, foundation head and city chairman of the World Memon Organisation (WMO), Haji Mudassar Patel, and Anjuman president and senior radiologist Padmashree Dr Zahir Kazi underscore the importance of supporting poor families with ration during the holy month of Ramzan. Moments later, the distribution of "Ramzan ration kits" begins.

The scene is one of several such distribution drives across the city. A nutritious intake at iftar, dinner and sehri (pre-dawn meal) is essential to endure a day of fasting. For families that cannot afford groceries for wholesome meals,

individuals and organisations step in with ration kits.

"The idea is to ensure the poor receive nutritious food at night through the month. We began during Ramzan in 2020 amid Covid and have continued every year since," says Patel, who, along with WMO India president Haseen Aghadi, partnered with Anjuman president and senior radiologist Padmashree Dr Zahir Kazi. The Memons are known for their generosity. This assistance in the holy month is vital for poor families," says Dr Kazi, as senior Anjuman functionaries Mushtaq Antulay and Rehana Ahmed look on.

For many, the effort transcends religious lines. Bandra-based businessman and BJP politician Asif Bhamla continues a 25-year-old initiative started by his late father, Wali Mohammed, sending thousands of ration kits to needy



families each Ramzan. "My volunteers distribute kits in poor pockets of Malwani, Dharavi and other sprawling slums. The poor are the poor — we do not

discriminate. Ramzan is also a time to promote communal harmony and national integration," says Bhamla. At night, his decorated mandap near a mosque in Bandra West becomes a meeting point for community leaders, celebrities and politicians to exchange greetings.

For Razia Chasmawala, deputy chairperson (women's wing) of WMO, Ramzan means spending long hours in the slums of Malwani, Bhiwandi and Nalasopara. "The need is enormous.

My heart breaks at the deprivation I see. Some argue charity should focus only on self-reliance, but my priority is to help the destitute fight hunger," she says. Many fondly call her the "Mother Teresa of the Memons."

Typically, Ramzan kits contain flour, rice, pulses, sugar, sewaiyan, dates

and bottles of sherbet — provisions meant to help families prepare nourishing iftar and dinner meals. Kits vary in size depending on family needs.

Why does zakat — the obligatory charity of 2.5% of annual savings — and other giving assume special importance in Ramzan? "A hadith says good deeds performed in Ramzan earn rewards 70 times greater than in other months. That is why many devote more time to prayer and charity during this period," explains Mufti Jasimuddin of the Andheri West-based Markazul Maarif Education and Research Centre.

For beneficiaries like Amina Begum, a widow in Mumbai Central, the support is crucial. "We are a family of five. My income as a housemaid is barely enough this month. The ration kit is a great help," she says.

## New species named after Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar found in Bengal's Ajothya Hills

Midnapore.(Agency)

In the damp, shaded crevices of the Ajothya Hills, where some of the Earth's earliest land plants still exist, scientists have discovered a species so minute it measures barely a millimetre in width, yet significant enough to bear the name of Bengal's iconic reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

The newly identified liverwort, *Solenostoma vidyasagariensis*, was formally described in the international botanical journal *Phytotaxa* in September 2025. The discovery was made by researchers from Vidyasagar University in collaboration with the Botanical Survey of India following extensive field surveys in the forested belt of Junglemahal across Purulia and West Midnapore.

Belonging to the division Marchantiophyta, one of the oldest lineages of land plants, the species forms part of the subgenus *Plectocolea*. Liverworts are moisture dependent bryophytes that often escape notice because of their diminutive size and simple structure, yet they represent a crucial evolutionary stage in the colonisation of land by plants.

Measuring approximately one millimetre in width, *Solenostoma vidyasagariensis* forms delicate mats over moist substrates, blending almost invisibly with the forest floor.

Morphologically, the species is characterised by ovate leaves with a shortly decurrent dorsal base. Under microscopic examination, its spores display distinctive crenulate and lamellate reticulate ornamentation, a feature that distinguishes it from its close relative *Solenostoma truncatum*.

It was this unique spore pattern and leaf structure that confirmed to researchers that they were dealing with a species previously unknown to science.

The research was led by Professor Amal Kumar Mondal, Head of Botany and Forestry at Vidyasagar University, along with research scholar Sk Rasidul Islam, in collaboration with Devendra Singh of the Botanical Survey of India. Detailed morphological analysis and taxonomic comparison preceded peer review and publication.

# AAP ministers meet family of cop killed in Gurdaspur in Punjab, extend support

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Punjab Cabinet Ministers Lal Chand Kataruchak (Minister of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs of Punjab) and Laljit Singh Bhullar (Minister of Transport) on Saturday met the family members of the deceased Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of the Punjab Police, Gurnam Singh, to extend their condolences. Singh, along with home guard Ashok Kumar, was found dead on February 22 with gunshot wounds. Their bodies were recovered from a checkpoint in Punjab's Adhian Village, two-kilometres away from Pakistan's border. Three local youths, Ranjit Singh (19),

Inderjit Singh (21), and Dilwar Singh (19), were identified by the police later, for allegedly being involved in the murder. As per the preliminary information, the murders were carried out at the behest of the ISI handlers. The police further revealed that the three accused acted for a promised payment of Rs 20,000 from Pakistan-based handlers. While meeting the family members, both ministers conveyed that the Punjab government stands firmly with them in this hour of grief and will extend every possible support. He also said that the Punjab Chief Minister will meet the victims' families soon.



"The killing of our brave police personnel, Gurnam Singh and Ashok Kumar, while they were on duty at the Adhian checkpoint, was

a cowardly act. This was not merely an attack on the police force, but an attack on the soil of Punjab and on the peace of its

people," Kataruchak said. "The sacrifice of our martyrs will not be allowed to go in vain, and the guilty will be given the strictest punishment under the law," he further added.

Appreciating the role of the Punjab Police, Bhullar, on the other hand, said that the police traced and arrested all the accused in the case, which sends a clear message that anyone on the wrong side of the law will face the strictest action. Slamming the ISI for allegedly trying to destabilise India by using Punjab, the Minister further urged the youth not to fall prey to the ill intentions of the ISI. He reminded the youth that they belong to the

land of the pious gurus and the brave martyrs.

The minister also took a jibe at the opposition parties, including the Congress, the BJP, and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), as they questioned the death of one of the accused, Ranjit Singh, in a police encounter.

Criticising the parties, Kataruchak said, "These parties are indulging in politics out of fear that the government is succeeding. Punjab, being a border state, faces repeated attempts to disturb its peace. These parties are, in some way, complicit in such efforts and are working to demoralise the police."

## Delhi Police arrests Rajasthan man for killing wife, three daughters

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Delhi Police has arrested a man from Rajasthan who was accused of murdering his wife and three daughters in Samaypur Badli area. The woman and her three minor daughters were killed allegedly with a sharp-edged weapon on Wednesday. According to the police, the accused fled the capital after the incident to evade arrest. Police teams were on alert to nab him. After committing the crime, the accused had switched off his phone, which caused difficulty in tracing his location. He reportedly changed routes multiple times. The technical and manual intelligence informed police that the accused was present in Rajasthan. Police apprehended him there and brought him to Delhi. The accused is currently in custody and is being interrogated. Investigators are trying to ascertain the motive behind the murder. Police are yet to recover the knife, the alleged murder weapon. The police will also examine his mobile phone call details to determine whom he was in contact with before the incident. Attempts are being made to determine the exact time of the murders and how long the accused remained in the room after committing the crime. One of the key questions is how he managed to kill all four victims without alerting other family members sleeping in an adjacent room. Police may take the accused to the house where the crime was committed. A reconstruction of the scenario may also be carried out to understand how the murders were executed. The deceased woman, Anita used to live with her husband and three daughters—five years, four years, and three years.

## Over 60,000 govt school teachers in Delhi spend Rs 15,000 from own pockets on digital project

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
For nearly seven years, Delhi's government school teachers have been paying out of their own pockets for a digital reform project that was meant to be funded by the state. More than 60,000 teachers, including regular and guest staff, were directed by the education department to purchase tablets worth around ₹15,000 each to record attendance and carry out official work. The promised reimbursement and monthly internet allowance, however, remain largely unpaid. The tablets were introduced during the tenure of the Aam Aadmi Party government as part of its much-publicised "education model" and digital governance drive. Teachers complied with the directive, using their salaries to buy devices for official duties. Yet, despite repeated assurances, the government have failed to clear their dues. "This is not the first time," said the teachers. In 2018, the Directorate of Education issued a circular instructing schools to procure tablets for teachers. The circular also stated that ₹200 per month would be paid to each tablet holder towards internet charges, with the amount subject to revision and budget allocation. In practice, teachers say the allowance was paid only once or twice and then stopped altogether. The issue was raised three months ago as well with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who reportedly directed the education minister to ensure payment. The minister assured that the matter would be resolved. No action has followed. According to Ajay Veer Yadav, general secretary of the Government School Teachers Association, Delhi, who has yet again written to the Chief Minister stating that the delay in the reimbursement has pushed teachers into financial distress. "They are spending from their own pockets to run official systems. This is unjust. If the government wants digital classrooms and digital records, it must bear the cost," he said. The association has now demanded immediate reimbursement of the amount which was Rs 15,000 per teacher for tablet purchases and clearance of the pending data allowance within the current financial year. The teachers argue that as digital systems expand across schools, the financial burden of reforms should not be shifted onto employees.

## "No Clue What To Do": Fliers Stuck At Indian Airports Due To Middle East Crisis

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Thousands of fliers were stuck at airports across India after airlines cancelled international flights on Sunday due to airspace restrictions in the Middle East. The flight ops were disrupted after the US and Israel attacked Iran on Saturday, forcing countries around the region to close their airspace and key airports that connect Europe, Africa, and the West to Asia. India's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), said that as many as 444 flights of domestic carriers were expected to be cancelled on Sunday.

"I have no clue what to do," Somnath, a resident of Rajasthan who travelled to Delhi for a flight to Lebanon, told. Sandeep, who works in London and came to India to attend a function, said he was in "big trouble" since he was already on extended leave.

He said he has to attend at his office from Monday but now has "no clue". Two passengers who were going to the UAE's Dubai, which has been under attack by Iran, for a vacation have also been stranded at Delhi airport.



They said their hotel bookings and everything were done. "The return flight was also booked, but now it is a major loss for us," they said. A couple from London who were in Delhi to attend a wedding were also stuck. Passengers were also stuck at Chennai,

Chandigarh, Mumbai, and other cities. Air India, IndiGo, Air India Express, Akasa Air, and SpiceJet were among the domestic carriers that have suspended their operations to the Middle East. More than 400 flights were also cancelled on Saturday, according to the DGCA. The DGCA also advised airlines to avoid airspaces of 11 countries, including Iran, Israel, Lebanon, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Qatar, till March 2.

**Israel-US-Iran Tensions**  
The Middle East was plunged into chaos after the US and Israel carried out joint strikes on Iran early Saturday, killing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. US President Donald Trump and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu said the strikes aimed to end a decades-long threat from Iran and ensure it could not develop a nuclear weapon.

## Racket selling expired Nestlé Sugar Free, Glucon-D, Vicks VapoRub busted in Delhi; one held

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A 40-year-old man was arrested in connection with a racket involved in tampering with and selling expired food and cosmetic products as fresh stock in the open market, Delhi Police's Crime Branch said on Saturday. Police said that acting on credible intelligence regarding the illegal storage and reprocessing of expired consumer goods, a raid was conducted at a godown located at Gali No 9B, Pushta Road, Jagatpur, Delhi. A huge quantity of expired daily-use items like Nestlé Sugar Free, Glucon-D, Dabur Gulabari Body Lotion, Dabur Gulabari Rose Water, Clean & Clear Face Wash, Vicks VapoRub,



Dabur Lal Tail, Odomos, Dabur Chyawanprash, and Savlon Antiseptic were seized during the raid, police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police Vikral Singh said the accused has been identified as Omprakash Sharma (40), a resident of Rail Vihar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. He was allegedly operating an illegal setup where

expired products were being systematically altered and prepared for resale, police said. According to the police, the accused was storing large quantities of expired food and cosmetic products as well as removing or chemically erasing original expiry dates and batch numbers. "He allegedly reprinted fresh manufacturing and expiry dates, repacked and relabeled the products to make them appear genuine, and supplied them to unsuspecting buyers in the market," a police officer said. Printing frames, labeling materials, and other equipment used to alter expiry and manufacturing details were also seized from the premises, police said.

## Police deny nod, then allow Jantar Mantar rally with 'conditions'

**A senior police officer said AAP has been allowed to hold the event with "some conditions".**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Hours after the AAP alleged that the Delhi Police has denied it permission to hold a "mega rally" at Jantar Mantar on Sunday, the police allowed the event with "some conditions" on the ground that Section 163 (power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita has been imposed near the Parliament. Without elaborating further, a senior police officer said AAP has been allowed to hold the event with "some conditions". Sources in Delhi Police said AAP was earlier denied permission to hold the rally, as Jantar Mantar cannot accommodate such a huge gathering that AAP is expecting. Earlier in the day, Delhi Police denying permission for the rally triggered a fresh political confrontation

between AAP and the ruling BJP government. This comes a day after the a trial court discharged AAP leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others booked for alleged corruption in the excise policy case. The rally is set to be held to celebrate the court verdict. AAP Delhi chief Saurabh Bhardwaj said that while the Delhi Police had initially denied permission for the rally, in the evening, senior officers communicated that permission has been granted and all events will be held as per schedule. According to AAP, which claimed that the rally had been announced several days in advance and permission was denied by



the police at the last moment, will be addressed Kejriwal, among others. Soon after the Delhi Police denied permission, Kejriwal posted on X that it was a pre-scheduled rally and that all necessary procedures had been followed. "Every citizen has the constitutional right to express their views and hold peaceful X.

rallies. If the court's decision came in our favor, then will the government now try to suppress our voice?" he wrote, adding that in a democracy, people must be allowed to speak to the public. Senior AAP leader Atishi also questioned the timing of the cancellation, calling it an attempt to curb democratic expression. Bhardwaj alleged that a written notice had been given to the police well in advance. "Delhi does not belong to the father of the BJP government. The Delhi Police had been given written notice well in advance for Arvind Kejriwal ji's rally at Jantar Mantar. All our preparations were done — how can the BJP's sycophantic police cancel the permission just one day before?" Bhardwaj posted on X.

## 17 killed in blast at Nagpur gunpowder factory; PM, Fadnavis announce aid

**Seventeen people died and 18 others were injured in an explosion at a gunpowder factory near Nagpur. PM Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced compensation of Rs 2 lakh and Rs 5 lakh respectively for the families of the victims.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
At least 17 people were killed and 18 others injured after a blast at a gunpowder factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis condoled the deaths and announced compensations of Rs 2 lakh and Rs 5 lakh for the families of the victims. The blast occurred at the SBL Energy Limited factory at Raulgaon near Nagpur. Visuals from the site showed a thick black plume of smoke coming out of the facility. Emergency teams rushed to the spot soon after the blast. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel joined local responders, while rescue



operations were intensified. District Collector Vipin Itankar and SP Podar were present at the site to oversee relief efforts. The injured were shifted to hospitals in Nagpur, police said. PM Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives, calling the incident "deeply distressing." In a post from the Prime Minister's Office, he announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each victim and Rs 50,000 for the injured. Fadnavis described the explosion as "extremely unfortunate and tragic," saying he was in constant touch with the local administration. He announced that the state government would provide Rs 5 lakh in financial assistance to the families of those killed, adding that the concerned company would also extend support. He also ordered a thorough investigation into the cause of the blast. The tragedy comes a day after a separate explosion at a firecracker unit in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada district claimed 21 lives.

NEW

## Sanath Jaysuriya to step down as Sri Lanka coach after forgetful T20 World Cup run

Pallekele. (Agency)

Sri Lanka head coach Sanath Jaysuriya has hinted that he could step away from his role following the team's disappointing T20 World Cup 2026 campaign at home, though not immediately. While expressing pride in the progress made during his tenure, Jaysuriya suggested he would be open to stepping aside if Sri Lanka Cricket finds a suitable successor. Speaking after Sri Lanka's 5-run loss to Pakistan on Saturday, Jaysuriya indicated that discussions about his future are still pending, with his current contract running until June 2026. With a limited-overs tour of Afghanistan scheduled for March, the board may prefer continuity in the short term even as it begins exploring replacement options. "I thought I should give that title to someone else. That's why I mentioned two months ago during the England series that I have no plans staying here." "I feel sorry about how the World Cup ended. I could have taken this team forward for one and a half years. We moved up in



rankings across formats and took the team to better positions." "My contract ends in June. I have not given my official decision to Sri Lanka Cricket yet. I need to discuss with them what comes next."

### HOW WAS SRI LANKA'S T20 WORLD CUP 2026?

Sri Lanka's campaign never really gained sustained momentum. After progressing from the group stage despite a shock loss to Zimbabwe, hopes of a turnaround faded quickly in the Super 8 phase. Back-to-back defeats against England, New Zealand and Pakistan ended their semifinal hopes. The loss to Pakistan was particularly painful, with Sri Lanka falling just five runs short while chasing 213 despite a blistering unbeaten 76 from captain Dasun Shanaka. The early exit extended a worrying trend for the 2014 champions, who have now failed to reach the semifinals in five straight T20 World Cup editions.

## Stranded PV Sindhu says explosion near Dubai airport, reveals frightening ordeal

MEXICO CITY. (Agency)

India's Olympic medal-winning badminton ace PV Sindhu revealed that an explosion occurred close to where she and her team were sheltering at Dubai airport after being stranded due to the ongoing Iran-linked attacks in the region. She described the moment as extremely tense and frightening, adding that her coach had to quickly move away after finding himself closest to the smoke and debris. Sindhu shared that the group has since been shifted to a safer location, crediting Dubai Airport authorities and the Indian High Commission for their swift support during the unfolding crisis. As uncertainty continues, she shared a post on her X account about the experience, while also updating that they are now trying to rest while holding on to hope for the situation to settle. "We are all safe now and have been moved to a more secure place, thanks to the tireless efforts of the staff at Dubai Airport



and the Dubai authorities. A special thanks as well to the Indian High Commission in Dubai for their incredible support and constant assistance in helping keep us safe. For now, we are trying to get some rest and hold on to hope as we wait for things to settle," she added. HOW PV SINDHU GOT STRANDED IN DUBAI

Sindhu was on her way to Birmingham for the All England Open, set to begin on Tuesday, with Dubai serving as her transit stop. However, the rapidly escalating conflict in the region brought air travel to a sudden halt, leaving one of the world's busiest aviation hubs paralysed and thousands of passengers — including the two-time Olympic medallist — stranded without clarity on when they could move. Earlier, Sindhu had shared visuals from inside the airport on Instagram, noting that all flights had been suspended until further notice. The update quickly gained attention, underlining how the ripple effects of geopolitical tensions were being felt far beyond the conflict zone. Dubai Airports later confirmed that operations at both Dubai International and Al Maktoum International Airport had been paused, advising travellers to avoid heading to the terminals.

# When cricket took a backseat as cringe ads and influencers took over

**T20 World Cup: This is not about influencers versus journalists. It is about why access is being decided by follower count instead of understanding of the game.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

The T20 World Cup is happening in India. The stands are packed, the buzz is real, and the energy is exactly what you would expect from one of cricket's biggest tournaments. The people who spend their lives covering the game are stuck refreshing emails, waiting to find out if they can even enter the stadium. Getting accreditation as a journalist for a World Cup on home soil has turned into its own mini tournament. You apply weeks in advance. Then you wait. Maybe you get approved. Maybe you don't. Maybe you get access to the press conference

but not the match. Maybe you get neither. And if your name isn't on the match day list, the security guard at the gate is not going to entertain your explanations. It's a strange place to be in.

IND vs WI, T20 World Cup Super 8 match: Preview

Because outside, fans are queuing for tickets. Inside, brands are hosting guests. And somewhere in between, the people whose job is to tell the story of the tournament are wondering whether they'll even be allowed to watch it from inside the stadium. Inside the same venue, however, there's another kind of access story playing out. Content creators are walking around pitchside, making reels with players, sitting in premium stands, and soaking in the experience as invited guests of global brands. They're filming from angles journalists aren't even allowed to stand near them. "As accredited journalists, we can't shoot videos on match days, we can't record PTCs inside the stadium, we can't post practice footage, and we can't even share clips from press conferences. Exclusive access to players? Forget it. But if you're an

influencer, it's a different story. VIP access, brand deals, special treatment. What's truly appalling is that many of them have little sense or understanding of the game, while we, who cover it day in and day out, are treated like side characters by the



administrators," one of those frustrated journalists said. Another journalist shared that the system has started to feel random. It's been tough dealing with last-minute match-day approvals from the ICC. While the Delhi cricket board and Tamil Nadu cricket board are trying to coordinate with journalists before approvals, the matchday access for

other venues are handed out randomly. Rejections come just 48 hours before a match, making it almost impossible to plan coverage. It's frustrating to see people with no real interest in the sport getting pitch-side access while journalists waiting to write meaningful stories are left outside. "And yet, not everyone inside the VIP zones feels entirely comfortable with the setup either.

Because sometimes, even the invitees are unsure why they are there in the first place.

### THE ROYAL INFLUENCER TREATMENT

Prachi Singla, a Mumbai-based content creator, told India Today how she landed at the India vs South Africa Super 8 match in Ahmedabad through a brand contest. "I entered the contest, created my look through Google Gemini, uploaded it on Instagram, and after a few days, I got a call from Google India saying I had been selected for the match," and just like that, Prachi, even to her biggest surprise, was at the stadium watching one of India's most vital matches in this T20 World Cup.

## England Lions vs Pakistan Shaheens called off amid UAE security concerns

**The ECB has cancelled the England Lions' second 50-over match in Abu Dhabi due to escalating security concerns in the Middle East. The situation has also delayed England Women's tour, although the senior men's team will continue with their T20 World Cup plans as scheduled**



**Bayamon. (Agency)**  
The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has cancelled England Lions' scheduled second 50-over match against Pakistan Shaheens in Abu Dhabi due to escalating security concerns in the Middle East. The decision came on Saturday evening after the United States and Israel carried out what they described as a "pre-emptive" strike on Iran, targeting sites linked to Tehran's alleged nuclear weapons programme. Iran responded with retaliatory missile strikes, with reports

suggesting targets in Israel and other parts of the region were hit, triggering heightened security alerts across the Middle East. In light of the developments, the ECB confirmed that the match, which was due to be played at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi, would no longer take place following official Government advice. "The safety and security of our teams and staff is our top priority," the ECB said in a statement. "We are in contact with security experts and the Government in relation to current events in the Middle East, and are

planned tour of Abu Dhabi, with their travel arrangements now delayed as the board evaluates the evolving security situation. However, the ECB clarified that England Men's senior side will continue with their existing plans and travel to Mumbai for the semi-final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup as scheduled. The situation remains fluid, with sporting bodies across the region closely monitoring geopolitical developments before confirming further fixtures.

following official advice. "Tomorrow's second 50-over game between England Men's Lions and Pakistan Shaheens in Abu Dhabi will no longer go ahead, and we are delaying the departure of England Women for their proposed trip to Abu Dhabi next week. "We will continue to monitor and assess the situation and official advice in relation to the future of these trips." The cancellation also impacts England Women's

planned tour of Abu Dhabi, with their travel arrangements now delayed as the board evaluates the evolving security situation. However, the ECB clarified that England Men's senior side will continue with their existing plans and travel to Mumbai for the semi-final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup as scheduled. The situation remains fluid, with sporting bodies across the region closely monitoring geopolitical developments before confirming further fixtures.

## IND vs WI Preview: West Indies, at home in Kolkata, stand between India and semifinal

Kolkata. (Agency)

India's walk out of their dressing room feels pensive. There is a sense of urgency as they step onto the ground and settle into their rhythm at Eden Gardens, only 24 hours before their virtual knockout against West Indies. The team, spread across five nets in Kolkata, is focused on individual processes.

After their warm-ups, Axar Patel is hitting nonchalant shots off Kuldeep Yadav and Washington Sundar. Ishan Kishan is settling into his stride against Mohammed Siraj, while Abhishek Sharma is having a go at the net bowlers. Two others — Jasprit Bumrah and Varun Chakravarthy — are stationed far away, training on their own, sharpening their skills in isolation. The Indian team was jolted by a personal loss a day earlier, when Rinku Singh's father passed away in Greater Noida after battling Stage IV liver cancer. Rinku, who often

forms the heart of the team wherever he goes, has flown to Aligarh to perform the last rites of Khandchand Singh. When a figure like that leaves the group, the air weighs heavy. Even the usually jovial



Arshdeep Singh is training alone. He is stationed along the boundary line, taking catching practice from T Dilip, the fielding coach of the Indian team. But there is perhaps no time to dwell on any of that. That

is the nature of professional sport. It is merciless on the field and off it as well. So the Indian team looked switched on throughout their session, in sharp contrast to West Indies, who had trained at the venue earlier. Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate addressed the press and provided a glimpse of India's mindset.

"I think the important thing is to focus on ourselves, focus on what has got this group to this point, how well they've done. And now there's only quality players left in the tournament," he said at Saturday's pre-match press conference. (India will face West Indies in their T20 World Cup Super 8 fixture in Kolkata at 7 pm IST. The match will be broadcast on Star Sports and streamed live on JioHotstar.)

The former Kolkata Knight Riders player, who has spent ample time at this venue, gave West Indies full respect, fully aware of what they are capable of at this stage of the tournament.

# Don't make the Washington Sundar mistake: Ex-India cricketer wants unchanged XI vs WI

**T20 World Cup: Aakash Chopra warned India against tinkering with their Playing XI now. He stressed stability over experimentation ahead of the must-win clash vs West Indies**

New Delhi. (Agency)

"India have found some rhythm at the right time, but the big calls are only getting tougher as they head into a virtual knockout clash against West Indies in Kolkata. Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra has now urged the team management to resist the temptation of tinkering with the playing XI, warning against bringing Washington Sundar or Kuldeep Yadav back into the side. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Chopra made it clear that stability should take priority over tactical experiments at this

stage of the tournament.

"Should India make any change? They shouldn't. I am saying put the matchups in a box. The team that played at Chepauk, play exactly the same team at the Eden Gardens. Don't think at all about bringing Washington Sundar in or whether Kuldeep can be played because we can trap the opposition," he said. "Leave it now. All are knockout games now. This is a virtual quarterfinal, and then there will be a semi-final and a final. Why should you change now?" India head into the must-win clash against the West Indies on the back of a dominant 256 for 4 against Zimbabwe, the highest total of the tournament so far. Contributions across the batting order finally brought balance to an otherwise inconsistent campaign. Sanju Samson's return at the top added intent early, Abhishek Sharma rediscovered touch with a half-century, and Tilak Varma's 44 not out off 16 balls at No.6 gave India the finishing punch

they had lacked earlier in the tournament. Yet, while the batting clicked, the bowling continues to throw up concerns, particularly



around the sixth bowling option and spin balance. **INDIA'S FAILED SUNDAR EXPERIMENT VSSA** India had earlier turned to Washington Sundar during the Super 8 opener against South

combination — a change that came only when Pakistan's qualification chances were hanging by a thread. Shehzad, meanwhile, echoed similar concerns on his YouTube channel, questioning what the current setup has achieved in the three years it has been in place.

"This setup has been in place for three years now, and instead of moving forward, our vehicle is going in the reverse direction. There's no improvement to be seen. We were promised during the Asia Cup that youngsters will be developed and other areas will be strengthened. What area have they strengthened though? Did we not support you when you brought youngsters into the team in the Asia Cup?" Shehzad said. The 33-year-old also raised questions over tactical decisions, particularly the reshuffle at the top of the order. He pointed to the 84-run partnership between Fakhar Zaman and Sahibzada Farhan in the Asia Cup final against India and wondered why that opening combination was altered.

### The decision did not quite deliver.

Sundar bowled only two overs, conceded 17 runs without taking a wicket, and managed 11 off 11 with the bat after being promoted up the order. His impact remained minimal, and India eventually suffered a crushing 76-run defeat. He was subsequently dropped for the Zimbabwe clash, with Axar Patel returning to the XI. The move brought greater balance and played its part in India's 72-run win that revived their semifinal hopes.

Chopra believes that with knockout cricket now underway, India cannot afford another experiment.

### IND VS WI: PREDICTED XI

With the batting finally settling into roles and combinations working, Chopra suggested that continuity is key.

## Maruti Suzuki India total sales up 7.32% at 213,995 units in February

New Delhi.(Agency)

Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India on Sunday reported a 7.32 per cent rise in total sales to 213,995 units in February 2026 compared to 1,99,400 units a year earlier. Total domestic passenger vehicle sales were marginally up at 161,000 units last month against 160,791 units in February 2025, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. Sales of the mini car vertical, comprising Alto and S-Presso, increased slightly to 10,238 units from 10,226 units in the year-ago month. However, the compact car segment, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, and WagonR, witnessed a decline in sales to 66,386 units last month against 72,942 units in February 2025.

On the other hand, sales of utility Vehicles, consisting of Brezza, Ertiga, e-Vitara, Fronx, Grand Vitara, Invicto, Jimny, Victoris and XL6, increased to 72,756 units compared to 65,033 units a year ago. The company has been calibrating production to reduce the waiting period uniformly across models.

Sales of light commercial vehicle (LCV) Super Carry stood at 13,130 units against 2,710 units in the year-ago period, Maruti Suzuki India said.

Total exports in February 2026 were higher at 39,155 units compared to 25,021 units in the same month last year, it added.

## Hyundai Motor India reports 12.6% rise in Feb sales, exports jump 25%

New Delhi.(Agency)

Hyundai Motor India Ltd on Sunday reported a 12.6 per cent year-on-year increase in total sales to 66,134 units in February 2026. Domestic sales grew 9.8 per cent to 52,407 units in February, and exports surged 24.8 per cent to 13,727 units, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) said in a regulatory filing. This is HMIL's highest-ever tally for total and domestic sales for February since its inception, the company added. HMIL MD and CEO Tarun Garg said, "We kicked off 2026 on a high note, achieving our highest-ever monthly sales in January, and the momentum continues in February". As the company approaches completing 30 years in India, he said, "Our ambition is very clear, to make cutting-edge connected technology accessible to all while elevating every ownership experience and carrying the spirit of Hyundai from India to the world".

## VOC Port to invest 15,000 crore in Outer Harbour transshipment hub project

New Delhi.(Agency)

VO Chidambaram Port will invest Rs 15,000 crore in its ambitious Outer Harbour project, which aims to increase overall cargo handling capacity and position Tamil Nadu as a major transshipment hub of southern India, a top executive has said.

The investment is in addition to the Rs 1,500 crore capex, which has been set aside to upgrade port infrastructure, along with clean projects and deployment of new-age technologies, VOC Port Authority Chairperson Susanta Kumar Purohit told PTI in an interview. VO Chidambaram Port (VOC Port) is one of the major ports in India, located at Tuticorin in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, with an annual cargo handling capacity of 82 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). It is also one of the oldest operational ports, with trade links dating back to 123 AD. Sharing future growth plans, Purohit said, "Outer Harbour is our ambitious project, aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for the maritime sector. Our ministry aims to make VOC Port a major transshipment hub of southern India".

To tap the growing opportunities, VOC Port Authority



is investing close to Rs 15,000 crore in the Outer Harbour project, which will add another 4 million tonne per annum (MTPA) cargo handling capacity in two phases by 2027 and 2030, he said. The port aims to compete with international hubs located in other countries, such as Sri Lanka, Singapore and Indonesia.

As part of the expansion, two berths will be developed with a draft depth of 18 meters, which will be sufficient to handle even the largest container ship. The berths will be able to handle vessels up to 2.5 lakh deadweight tonnage (DWT). In shipping, DWT is a measure of the total weight of a vessel.

On the status of the project, Purohit said a detailed project report prepared for the Outer Harbour project has been submitted to the government for approval.

VOC Port has already signed a tripartite agreement with Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) and Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited to secure the necessary funding, the official said in reply to a question related to finance sourcing.

The rapid growth in container cargo traffic at VOC Port and good hinterland connectivity have created an urgent need to increase handling capacity and accommodate larger vessels. Hence, the Outer Harbour project is proposed with upgraded vessel handling capacity for present and future trend vessels, he added.

# Production rise in non-Gulf areas unlikely to offset oil disruption from Iran war

**Traders warned that prices could jump sharply when markets reopen on Monday if the violence continues.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Missiles fired between Iran and Israel-US joint forces across the Gulf pose one of the most serious disruptions to oil flows in decades and may not be offset by production increases outside the Gulf, analysts said on Sunday. Traders warned that prices could jump sharply when markets reopen on Monday if the violence continues. Though no confirmed disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the risk of tankers being stranded or targeted has prompted major oil traders to suspend shipments through the strait. The narrow



waterway between Iran and Oman handles nearly 20 million barrels a day of crude and refined products. Tanker freight rates have already risen, with benchmark rates for very large crude carriers from

the Middle East to China having tripled in 2026 YTD, indicating that vessels are shrinking away from taking risks.

The Middle East supplies about 20 per cent of the world's oil, and the scale of

disruption will depend on if energy infrastructure will be directly targeted and how quickly normal service on shipping routes resumes, they said.

So far, war conflict between Iran and Israel-US joint forces have not led to any confirmed hits to major oil and gas infrastructure, though explosions were reported in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait and blasts were heard near Iran's Kharg Island, the terminal that handles most of Tehran's crude exports, according to multiple reports. Analysts noted that even short-term conflicts have outsized effects on prices and supply, citing past incidents in the Gulf during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced a new wave of attacks targeting US and Israeli military installations across the Middle East, to avenge the recent US-Israeli strikes on Iran that reportedly killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

## HSBC keeps Brent crude forecast at USD 65/barrel despite Iran strikes

**In a report titled "Strikes on Iran," HSBC noted that President Trump described a "massive ongoing operation" after strikes were launched.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

HSBC Global Investment Research has kept its Brent price forecast unchanged at USD 65 per barrel for 2026, even as it warned of rising risks following air strikes on Iran. In a report titled "Strikes on Iran," HSBC noted that President Trump described a "massive ongoing operation" after strikes were launched. "Given uncertainty, we pull together views related to the economic and market risks of such escalation."

HSBC added, "Oil market risk is asymmetrical, with Hormuz transit the main concern; USD likely to have an

upper hand in the near-term." It also cautioned, "We can have no conviction on how the situation in Iran may evolve following air strikes launched on Saturday, with the impact contingent on the duration of any conflict and how it extends to the



broader region." In crude markets, the bank wrote oil market risk is asymmetrical regarding possible Iran scenarios, with Hormuz transit the main concern. While spare capacity in the Mideast Gulf is significant, it warned that it would not be accessible if Hormuz is closed.

Assessing the larger regional impact,

HSBC said, "Wealth and policy experience safeguard economic order but any fresh conflict would test sentiment, activity and capital flows in the Gulf and challenge Egypt's recent external account gains."

In foreign exchange markets, the bank stated the USD is likely to have an upper hand in the near-term. It added, "Geopolitical events can give confusing signals for currencies, not just for the USD."

On Saturday, the United States and Israel carried out joint missile attacks on Iran, with large explosions reported in Tehran and other major cities, signalling a sharp escalation that risks expanding tensions into a broader regional conflict in West

Asia. Meanwhile, Iran has retaliated, targeting Israel and US assets in multiple Gulf states. Multiple explosions have been heard in Iran's capital, Tehran, while blasts have also been reported in several other locations across the country.

## The macroeconomic implications of India's new trade gamble

New Delhi.(Agency)

India is undertaking one of the most ambitious trade pivots since 1991. The pivot doesn't involve mere tariff reductions or is part of diplomatic symbolism. It also concerns whether India establishes its manufacturing prowess embedded in global supply chains, or remains as a large consumption market economy that is dependent on imports. With Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal confirming the operationalisation of recent Free Trade Agreements with the UK and Oman by April 2026 followed by New Zealand in September, New Delhi is decisively redefining its trade posture, which merits a closer scrutiny. India is gradually integrating into global supply chains not by lowering its multilateral World Trade Organization tariffs, which average roughly around 15.8%, but

through targeted bilateral agreements. As former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian argued in The Economist, this marks a clear dismantling of recent protectionist tendencies. If these agreements endure, India could emerge as one of the world's most open large economies.

India commands around 2-3.5% of low-skilled global exports compared to China's 53%, while merchandise exports remain at 12-13% of GDP. The new treaties aim to close that gap. However, trade pacts expose competitiveness. Share of manufacturing in India's economy has remained between 15% and 17% for over a decade, far below the government's 25% aspiration. The question is whether domestic industry is capable of rising. The utilization paradox India has attempted this

integration before by signing agreements with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea to plug Indian firms into the Asian growth engine. The results were sobering. Since the ASEAN pact took effect in 2010, India's trade deficit with the bloc widened from \$7.5 billion to nearly \$44 billion by FY23, with imports growing to roughly double the value of exports. Trade expanded, but the benefits flowed unevenly. The reason was the Inverted Duty Structure. India reduced tariffs on finished goods, while keeping import duties on intermediate inputs elevated.

It became cheaper to import fully assembled products than to import components and manufacture domestically. Instead of strengthening local production, the policy framework incentivised dependence on foreign assembly lines.



trend, India's forex reserves have shown steady growth in recent years. They have increased by about USD 56 billion so far in 2025, following a rise of over USD 20 billion in 2024 and a USD 58 billion addition in 2023, after a decline of USD 71 billion in 2022. The RBI actively manages reserves by buying dollars when the rupee strengthens and selling them to prevent excessive depreciation.

# AI changes how India's IT employees work, not yet the jobs

**Across large IT firms, AI adoption is no longer optional. Inside the company, there is strong encouragement to use AI in every project**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how employees work inside India's IT services companies, forcing engineers to adopt new tools, retrain in AI skills and adjust to rising productivity expectations, even as company leaders say the shift is creating more transformation than immediate job losses. "AI has clearly changed how we work. Earlier, we would spend days writing and testing basic code. Now, tools can generate a first version in hours. It saves time, but it also means clients expect faster delivery and sometimes lower costs," said Ram Prasad, a mid-level software engineer at a Bengaluru-based IT firm. He said the

change is altering the nature of work rather than eliminating it outright. "So we have to add value in other ways, like understanding the business problem better or improving system design. I don't think jobs will disappear overnight, but the nature of our roles is definitely changing." Across large IT firms, AI adoption is no longer optional. "Inside the company, there is strong encouragement to use AI in every project. Training programmes and certifications are becoming common," said a project lead at a top Indian IT firm, who did not want to be named. "At the same time, people are quietly worried about what this means in the long term. If AI can handle routine tasks like testing or monitoring, fewer junior roles may be required. For now, it feels more like a shift in skills rather than job losses, but everyone knows we have to keep adapting to stay relevant," she added. Shilpi Chopra, a Noida-based IT professional, said both companies and clients are now encouraging the use of large language models (LLMs) in projects. According to her, LLMs help generate baseline code — with nearly 50% of the work being handled by these

tools — after which engineers build and refine the rest. Earlier, Chopra said, clients and companies often restricted the use of LLMs such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Alibaba Cloud's Qwen, Anthropic's Claude, and Meta's Llama. Now, however, their use is actively encouraged.

Chopra, who worked at Tata Consultancy Services until last year, said companies have made it mandatory for employees to complete AI courses and obtain certifications. Even fresh recruits are now trained in AI.

However, she dismissed concerns that AI poses a large-scale threat to IT jobs. At the organisational level, executives say artificial intelligence is changing how services are delivered, particularly in cloud operations. TCS wants employees to proactively use artificial intelligence (AI) even if it means "cannibalising revenue streams", CEO K Krithivasan said at the Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum in Mumbai. "We are telling associates that if you find that you can do something faster, better, cheaper with AI, you should probably go and tell your customers, even if it cannibalises revenue," Krithivasan said. Enterprises are moving towards what is described as a

'human by exception' model, where AI systems handle routine monitoring and fixes, while people intervene only when decisions carry significant risk, Anant Aya, EVP and Service Offering Head at Infosys, told TNIE. "The level of criticality and potential impact of a decision determines whether human judgment must remain involved," Aya said. "When a decision affects business-critical systems, security posture or data integrity, or has a large or irreversible impact, humans must stay in the loop." AI agents are designed to analyse large volumes of operational data and act on it automatically.

"They make operational decisions and execute in high-volume situations like proactive monitoring (lead indicator identification), fleet management, backup assurance, incident triaging, recovery handling, and change analysis," Aya said, adding that this boosts system availability, provides operators with vital insights, and reduces fatigue, all without elevating enterprise risk. While employees adapt to new tools, company leaders acknowledge that AI-driven productivity is putting pressure on traditional billing models.

# Ankita Lokhande

**Introduces Her 'Baby' On Laughter Chefs: 'It's Such A Proud, Happy Feeling'**

Television superstar Ankita Lokhande introduced her baby 'Mau' on the celebrity cooking reality show Laughter Chefs, further calling it a proud and special moment as her little one made a debut on national television. Sharing glimpses from the episode, she wrote on her social media account, "Such a special episode coming your way our little Mau made her debut on national TV... she has no idea what's happening on screen, but we know... and our hearts are just full! It's such a proud, happy feeling to introduce our baby to all of you Mau meri Mau Love thy pets."

In the picture, Ankita is seen sitting on the stage floor holding her fluffy pet cat close, smiling ear to ear. Ankita Lokhande and her husband Vicky Jain adopted Mau in 2024 and ever since then, the fur baby has been an integral part of their family.



Back then, Ankita had announced the arrival of her pet on her social media account. Ankita had shared a cute video of herself playing with the kitten. The clip showed Ankita and Vicky playing with the cat, hugging it, kissing it and cuddling with it. In a heartfelt note, Ankita wrote, "Welcome to the family, our little princess Mau Lokhande Jain! You're the newest addition to our family, mommy and Daddy are already head over heels in love with you! Your tiny meows and cuddles have stolen our hearts. May your little paws bring immense joy and happiness to our lives."

"Congratulations to us, the proud parents! May our lives be filled with laughter, snuggles, and endless joy, courtesy of your adorable antics, Mau. Here's to many adventures, playtime, and cozy moments with our new little bundle of joy! Mau, you're loved and cherished already, our sweet daughter," the note further read. Talking about the couple, Ankita had tied the knot with businessman Vicky on December 14, 2021 in a traditional ceremony in Mumbai.

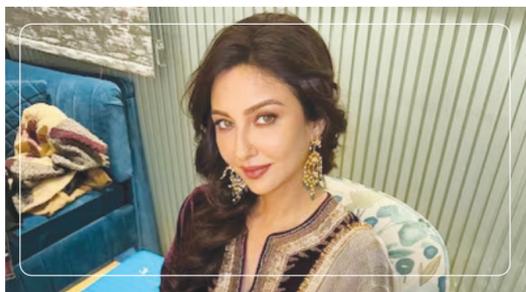
On the work front, the couple had participated in the controversial reality show 'Bigg Boss 17', that tested their relationship. The couple is currently seen in the celebrity cooking reality show, 'Laughter Chefs-Unlimited Entertainment'. It is hosted by Bharti Singh, and judged by chef Harpal Singh Sokhi.

# Saumya Tandon

**Shares How She Kept Working Out Despite Pregnancy, Sciatica: 'Your Body Is The Best..'**

Actress Saumya Tandon believes fitness is a lifelong commitment and not something to be paused. She asserted to never stop, even with a knee injury, pregnancy, or sciatica. Saumya, who is currently basking in the success of her latest release "Dhurandhar" by Aditya Dhar, took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images of herself doing aerial yoga, planks, TRX workout, pilates and yoga.

Reflecting on her fitness journey over the years, Saumya highlighted how yoga, pilates and weight training have remained constant in her routine. She wrote: "Over the years... Yoga, Pilates, Weight training. Never stop. Even with knee injury, pregnancy, sciatica whatever situation you are thrown into, just be at it. Your body is the best investment in the world. Women lift weights."



Talking about Dhurandhar, the film also stars Akshaye Khanna, Ranveer Singh, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun and Rakesh Bedi with Manav Gohil, Danish Pandor, Saumya Tandon, Gaurav Gera, and Naveen Kaushik in supporting roles.

The film draws inspiration from real-life events involving geopolitical tensions and covert operations conducted by India's R&AW, particularly those associated with Operation Lyari,

2008 Mumbai attacks, crackdown on gangs and criminal syndicates.

Saumya she took up modelling assignments early in her career and was the "Femina Cover Girl First Runner Up" in 2006. She also appeared in the Afghan serial Khushi in 2008 as part of the international project, where she played the lead of an Afghan woman doctor.

She co-hosted Zor Ka Jhatka: Total Wipeout with Shah Rukh Khan in 2011. She has hosted Dance India Dance for 3 seasons. She co-hosted the Bournvita Quiz Contest, along with Derek O'Brien for three seasons. In Imtiaz Ali's Jab We Met, starring Shahid Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor, she played the role of Kareena's character's sister Roop. In 2015, she started playing the role of Anita in the comedy serial Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain!. She is also known as "gori mem" from the serial, due to her being referred to as the same in the show by Rohitashv Gour's character. In 2018, she hosted the second season of Entertainment Ki Raat.

**Drishyam Actress Ishita Dutta Gets Real About Motherhood: 'Am Celebrating Beautiful Chaos'**



In a time when social media presents picture-perfect parenting, Bollywood actress Ishita Dutta is opting for honesty over filters. In a recent candid insight into her daily life as a mother, the Drishyam star celebrated the chaos, fatigue, and emotional upheaval that accompany raising small children. She portrayed parenthood as gloriously chaotic, with disorganised toys, messy hair, and never-ending to-do lists, rather than as perfectly tranquil. Dutta views these flawed moments as reminders of unwavering love rather than as duties.

#### Finding Joy in the Beautiful Mess

Taking to social media, Dutta shared a candid selfie and a heartfelt note describing the realities of parenting — from toys strewn across the house to stickers appearing in unlikely places. She captured the bittersweet nature of having young children when she said that, despite the chaos, motherhood symbolises "happiness in its purest form."

"Life as a mom — Messy hair, toys everywhere, a never-ending to-do list, stickers in places they don't belong and yet, somehow, this is happiness in its purest form," Dutta captioned her Instagram Story.

#### Parenting Beyond Perfection

The Drishyam actress married actor Vatsal Sheth in 2017. The couple welcomed their son Yavu in 2023 and were blessed with a baby girl in 2025. Dutta has been outspoken about dealing with emotional outbursts and toddler meltdowns, especially with her young son.

Instead of aiming for impossible perfection, she promotes a balanced parenting style that involves remaining composed during tantrums and giving oneself grace on trying days. The actress continues to fulfil her film commitments, like the upcoming Drishyam 3, while sharing glimpses of her family life on social media.

#### Ishita Dutta Lost 15Kgs Post Second Pregnancy

Ishita Dutta recently shared that she lost weight after giving birth to her second child. The actress lost 15 kgs within two months, which Dutta blamed on health issues brought on by her gallbladder surgery and the eating restrictions that followed. "I lost more than 15 kgs in less than two months. Want to know my secret? I hate to break it to you guys, but there is no secret," Dutta said in an Instagram video.

**Munawar Faruqi, Huma Qureshi Pose For A Candid Picture At Awards Night**



The Indian Telly Streaming Awards 2026 honoured some of the best OTT performances last night. Several actors graced the special event in Mumbai and many secured the prestigious accolade for their shows and films. At the event, Munawar Faruqi was spotted interacting with Huma Qureshi. In the clip, Munawar was seen congratulating her for her award.

Moving on, he was also seen posing with her for some pictures before she bid him goodbye. Rasika Dugal was also seen standing beside them and greeting the duo later on. Munawar was seen in a black and white suit while Huma was seen in a classic black dress.

#### Munawar Faruqi's Acting Debut

Munawar made his acting debut in First Copy, and the reality TV personality just participated in the sequel.

The second season, set in the early 2000s, follows Munawar's character as he struggles to maintain control of his piracy empire. As his enemies tighten their grip, his allies betray him, and the underworld becomes involved, complicating matters for him. Season 2 of First Copy is presently available on Amazon MX Player.

#### Munawar Faruqi To Host The Society Season 2

Meanwhile, hosted by Munawar Faruqi, The Society was introduced in July 2025 and has garnered excellent feedback from fans. The show has been renewed for Season 2, and Munawar has announced the release date, along with a new trailer. The Society Season 2, hosted by Munawar Faruqi, will premiere on March 9 and will be available for free on JioHotstar Sparks.

The teaser shows extreme physical and psychological trials, such as brutal combat-style tests and head shaving, as well as emotional breakdowns and heated confrontations among the participants. Munawar is portrayed as the ultimate authority figure, serving as judge, jury, and executioner for the system. Meanwhile, the lion, deer, and rat icons reflect various levels of social order in the game.

Bhawish Madaan, a social media star, won Season 1. In the final, he overcame the other competitor, Badal Sharma. The show included 25 contestants participating in a controlled social experiment divided into classes.



# Consider

these tips while moving into a

# New home

**B**uying a new house is one of the most fulfilling experiences in life. Your home is your personal space and you would always want to make it special. Although, it is extremely exciting to move into your home, make sure you keep these tips handy so that the transition is smooth.

**Pack the stuff in slots, name them into categories**  
Show them what needs to be packed

together, slot them out into living room, bedroom, kids's room, kitchen and bathroom accessories. Mark every box with specific details so that you understand what's there in each box. Pack delicate stuff like handicraft, artefacts, crockery etc in cushioned boxes and mark them as 'fragile'.

**Supervise the process**  
Don't try to manage everything by yourself,

take help from parents and friends to supervise the process of moving in. Allot one member at every point of change in hand. This will ensure that everything reaches your new home in one piece. Ask them not to rub heavy furniture against each other, not the bang boxes marked as 'fragile' and handle them carefully, etc.

**Make sure all the work is complete before you move in**

Do not plan to move in even if a tad bit of the work is incomplete. Since, it is extremely difficult to make any changes once you move in. Even if small things like one of your designer walls is yet to be done or a cabinet in your kitchen is yet to be fixed, wait till they are all set. Do not hurry up.

**Start with one section at a time**  
Do not open all the boxes at a time, start with one section at a time. This will ensure

accuracy and finesse. Its best to begin with the living room as it is the first room that opens the door to your home. Then gradually set the other rooms. Although, you can seek help from friends to set up all sections of your house, make sure the bedroom is done only by you and your spouse, since its your personal space and needs to be done up with love and care.

## Celebrate summer with a Sundowner



**Pick the perfect place**  
A sundowner typically takes place from 5pm and goes on till 8 pm or so... So, pick a place where the romance of the evening is accentuated. A pool side sundowner is always a hot pick. just have some floats, deck chairs and pool side recliners handy. Those who want to chill by the pool will do so, and others can cool off in the water. Another alternative is your terrace! Just make sure you arrange for some comfy furniture for the guests — plenty of floor cushions, swing chairs, recliners, and an open bar. Ah ha! Lawn parties in a fab garden setting is another sundowner staple. Think pretty gazebos, flowly drapes, garden chairs... If all that sounds like too much work, throw a party at a roof top pub from where you can catch a

beautiful sunset. This way drinks, decor and food are taken care of, and the hosts too can chill, literally.

**Dress down**  
Loud clothes and makeup are not apt for sundowners. Maxi dresses, shorts with tank tops, comfortable footwear — slip ons, flip flops in bright colours — are the key to dressing up for such a do. Leave your tresses loose or opt for a high ponytail. Just a hint of mascara and gloss and you should be set!

**Music sets the mood**  
You can always invite an in-house DJ to play for you if you are hosting a sundowner do at a pub. But if you are hosting it at home premises, make sure to have a peppy playlist ready because you have to get your guests in the mood to party quite early before the usual hours.

**Keep the munchies light**  
No one wants to gorge on heavy food during sundowner. Anything that is bite-sized and easy to eat, such as canape, dimsums, cruncy salad, nachos, chips, fresh fruit popsicles, mini donuts, pop-in-the mouth desserts are some of the yummy dishes that you can choose for an ideal sundowner platter.

**What you gonna sip**  
Some of the best drinks to serve at a sundowner are Long Island Iced Tea, Cosmopolitan, sangrias Mojitos, Vodkaranberry concoction and any other drinks with a hint of fruit or fresh lime is the best way to start your evening. Those who want beer can be served draught beer too. Chilled Mojito popsicles are also a great idea for summer sundowners.

## 5 ways to organise your Book shelf

you're a bookworm and not a particularly organised person, you're sure to have tons of books lying around the house. It is easy to segregate your book collection in an organised and functional manner, this not makes your work easy but also makes your work and space a lot more clear and

of the book. For example, if most of your books are black and white, you can create a monochrome section.

**4. Arrange according to publications:** If you do not wish to mix your books, the ideal way to arrange them is by separating them according to the publisher. You can build different sections for each publisher, so that you do not get confused while arranging your books.

**5. According to emotions:** You don't have to ideally follow the usual method of arranging books. You can do it a bit differently. If there are books that have been gifted to you by friends and family, you can make a separate section for them and label it accordingly. While the books that you have bought for yourself can be organised in another section and labeled.



consistent. Here are a few ways you can organise your book shelf—

**1. Categorise it alphabetically:** One of the best ways and the most common method of organising your book shelf is by arranging the books according to the alphabets. You can either do it by the author's first or last name or by organising it according to the book title.

**2. According to genre:** This is the easiest way to organise your books and also find them when you are looking to read a particular genre. Make separate shelves for comedies, classics, thriller, suspense etc.

**3. Colour coded:** You can turn your book shelf into a giant rainbow by arranging them according to the colour

