

# Bhagwant Mann Leads Punjab's Development

► Industrial reforms, welfare schemes and job creation mark a new chapter of development in Punjab



The Sikh Times  
Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi 13 March: Punjab is witnessing a major transformation under the leadership of Chief Minister Sardar Bhagwant Singh Mann, as the state government continues to launch ambitious policies and welfare programmes aimed at strengthening the economy, empowering citizens and creating new opportunities for the youth. In a significant step toward economic growth, the Punjab Government recently unveiled the Industrial and Business Development Policy-2026, which aims to attract nearly ₹75,000 crore of investment into the state. The policy is designed to accelerate industrial expansion, generate employment



and position Punjab as one of India's most attractive investment destinations.

Speaking during the launch of the policy in Ludhiana, Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann said that Punjab is open for business and committed to providing a flexible and investor-friendly environment. The policy introduces innovative incentives, capital subsidies and customized incentive packages that allow investors to choose from a wide range of benefits suited to their business. According to the state government, incentives under the new policy may reach up to 100 percent of fixed capital investment, a move expected to attract large industries, manufacturing units and emerging technology sectors to Punjab. The policy also lowers employment generation thresholds, encouraging even medium-scale industries to invest and create jobs across the state.

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## 'Paucity Of Time': President's Office Snubs Trinamool Outreach In Protocol Row

The Bengal Assembly election is due in April/May and will see a fierce showdown between the ruling Trinamool Congress led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, the main opposition.

New Delhi. (Agency) The office of President Droupadi Murmu has rejected the Trinamool Congress' request for an appointment citing a 'paucity of time', sources said Friday morning. Sources said a senior Trinamool member wrote to Murmu on Monday asking for a meeting with a 12-member delegation to brief the President on state-sponsored welfare measures for tribal communities. The Trinamool wrote back requesting time next week, sources added. The rejection followed a face-off between the President and the Bengal government over alleged protocol lapses at a conference on welfare of tribal communities in Siliguri last week. The Trinamool's request has been seen as an attempt to

mend fences and share information about state initiatives for the 'inclusive development of all sections of society'. The President had questioned the absence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee or any of her cabinet ministers in the group that received her at the airport in Bagdogra. She also offered sharp remarks over a change in the location of the event and suggested the state is actively denying tribals access to welfare measures and facilities being offered by the centre. "Is development taking place for Santhals and tribals here? I don't think so," she said at the event. "Are facilities (from the central government) reaching you? I don't think so. I think some people



are being stopped from coming here... maybe some don't want Santhals to progress..." The Chief Minister responded as sharply and

dismissed the President's remarks as "political" and timed to coincide with a critical Assembly election due in April/May. "I would like to humbly request the President not to make statements that don't speak well of your post. You spoke about one community today... you didn't speak about the rest of the communities here in Bengal," she said. "Don't play politics on advice of BJP before poll." Mamata Banerjee - protesting the revision of state voter rolls, a revision opposition parties say is meant to disenfranchise some sections of voters - also asked the President: "Do you know how many tribals were deleted from voter lists here?"

## Bid on Farooq Abdullah life a matter of great concern: Nadda in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi. (Agency) The Centre Thursday said the murderous attack on Farooq Abdullah is a matter of great concern, adding that all necessary steps will be taken to ensure his security. Leader of the House and Union Minister J P Nadda said the government is taking the assassination bid with utmost seriousness. This was in reply to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's allegation that there seemed to be a conspiracy to kill Abdullah, blaming revocation of J&K's statehood for the incident. Nadda said a



thorough probe is being conducted to ascertain the motive of the arrested assassin and to prevent any such security lapse in the future. He said: "Reaching a conclusion that this happened because

(J&K) was not given statehood... and making allegations that there is in a way a conspiracy being hatched to kill him... is condemnable." Also, Opposition members slammed the Centre for replacing MGNREGA with the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act - VB-G RAM G. In the Upper House, Congress MP Shaktisinh Gohil said: "...MGNREGA gave jobs to poor people in villages... now you say the states will give money (for the scheme under VB-G RAM G).

## 10 lakh leaflets with 'chargesheet' against Himanta govt: Behind the arrest of 4 Congress workers in Guwahati

New Delhi. (Agency) On a visit to Assam on February 19, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra released a 20-point "People's Chargesheet" against the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government. This Monday, the Assam police found four Congress workers carrying a large number of these leaflets, intended for distribution as part of the party's assembly poll campaign. The four were arrested and slapped with Section 152 of the BNS, a charge similar to "sedition" under the IPC. Their bail has been denied. The four



Congress workers - Rakibul Hoque Khan, Akshay Bordoloi, Joyanal Abedin and Pranjit Pator - were detained by police in Guwahati in the early hours of Monday. Guwahati East DCP Tabu Ram Pegu said the police were alerted about a dispute over the entry of a truck into a housing society in the city, and when they checked the vehicle, they found "around 10 lakh printed leaflets", which "had allegations against our honourable chief minister", stocked for "large-scale distribution." He cited the "sensitive election time", and "law and order ramifications.

# Iran's Araghchi dials Jaishankar 4th time, calls for co-operation from Brics

Abbas Araghchi spoke with S Jaishankar on Friday, briefing him on Iran's position after US-Israeli strikes and calling for support from Brics nations, while India emphasised cooperation and regional stability.

Chennai. (Agency) Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held another phone conversation with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to discuss regional and international developments, according to an Iranian readout of the call. Araghchi briefed Jaishankar on the latest situation following what Iran described as US and Israeli attacks and their impact on regional and global stability, while also calling for greater cooperation from BRICS nations, Tehran said. This was the fourth time the Iranian foreign minister has spoken to his Indian counterpart since the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran on January 18, triggering retaliation from Tehran and escalating tensions across the Middle East. "Araghchi briefed his Indian counterpart on

the latest situation following what Iran described as US and Israeli attacks, and their impact on regional and global stability. He stressed the determination of the Iranian government, people, and armed forces to exercise their legitimate right of self-defence," the readout said. He also called on international and regional organisations to condemn what Iran termed "military aggression against the country" and highlighted the "importance of Brics in supporting global stability". Jaishankar, for his part, said India is ready to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation in regional and international forums and emphasised the need to strengthen lasting stability and security in



the region, Tehran added. Jaishankar also confirmed the conversation, which happened on Thursday night. "Had another conversation with Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi yesterday night. Discussed bilateral matters as also Brics related issues," Jaishankar said. Both leaders held another "detailed" conversation on March 11, where they

discussed the war developments, including the missile attack on a girls' elementary school in Iran on the first day of the war and "subsequent widespread attacks on civilian sites and public service centres". "The Foreign Minister described the aggressive act by the US and the Israeli regime as a violation of the fundamental principles and rules of the United Nations Charter and international law, noting that all governments have a responsibility to condemn this military aggression and blatant law-breaking. The foreign ministers of Iran and India also discussed the consequences of the US and Israeli regime's military aggression on the security of shipping and vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz," an earlier readout said.

Front continued news

**Bhagwant Mann Leads Punjab's Development**

The Mann-led government has also emphasized job creation as one of its primary priorities. Officials say that the government has already provided tens of thousands of government jobs and continues to focus on employment opportunities for educated youth in various departments and sectors.

In another important decision, the Punjab Cabinet has approved the recruitment of over 1,100 assistant professors in government colleges to strengthen higher education and improve academic infrastructure across the state.

These measures are expected to enhance the quality of education and open new career opportunities for young professionals in Punjab. Chief Minister Mann has repeatedly emphasized that education is the foundation of Punjab's future. The state government has launched initiatives to modernize government schools, upgrade educational facilities and provide international exposure to teachers.

Under a new programme, government school teachers are being sent abroad for training so that students in Punjab receive global-standard education without having to leave the country.

The Punjab Cabinet has also approved the establishment of a world-class Sri Guru Teg Bahadur University at Anandpur Sahib, which will strengthen higher education and research facilities in the state.

Education experts believe that such initiatives will help Punjab emerge as a hub of learning and innovation.

The Punjab Government has also taken significant steps toward social welfare and women's empowerment. In the recently announced state budget, the government introduced a scheme providing monthly financial assistance to women, with special support for economically weaker sections. Officials say that these initiatives are aimed at improving the economic independence of women and strengthening family welfare across rural and urban areas of Punjab. Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann has repeatedly stated that the primary goal of his government is to ensure transparent governance, eliminate corruption and improve public services. The government has taken steps to improve financial management, strengthen power supply and enhance irrigation systems for farmers. Addressing public gatherings in recent days, the Chief Minister said that Punjab is moving forward with a clear vision of development and progress in sectors such as education, healthcare, industry and agriculture. Political observers believe that the Mann government's industrial reforms, welfare initiatives and education policies are laying the foundation for a new phase of economic growth in Punjab.

With large investments expected under the Industrial Policy-2026, increased employment opportunities and expanded welfare schemes, the state government is projecting Punjab as a progressive and dynamic state ready to compete with the leading economies of India.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann has expressed confidence that with the cooperation of the people, Punjab will soon emerge as one of the most prosperous and progressive states in the country.

News box

**Rs 40L compensation and jobs for kin of 7 collapse victims**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The families of the victims of a wall collapse at the Signature Global project site in Sidhrawali on Monday will receive around Rs 40 lakh in compensation each. The company — Signature Global (India) Limited — has also assured a job to one member of each victim's family. Seven labourers had died in the collapse while excavating soil for a sewage treatment plant (STP). Out of this Rs 40 lakh, Signature Global will pay Rs 20 lakh and the remaining amount will be paid by Haryana govt. Out of the five injured, the company will give Rs 1 lakh each to two labourers who are seriously injured and Rs 50,000 to three who have received minor injuries besides treatment expenses. A senior Gurgaon administrative officer said that the state govt will pay Rs 19 lakh to the families of the deceased, including Rs 4 lakh by the labour department. "Each family was also paid Rs 20,000 for the travel and transport cost to reach back to Jharkhand," a senior administrative officer said. Signature Global group president (operations) Varun Mehta wrote in his letter to the family of Satish Kumar, one of the victims, "In accordance with the company's policy regarding compassionate employment, the company decided to offer one employment opportunity to an eligible member of the deceased's family. The said employment shall be provided subject to the qualification, eligibility and suitability of the nominated family member, in accordance with the applicable company rules and policies."

**Haryana rights panel seeks aid policy for deaths in police custody**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The Haryana Human Rights Commission directed the state govt and the state police to frame a compensation policy for deaths, torture and other violations in police custody on the lines of the existing policy for deaths in judicial custody. Commission member Deep Bhatia said the framework must mirror the existing compensation mechanism to ensure uniform accountability and compensation across all custody-related cases. In 2021, the state implemented India's first compensation policy for unnatural deaths in judicial custody—offering Rs 7.5 lakh in cases involving assault, torture or negligence by prison officials, and Rs 5 lakh for deaths caused by medical negligence. The policy was subsequently endorsed by the National Human Rights Commission. Bhatia was hearing a case of alleged custodial violations where the complainant argued that families of victims of police custody violence face uncertainty due to the absence of a structured compensation regime. The commission observed that the state cannot maintain two separate standards—one for judicial custody and another for police custody.

**Illegal colonies, walls and sheds razed by DTCP in Gurgaon**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

In a strong warning to encroachers, the department of town and country planning (DTCP) carried out several demolition drives across several parts of the city this week, flattening illegal structures in Sadhrana, Bhondsi and inside a group housing society in Sector 89. A DTCP official said the action was part of an intensified campaign against illegal plotting and construction. "The aim of such drives is to stop encroachment at an early stage so that buyers are not misled into purchasing plots in unauthorised developments," he said. The drives were carried out with the assistance of personnel from Sector 10A and Bhondsi police stations. On Wednesday, an unauthorised colony in Sadhrana village spanning five acres was razed down. Around 12 DPCs (damp-proof course foundations), three boundary walls and two under-construction structures were demolished as part of the drive. An entire



earthen road network created within the colony was also uprooted to prevent further development and illegal sale of plots in the area. In a separate action on the same day, authorities demolished an illegal shed constructed on an internal road of Tulip Ace, a group housing colony

in Sector 89. The action followed a complaint received through the chief minister's grievance portal, the CM Window. According to the official, the shed had been erected for parking by the residents of the housing. Acting on the complaint, authorities removed the

structure and restored the internal road within the housing complex. Earlier, on Monday, another demolition drive was carried out in the urban area of Bhondsi. During the operation, authorities flattened four unauthorised colonies spread across around eight acres in the villages of Bhondsi and Rithoj. The action led to the demolition of 32 DPCs, eight boundary walls and two makeshift structures. The pucca and kutcha road network was also dismantled to discourage further activity. Illegal colonies often lack basic sewage and drainage systems and proper road networks, leading to civic issues in the area, the official said. Authorities reiterated that strict action will continue to be taken against encroachment and asked property buyers to verify approvals and licences before investing in plots or properties to avoid future disputes or losses.

**More work, same pay: Safai staff hit streets**

Noida.(Agency)

Nearly 200 sanitation workers, under the banner of Akhil Bhartiya Safai Mazdoor Congress, staged a strike outside Noida Authority office in Sector 94 on Thursday morning, to protest against the merger of the health department with the civil department. Workers said they were being forced to take on civil works in addition to sweeping and cleaning, alleging that refusals had led to sackings and salary cuts.

On Thursday, garbage and dry leaves remained uncollected in several sectors during the day, including sectors 18, 91, 92 and 96. Heaps of garbage were seen near DLF Mall of India, while dry leaves piled up near The Great India Place Mall.

Ravi Kumar Tank, a sanitation worker from Sector 101, said he has been on the job for 10 years and works from 7am to 3pm, covering Sector 128 and the Asgharpur area. "Earlier, our work was limited to cleaning roads and drains. But last month, after the Authority merged the health and civil departments, sanitation workers were given civil duties too," he

said. "Now we are asked to handle construction and demolition waste and even work on central verges and pathways. We earn Rs 18,400 a month. If our salary hasn't increased, why should we be made to do extra work?"



Sachin, a resident of Gadhi Chaukhandi village who works in Sector 65, said sanitation workers earlier swept roads, collected garbage and loaded it onto tractors. "Now we are being assigned civil works as well," he said. The strike comes

after Noida Authority CEO Krishna Karunesh on Monday removed four sanitation workers and two supervisors, and withheld salaries of some staffers over poor upkeep. The protestors alleged that the Authority sacked them for refusing to carry out civil works in their areas. They also shared WhatsApp messages from officials warning of strict action and salary cuts if they joined the strike or stayed away from duty. The workers are also demanding medical insurance for themselves and their families.

Noida Authority general manager SP Singh said the CEO had approved medical insurance for around 4,800 outsourced sanitation workers through SBI General Insurance. "Each worker and up to five dependent family members will get medical cover of up to Rs 5 lakh annually. The Authority will pay a premium of Rs 10,000 per worker through the outsourcing agency," he said, adding that talks were under way to resolve the workers' concerns.

**Man accused of biting off neighbour's thumb in Gurgaon**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A 45-year-old man was arrested for allegedly forcing his way into a neighbour's flat and biting his thumb during a dispute inside a residential building in Sector 54's Suncity township. The complainant, Inder, who lives on the fourth floor of the building, told police that the accused, Prateek Sapra, a resident of the first floor, assaulted him at his home on March 4.

According to the complaint filed at Sector 53 police station, an argument broke out between the two during Holi celebrations earlier in the day. Around 4.22pm, Inder was at home with his family and neighbours when Sapra called him and used abusive language during the call.

A short while later, Sapra reached Inder's flat. When the door was opened, he forced his way inside, continued abusing him and tried to grab his collar. Inder alleged that Sapra then bit his right thumb with such force that the nail was dislodged and the bone was crushed. Sapra fled the house after seeing blood and hearing the children crying.

Inder was taken to a private hospital, where doctors confirmed bite marks and found that the bone in his thumb was shattered. He was advised to undergo surgery, the FIR stated.

The complaint further alleged that the following day, Sapra's elder brother came to his residence and confronted his wife while she was alone at home. Inder also claimed his family was receiving threats from the accused.

Police said Inder submitted a written complaint on March 5 and later provided medical documents on March 10. Based on the complaint and medical records, a case was registered under sections 117(2) (voluntarily causing grievous hurt) and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of BNS. "The accused works as a businessman, while the complainant is employed with a private company. We are investigating the case," an officer said.

**No bail for lawyer held in fake international crime bureau case**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A sessions court on Wednesday denied bail to advocate Nasir Ali Bhatt in a case linked to a fake agency operating in the city. Police said Bhatt, a member of the Jharkhand Bar Council, helped the accused draft forged documents for an outfit calling itself the International Police and Crime Investigation Bureau.

Six men from Birbhum district in West Bengal were arrested during a bust in Aug last year from a rented house in Sector 70 where they had set up an office barely 10 days earlier. The accused — Bibhash Chandra, Aragya Adhikari, Babul Chandra Mandal, Pintu Pal, Samapadmal and Ashish Kumar — allegedly posed as govt officials using police-like logos and uniforms to extort money. Police said they promised to help bring back people stranded abroad and handle police-related work for a fee. All six accused remain in

jail after their bail pleas were rejected. While rejecting the bail application, sessions Judge Atul Srivastava said that the accused was alleged to be involved in the serious allegation of colluding with other co-accused to fabricate forged documents and obtain financial gain through them and through an organisation. Investigations were underway against the accused in the present case. "Considering the facts and circumstances of the above case, the nature and gravity of the offence, I am of the opinion that the accused's bail application is insufficient," he added. Bhatt's counsel argued that he was not a named accused in the original FIR registered in the case, and his name first surfaced in the charge sheet filed against co-accused Anil Kumar Maurya in the ACJM Court. "The accused is merely a witness in the deed of trust (International

Police and Crime Investigation Bureau) registered with the Noida sub-registrar, in which he signed with his real identity," the counsel said. The prosecution, opposing the bail, argued that the accused and the co-accused had formed the fraudulent organisation to defraud people by forging documents, falsely impersonating govt officials, using police logos, and influencing political figures. The prosecution also argued that the regular bail applications of the six co-accused were previously rejected by the sessions court. The "international police bureau" website created to aid in scamming people is still active online, where the accused claim to assist police internationally and help in trans-border cases. During interrogation, the accused told cops they were working as an NGO in close coordination with the ministries of social justice and empowerment, tribal affairs,

**Drain to tackle Narsingpur flooding, but not this year**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation will build a surface drain along Narsingpur on the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway to address chronic waterlogging during heavy rain. The project, estimated at around Rs 7 crore, will include widening of the service road along with a 15-metre lane to ease traffic movement. A heavy downpour often submerges the low-lying stretch forcing people to wade through knee-deep water along the adjoining service road. Vehicles crawl through the stretch, creating long tailbacks. However, relief from waterlogging is unlikely this year, as the construction is expected to take around 12 months to complete once the work is allotted. In the first phase, a 1.2 km reinforced cement concrete (RCC) drain will be constructed along the



stretch. HSIIDC has floated the tender for the project and plans to begin work next month. The proposed drain will channel rainwater accumulating along the Delhi-Jaipur carriageway and divert it towards the Badshahpur drain through a culvert. While HSIIDC will construct the drain, the culvert required to carry the water across the expressway will be built by NHAI. The culvert design earlier faced

objections from NHAI, which rejected the initial proposal prepared by GMDA, citing serious design flaws and failure to meet mandatory safety guidelines.

GMDA proposed the plan to lay three piped culverts across the highway. One of the biggest concerns raised was the method suggested to build the culvert across NH8 by excavation, which could disrupt traffic on the expressway. GMDA officials

said the design is now modified to accommodate the box-pushing technique, a method that allows construction of underground structures without blocking traffic above. "NHAI has sought adequate cushioning, which is provided to facilitate box pushing so that the culvert can be constructed without affecting traffic on the expressway. Now NHAI will decide how they are going to proceed, as construction of the culvert falls under their jurisdiction," a GMDA official said. In parallel, GMDA is already executing another drainage project to carry stormwater from Narsingpur to the Badshahpur drain. The Authority is constructing the permanent RCC drain estimated at Rs 5 crore. While the project is supposed to be concluded by Aug.

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# Arvind Kejriwal's guarantee to industry, AAP Govt will provide every facility in Punjab to compete with China

**The Sikh Time**  
**MOHALI (SAS NAGAR), 13th March:** The Progressive Punjab Investors Summit 2026 began on a strong note in Mohali on Friday, with investment commitments worth over ₹10,000 crore on the opening day and major industry leaders announcing expansion plans in the state. Addressing investors and industry leaders, AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal said the Punjab government would provide every facility needed for industries to compete with China, asserting that a business-friendly environment had already helped attract 21.50 lakh crore in investments in four years. The AAP Supreme highlighted how the Bhagwant Mann government has introduced a 45-day single-window clearance system and is building a business-friendly ecosystem focused on human capital, industrial growth and large-scale job creation for youth. Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the summit marked the beginning of a new phase of economic growth, employment and industrial expansion, as the state positions itself as a major investment destination with faster approvals, pro-industry policies and a focus on education, healthcare and skilled manpower. Addressing the Progressive Punjab Investors Summit, Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh

Mann stated, "In a major boost to the industrial development of the state, the Punjab government has roped in leading industries to invest in Punjab. It is a matter of immense pride and satisfaction that on the very first day of the Progressive Punjab Investors Summit 2026, the state has secured investments worth more than ₹10,000 crore. Major industry leaders such as HEMEL, Tata Steel, JSW, Trident Group, Hero Industries and several others have announced plans to expand and set up their ventures in the state." He continued, "Punjab is known for its entrepreneurial abilities, innovation and problem solving spirit. You will rarely find a Punjabi begging because our people believe in hard work and are doers who can perform even in the most difficult conditions. Punjab can work for 20 hours a day with unmatched dedication, commitment and resilience. This quality is unparalleled across the world." Highlighting the global identity of Punjabis, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Punjabis are a martial community, courageous and enterprising, and they have excelled in every field across the world. Whenever any tragedy strikes anywhere in the world, Punjab 'langar' is often the first to reach those in need, following the teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji of

service and humanity. Punjab is also blessed with rich culture, fertile land and strong unity. Everything can grow on the fertile land of Punjab, but the seed of hatred can never take root here. Following the message of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the great Sikh Gurus, every Punjabi prays for the well being and progress of all. Since 2022, when our government assumed office, Punjab has witnessed remarkable progress across sectors such as power, health, real estate, infrastructure and education." Highlighting education reforms, he added, "Today the youth of Punjab are excelling in competitive examinations such as UPSC, JEE, NEET and IIT entrance tests because the state government has significantly strengthened the education sector. Thirty school principals from Punjab are currently in Singapore undergoing advanced training so that their expertise can further benefit students across the state. Punjab currently has operational airports in Mohali, Halwara, Amritsar, Bathinda, Pathankot and Adampur. At the same time, road infrastructure in the state is also developing rapidly. I invite industries to come, invest and work in Punjab so that together we can build a progressive and prosperous state." Citing examples of local success stories, he said, "Punjab based enterprises such as Sonalika, Preet Tractors, Duke, Monte Carlo and many others are shining examples of local entrepreneurship. The doors of Punjab are open to all investors and we welcome

them with a red carpet. Our policies are flexible and designed to meet the needs of industry. I urge all of you to invest here, create jobs for Punjabis and help Punjab write a new success story. The state government is aligning skill education and training with the needs of industry so that a strong pool of skilled manpower is created in Punjab. Whatever the industry requires, the government will ensure that the youth receive the necessary training. This will create employment opportunities and accelerate economic growth in the state." Welcoming business leaders, Bhagwant Mann further said, "I welcome all business tycoons to the land of Gurus and Pirs. We are honoured to have such eminent personalities among us today. Punjab is one of the most favourable investment destinations in the country and we will leave no stone unturned to facilitate investors. Our vision is to build a strong partnership between the government and industry to make Punjab a leading industrial hub." Appealing to entrepreneurs, the Punjab CM stated,

"Entrepreneurs are a source of inspiration for everyone and represent the opportunities that the youth of Punjab and India aspire to achieve. Whether we work in the public, private or non profit sectors, each one of us has a responsibility to fulfil if we are to realise our hopes and aspirations for our country, society and families. This summit is not merely about signing MOUs but about sharing knowledge, brainstorming and learning from each other." Speaking about the future vision, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann shared that the state government has chosen a path that will make the future of Punjab bright by accelerating economic growth. I have seen that the young generation of Punjab wants to achieve something big in life. They

are natural leaders who cannot live in isolation. I firmly believe that God has given me this opportunity to lead Punjab so that we can bring meaningful change in the lives of our people." Highlighting innovation and technology, he continued, "Punjab is now at the threshold of transitioning toward a new culture of innovation and technology driven enterprise. The youth of the state are coming up with new ideas and innovations and it is our responsibility to support them. We are leaving no stone unturned for this noble cause. World class infrastructure, excellent connectivity, premier educational institutions and supportive govern-

ment policies together make Punjab one of the most preferred investment destinations globally." Thanking industry leaders, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "I thank all the business leaders for becoming part of Punjab's growth story. Our government is committed to transforming Punjab into a major industrial and export hub in the world. Punjab is among the top performing states in the Ease of Doing Business ranking conducted by the Government of India.

Invest Punjab, the unified regulator of the Government of Punjab, has been recognised by the Government of India as one of the top performing investment promotion agencies." Explaining the governance approach, he added, "Our government seeks holistic economic and financial success for Punjab.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is hereby given to the general public that our client Mr. Vinod Kumar S/o Late Mr. Bhopal Singh is the owner and in possession of a Freehold Residential Built-up House measuring 60 Sq. Yards (i.e., 50.166 Sq. Meters) out of Kharsa No. 1628, situated at Mohalla Noorgun, Waka Village Sarma, Muradnagar, Pargana Jatalabad, Tehsil Modinagar, District Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Our client acquired the said property by virtue of a Gift Deed dated 26.09.2023, registered vide Document No. 15834, Volume No. 14797, Book No. 1, Pages 57-74, at the office of Sub-Registrar, Modinagar, Ghaziabad, in the chain of documents, the Surviving member Certificate of Late Mr. Bhopal Singh, who expired on 27.07.2017, is not available. Therefore, our client hereby declares that except him, no other person has any right, title, interest, claim or objection in respect of the above-mentioned property. The said property is presently financed / mortgaged with Piramal Finance Ltd., any branch(es) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property then contact us within 07 days from the date of Publication of this notice and or the same to the undersigned if found by anyone. Thereafter no claim shall be entertained.

**[NAVEEN KUMAR VERMA]**  
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### Public Notice

My Client Dinesh Chander S/o Sh. Pale Ram R/O D-38, inner Enclave, phase-1, Kirari Suleman Nagar, north West, Delhi-86 have severed all their relations and debar his son Mohit Yashish and his wife Khushbu Kumari from all his movable-immovable properties due to their misconduct and misbehavior if anybody dealing with them, he/she/they will do so at his/her/their own risk and consequences, my client will not be responsible for their any acts and deeds in future.

### Mithilesh Kumar Pathak (Advocate)

Office: ch.no.931, rohini Court Complex, 9th Floor, rohini District Court, New Delhi.

### Public Notice

BE IT KNOWN TO PUBLIC IN GENERAL, my clients Sh. Harish Chand S/o Sh. Kail Charan Sharma R/O H.No. 180, Street No. 4, Shakri Vihar Karawal Nagar, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094, have severed his all relation to his son Mr. Lalit Kumar Sharma and have disowned him from all his movable and immovable properties because of his disobedience and treacherousness. My clients will not be responsible for any act done by him in any manner.

### Harish Chaudhary (Advocate)

Office: ch.no.931, rohini Court Complex, 9th Floor, rohini District Court, New Delhi.

### Public Notice

This is for information of General Public that my client Mrs. Sushma Sharma who is the owner of Property as Residential Entire Second Floor, with roof/terrace rights, built on Plot No. 4118, area measuring 235 Sq. Yds., in the Project Known as "INDER-PRASTHA EXTENSION" Situated at Ownership No. 9, T.P. Scheme No. 3(Part-1), Sector-49, Faridabad forming Part of Kharsa No. 36/1/1, 36/1/2, 36/1/3, 36/1/4, 36/1/5, 36/1/6, 36/1/7, 36/1/8, 36/1/9, 36/1/10, 36/1/11, 36/1/12, 36/1/13, 36/1/14, 36/1/15, 36/1/16, 36/1/17, 36/1/18, 36/1/19, 36/1/20, 36/1/21, 36/1/22, 36/1/23, 36/1/24, 36/1/25, 36/1/26, 36/1/27, 36/1/28, 36/1/29, 36/1/30, 36/1/31, 36/1/32, 36/1/33, 36/1/34, 36/1/35, 36/1/36, 36/1/37, 36/1/38, 36/1/39, 36/1/40, 36/1/41, 36/1/42, 36/1/43, 36/1/44, 36/1/45, 36/1/46, 36/1/47, 36/1/48, 36/1/49, 36/1/50, 36/1/51, 36/1/52, 36/1/53, 36/1/54, 36/1/55, 36/1/56, 36/1/57, 36/1/58, 36/1/59, 36/1/60, 36/1/61, 36/1/62, 36/1/63, 36/1/64, 36/1/65, 36/1/66, 36/1/67, 36/1/68, 36/1/69, 36/1/70, 36/1/71, 36/1/72, 36/1/73, 36/1/74, 36/1/75, 36/1/76, 36/1/77, 36/1/78, 36/1/79, 36/1/80, 36/1/81, 36/1/82, 36/1/83, 36/1/84, 36/1/85, 36/1/86, 36/1/87, 36/1/88, 36/1/89, 36/1/90, 36/1/91, 36/1/92, 36/1/93, 36/1/94, 36/1/95, 36/1/96, 36/1/97, 36/1/98, 36/1/99, 36/1/100, 36/1/101, 36/1/102, 36/1/103, 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NEWS BOX

### 5.5 magnitude quake jolts central Turkiye, sending residents into the cold streets

ANKARA. (Agency)

A moderately strong earthquake struck central Turkiye on Friday, Turkiye's emergency response said. The tremor sent some residents rushing into the streets but no damage has been reported. The magnitude 5.5 quake was centred in the town of Niksar in Tokat province, at a depth of 6.4 kilometers (4 miles), according to the Disaster and Emergency Management agency, AFAD. It occurred at 3:35 am and was felt in several provinces, AFAD said, adding that "no adverse developments" were reported. Still, many residents were seen waiting in cars or in the streets despite the cold, afraid to return to homes, Haberturk news channel reported.

Turkiye sits on top of major fault lines and earthquakes are frequent. In 2023, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake killed more than 53,000 people in Turkiye and destroyed or damaged hundreds of thousands of buildings in 11 southern and southeastern provinces.

### US Woman Wrongly Imprisoned For 6 Months Due To Faulty Facial Recognition

World. (Agency)

A woman in the US had her life upended after she was wrongly imprisoned for six months in jail over a bank fraud case. Angela Lipps, 50, from Tennessee, was slapped with criminal charges last year when police jailed and later flew her to North Dakota after facial recognition showed she was the main suspect in an organised bank fraud case. Despite having never been to North Dakota or stepped on an aeroplane in her life, Lipps was apprehended and thrown behind bars.

Lipps was babysitting her four young children when a team of US Marshals took her away at gunpoint, according to a report in the Grand Forks Herald. She was booked into her county jail in Tennessee as a fugitive from justice from North Dakota. After sitting in the Tennessee jail for four months, she was charged with four counts of unauthorised use of personal identifying information and four counts of theft in North Dakota. After a local news channel obtained the Fargo police file in this case, it was revealed that detectives were investigating several bank fraud cases, where they came across a female suspect who was using a fake US Army ID to withdraw tens of thousands of dollars. To identify the woman, the Fargo police used facial recognition software, which wrongly pinpointed Lipps. In his charging document, the detective wrote that Lipps appeared to be the suspect based on facial features, body type, hairstyle and colour.

"If the only thing you have is facial recognition, I might want to dig a little deeper," said Jay Greenwood, the lawyer representing Lipps in North Dakota. After furnishing Lipps' bank records, Greenwood met Fargo police at the Cass County jail on December 19. It was the first time the police had interviewed in the last five months. Five days after the meeting, the case was dismissed, and she was released.

### In Iran, Residents Deal With Shut Shops, Joblessness And Rationing

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

AFP reporters have been speaking to a range of people living in Iran to build a picture of life under daily US and Israeli bombardment despite an internet blackout and major communication problems. Here is a selection of their comments, either from people who sent messages to AFP reporters or from those interviewed at the borders as they fled. FOLLOW LIVE UPDATES AFP is withholding identifying information for their security.

My son 'has no understanding of war'

A 37-year-old man in Bukan, northwest Iran: "Our landmarks, such as the main square and the central avenue, have been severely damaged by missile strikes. The city's only cinema is in ruins.

Many businesses have also been hit and the market that is usually bustling in the days leading up to Nowruz (Iranian New Year) no longer exists, which is really distressing. I have a six-year-old boy who has no understanding of war. Since the beginning of the conflict, during the bombings, we made him believe it was a game, a kind of 'Missile Launch World Cup' between Iran, the United States and other countries. Each time, he tells us that in this competition, he supports Iran. 'Employers weren't paying' A 24-year-old Afghan who worked at a factory in Tehran: "I saw a bomb drop on a military base. It destroyed the base and broke the windows of the factory. But electricity and gas supplies were ok, banks were active, everything was active. The internet was not working, but the landline phones were active. The market would be open for an hour or two, people would buy what they needed and leave quickly. All the Afghans were leaving, those with four or five months of validity left on their passports, because there was no more work anymore. They (Iranian employers) weren't paying, and there was no internet." Another Afghan, 48, from the capital:

"There were very few Iranians on the streets. I have been travelling around Iran for work for about 32 years. At this time, which is near the New Year and Eid, the streets and markets are usually very busy, but when I went to the market to buy a pair of shoes, I saw no one. The company I worked for had about 60 Iranian and Afghan employees, but not even 10 of them were coming to work. The Iranians had not faced much war compared to Afghans. The Afghans were less afraid, but the Iranians would become very nervous as soon as they saw a missile or a fighter jet, but since we had seen war, it wasn't too difficult for us.

# China positions itself as force for global stability at its annual Congress

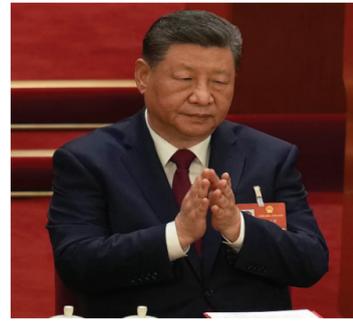
**China is doubling down on a push to transform its economy and be at the forefront of technology, as the People's Congress also rubber-stamped three laws, including one governing ethnic minorities.**

BEIJING. (Agency)

While much of the world's attention is on the Iran war, that hasn't stopped China from moving ahead with national priorities with global repercussions. Not that China doesn't care about the war and its impact on energy supplies and geopolitics. But for the world's second largest economy, its growing rivalry with the United States revolves around a different battle: the

development of the cutting-edge technologies shaping the 21st century. That message came through in a five-year plan formally endorsed on Thursday by the National People's Congress at the end of its annual meeting, the nation's biggest political event of the year. If anything, China is doubling down on a push to transform its economy and be at the forefront of technology. State media described China's determination to stay the course on economic development as a force for stability in an uncertain world.

"A stable and developing China injects more stability and certainty into a world fraught with change and turbulence," the official People's Daily newspaper said in a front-page column on Wednesday. Other state-media echoed that view. The commentaries and official statements didn't mention US President Donald Trump, whose tariffs and use of military force from Venezuela to Iran are shaking up the global order that has governed international relations in the post-World War II era. China publicly defends that system, while calling for



making it more equitable to reflect the interests of developing countries as well as rich ones.

Trump is due to visit Beijing in three weeks to hold talks with his counterpart, Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The National People's Congress also rubber-stamped three laws, including one governing ethnic minorities, at its closing session. The votes are ceremonial and nearly unanimous,

designed to show unity behind the ruling Communist Party's vision for the nation. The five-year plan was approved with 2,758 votes in favor, one against, and two abstentions. "We are forging ahead at full speed in building a great country," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at an annual news conference during the Congress.

**Banking on tech for growth**

Many economists believe that China needs to do more to put more money into the hands of consumers to boost domestic spending and reduce its dependence on export-led growth. China's leaders agree in concept, but the five-year plan puts technology front and center, confirming it remains the top priority. Analysts expect any steps to boost consumption to happen only gradually, such as expanding social security and health care benefits, while government funds are poured into artificial intelligence, robotics and other areas. Chinese Premier Li Qiang announced an economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for 2026 at the start of the Congress.

## Watch what happens': Trump issues new threat to Iran's leaders as war rattles energy supplies

DUBAI. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump on Friday issued a new threat online to Iran's leadership, writing: "Watch what happens to these deranged scumbags today." Trump tallied the damage inflicted on Iran and its leaders and called it a "great honor" to be responsible for it. Trump made the post on Friday on his Truth Social website, saying that "Iran's Navy is gone, their Air Force is no longer, missiles, drones and everything else are being decimated, and their leaders have been wiped from the face of the earth."

Trump's remarks came in response to Iran's new leader issuing his first public statements on Thursday, resolving to keep fighting, promising more pain for Gulf Arab states and threatening to open "other fronts" in a war that has already disrupted world energy supplies, the global economy and international travel. The remarks by Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country's attacks were creating conditions for the Iranian population

to topple the government. "It is in your hands," Netanyahu said at a news conference, addressing the Iranian people. "We are creating the optimal conditions for the fall of the regime." Netanyahu also denounced Khamenei



as a "puppet of the Revolutionary Guards." Khamenei is close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and is widely seen as even less compromising than his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Khamenei said in a statement read by a state TV news anchor that he was keeping a "file of revenge." He did not appear on camera and has not been seen since his father and wife were killed in the war's opening salvo, which also wounded him, according to an Iranian ambassador. Since the start of the war,

US and Israeli strikes have targeted security checkpoints in Iran to undermine the government's ability to suppress dissent, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, the US-based independent monitoring group known as ACLED.

Intense airstrikes hit early Friday around Iran's capital, Tehran, as well as outlying areas. It was not immediately clear what had been targeted. Oil prices spiraled again and stocks sank

The war continued to escalate on its 13th day as oil prices spiraled up again to \$100 per barrel, and stocks sank worldwide over fears that the conflict could drag on longer than hoped.

To relieve the surge in prices, the US Treasury Department announced it was further easing sanctions on Russian oil by granting a license that authorizes the delivery and sale of some Russian crude oil and petroleum products for the next month. Trump signaled earlier this week that he would take more action to address the squeeze on oil flows. The move follows the administration's decision to grant temporary permission for India to buy Russian oil.

## US military refueling plane crashes in Iraq and rescue is underway

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

An American military refueling plane taking part in the operation against Iran crashed in Iraq and rescue efforts were underway, U.S. Central Command said Thursday. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties. A U.S. official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the developing situation, said the KC-135 aircraft that crashed had at least five crew members aboard. The crash was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire, the military said in a statement, which described the plane as "a loss." U.S. Central Command, which oversees the Middle East, said that two aircraft were involved and that one landed safely and the other went down in western Iraq. A second U.S. official, who similarly spoke on condition of

anonymity, said the other plane involved also was a KC-135 tanker. "More information will be made available as the situation develops," Central Command said. "We ask for continued patience to gather additional details and provide clarity for the families of service members." The tanker is the fourth publicly acknowledged aircraft to crash as part of the U.S. military's operations against Iran. Last week, three American fighter jets were mistakenly downed by friendly Kuwaiti fire. All six crew members safely ejected from the F-15E Strike Eagles and were in stable condition after being recovered, the U.S. said.

Seven American troops have been killed in combat during the Iran war so far, while about 140 U.S. service members have been injured, including eight

severely, the Pentagon said earlier this week. Both President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth have warned that the Iran war would likely claim more American lives before it ends. Six of the fallen service members were killed when an Iranian drone struck an operations center at a civilian port in Kuwait. They were in the Army Reserve and worked in logistics, keeping troops supplied with food and equipment. They died one day after the U.S. and Israel launched the military campaign against Iran on Feb. 28. The Islamic Republic has retaliated with missiles and drones against Israel and several Gulf Arab states that host U.S. armed forces. The seventh American service member died after being wounded during a March 1 attack on the Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

# Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of targeting civilians in airstrikes amid third week of fighting

KABUL. (Agency)

Afghanistan's Taliban government early on Friday accused Pakistan's military of targeting homes in overnight airstrikes in Kabul and the southern province of Kandahar, saying at least four civilians were killed as fighting between the neighbors entered its third week.

Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on X that Pakistan's aircraft also struck fuel depots belonging to the private airline Kam Air near Kandahar airport. "This company supplies fuel to civilian airlines as well as to United Nations aircraft," he said.

Pakistan's military and government did not immediately comment. Pakistan and Afghanistan have been targeting each other's military installations since late February, when Kabul said it struck Pakistani posts in response to Pakistani attacks along the border. Pakistan's military has said its operations targeted the Pakistani Taliban and their support networks along the border, which Afghanistan has never formally

recognized. Both sides have claimed to inflict heavy losses in what has become their deadliest fighting in years, a confrontation Islamabad has described as an "open war" with Afghanistan.

In his posts on X, Mujahid claimed that Pakistani strikes hit multiple civilian sites and uninhabited locations in Afghanistan's Paktia and Paktika provinces, as well as other areas. He said the attacks "will not go unanswered." Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said at least four civilians, including children, were killed in the city and 15 others were injured. The total number of casualties around Afghanistan was unclear. The latest Pakistani strikes came a day after China's special envoy, Yue Xiaoyong, arrived in Islamabad and met with his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammad Sadiq, following a visit to Kabul where he met Afghan government officials. Sadiq, Pakistan's

special envoy for Afghanistan, wrote on X the previous day that he and Yue "discussed threats posed by terrorist groups such as TTP and ETIM (East Turkestan Islamic Movement) to Pakistan and China



respectively" and agreed on the need for collective efforts to ensure lasting peace and stability.

Repeated calls from the international community for restraint have had little

effect. Pakistan has previously said its strikes along the border and inside Afghanistan are aimed solely at Khawarij, a phrase Islamabad uses for the outlawed Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-e

Taliban Pakistan, or TTP. Islamabad frequently accuses Afghanistan's Taliban government of harboring the group, a charge Kabul denies. Since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, the TTP has intensified attacks inside Pakistan and along the border. Islamabad says its military operations will continue until Kabul takes verifiable steps to curb the TTP and other militants operating from its territory. The current clashes also ended a ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey in October, when the two neighbors again came close to war.

The truce, signed in Qatar, was followed by six days of talks in Istanbul that produced an agreement to extend the ceasefire and hold a third round of negotiations in November.

## Man who rammed his vehicle into Michigan synagogue was naturalized citizen from Lebanon, says DHS

WEST BLOOMFIELD, Mich. (Agency)

The armed man who rammed his vehicle into one of the nation's largest Reform synagogues Thursday has been identified as a 41-year-old naturalized citizen born in Lebanon, according to federal officials. Ayman Mohamad Ghazali was fatally shot by security officers after driving through a hallway at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield Township near Detroit, Michigan, in a vehicle that then caught fire, authorities said. Ghazali came to the U.S. in 2011 on an immediate relative visa as the spouse of a U.S. citizen and was granted U.S. citizenship in 2016, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Jennifer Runyan, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Detroit field office, called the crime a "targeted act of violence against the Jewish community" and said at a news conference Thursday that the FBI is leading the investigation. Investigators have not determined a motive yet.

"What drove this person into action has to be determined by the investigation," said Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard. None of the synagogue's staff, teachers or the 140 children at its early childhood center were injured, Bouchard said.

In the minutes after the attack, smoke billowed from the synagogue. One security officer was hit by the vehicle and knocked unconscious but did not suffer life-threatening injuries, the sheriff said. And 30 law enforcement officers were treated for smoke inhalation. West Bloomfield Police Chief Dale Young said Temple security officers "engaged the individual and neutralized the threat." The suspect was found dead inside his vehicle, according to Bouchard. Cassi Cohen, director of strategic development at Temple Israel, was standing at the hallway where the crash happened. She said she heard a loud bang, grabbed a few staff members, ran into her office and locked the door.

"When I heard the crash, I knew it was bad," Cohen said. She said a classroom was near where the car rammed the synagogue and, in addition to the children, who were as old as 4, there were also more than 30 staff members in the synagogue. "Thankfully, we have had many active shooter drills and our staff is prepared for these situations," she said. Rabbi Arianna Gordon, from Temple Israel, thanked the security team, law enforcement and early childhood teachers for getting the children out safely and reunited with their parents, calling them the "true rock stars of the day." Parents raced to retrieve children who were in the synagogue. About a dozen parents sprinted to get their children soon after authorities cleared the building. Other families were reunited at a nearby Jewish Community Center.

NEWS BOX

**'If we don't get gas, how will the business run?': Ahmedabad's eateries feel the pinch of LPG shortage**

**KOCHI .(Agency)**  
As the West Asia conflict enters its second week, the LPG cylinder shortage has begun to show on the menus of street eateries and in the crowds at tea stalls, which are an integral part of Ahmedabad's nightlife. Restaurateurs, street food vendors and tea stall owners are trying to find ways to retain customers while also conserving gas. Kamesh Patel, owner of the Thaltej-based eatery Gidima, said his restaurant typically uses one cylinder roughly every two days. However, due to the shortage, his kitchen has reduced menu options to conserve gas. "Items like dosa will continue because they bring most of the revenue, but other dishes such as rice items, breads and curries may not be available," said Patel, who added that he may stop deliveries on Zomato and Swiggy. "We cannot keep switching the gas on and off for one or two orders," he said, adding that he is exploring induction cooking and electric tawas. For small vendors operating on tight margins, the situation is particularly difficult. Vinod Kumavat, who opened his stall just weeks ago, said customers had already walked away when gas ran out briefly. "For about one or two hours we had no gas and customers left," he said. Street vendors say an LPG cylinder typically lasts two to three days depending on customer volume, making continued shortages difficult to manage.

**Four die in bus accident near Indalwai in Telangana's Nizamabad district**

**NIZAMABAD. (Agency)**  
Four persons died in a ghastly road accident on Friday near Indalwai in the Nizamabad district. The accident, involving a private travels bus occurred at around 2.30 am near Gannaram under the jurisdiction of Indalwai Police Station on National Highway 44. The bus was travelling from Hyderabad to Akola with 36 passengers on board. According to Indalwai Police Sub-Inspector S Sandeep, the driver lost control and the bus overturned while most passengers were asleep. While four passengers died on the spot, several others sustained injuries. Police personnel rushed to the scene soon after receiving information and carried out rescue operations. The injured were shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) and Manorama Hospital for treatment. Doctors said that two of the injured are in critical condition. Preliminary investigation suggests that over-speeding or driver fatigue could have caused the accident. Police cleared traffic on the highway and registered a case. Further investigation is underway.

**21-year-old man sexually assaults fiancée's minor sister, arrested**

**CHENNAI. (Agency)**  
The Pulianthee All Women Police on Thursday arrested a 21-year-old man from Vyasarpadi on charges of sexually assaulting his fiancée's 14-year-old sister. According to the police, the accused used to frequently visit the girl's house after the engagement. On March 9, the accused arrived at the house just as the girl was leaving for school. He told her parents that he would drop her to school and picked her up. He reportedly took her shopping and bought her clothes and food before taking her to a relative's house in Otteri. Sources said the accused sexually assaulted her and threatened her with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to anyone. The incident came to light after the girl's parents noticed changes in her behaviour. Though she initially attributed her distress to health issues, she eventually confided in her elder sister. Following a complaint, the police registered a case under PoCSO Act and arrested the accused.

**Two booked in Madurai under Goondas for hoarding gas cylinders**

**MADURAI.** In a first, the Goondas Act has been invoked against two persons in Madurai for hoarding subsidised and commercial LPG cylinders and selling them illegally. During a raid at a vacant site near Kovilpakkudi Athalai on Wednesday, the Civil Supplies Criminal Investigation Department (CSCID) officials seized 209 cylinders, including 100 subsidised domestic cylinders and 109 commercial cylinders. Palani (46), son of Mayan, was arrested on the spot. A subsequent search near the house of V Madhankumar (27) at Anandam Nagar led to the seizure of another 189 cylinders — 63 subsidised and 126 commercial cylinders. In total, 398 cylinders were confiscated from the two locations. Separate cases were registered against the two under the Essential Commodities Act, following which they were arrested.

**Will give land to genuine claimants but ensure 'jungles do not go bald': Gujarat minister in Assembly**

**Gandhinagar.(Agency)**  
Speaking on the issue of allocation of land to tribals under the Forest Rights Act in Gujarat, Tribal Development Minister Naresh Patel on Thursday said that the government will give land to genuine people, but it also takes care to ensure that the "jungles do not go bald". Patel was speaking in the Assembly during the discussion on budgetary demands of Tribal Development department while replying to Congress legislator Kanti Kharadi's demand over the issue. Speaking on the subject earlier, Kharadi alleged that tribals were not being given certificates under the Forest Rights Act and their applications were pending in huge numbers in Banaskantha district. He requested the minister to take a decision on the pending claims of the tribals as per rules at the earliest. He also said that all those who were having possession of the forest land before 2005 should be given the certificates under the Act so that their harassment ends. In reply, Patel said,

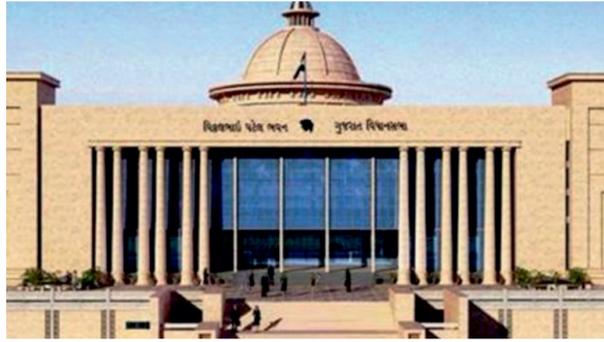
"...more land will be given to true (genuine) claimants. But we also worry about ensuring that the jungles do not go bald." He then alleged that the Opposition was doing contradictory

have to take care of the environment. But when we give forest land to industries, don't we take care of the environment? So, the tribals should not be misguided by bringing in the matter of the environment while giving them (forest) land."

Patel then gave details of the land allotted to tribals under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act. He said that the land is being provided in two different manners; individual claims and community claims.

Patel also said that so far, 98,935 individual claims have been approved and 68,651 hectare land has been given. Moreover, 6,219 community claims have been received and a total of 3,627 hectares of land parcels have been given to tribals under those claims, he added. The Tribal development minister

added that the government is committed to allotting land to those tribals who are genuinely cultivating the forest land and hold genuine rights over it.



**HPCL official was weeks away from retirement. Then a blacklisted vendor he warned police about shot him dead**

**Lucknow. (Agency)**  
Angered after being blacklisted by the Deputy General Manager (DGM) of a Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) compressed biogas plant, a local vendor allegedly shot dead the senior official, and an Assistant Manager who tried to stop him, in Saijni village in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun district on Thursday. He then walked to the police station and surrendered.

Police said the accused, Ajay Pratap Singh, had been barred from the plant about eight months ago following complaints of indecent behaviour, threats to employees and issues related to supply of parali (crop stubble). Investigators said Singh held DGM Sudhir Gupta (55) responsible for the decision and had been threatening him for months.

In the early hours of Friday, police officers claimed a team had taken Singh to recover the firearm used in the murders, which he had dumped in the thickets close to Saijni village. Police claimed Singh located the weapon, fired at the team and attempted to escape. The policemen returned fire, injuring him in both legs. A senior officer told The Indian Express

that after the double murders, Singh, known to be a local strongman, had walked to Musajhag police station accompanied by a crowd of locals. While he was taken into custody, the locals remained outside, surrounding the



station. Police said the Musajhag SHO, Ajay Kumar, and Sub-Inspector Dharmendra Kumar have been suspended on charges of dereliction of duty as they failed to take cognizance of a complaint by Gupta that Singh was threatening him. While Gupta was from Noida, the second victim, Assistant Manager I, Sales, Harshit Mishra (34),

belonged to Pilibhit. Their families arrived in Badaun after they were informed of the incident. Gupta's son, Arush, told the media that his father had applied for VRS (Voluntary Retirement Scheme) following the threats to his life and it had been approved. He was to come home after his service tenure ended on March 31.

Harshit's father, Sunil Mishra, alleged that the accused enjoyed patronage by local politicians and that police had failed to act on complaints against him because of political pressure.

**The shooting**  
Police said the attack took place around 1.30 pm on Thursday. According to officers investigating the case, Singh stopped a Bolero vehicle that was ferrying HPCL employees to the plant and forcibly took away phones of all occupants. He then threatened the

driver to take him to the plant. Since the vehicle belonged to the department, it was not checked at the gate. Police said Singh then went straight to the administrative block, where DGM Gupta and Mishra were holding a meeting with the incoming DGM who was to replace Gupta after his voluntary retirement on March 31.

**Buffets stopped, party bookings cancelled, no meal options for guests: Lucknow's restaurant industry battles LPG crisis**

A private university launched in 2009, AU describes itself as a "non-profit research university offering students a liberal education focused on interdisciplinary learning, practice orientation, and research thinking".

**Lucknow. (Agency)**  
At a hotel in Lucknow's Gomti Nagar, the restaurant kitchen has gone silent. Party bookings have been cancelled, buffets stopped and rooms are being offered to guests without breakfast or dinner options. The reason: the hotel has run out of commercial LPG cylinders.

"We have shut the restaurant and are not taking bookings for parties. We are only allowing room bookings, but without buffet breakfast or dinner," said Pawan Agarwal, the hotel owner. His 42-room hotel earlier hosted regular dining and events but has had to scale down operations due to the shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) amid the ongoing conflict affecting West Asia.

To manage basic meals for employees, the hotel has arranged induction cooktops. "We have about 30 staff members, so we arranged induction units just to

cook food for them. But these cannot support restaurant operations," Agarwal said. Across Lucknow, like several cities across the country, restaurants and hotels said they are facing a severe shortage of commercial LPG



cylinders, forcing many establishments to cut services, suspend dining operations, restrict menus or explore electric cooking alternatives.

Another restaurant owner said they have removed dosa from the menu temporarily, as it requires constant high heat to be maintained on the tawa, and other

such items that consume more fuel. While the government maintained that there is no shortage and warned against creating panic, restaurant owners said their existing cylinder stock has been exhausted and refills are

either delayed or unavailable, disrupting kitchen operations across the city. "Several restaurants have reduced breakfast services, with some limiting buffets or discontinuing them altogether. Others have stopped accepting party or banquet bookings, fearing they may not have enough fuel to run kitchens," said Garish Oberoi, Secretary of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurants Association of India. The government has assured us that the situation would be normal within the next few days, he said. "But if it isn't, many would have to completely shut down operations."

**Fuel shortage rumours spark panic, motorists rush to fill tanks in TN**

**CHENNAI.(Agency)**  
Rumours about possible halt of sale of petrol and diesel due to the West Asia crisis triggered widespread panic buying since Wednesday night across Tamil Nadu, particularly in Chennai, leading to serpentine queues at several fuel stations.

According to the Tamil Nadu Petrol Dealers Association, the average daily sale, which had already risen by 15% to 20% on Wednesday, surged by 50% to 70% on Thursday. The sudden spike caused many outlets to run out of stock.

The panic is said to have been partly sparked when employees of private fuel retail chains such as Reliance, Nayara, and Shell allegedly told motorists that their outlets might shut down due to lack of stock. The situation was aggravated due to the ongoing shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, and surge and difficulty in booking domestic cylinders. Of the nearly 7,000 fuel outlets in Tamil Nadu, around 700 (10%) are

**Karnataka HC orders probe into encounter of rape-murder accused**

**BENGALURU.(Agency)**  
The Karnataka High Court ordered a judicial magistrate enquiry into the alleged 2025 police encounter of a migrant labourer, who was accused of rape and murder of a minor girl in Hubballi-Dharwad.

The HC said the enquiry report should be submitted on June 8, 2026. Referring to the directions issued by the Supreme Court in People's Union for Civil Liberties, the division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha directed that those norms must be strictly observed in all cases of death and grievous injury in police encounters by treating them as law declared under Article 141 of the Constitution of India.

The judicial magistrate concerned should also bear in mind the guidelines issued by the National Human Rights Commission for conducting an inquiry in cases of death in custody or in the course of police action, said the HC, in the order passed recently.

The court was hearing the public interest litigation, filed in 2025 by People's Union for Civil Liberties-Karnataka, and Dr Madhu Bhushan. The counsel said instead of filing an FIR for custodial death, it was filed against the accused-deceased, and no police officials were named.

There should be a magisterial enquiry in accordance with Section 196 of the BNSS. An enquiry by an Executive Magistrate was conducted, which is not in conformity with the directions issued by the apex court, the counsel argued.

Advocate General K Shashikiran Shetty said that there is no requirement to name the police officials as accused, as the entire incident is recorded, and that if any further offences are to be added, the same can be done at an appropriate stage. He assured that all aspects of the incident recorded would be investigated by the CID, including the role of the police officials.

Insofar as the conduct of enquiry by a judicial magistrate is concerned, he submitted that there is no objection for this court to issue directions in this regard.



IOCL, BPCL, and HPCL continue fuel sale regardless of price fluctuations in the global market.

On Thursday, staff at Shell petrol bunks in Korattur and Mogappair East told TNIE that their fuel stocks were running low and could turn dry anytime soon.

**Ahmedabad civic body faces tough questions over conservation of heritage homes; owners allege delay in plan approvals**

Several attendees — including homeowners, one of whom claimed to be renovating up to five houses in the old city — demanded a definite timeline for the civic body to approve such plans. The exchange took place after a panel discussion on 'Built Heritage Conservation'.

**Ahmedabad. (Agency)**  
A seminar on heritage management in Ahmedabad on Thursday saw several attendees, including owners of residences listed as heritage homes under the UNESCO World Heritage City tag, seeking answers from officials of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) over alleged delays in approving plans for the conservation of these structures.

Several attendees — including homeowners, one of whom claimed to be renovating up to five houses in the old city — demanded a definite timeline for the civic body to approve such plans. The exchange took place after a panel discussion on "Built Heritage Conservation". This was the first consultation of its kind organised by the AMC and the Ahmedabad

World Heritage City Trust (AWHCT). It comes ahead of an expected visit by UNESCO representatives later this month, as part of the organisation's mandate to review sites that have been granted the heritage tag.

The historic Walled City of Ahmedabad was officially inscribed as India's first UNESCO World Heritage City on July 9, 2017.

While Assistant Municipal Commissioner Prayag Langalia sought to calm the situation by saying that the civic body would expedite the process, he added that



about 73 plans had been approved by the AMC over the past six months. He also urged homeowners to discuss specific cases privately. Several attendees argued that files had been pending before the Municipal Commissioner for months without

being signed and said they had a right to raise the issue at the seminar. Municipal Commissioner Banchha Nidhi Pani, who delivered the opening address, had left the venue shortly after due to another engagement and was not present during the interaction.

Attendees also questioned the choice of venue for the seminar, which was held at Riverfront House on the western bank of the Sabarmati. They argued that only a few heritage homeowners could attend and said the consultation should have been

held in the Walled City, where most heritage homes are located.

A moment of comic relief occurred during the otherwise heated exchange when Langalia, moments after saying that solutions could not be reached as long as stakeholders were divided between the AMC and homeowners, later referred to the issues as "your problems". An attendee corrected him by saying, "our problems", drawing laughter from the audience.

Homeowners, frustrated by delays in the approval of their renovation and conservation plans, said they were less concerned about the money owed to them under the Tradable Development Rights (TDR) scheme and simply wanted permission to proceed so that the structures could be conserved.

## A war that the global economy cannot afford

Given the imbalances in capabilities, an Iran weakened by decades of sanctions and isolation will lose the kinetic conflict. But the US and Israel's ability to win the strategic war is uncertain. As former US defence secretary James N Mattis understood: "In war, the enemy gets a vote".

The problem is the lack of clear objectives. The Trump administration has offered a confusing and ever-changing kaleidoscope of aims. Israel's goal is chaos and disarray to further its regional, territorial and hegemonic ambitions. The conflict is, in reality, a distraction for two leaders from major domestic and personal issues.

Unable to militarily match its opponents, Iran's focus is on inflicting economic and commercial damage. Even war now is financial rather than human. The object is to harm Gulf and Western citizens, focusing on their wealth and comfort with little tolerance for risk or pain.

First, the US is incurring costs of around \$1-2 billion a day. Congress has been asked for \$50 billion in immediate emergency funding. The overall cost could reach \$210 billion, depending on the conflict's trajectory. Given the public debt of \$39 trillion, it will strain the American government's finances. The damage to Iran and the global economy will push this number higher.

Second, Iran has targeted the Strait of Hormuz along with Saudi Arabian and Qatari energy facilities. It may seek to limit transit through the Bab-el-Mandeb. Oil and gas prices as well as shipping and insurance costs have risen sharply with the potential for further increases. The effectiveness of US proposals to provide escorts remains uncertain. A return to normality soon is unlikely as the risk of new hostilities remains. The availability and cost of energy will have far-reaching effects on electricity, fertiliser, shipping, chemicals, mining and manufacturing. Semiconductor supply chains, refining and industrial chemicals and extractive industries will be quickly affected. An interruption to desalination, a major source of water for the Gulf, would not be trivial.

Third, the economic impact on the Middle East is substantial. The curtailment of civilian air traffic has exposed a vulnerability. Every day, over 300,000 people transit through Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha. These cities act as key links between Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Oceania. This will affect both people's movements and cargo, interfering with supply chains. After the invasion of Ukraine, the closure of Russian and Ukrainian airspace to European carriers limits re-routing options. The effects on airfares, freight costs and choices remain unknown. Even after the war ends, the threat of future interruptions will likely change behaviour. The Gulf's standing as a business and financial hub will be tarnished, perhaps irretrievably. The illusion of liberal and lucrative centres for commercial activities has been shattered. Rebuilding reputations will be difficult unless the underlying geopolitical tensions are resolved—a Herculean task. The flight of expatriates and migrant labour from affected countries is another issue. They are critical to Gulf economies because of their small local populations. As workers return home, remittances from migrant labour will also be affected. Outbound remittances from the Gulf totalled over \$120 billion in 2022. The impact will be felt by originating countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, placing strains on domestic employment and services. Finally, the contraction in Gulf economies will affect global capital flows. These economies rely on energy, transport, logistics, finance and tourism. The petrostates may be asked to pay for the war. US President Donald Trump, consistent with his recent behaviour, will expect to be paid for "protecting" them from "evil" Tehran. In the long term, they will have to increase defence spending. Some, such as Saudi Arabia, may need to acquire nuclear capabilities.

## West Asia crisis roils oil, gas markets

India needs to contain inflationary impact by keeping fuel prices stable in the medium term

OIL is at the heart of the economic crisis that has engulfed the world after the US and Israel attacked Iran. This is the fossil fuel that continues to be the planet's dominant energy source despite efforts to move towards renewables. West Asia accounts for as much as 50 per cent of the global proven oil reserves and supplies 30 per cent of the world's oil needs. A spike in petroleum prices had been expected since the onset of the war. Even so, the jump to \$100-plus per barrel on March 9 took most analysts by surprise. Prices rose to over \$119, raising worries over a potential peak of \$150 in case hostilities do not cease soon. There was a retreat to \$89 after US President Donald Trump signalled that the war would end soon, but this is still 30 per cent higher than earlier.

To put the situation in perspective, oil prices have been in bear territory for the past year. They have averaged about \$69 per barrel and even dipped to \$55 last December, despite continuing geopolitical tensions. Prices began inching upwards last month and were around \$72 per barrel for the Brent benchmark crude just before the attacks on Iran began on February 28. It thus took only 10 days for the prices to cross the psychological \$100 barrier. The last time prices touched such heights was after the Ukraine war began in 2022. The impetus for the sudden hardening in oil markets was the decision of several West Asian countries to cut output, including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq. This followed Iran's attacks on energy facilities in the region as well as Israel's air raids on Iran's oil infrastructure.

The immediate impact of these developments has been stock market volatility around the globe, stretching from the US to Europe to Asia. The Group of Seven (G7) — comprising advanced economies — has offered to release stocks from their huge petroleum reserves, prompting a moderation in the price spike. But this is likely to have only a temporary effect on oil markets. With energy facilities continuing to be targeted and crucial sea passages blockaded by Iran, a price surge is not likely to ease anytime soon. What is of equal concern is that natural gas prices have also shot up. The European benchmark prices of liquefied natural gas (LNG) have risen by as much as 40-60 per cent. This is largely due to output difficulties in

Qatar, which accounts for about 20 per cent of the world's total LNG supplies. Much of this natural gas moves through the world's most sensitive petroleum chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow corridor which connects the Gulf of Oman to the Persian Gulf. As much as 30 per cent of global oil supplies and 20 per cent of natural gas shipments move through this route. At the global level, the spurt in prices and the logjam created by the inability to move cargo ships and tankers through normal sea routes has created multiple crises. Insurance covers have been withdrawn as ships are being targeted, export cargoes are held up at ports, air travel has become expensive and energy prices have already shot up in

of LPG imports move through the blockaded Strait of Hormuz. Domestic refineries have already been directed to step up LPG output, while priority is being given to cooking gas consumers. The issue of fertiliser imports from West Asian countries is another concern as shipments remain disrupted. A prolonged conflict could eventually affect availability, though stocks are reported to be adequate for the coming kharif season.

The inflationary impact of the sudden rise in oil and gas prices has to be factored into the projections for economic growth in the upcoming financial year (2026-27). If global oil prices continue to stay at high levels, the rise in the costs of imported raw material and intermediates will

lead to a corresponding rise in the cost of finished goods. This could, in turn, impact GDP growth. According to the Reserve Bank of India, a 10 per cent rise in crude prices could reduce real GDP growth by up to 15 basis points. The question is, what can India do to insulate itself from the global crisis? The first step is to continue with the policy of diversifying sources of oil supply that has served it well till now. Despite US objections (prior to the 30-day "waiver") to India's oil purchases from Russia, these still comprise 30 per cent of the total imports. They are now set to expand further to avoid reliance on crude supplies from the Gulf region.

The second is to contain the inflationary impact by ensuring that petrol and diesel prices are kept stable in the medium term. Oil marketing companies have been able to build up a cushion of

resources over the past year marked by relatively low global oil prices. This should enable them to absorb the latest oil shock. January data shows that inflation has been well within the central bank's acceptable range at 2.75 per cent. External headwinds, however, may deepen inflationary pressures in the coming days. The skyrocketing international oil prices have the potential to create a perfect storm for the economy. But India is not alone in facing this crisis. The entire world has to tackle the consequences of a war that has engulfed the oil-rich nations of West Asia. One can only hope that better sense prevails sooner rather than later to end a conflict that can only have disastrous outcomes for the global economy.



many countries.

India faces many challenges, especially at a time when the economy seemed to be moving towards a consistently high growth path. After 7.1 per cent in 2024-25, growth is projected to touch 7.6 per cent in 2025-26. The scenario, however, has altered dramatically with the Iran war. On energy, a short-term availability crisis has been averted as the country has petroleum stocks of up to eight weeks' requirements. This includes reserves in underground storages created on the western and eastern coasts as well as inventories with refineries.

Yet there is a question mark over the availability of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). As much as 85 per cent

## Energy tightrope: India prioritises gas amid West Asia tensions

The Tribune Editorial: Refineries have been instructed to divert key hydrocarbon streams such as propane and butane away from petrochemicals and towards LPG production.

INDIA's decision to rejig domestic natural gas allocation amid disruptions triggered by the escalating West Asia conflict reflects the difficult balancing act between energy security and economic stability. With liquefied natural gas supplies under strain, the government has prioritised LPG production, piped natural gas for households and CNG for transport. In doing so, it has placed the protection of household energy needs above industrial demand — a prudent choice in a moment of uncertainty. The Centre's move to invoke the Essential Commodities Act highlights the gravity of the situation. Refineries have been instructed to divert key hydrocarbon streams such as propane and butane away from petrochemicals and towards LPG production. Fertiliser plants will receive only 70% of their previous gas supply, while several manufacturing sectors must adjust to 80% per cent of past consumption. Though such rationing may strain parts of the economy, it is a necessary measure to prevent a shortage of cooking fuel.



Reports of commercial LPG scarcity in some metro cities underline the vulnerability of urban supply chains. Hotels

and restaurants may feel the pinch first, but the government's intervention seeks to ensure that domestic consumers remain insulated. At the same time, India is quietly reinforcing its crude oil supply lines. Private refiner Reliance Industries has reportedly purchased around six million barrels of Russian Urals crude for March delivery, while policymakers have reiterated that the country requires no external permission to source oil from Russia. This pragmatic approach reflects New Delhi's emphasis on strategic autonomy in energy procurement. The lesson from the present turmoil is unmistakable. India's dependence on imports routed through critical chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz leaves it exposed to distant conflicts. The deeper challenge lies in diversifying supply sources, strengthening domestic production and accelerating the shift to cleaner, more resilient energy systems.

## Nepal's youthquake election

Balendra Shah, among a cadre of young leaders, has decisively secured the public mandate in Nepal's first general elections after the violent Gen Z protests.

With old giants buried, this marks the advent of a new political era. The popular leaders now have a tall order ahead to establish effective governance

Balendra Shah and the newly strengthened Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), headed by Rabi Lamichhane, have achieved a remarkable victory in Nepal's elections securing the two-thirds majority to form a government. RSP's blue party flags and election symbol 'bells' are flying and ringing across the Himalayan country, echoing the voice of young voters demanding an end to corruption and calling for change. However in remembrance of the people that had died during the previous year's Gen Z protests, Shah has requested to not hold any victory rallies. Congratulations are pouring in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's warm telephonic conversations with Shah and Lamichhane made headlines in Kathmandu and New Delhi. Modi stated that he looked forward to working together on mutual prosperity. Lamichhane reverted by thanking Modi and expressing eagerness to work together.

As it became clear that RSP would form Nepal's next government, speculation spread in the media about how the new faces, especially the incoming PM, will perform. While Nepal faces many internal challenges, its geopolitics is among the most closely watched issues. Sandwiched between India and China, Nepal occupies a sensitive strategic position for these neighbours and the West. For Nepal, the challenge has long been maintaining balanced relations with both as its day-to-day functioning depends on them. Its landlocked status further weakens its bargaining power. Past governments have often lacked clear foreign policy or negotiation strength with either country. The geopolitical stance of a Balen-led RSP government, particularly toward India and China, is therefore under close scrutiny. Thirty-six-year-old Shah—popularly known as Balen—is a structural engineer-turned-rapper and the former mayor

of Kathmandu. He resigned as mayor in January and joined the RSP as its prime ministerial candidate. In a dramatic move, he challenged former four-time PM K P Sharma Oli in Jhapa-5—Oli's long-held constituency, which he had won six times—framing the contest as a choice between integrity and corruption allegations that had plagued the Oli government before its collapse on September 9, 2025. The result was decisive. Balen defeated Oli by nearly 50,000 votes, positioning himself to become not only Nepal's youngest PM but also the first from the Madhesh Province bordering India. Most of the 125 first-past-the-post-elected parliamentarians who won by large margins—including Lamichhane—are likewise young, educated and known for honest work.

These elections came exactly six months after the Gen Z protests—events that fundamentally altered Nepal's political landscape. Tragically, the protests turned violent after police opened fire on demonstrators outside the Parliament building. Among those killed were students in school uniforms. Nineteen young protesters died on September 8, while the final toll reached 77. Public outrage quickly intensified, forcing Oli to resign and flee. Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was appointed as Nepal's interim prime minister by President Ram Chandra Poudel at the request of the Gen Z protestors. Balendra Shah, initially the first choice, declined the offer and supported Karki's appointment. She was tasked with forming a caretaker government,

conducting fresh elections and ensuring justice for those killed during the protests. On the day she took oath, Karki announced that parliamentary elections would be held on March 5, 2026. Despite facing intense political pressure, Karki remained firm in her commitment to hold fair and logical elections.



She has now emerged as a statesperson who placed national stability above personal or political interests. The elections were ultimately conducted peacefully, raising hopes that Nepal may finally see a stable full-term government—something the country has struggled to

achieve since the restoration of democracy in 1990. The RSP's rise itself has been rapid. The party first emerged during the 2022 general elections when Lamichhane—then a popular television anchor—entered politics. Inspired partly by Balen's victory as an independent candidate in the 2022

Kathmandu mayoral election, candidates across Nepal contested for the parliamentary elections independently.

Lamichhane later brought many of these voices together into the RSP. Lamichhane served briefly as home minister and later as deputy PM, gaining prominence for reopening corruption cases involving influential political figures. However, he faced cooperative fraud charges and citizenship accusations for which he was briefly removed from Parliament. After legal contestation and proving the validity of his citizenship, he won his seat again with a large majority.

Balen and Lamichhane's popularity is undeniable, particularly among Nepal's younger generation. If their leadership succeeds in translating public expectations into effective governance, Nepal may finally enter a new political era of stability and prosperity. Their biggest challenge is to fulfil the Gen Z protestors' demand for actions against the perpetrators of the killings and vandalism. A commission report on the incident was submitted to Karki on March 9. For a country long frustrated by instability, corruption and unfulfilled promises, this election could mark the beginning of a different political trajectory.

## Court recalls non-bailable warrant against Farooq Abdullah in JKCA 'scam'

**Srinagar.(Agency)**  
A court in Srinagar recalled a non-bailable warrant it had earlier issued against former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in connection with the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) "scam" after his counsel moved an application explaining his absence from the proceedings.  
Counsel for Abdullah, Ishtiyak Khan, told the court that the former Chief Minister could not attend the hearing due to the trauma caused by a "murderous attack" on him a day earlier in Jammu. He submitted that the National Conference president was unable to appear either physically or through virtual mode because of the aftermath of the incident.  
Khan said he initially filed a routine exemption application, but after the court issued the non-bailable warrant in open court, he moved a detailed application seeking recall of the warrant and explained the circumstances behind Abdullah's absence.  
The court accepted the plea and immediately recalled the warrant, he said, adding that such a recall has to be made by the same judge who issued the warrant.  
The matter will now be taken up on the next scheduled date of hearing on March 30.  
On Thursday, Chief Judicial Magistrate Srinagar Tabassum had issued a non-bailable warrant against Abdullah in a multi crore JKCA financial irregularities case. The warrant against Abdullah was issued as he had failed to appear in court either in person or online.

## J&K: Cop, wife killed, kids injured in Doda road mishap

**Jammu.(Agency)**  
A head constable of Jammu and Kashmir Police and his wife were killed, while their children suffered injuries, when a car they were travelling in met with an accident on Friday in the hilly Kishtwar district.  
Police here said that a head constable identified as Zulfikar Ali and his wife were killed, and their children suffered injuries when their car met with an accident and rolled down into the river near Basti village in the Bhandarwah area of Doda district.  
They said that injured children have been



shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment.  
Meanwhile, police have taken cognisance of the incident. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, in a post on X, said, "Spoke to DC Doda, Krishan Lal, after learning about the tragic road accident near Basti village of Bhandarwah, in which, unfortunately, a Head Constable of Jammu & Kashmir Police, Zulfikar Ali, and his wife lost their lives."  
Their two children, also travelling with them, got injured but are out of danger.  
All possible assistance is being provided, he said in a post, adding, "My sincere condolences to the families of the deceased."

## Himachal govt keeps ACB, Vigilance Bureau beyond RTI reach

**Shimla.(Agency)**  
The Himachal Pradesh Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and the state Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau have been kept outside the ambit of the Right to Information Act, 2005 in the state.  
According to a notification issued by the Himachal Pradesh Department of Personnel (Administrative Reforms) on Thursday, these agencies have been exempted from the provisions of the RTI Act under Section 24, which allows certain intelligence and security organisations to be kept outside the purview of the transparency law.  
However, the exemption is not absolute. Information related to allegations of corruption and human rights violations can still be sought under the RTI Act even from these agencies.  
In such cases, the information is required to be provided after approval from the competent authority within the prescribed time.  
Officials said the exemption has been granted keeping in view the sensitive nature of investigations carried out by the anti-corruption and vigilance wings, where disclosure of certain information could hamper inquiries and compromise sources.  
The decision means that routine administrative or investigative details of these agencies will not be accessible through RTI applications.  
Nevertheless, complainants and citizens can still seek information if it pertains to proven corruption allegations or human rights violations.

# Vikramaditya seeks special central support for infrastructure projects in Himachal

**Vikramaditya Singh seeks special central support for Himachal infrastructure, citing higher costs of civic projects in hill regions during meeting with Manohar Lal Khattar.**

**Chandigarh.(Agency)**  
Himachal Pradesh Public Works and Urban Development Minister Vikramaditya Singh on Thursday urged the Centre to extend special financial support for key infrastructure projects in the hill state during a meeting with Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in New Delhi.  
The meeting, held at the Parliament House, focused on securing additional central assistance for urban development and road infrastructure projects in Himachal Pradesh, considering the unique challenges faced by hill states, according to a statement.

Singh highlighted that the mountainous terrain, fragile ecology and scattered habitations in the state significantly increase the cost of developing and maintaining civic infrastructure such as roads,

drinking water supply, sewerage systems and solid waste management facilities.  
"Central allocations under various schemes are



he said. Singh requested enhanced allocations under schemes such as the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation

and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0 and the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) to expand drinking water, sewerage, storm-water drainage and solid waste management projects in urban local bodies across the state.  
He also highlighted the state government's efforts to implement the National Urban Digital Mission through the UPYOG platform and sought additional support for rolling out a "One State, One Portal" system to provide municipal services online.

Khattar assured that the concerns raised by the Himachal delegation would be examined within the framework of the Government of India policies and ongoing schemes.

largely based on population and area, which do not adequately reflect the higher per-unit costs and logistical difficulties in Himalayan regions,"

# Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi Dedicated and Laid Foundation Stone for Various Railway Development Works worth Rs 6,146 Crore in Assam Also Flagged of One Amrit Bharat & Two Express Trains

**The Sikh Times**  
Maligaon, 13th March: The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today dedicated and laid foundation stone for various railway infrastructure development projects in Kokrajhar, Assam via Video Conferencing from Guwahati. The Prime Minister flagged off the Kamakhya-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express, the Guwahati-New Jalpaiguri Express and the Narangi-Agartala Express further boosting the railway connectivity in the Northeast. The Prime Minister said that these new trains and projects will be stimulating trade & tourism and beneficial for students & patients. He also stated that improved communication & logistics will provide easier access to larger

markets benefiting regional economy. The Prime Minister also congratulated the people of Assam on the launch of various other

opportunities in the region. The Prime Minister also stated that significant strides

Bharat and Rajdhani Express trains in Kokrajhar, symbolizes the region's rising status. Kokrajhar is set to become a major



centre of trade through these new initiatives. Later on at Guwahati, the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation three major railway electrification projects. These include electrification of railway lines between Rangiyamukongselek (558 km), Chaparmukh-Dibrugarh (571 km) and Badarpur-Silchar & Badarpur-Churairabi (315 km). Foundation stone of Furkating-Tinsukia double line (194 km) was also laid by the Prime Minister. The total cost of these projects is Rs 5,890 Cr. These initiatives will significantly enhance railway infrastructure in Northeast including Assam while promoting economic growth, tourism and regional integration across the region, contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat through stronger connectivity.

transformative developmental works. The Prime Minister also laid foundation stone for a new railway Wagon POH Workshop at Bashbari, Kokrajhar, worth Rs 256 Cr., which will strengthen railway rolling stock maintenance infrastructure, improve opera-

are being taken to bolster overall development of railways and local economy. He also stated that the upcoming rail link to Bhutan and the on-going modernization of the station will turn the area into a logistics hub. He mentioned that the stopovers of Vande

## SEC begins ward delimitation process for Himachal's three urban bodies

**Chandigarh.(Agency)**  
The Himachal Pradesh State Election Commission (HPSEC) on Thursday initiated the process for delimiting wards in three urban local bodies following changes to their jurisdictions and status, paving the way for municipal elections.  
In a notification issued on March 12, the Commission said: "The Department of Urban Development recently created or included areas in certain urban local bodies in the state. These include the Municipal Corporation Rohru in Shimla district, where Narkanda Nagar Panchayat area has been included; the Municipal Corporation Una, where additional areas have been incorporated; and the creation of a new Nagar Panchayat at Bir in Kangra district."  
State Election Commissioner Anil Kumar Khachi issued the notification, directing the Deputy Commissioners of Shimla, Una and Kangra to carry out the process as per the prescribed rules.  
As per the notification, the Commission has

announced a schedule for the delimitation of wards in these urban local bodies in accordance with the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Act, 1994, and the Municipal Corporation Act, 1994. The process begins with the publication of the draft proposal for ward delimitation on March 12. Residents of the concerned municipal areas can submit objections or suggestions regarding the draft proposals by March 19.



The objections or suggestions received will be examined and disposed of by the respective Deputy Commissioners by March 23. If any person is aggrieved by the decision of the Deputy Commissioner, an appeal can be filed

before the concerned Divisional Commissioner within seven days of the passing of the order. The Divisional Commissioners will dispose of such appeals by April 1. Following this, the Deputy Commissioners will issue the final orders for delimitation of wards on or before April 2.

## No shortage of LPG in Kangra, adequate cylinder stock available: DC Haimraj Bairwa

**Dharamshala.(Agency)**  
Deputy Commissioner Kangra Hemraj Bairwa on Thursday said that the supply of LPG cylinders in the district is running smoothly and there is no shortage of domestic gas.  
He informed that 37 gas agencies are currently operating in Kangra district and together they have a stock of 11,551 domestic gas cylinders and 3,399 commercial cylinders as of March 12, 2026.  
The Deputy Commissioner said that consumers who had booked cylinders earlier would be given priority in delivery. Until gas supply becomes fully regular, cylinders will be issued to consumers only after 25 days of booking. Bairwa further stated that if any hotel, dhaba, temple langar or other commercial establishment faces a shortage of commercial LPG, they

may demand kerosene oil as an alternative. Such establishments can submit their request to the concerned Inspector of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department or to the District Controller at Dharamshala via email at dfscckangra@gmail.com.  
He warned that strict action will be taken against hoarding or profiteering of gas cylinders by agencies or commercial establishments. Inspectors have been directed to conduct regular inspections of gas agencies and commercial outlets to prevent any malpractice.  
The Deputy Commissioner added that all bottling plants in Kangra district are receiving regular LPG supplies, ensuring that domestic gas availability in the district remains stable.

# AFT refuses to stay colonel's court martial but issues 'fair play' directive on witness signatures

**The colonel had sought sweeping reliefs, including summoning the original handwritten records of the General Court Martial evidence, and also sought a fresh trial.**

**Chandigarh.(Agency)**  
The Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) principal bench has refused to stay ongoing General Court Martial (GCM) proceedings against a colonel but directed the Army to ensure that all defence witnesses sign and date every page of their depositions "in the interest of justice and fair play".  
In an order passed on February 25 in an application filed by Suraj Shumsher Singh, who is undergoing a GCM, the AFT bench of Justice Anu Malhotra and Lt Gen C P Mohanty observed that the GCM has already recorded the prosecution evidence and the applicant's statement under Army Rule 58(2) and is now at the defence-witness stage. The bench held that staying the trial at this advanced stage was not warranted.

The colonel had sought sweeping reliefs, including summoning the original handwritten records of the GCM evidence, setting aside the typed transcripts for alleged non-compliance with earlier AFT Kolkata bench directions, and ordering a fresh trial.  
He also prayed for a general order from the Chief of Army Staff directing all future courts martial to follow the Kolkata bench's 2014 rulings in the cases of ex-Havildar/Clerk Rajendra Kumar Mishra and ex-Lt Col Sheo Shankar Prasad Singh—rulings that were later upheld when the Supreme Court dismissed the Union of India's special leave petitions. The applicant argued that

prosecution witnesses' statements were neither signed by the witnesses nor properly authenticated, violating Sections 78 and 79 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, and the Kolkata bench precedent.  
The tribunal, however, noted that the same signature issue is already



under active consideration before its own Court No 1 and had been examined in related cases, including by the Punjab and Haryana High Court and the Delhi High Court. Citing the Delhi High Court's December 6, 2025, judgment in the case of ex-Major General M S Jaswal, the bench clarified that the presiding officer is not required to sign day-to-day proceedings—only the final sentence under Rule 67(2) of the Army Rules.  
While refusing the interim stay, the bench issued a limited protective direction: "The respondent authorities ... shall ensure that the statements of the defence witnesses ... are all duly signed by the witnesses and dated

by the witnesses ... and the witnesses are directed to sign each of the pages of the said depositions."  
The matter has been directed to be placed before the AFT's Court No 1 on March 19 for further hearing, given the overlapping issues in the earlier connected case filed by the same officer.  
The order comes amid a wider debate within the armed forces legal community over the exact procedure for recording evidence in courts martial. Several officers have challenged the non-signing of witness statements, citing the Kolkata bench's 2014 judgments, while other benches and high courts have taken a more restrained view, holding that military law does not mandatorily require witness signatures on every page.

# Hundreds Homeless As Massive Fire Burns Down 80 Delhi Shanties

The Delhi Fire Service rushed 23 tenders to the spot, who continued firefighting through the night, bringing the flames under control only around 3 am .

New Delhi.(Agency)

On the night on March 11, a ferocious fire tore through nearly four acres of the bustling Machhli Mandi slum cluster in Matiala village near Delhi's Uttam Nagar, reducing homes to smouldering ash and charred ruins within hours. Delhi Police stated that at least 80 shanties were burnt down, leaving hundreds of migrant families - mostly Bihar natives, who work as daily-wage labourers and ragpickers - without any of their possessions. No deaths were reported, but the people face extreme hardship. School children were set to appear for board exams, but their textbooks, uniforms and notebooks have now been burnt to ashes, and mothers have no food or water for their infants.

Thick layers of grey ash blanketed the ground for acres, mixed with the blackened skeletons of bamboo poles, melted tarpaulin

sheets, twisted tin roofs and heaps of burnt plastic waste. Some eyewitnesses remember seeing individuals coming in on motorcycles, deliberately setting clusters of shanties ablaze before speeding away. The Delhi Fire Service rushed 23 tenders to the spot, who continued firefighting through the night, bringing the flames under control only around 3 am on Thursday, with cooling operations ongoing to prevent flare-ups.

District Magistrate Mekala Chaitanya, who visited the site, confirmed that the land has long been under dispute. "The occupants had received an evacuation notice on March 7, making last night the final compliance deadline. Yet the fire struck just hours



before," he said. "Investigation is fully underway to determine the exact source. However, I anticipate that many of these ragpickers habitually burn waste at night, and that is how the fire most likely happened. A similar incident was reported at the same spot earlier this month, when eight

fire tenders were needed to douse flames after illegal garbage dumping."

Police assisted in safely evacuating all residents. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Kushal Pal Singh confirmed that all inhabitants were moved to safety before the blaze intensified. "The shanties were made of highly flammable material - bamboo, tarpaulin and plastic sheets. Swift action prevented any loss of life," he added.

Rani Devi, a mother of three, said, "My baby had nothing to eat last night - no milk, no rice, no water - nothing. Our clothes, vessels, everything is gone. We sleep on the debris now. Who will help us survive? Should our leaders not visit us like the local MLA and or CM Rekha Gupta?" Sitting on a half-broken, charred van, Rahul Kumar, whose board exams begin in few

days, told, "All my textbooks, notebooks and uniform were burnt. I studied so hard. Now I have nothing to write with. How can I sit for the exam? My future is finished." Another resident, 42-year-old Rajesh Paswan, a rag-picker who migrated from Bihar 12 years ago, said, "We work day and night to feed our children. In one night, the fire took everything. We suspect some people deliberately set our homes on fire. We are not criminals, we are poor people trying to live." AAP leader Ramesh Matitala, who met the families, demanded immediate justice and compensation. "This tragedy on disputed land cannot be brushed aside. These families deserve fair financial compensation, prompt rehabilitation to a safe location, and full accountability. No family should be left to beg on the streets," Matitala declared.

## Cannot put blanket ban on protests: Delhi HC to DU, police

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi HC on Thursday pulled up Delhi University and the Delhi Police over the varsity's order barring protests on campus, saying there cannot be a blanket ban on demonstrations and processions.

A bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said DU's move had a direct impact on the right to freedom of speech and expression granted under Article 19 of the Constitution. The bench observed that if there were violations of law and order, it was for the police to take action.

"We are of the clear opinion that there cannot be a blanket ban. Public meetings, rallies, processions, demonstrations, protests, dharnas or agitation of any kind... So, you (DU) will, in its sweep, take even peaceful protests, rallies and processions.



How far can you justify this? Where was the need for you to pass this order? If someone had violated Section 144 (of CrPC), it was for the police to take action. Why did you issue this order," the bench asked.

The judges further questioned the use of Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure by the police to prohibit protests, noting that certain conditions must be satisfied before issuing such directions. At the same time, the court also questioned the conduct of some students and said the matter was being heard primarily because it concerned freedom of speech and expression. The court directed the police and the university to file their response within a week and listed the matter for further hearing on March 25.

## Cash-for-query case: SC stays Delhi HC order on sanction for CBI to try Mahua Moitra

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a part of the December 2025 order of the Delhi High Court permitting the Lokpal to consider granting sanction to the CBI to file a chargesheet against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra in the alleged cash-for-query case. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi issued notices to Moitra, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and BJP MP and complainant Nishikant Dubey



on the Lokpal's plea against the high court order. On December 19, 2025, the high court had set aside an order of the Lokpal granting sanction to the CBI to file a chargesheet against Moitra in the alleged cash-for-query scam.

"The learned Lokpal is requested to accord its consideration for grant of sanction under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act, strictly in accordance with provisions thereof as construed hereinabove, within a period of one month from today," the high court had said in para 89 of that judgement.

The CJI-led bench stayed the para 89 of the high court judgement while issuing notices on a batch of pleas related to power and procedures enumerated under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act.

The cash-for-query case pertains to the allegation that Moitra asked questions in the Lok Sabha in exchange for cash and gifts from a businessman.

## SC takes suo motu cognisance of illegal sand mining in National Chambal Sanctuary

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Friday took suo motu cognisance of illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Sanctuary and threats to endangered aquatic wildlife.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said the court has taken cognisance of recent newspaper reports highlighting rampant illegal mining in areas where endangered gharial (long-snouted crocodile) species preservation programme is going on. Due to the illegal mining, the endangered gharials have to relocate, the court said.

The bench said that even areas where the Madhya Pradesh chief minister had

released gharials have come under illegal mining.

"Place the matter before the chief justice of India for necessary directions," the



top court ordered the registry. According to reports, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released

10 gharials into the Chambal river at the sanctuary in Morena in February last year. The National Chambal Sanctuary, also called the National Chambal

Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is a 5,400 sq km tri-state protected area.

Besides the endangered gharial, it is home to the red-crowned roof turtle and the endangered Ganges river dolphin.

Located on the Chambal river near the tripoint of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the sanctuary was first declared a protected area in Madhya Pradesh in 1978

and now constitutes a long narrow eco-reserve co-administered by the three states.

## Opposition urges govt, Speaker to revoke suspension of eight MPs

New Delhi.(Agency)

The opposition has urged the government and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to revoke the suspension of seven Congress members and one CPI-M MP who were suspended during the first part of the Budget session for "unruly behaviour". Congress general secretary K C Venugopal, SP's Dharmendra Yadav, NCP (SP)'s Supriya Sule, DMK's Kanimozhi and TMC's Shatabdi Roy met Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday and called for revoking the suspension of the eight opposition MPs, Congress sources said.

According to sources, Rijju assured them that he would take up the matter with the Speaker.

During a meeting of the Business



Advisory Committee on Friday, Congress' chief whip, K Suresh, again raised the issue with the Speaker and Rijju, the sources said.

"Rijju has told the opposition that he would get back to them on the issue after consultations," a source said.

The issue of suspended MPs remains the only sticking point between the opposition and the government, sources said, adding that the

government is also likely to agree to a discussion on the West Asia conflict and its impact on India's energy security under Rule 193.

In an escalation of the tussle between the government and the opposition, seven Congress members and one CPI-M MP were suspended from the Lok Sabha on February 3 for "unruly behaviour" after they tore papers and threw them at the Chair. Their suspension from the House for the remaining part of the Budget Session that concludes on April 2 had intensified the face-off with the government over various issues.

The suspended members are Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Jagore, Prashant Padole and Dean Kuriakose (all Congress) and S Ventakesan (CPI-M).

## Kerosene, coal back as cooking fuel amid LPG shortage

With the war in the Middle East continuing to disrupt the supply of natural gas from the Gulf countries to India, the Centre said it was increasing state-wise allocations of kerosene and coal to be used as cooking fuel for households and commercial establishments, respectively.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India on Thursday temporarily reintroduced kerosene for household cooking and coal for hotels and restaurants, following continued disruptions to energy supply from the Middle East due to the ongoing Iran war. This was a result of the shortage of LPG refills and the panic that was created across the country.

India launched a campaign in 2012 to replace kerosene with LPG as cooking fuel. The government's Ujjwala scheme is aimed at doing away with coal and firewood for domestic use. The government has allocated 48,000 kilolitres (kl) of additional kerosene to states on top of the regular quota of 1 lakh kl for use as cooking fuel by households, according to a report by news agency PTI. It has also asked environmental bodies to permit the use of biomass, RDF pellets and

coal as alternate fuel for commercial bodies in the hospitality and restaurant sectors for one month, PTI reported, citing a senior oil ministry official.

RDF pellets refer to Refuse-Derived Fuel, which are fuels manufactured from processed municipal solid waste, industrial waste, and agricultural residues, and are used as a low-emission alternative to coal.

Following the closing of the Strait of Hormuz a narrow sea lane between Iran and Oman through which India obtained more than half of its 5.8 million barrels of crude oil, 55% of cooking gas LPG and 30% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG), oil companies prioritised supply of LPG to household kitchens while cutting back on commercial users like hotels and restaurants. With certain measures helping raise domestic LPG production by 28%



and some alternative sources being tapped overseas, the government has decided to allow some sale of commercial LPG to meet a fifth of the demand, PTI reported, citing Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Oil Ministry. "The state governments will have to identify the beneficiaries," Sharma said.

**LPG ORDER GAP EXTENDED TO 45 DAYS FOR RURAL CUSTOMERS**  
As panic buying escalated, the government

extended the LPG refill ordering window for rural users to 45 days, up from 25 days set last week for all users, which itself had replaced the previous 21-day limit. The move aims to manage demand and ensure equitable distribution amid the ongoing energy supply disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis, Sharma was reported by PTI as stating. The increase in the monthly quota of kerosene released to states is the first in more than a decade and temporarily reverses the government's stated objective of phasing out the fuel, which, besides being heavily subsidised, was also used for adulteration in petrol. Delhi was officially declared the first kerosene-free city in India on June 17, 2014. The initiative, launched in 2012, replaced kerosene usage with LPG connections for households, aiming to reduce pollution and fire risks.

NEWS BOX

**Trophy is home: Suryakumar thanks Team India fans after T20 World Cup win**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Suryakumar Yadav sent a special message to the Indian cricket team fans after their T20 World Cup 2026 win, with the trophy finally coming back home. India put on a clinical performance with bat and ball in the final in Ahmedabad on March 8 to beat New Zealand by 76 runs and become the first team in the history of the tournament to retain their title. The BCCI posted a special video dedicated to the fans with Suryakumar thanking them for their support and blessings throughout the journey. The Indian skipper said that the trophy win belongs to the entire country, and it was the victory of the kids who dream about making it big in cricket. "Dear Team India fans. First of all, a heartfelt thank you. We are here only because of your support and blessings. This



World Cup trophy belongs to the entire country. When we won, it wasn't just our victory." "It was the dream of those kids who hold a bat and ball and imagine a future. It was for the fans who fill the stadiums. And for the millions who support us from their homes. Your prayers and unconditional love have given us the strength to bring this trophy home. In India, cricket is not just a game — it's an emotion. And this victory belongs to all of you."

**SURYAKUMAR AIMING FOR OLYMPIC GLORY**

The T20 World Cup 2026 win was a major achievement for Suryakumar as India have remained unbeaten in bilateral series and multi-team tournaments during his tenure. However, the Indian captain isn't ready to slow down and is aiming for Olympic glory in LA in 2028 and doing a hat-trick in the T20 World Cup. "Next goal is Olympics gold and the T20 World Cup which is also in that year," said Suryakumar. Suryakumar will next be in action during the IPL where he will play for Mumbai Indians.

**South Africa the stupidest team of T20 World Cup, could've knocked out India: Vaughan**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former England captain Michael Vaughan labelled South Africa as the stupidest team in the T20 World Cup 2026 and claimed it was their mistake that allowed India to win the tournament. Vaughan said that if South Africa had allowed West Indies to beat them in their Super 8 clash, then India would have faced an uphill task to make it to the semis and may have been eliminated in the process. During the Super 8 stage, India lost to South Africa by 76 runs, and it left Suryakumar Yadav's team in a tricky spot, needing wins in their next two games against Zimbabwe and the West Indies. India defeated Zimbabwe but were also closely following the result of the South Africa vs West Indies clash in Ahmedabad. The Proteas thrashed the Windies to seal their spot and make India's clash against the two-time champions a virtual quarterfinal in



Kolkata. The hosts won the contest and went on to beat England in the semi-final. South Africa were eliminated from the tournament after their loss to New Zealand in the final four stage. "I tell you, who I think is the stupidest team of the tournament? South Africa. Because if South Africa had allowed the West Indies to beat them in the Super 8s, India would have been knocked out. I'm just saying — if they had cleared them out, the juggernaut that was coming would have stopped," Vaughan said on the Stick to Cricket podcast. By winning that game, they allowed the juggernaut to go on. India then beat Zimbabwe, then the West Indies in a kind of quarterfinal, and then England. South Africa had to play Zimbabwe next, and they even rested three players for that match," he added.

**England lifts media ban on Ashes stars despite ongoing performance review**

**ECB has lifted the temporary restriction on centrally contracted England players speaking to the media. The move comes amid scrutiny following England's Ashes defeat and a series of off-field controversies involving players during recent tours.**

LAVERKUSEN. (Agency)

The England and Wales Cricket Board has lifted the temporary restriction that had prevented centrally contracted England players from speaking to the media while representing their counties. With the decision now reversed, England's top cricketers will once again be free to engage with journalists without limitations.

The measure had originally been introduced in the aftermath of England's disappointing Ashes campaign. The ECB wanted senior officials — managing director of men's cricket Rob Key and chief executive Richard Gould — to address the media first before



players began speaking publicly about the tour. As a result, centrally contracted England players were temporarily restricted from discussing the Ashes while appearing in media interactions linked to their counties. The ECB has now withdrawn that restriction, allowing players to speak independently of Key and Gould's scheduled media briefings in the coming weeks. The move comes amid continued scrutiny around England's Ashes

tour, where both on-field performances and off-field issues drew widespread attention.

**ENGLAND'S OFF-FIELD PROBLEMS**

England's difficult tour was followed by a series of controversies that placed the team management led by head coach Brendon McCullum under intense pressure.

One of the biggest talking points emerged after the Sydney Test when reports surfaced that Harry Brook had allegedly been involved in

an altercation with a nightclub bouncer during England's earlier tour of New Zealand, where the side had suffered a 3-0 defeat. The reported incident also raised questions about Brook's position as England's white-ball captain. Another controversy followed during the Ashes when reports suggested England's four-day break in Noosa resembled a stag-style party, with claims that several players had spent the time drinking heavily. Matters escalated further when a video circulated online showing England opener Ben Duckett appearing intoxicated while speaking to a fan. Responding to the incident ahead of the fourth Test, Rob Key said the board would look into the matter, adding that such behaviour did not represent the standards expected from an international side. England's performances on the field also failed to impress. The team struggled through the early stages of the Ashes, allowing Australia to retain the urn after dominating the opening three matches of the series. The ECB has since begun a formal review into the disappointing campaign in Australia. Despite the criticism surrounding the tour, McCullum is expected to remain in charge and guide England into the next home Ashes series in 2027.

**World Cup-winning captain under fire: The strange scrutiny of Suryakumar Yadav**

New Delhi. (Agency)

When a team lifts a World Cup trophy, the script usually writes itself. Celebration, admiration and collective pride follow in equal measure. Yet India's historic defence of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on home soil has been met with something rather different. It has not even been a week after the triumph, and a curious narrative has emerged that questions the value of the victory and directs an unusual amount of criticism towards the man who captained it, Suryakumar Yadav. Another T20 World Cup now sits in India's cabinet, but for a section of fans, the moment somehow feels diminished. Some argue that India's influence over the modern game is too powerful, calling the triumph a sham. Others insist that the cricketing world must unite to curb India's dominance. It is an extraordinary reaction to what should have been a straightforward sporting achievement. Amid the noise, the player absorbing the brunt of the scrutiny is the captain himself.

**KEY CONTRIBUTIONS**

Statistically, Suryakumar's tournament was far from a failure. He finished as India's third-highest run-scorer, accumulating 242

runs from nine innings at an average of 30.25 and a strike rate of 136.72, including one half-century. These may not be headline-grabbing numbers, but they came



at moments when the team most needed composure. His most defining knock arrived in the opening fixture itself against the USA. India had slumped to 77/6, staring at an embarrassing defeat as the hoodoo of the first match as hosts in the T20 World Cup seemed to haunt the team again.

However, fresh from winning Player of the series against New Zealand, Suryakumar took it upon himself to rescue his team with

an unbeaten 84 from 49 deliveries, dragging the innings to a respectable 161/9. The knock ultimately set up a comfortable 29-run victory and ensured India won their opening game of the T20 World Cup as hosts for the first time. The rest of the competition did not produce another major innings from the captain, yet his contributions remained quietly significant.

A steady 32 off 29 against Pakistan on a tricky surface made sure that there was no collapse in the middle overs. Later, a measured 34 off 28 against the Netherlands provided stability amid the constant fall of wickets. A blistering 33 from just 13 balls against Zimbabwe ensured India maintained a relentless scoring rate on their way to a commanding total. None of those innings stood out amid the flashy big scores of the game and their value often slipped beneath the surface of scorecards and highlight reels.

**THE STRANGE SCRUTINY**

Despite those contributions, Suryakumar's credentials as India's captain have repeatedly been questioned since the World Cup victory. Much of the criticism stems from his broader batting numbers since the ICC T20 World Cup 2024 triumph.

**Suit, stocks and squash: Ramit Tandon now eyes the Olympic dream for India**

New Delhi. (Agency)

"I don't think an athlete ever selects the sport. It's the sport that selects the athlete."

When Ramit Tandon said this about being a squash player, there was a beaming smile and a sense of pride in his words. For the 34-year-old, squash came into his life by accompanying his father and watching him play. Today, he is one of India's finest in the sport, but owes it all to his father for putting that fire in him to take it up as his calling. But even then, the man from Kolkata played squash more for the fun factor than anything else. "I had the opportunity to play the sport because of my father, otherwise I probably wouldn't know what squash is, like a lot of people in our country. But after you get exposed to certain things, then at the young age of 5 years, 6 years, it's not about you selecting it or you choosing to do it. It's just something that aligns with you. You like it more than other activities, you get into it," said Ramit to India Today.

"So for me also, the journey was, it wasn't a



thoughtful decision like, 'oh, I want to be a squash player.' It was more like, ok this is fun, let me enjoy my time playing squash. While my friends would be playing cricket or football, I would spend my time on the squash courts and slowly that passion turned into a profession. Now, Ramit sits at No.38 in the PSA squash world rankings. He is the second-highest-ranked Indian behind Abhay Singh (World No.27) and one of the stalwarts leading the squash revolution in the country alongside Joshna Chinnappa, Anahat Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar. But watching Ramit show off his skills inside the squash court was something that almost didn't happen. In fact, he could have been living a completely different life — one in the world of finance, tackling balance sheets and the ups and downs of the stock market.

**Sunrisers Leeds X account suspended after backlash over Abrar Ahmed Hundred signing**

**Hours after making the signing of Abrar Ahmed during the Hundred auction, Sunrisers Leeds' X account was suspended on Thursday, March 12. The Leeds team is fully owned by the Sun Group, who are the owners of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Sunrisers Leeds' X account was suspended on Thursday, March 12, hours after they completed the much-talked about deal to sign Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed during the Hundred auction. The Sunrisers franchise, which is owned by the Sun Group — an Indian media conglomerate headed by



Kalanithi Maran — made a strong push to sign Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed and eventually secured his services for ₹190,000 (approximately Rs 2.34 crore). Kavya Maran, the CEO of the franchise and a key decision-maker, was present at the auction. Kavya Maran was joined by head coach Daniel Vettori at the auction table at

Piccadilly Lights in London on Thursday as SunRisers Leeds successfully outbid Trent Rockets to land Abrar Ahmed. The team will be captained by England's T20I skipper Harry Brook. The signing also marked a rare moment, as it is the first time in several years that a franchise with ownership ties to the Indian Premier League (IPL) has recruited a Pakistan cricketer. Following this, Indian fans slammed the Sunrisers franchise, calling for a boycott of SRH in the IPL. Now, the Sunrisers Leeds account cannot be accessed on X. If someone tries to access the account, they're met with the message, "Account suspended. X suspends accounts that violate the X rules."

At the moment, there is no explanation given by X as to why they decided to suspend the account of the Sunrisers Leeds franchise.

**Duplantis breaks pole vault world record for 15th time at Uppsala World Athletics**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Armand Duplantis continued his extraordinary dominance in pole vault by breaking the world record for the 15th time in his career. Competing in front of a home crowd at the Mondo Classic in Uppsala, Sweden, the Olympic champion cleared 6.31m, improving his own previous mark by one centimetre. The record-breaking jump came at the World Athletics Indoor Tour Silver meeting on Thursday, where Duplantis comfortably won the competition before raising the bar to a new world record height. Speaking after the event, the Swedish star admitted performing in front of his home fans added extra pressure but made the moment even more special. "If you come to Sweden to compete against me, it will be even harder to beat me," Duplantis said after securing the 15th world record of his career. "There are a lot of emotions right now. There was a little extra pressure because I want to perform in a different way. Setting a

world record here was actually incredible."

"This is my home. Every time I stand on the track I represent you and feel such pride to jump for you and Sweden," he added.

**DUPLANTIS BREAKS HIS OWN WORLD RECORD**

Duplantis produced a dominant performance in Uppsala, clearing 5.65m, 5.90m and 6.08m without any failed attempts to seal victory. With the competition effectively wrapped up, he then asked for the bar to be raised to 6.31m, a height that would surpass his previous world record. The 26-year-old successfully cleared the mark to once again rewrite the record books. His previous world record had been set at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in September. The latest feat marked the 15th time Duplantis has broken the world record since first setting it in February 2020 with a clearance of 6.17m. Interestingly, most of his record



improvements have come in increments of just one centimetre, a pattern that continued with his latest jump.

**All Mondo Duplantis world records:**

- 6.17 m — February 08, 2020
- 6.18 m — February 15, 2020
- 6.19 m — March 07, 2022
- 6.20 m — March 20, 2022
- 6.21 m — July 24, 2022
- 6.22 m — February 25, 2023

- 6.23 m — September 17, 2023
- 6.24 m — April 20, 2024
- 6.25 m — August 05, 2024
- 6.26 m — August 25, 2024
- 6.27 m — February 28, 2025
- 6.28 m — June 15, 2025
- 6.29 m — August 12, 2025
- 6.30 m — September 15, 2025
- 6.31 m — March 12, 2026

It was also a special milestone for the Swedish superstar. Although he had previously broken the record in Sweden, Thursday's jump marked the first time he achieved the feat indoors on home soil.

Duplantis had only recently returned to competition after battling food poisoning during an appearance in Clermont-Ferrand, France, in February, where he cleared 6.06m. The Uppsala meeting was just his second competition of the year, making the record-breaking performance even more remarkable.

## Got a problem with your builder You can only complain in one place — Choose carefully

New Delhi, (Agency)

If your builder hasn't given you your flat on time, you have two places where you can file a complaint — RERA (the real estate regulator) or the Consumer Forum. But here's the catch the Supreme Court just made crystal clear: pick one and stick with it. You cannot try your luck at one, and then quietly sneak over to the other if things don't go your way.

A couple from Maharashtra — Rekha and Raj Kumar Hemadev — had a dispute with their builder, M/s Kabra and Associates. They first went to MahaRERA. That didn't quite work out. So they tried to walk into the Consumer Forum next. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) initially said, sure, come on in. But the Supreme Court stepped in and said — no. Once you've started down one road, you can't switch lanes for the same complaint. So What's the Rule Now? Think of it like choosing a restaurant. Once you've sat down and ordered, you can't suddenly get up and go to another restaurant and order the same meal. That's essentially what the court is saying. If you've already gone to RERA for your grievance, the Consumer Forum is now off the table for that same issue — and vice versa. Then Which One Should You Pick? This depends on your specific situation. Here's a plain-English breakdown: Your complaint is about the builder not following the rules — delayed possession, construction not matching what was promised, or any violation of the RERA agreement.

You don't have a strict time deadline. RERA has no fixed time limit for filing a complaint.

You want a faster, more straightforward process. RERA complaints follow a fixed format and are usually resolved within 60 days.

## From missiles to markets: Indians may soon pay more for every sip of bottled water

New Delhi, (Agency)

India's packaged drinking water industry is facing a sharp increase in production costs following the rise in global oil prices triggered by the conflict in Iran, with consumer prices expected to go up within days. Plastic, which is used to make bottles, caps and labels, is a crude oil derivative. As oil prices have climbed, the cost of polymer — the key raw material for plastic bottles — has risen 50 percent to Rs 170 per kilogram. Bottle caps have more than doubled in price to Rs 0.45 per unit. Packaging materials including cardboard boxes, labels and adhesive tape have also become more expensive. India's bottled water market is valued at around five billion dollars and includes thousands of manufacturers ranging from large national brands to small regional producers. Major brands including Bisleri, Kinley, Aquafina, Reliance and Tata are currently absorbing the additional costs rather than passing them on immediately, given the risk of losing market share at the start of the summer peak season. Smaller producers do not have the same financial cushion. Around 2,000 smaller manufacturers have already raised distributor prices by Re 1 per bottle, a 5 percent increase. The Federation of All India Packaged Drinking Water Manufacturers' Association has said a further 10 percent increase is expected within days.

## Crude prices cool down as US allows all countries to buy Russian oil

New Delhi, (Agency)

Global oil prices cooled down marginally on Friday after the US announced a 30-day waiver, allowing all countries to purchase Russian oil. Brent crude was trading at \$99.99 per barrel, down 0.47 per cent, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) dropped 0.67 per cent to \$95.09 per barrel. US Secretary of Treasury, Scott Bessent, said on X that "To increase the global reach of existing supply, @USTreasury is providing a temporary authorisation to permit countries to purchase Russian oil currently stranded at sea". This narrowly tailored, short-term measure applies only to oil already in transit and will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, which derives the majority of its energy revenue from taxes assessed at the point of extraction," Bessent posted.

The temporary increase in oil prices is a short-term and temporary disruption that will result in a massive benefit to our nation and economy in the long-term, he added. The US waiver applies to Russian-origin crude oil and petroleum products loaded on vessels — on or before 12:01 am Eastern Daylight Time on March 12. On Wednesday, the US announced the release of 172 million barrels from its strategic petroleum reserves.

Meanwhile, the Indian government said that crude supply position is secure, and volumes secured exceed what Hormuz would have delivered.

Before this crisis, approximately 45 per cent of India's crude imports transited the Hormuz route.

Now, India has secured crude volumes that exceed what the disrupted Strait route would have delivered in the same period. Non-Hormuz sourcing has risen to approximately 70 per cent of crude imports, up from 55 per cent before the conflict began, informed Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri. India sources crude from 40 countries, against 27 in 2006-07; this structural diversification, built through sustained policy over successive years, "has given us options that other nations now find themselves without".

Refineries are operating at high capacity utilisation; in several cases, they are exceeding 100 per cent, said Puri.

# March 15 Advance Tax deadline: Who should pay now to avoid extra interest

New Delhi, (Agency)

As the financial year draws to a close, taxpayers have one more key date to remember. March 15 is the deadline to pay the fourth and final instalment of advance tax for the financial year 2025-26. Those who still have unpaid tax liability must clear it by this date to avoid interest charges later. Advance tax simply means paying income tax in parts during the financial year instead of paying the entire amount while filing the income tax return. The system is designed so that taxes are paid gradually as income is earned.

**WHO NEEDS TO PAY ADVANCE TAX**  
Advance tax becomes mandatory if a person's total tax liability for the financial year is more than Rs 10,000 after adjusting tax deducted at source (TDS), tax collected at source (TCS), and available tax credits. This rule generally affects people who earn

income where tax is not automatically deducted. Freelancers and consultants often fall into this category because they receive payments without TDS in many cases. Similarly, individuals who run their own businesses or professional practices may also need to calculate and pay advance tax.

Taxpayers earning capital gains from shares or mutual funds, individuals receiving rental income, and those earning interest from deposits or other investments may also need to pay advance tax if their tax liability crosses the Rs 10,000 threshold. Even salaried employees may sometimes come under the advance tax requirement. This usually happens when they have additional sources of income that are not fully covered by TDS. For example,

profits from stock market investments, gains from cryptocurrency trading, rental income, or earnings from side businesses can create extra tax liability during the year. However, there is an

advance tax. **SPECIAL RULE FOR PRESUMPTIVE TAXATION**

Taxpayers who choose the presumptive taxation scheme under the Income Tax Act follow a slightly different system. Instead of paying tax in four instalments during the year, they are required to pay the entire advance tax amount in a single instalment by March 15.

This option is commonly used by small businesses and professionals who declare income under simplified taxation rules.

**ADVANCE TAX SCHEDULE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR**

The Income Tax Department has set a fixed schedule for advance tax payments during the year. Taxpayers are expected to pay a portion of their estimated tax liability at different stages.



important exemption. Resident senior citizens aged 60 years or above who do not have income from business or profession are not required to pay

## Sensex has fallen 6,000 points since Iran war began. Is this a buying opportunity

Mumbai, (Agency)

Benchmark stock market index Sensex has fallen about 6,147 points since the Iran war began, dropping from around 81,287 on February 27 to about 75,140 now. This means the index has declined roughly 7.5% in a little over two weeks as global tensions and rising oil prices triggered selling in equities. The chart shows that the Sensex was trading near 81,287 on February 27, a day before the conflict escalated the next day. Since then, the index has moved lower in several volatile trading sessions as investors reacted to the geopolitical developments and rising crude oil prices.

**WHY MARKETS FELL AFTER THE IRAN WAR**

The fall in the market began soon after tensions escalated in the Middle East. The conflict has pushed crude oil prices close to \$100 per barrel, raising

concerns for countries that depend heavily on oil imports.

India is the world's third-largest importer of crude oil. Higher oil prices often hurt market sentiment because they can increase inflation, widen the



fiscal deficit and put pressure on economic growth. The global uncertainty has also made investors cautious. During geopolitical conflicts, investors often move money away from equities into safer assets

such as cash or gold. Foreign investor selling has added to the pressure on Indian equities. Overseas funds have been reducing their exposure as global risks increased, which has led to sharper swings in benchmark indices.

**IS THE WORST BEHIND US?**

Some market experts believe the worst phase of the correction may already have happened. N. Aruna Giri, CEO of TrustLine Holdings, said past geopolitical crises show a clear pattern in how markets react during such events. "If one looks at past geopolitical crises, a very interesting pattern emerges in the way markets react. Almost without exception, in most crises, the bulk of the price damage—particularly in the Indian markets—tends to happen within the first few days of the outbreak of the conflict.

## Rupee hits fresh intraday low of 92.49/USD amid crude surge near USD 100 per barrel

New Delhi, (Agency)

The Indian rupee hit a fresh intraday low of 92.49 against the US dollar on Friday as Brent crude prices surged again to around USD 100 per barrel, putting renewed pressure on the domestic currency. Currency experts told ANI that the rupee is likely to remain under pressure until there are clear signs of de-escalation in the ongoing geopolitical crisis, which has pushed global oil prices higher and strengthened the US dollar. They noted that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been intervening in the foreign exchange market to slow the fall of the rupee and prevent excessive volatility. However, experts cautioned that there is a limit to how much the central bank can intervene in the market. K N Dey, a currency expert, told ANI that the rupee opened at 92.34/35 on Friday, reflecting continuing pressure due to rising crude prices. "Rupee opened today at 92.34/35 showing signs of continuing pressure on Brent again around 100 with chances of further going up. Highly volatile with either side movement of 7 to 8 per cent intraday. Highly speculative zone," he said. Dey also highlighted significant foreign investor outflows from Indian equities this month, which

## Gold, silver prices ease over profit booking, consolidation trend

New Delhi, (Agency)

Gold and silver prices opened flat but dipped marginally on Friday, amid profit-taking capped after recent record highs and strengthening of US dollar. MCX gold April futures lost 0.14 per cent to Rs 1,60,046 per 10 grams around 11.10 am on an intraday basis. Meanwhile, MCX silver May futures declined 0.19 per cent to Rs 2,67,448 per kg. However, the decline was capped by safe-haven demand amid the ongoing US-Iran war, and high crude prices kept underlying support intact. Gold today mainly driven by US-Iran war news, the US dollar rate, and oil price movements, analysts said adding that crude oil's bull trend, fuelled by the blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, is aiding the petro-dollar system, with gold moving inversely to oil and dollar rates. Persistent tensions in the US-Israel conflict with Iran continued to fuel higher energy prices and inflation concerns, prompting stronger flows into the U.S. dollar and bond yields, said Manav Modi Commodities

Analyst Motilal Oswal Financial services Ltd. Despite ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, bullion struggled to gain traction as a firmer



dollar, rising yields, and uncertainty surrounding the Federal Reserve's policy outlook weighed on sentiment, he added.

Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, said the gold has entered a short-term corrective phase after recently touching record highs, though the broader bullish framework remains intact. The

current consolidation has pushed prices below some short-term moving averages, signaling a temporary pause in momentum, he added.

Broader weakness in global equity markets also contributed to pressure on gold, as investors liquidated positions to raise cash and meet margin calls during sharp market volatility. The US dollar strengthened 0.07 per cent on an intraday basis to 99.81 cent, making dollar-priced bullion expensive for holders of other currencies. Brent crude was trading at \$99.99 per barrel, down 0.47 per cent, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) dropped 0.67 per cent to \$95.09 per barrel. US Secretary of Treasury, Scott Bessent, said on X that "To increase the global reach of existing supply, @USTreasury is providing a temporary authorisation to permit countries to purchase Russian oil currently stranded at sea".



have further weighed on the rupee.

"FII's have Net sold equities this month only in 8 trading days Rs. 46,000 crores roughly equal to US \$ 5 billion going out. Huge outflows. Most of the Asian currencies have fallen. (Russian Ruble has gained)," he added. He further pointed to concerns related to breakdown of supply chain management and the possibility of stop loss triggers in dollar-rupee positions. According to him, the previous day's high of the dollar-rupee pair in the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market stood at 92.49/50. Dey noted that RBI intervention mainly works as a "speed breaker" in the market rather than reversing the trend. "The intervention acts only as a Speed Breaker. Dollar demand may also arise on account of Balance Sheet management. It's extremely impossible to say how far the Rupee's fall will extend," he said.

# Could rising gas prices make your quick commerce orders costlier

**Quick commerce has become the go-to option for instant groceries and food deliveries. But with LPG prices rising and supply concerns growing, the cost pressure may be building behind the scenes. Could this soon make your quick commerce orders costlier? Let's have a look.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

The ongoing concerns around LPG availability and rising gas costs may not just affect household kitchens. They could quietly ripple into India's fast-growing quick commerce sector as well. Built on speed, convenience and thin margins, the industry depends on a large network of food vendors and cloud kitchens that rely heavily on LPG. If gas becomes costlier or harder to access, the pressure may start building behind the scenes. Though the

impact may not immediately show up on delivery apps, if prices keep rising or supply tightens further, the strain on vendors could slowly reshape menus, pricing and even consumer ordering habits.

**THE INVISIBLE ROLE OF GAS IN QUICK COMMERCE**

Most consumers associate quick commerce with delivery bikes and mobile apps. But behind the scenes, LPG plays an important role. Thousands of partner restaurants and cloud kitchens depend on LPG to prepare food ordered through delivery platforms. Many quick commerce apps are now delivering hot meals, ready-to-eat items and bakery products within minutes.

Madhav Kasturia, CEO and Founder of Zippee, believes the real pressure on quick commerce begins here. "For quick commerce, the real damage is upstream. India's cloud kitchen market, valued at \$1.2 billion in 2025 and projected to reach \$3.7 billion by 2034 at a 12.28% CAGR, runs almost entirely on LPG," Kasturia says. If LPG becomes

more expensive or supply tightens, cooking costs rise immediately. Smaller kitchens operating on thin margins may be forced to either increase prices or reduce menu options. For platforms that rely on high order volumes, even small price



increases could begin to affect demand. **CLOUD KITCHENS MAY FEEL THE HEAT FIRST**

The biggest impact could fall on cloud kitchens, i.e., the facilities designed exclusively for online delivery. Unlike large restaurant chains that may

negotiate bulk energy contracts or diversify fuel sources, many cloud kitchens rely almost entirely on LPG cylinders. A price spike could push up the cost of preparing each order. For kitchens already operating on narrow margins, this

could translate into higher menu prices on delivery apps or additional service charges. "These kitchens were already margin-thin. A Rs 115 per cylinder hike on top of OMCs (oil marketing companies) already incurring losses of around Rs 39,000 crore in FY25 at below-cost pricing means the actual cost floor is far higher than what's being passed on today," Kasturia explains. Consumers may not immediately connect these changes to LPG prices, but the impact could eventually show up in the final bill.

**A CASCADING SQUEEZE ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM**

The effect of rising gas costs could move through the supply chain in layers.



# Nikki Tamboli

## Reveals Why She Didn't Quit The 50 After Arbaz Patel's Exit

Reality TV actress Nikki Tamboli, who is currently seen on the reality show The 50, has finally opened up about why she chose to stay on the show even after her boyfriend, Arbaz Patel, was shown the exit door following a heated confrontation with fellow contestants. Many people speculated that she would leave the show as well, but that didn't happen. Several people on social media called Arbaz a loyal partner in their relationship and a strong contender on the show. They wanted Arbaz to have a second chance.

### Nikki Tamboli Opens Up About Not Quitting The 50

Taking to Instagram, Nikki shared a heartfelt note revealing the real challenges she was facing while shooting the show. She explained that she had entered the show shortly after recovering from dengue, and her body was still dealing with its after-effects.

"Many people judged my performance without knowing the reality of what I was going through. My body was still dealing with constant fatigue, weakness and exhaustion. Even the smallest things felt heavier than usual, but I still chose to step into the show and face every day with courage," she wrote.

### "Biggest Challenge Was With Myself:" Nikki Tamboli

Nikki further explained that her biggest challenge on the show was not with other contestants but with herself. She stated that she was competing with her own strength and limits, especially while her body was still weak from dengue.

"What people didn't understand was that I wasn't competing with anyone else in that house. My real competition was with myself with my own strength, my own limits and the battle my body was fighting every single day," she added. "Sometimes the toughest fights are not visible to the world. Showing up, standing there, pushing through the fatigue and refusing to give up was my real challenge," Nikki further mentioned.

About Arbaz Patel's exit, Nikki explained why she didn't leave the show. She said staying was about honouring her commitment. "Seeing so many people say I should have left the show when Arbaz got an exit order. But what people don't understand is that when you enter a show like this, you enter with a commitment," she wrote.

"Walking out emotionally might look dramatic, but honouring your responsibility takes strength," Nikki added. She cited an example from her past when her brother passed away, she still flew to participate in Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi the next day. "That's what commitment means to me. Emotions are real, but so is honoring your responsibility," she said.



## 'Cut The Hair, Kept The Attitude': Urvashi Dholakia Debuts New Look



Urvashi Dholakia is currently receiving a lot of appreciation for her stint in The 50. While fans are loving her bold and edgy side on the show, her Instagram feed is also full of exciting updates. Urvashi recently shared a video where she showed off her new haircut and she looked absolutely stunning.

### Urvashi's New Hairdo Will Definitely Impress You

Urvashi shared a video from her salon session where she treated herself to a fresh bob haircut, and it looked absolutely great on her. The video showed Urvashi enjoying the pampering session at the salon. The caption on the post read, "Cut the hair, kept the attitude. A haircut isn't just a style, it's an attitude. @ak\_hairworld you are the best." Actress Sumona Chakravarti commented on Urvashi's post with a fire emoji.

Internet users were extremely impressed with the actress' latest look. A user wrote, "My dream haircut for the future." Another one added, "You look amazing." Another individual remarked, "Short hairdo suits you." A user said, "You suit girl."

### Urvashi Sheds Lights On Her The 50 Journey

On March 3, Urvashi shared a carousel of six slides where she was seen wearing an off-shoulder top paired with pants, and she looked stunning.

In the caption, she wrote, "Always choose yourself first! It's the first rule! Because when the game ends, you're the only one still standing with you." She further reflected that when she first walked into The 50, she thought of it as just a game. The experience helped her understand herself better. She also spoke about how people may betray you, but the one person who always stands by you is yourself.

She added that she will always choose herself first.

The post concluded with the line, "Picture abhi baaki hai doston, bas dekhte jao... jahan show mein aage chalke sabke rang badlenge girgit se bhi tez... phir judge karna. But I will always love you" On a related note, The 50's contestants include Prince Narula, Rajat Dalal, Mr. Faisu, Shiv Thakare, Ridhi Dogra, Krishna Shroff, Manisha Rani, Yuvika Chaudhary, Sapna Chaudhary, Nehal Chudasama, Vikrant Singh, and Archana Gautam among many others.

## Allu Arjun's Airport Walk Proves His Star Aura Needs No Effort



Allu Arjun's films captivate audiences not just because of his acting skills. It's also the magnetic aura he brings to every character, and that charm is impossible to miss off-screen too. He was recently spotted at the airport, and even in a simple paparazzi video, his effortless swag had everyone talking.

### Allu Arjun Spotted At The Airport

Allu Arjun looked effortlessly stylish at the airport in a crisp black shirt, grey trousers, and casual slippers. His blonde hair made him stand out even more, and he walked with a confident smirk that suited his unmatched aura. Everyone around him at the airport couldn't help but notice Allu and some were even capturing the superstar on their mobile phones.

### Allu's Next Film Title To Be Announced On His Birthday?

According to a report by Variety India, the makers of AA22XA6 are likely to reveal the film's official title on Allu Arjun's birthday, which is April 8. The announcement is expected through a specially crafted video that will introduce audiences to the film's spectacular cinematic universe.

The report adds that this won't be a simple title reveal. The video is said to be a visual extravaganza, packed with cutting-edge VFX and offering the first look at the film's ambitious story, which reportedly unfolds in a parallel universe.

A source shared that the video is designed to leave viewers in awe. Fans can expect to see Allu Arjun in multiple never-before-seen avatars, showcasing the scale, creativity, and transformation at the heart of the project. While the focus will remain largely on Allu Arjun's character, fans of Deepika Padukone, who stars alongside him, may have to wait a little longer for a proper glimpse of her role.

Besides Allu Arjun and Deepika Padukone, the film is expected to feature several prominent actors in key roles. Reports suggest that Mrunal Thakur, Rashmika Mandanna, and Janhvi Kapoor will play pivotal characters. The film is reportedly being made on a massive budget exceeding Rs 700 crore and is produced by Sun Pictures. Apart from AA22XA6, Allu will also be seen in Lokesh Kanagaraj's temporarily titled film, Aa23.

## Saba Pataudi Congratulates

# Kritika Kamra

## Gaurav Kapur After Their Wedding



Actress Kritika Kamra and one of India's most-loved cricket hosts, Gaurav Kapur, have officially tied the knot. The couple got married on March 11 in a low-key registrar wedding held at their home in Bandra, Mumbai. The intimate ceremony was attended by close family members and friends.

Following the formal ceremony, the newlyweds hosted a relaxed sundowner gathering for their loved ones. Soon after the news surfaced, congratulatory messages began pouring in from fans and members of the film and cricket fraternity. Among those who sent their heartfelt wishes was Saba Pataudi, who shared a warm message blessing the newlyweds as they begin this new chapter of their lives.

### Saba Pataudi Congratulate Newlyweds

On March 12, Saba re-shared the couple's wedding picture on her Instagram stories and wrote, "Congratulations. To beautiful years ahead... lots of love, Kritika Kamra and Gaurav Kapur."

### Kritika Kamra And Gaurav Kapur's Star-Studded Guest List

Despite being an intimate affair, the celebration saw several well-known personalities from the entertainment and cricket world in attendance. Celebrities including Malaika Arora, Amrita Arora, Soha Ali Khan, Farhan Akhtar, Neha Dhupia along with her husband Angad Bedi, cricketers Virender Sehwag and Zaheer Khan

with actor-wife Sagarika Ghatge were present at the ceremony. The guest list also included Masaba Gupta, Anya Singh, Rhea Chakraborty and cricketer Yuvraj Singh, who attended the celebration with his wife Hazel Keech and their children.

### Kritika Kamra And Gaurav Kapur's Private Love Story

While there is not much available about how they



started dating as Kritika and Gaurav have kept their relationship private, it was in 2025 that they confirmed their bond. In December 2025, Kritika made her relationship Instagram official by sharing a bunch of pictures from a cosy breakfast date with Gaurav. Before this, Gaurav was married to actress and model Kirat Bhattal. The two first met in 2012 and fell in love with each other. They dated for a couple of years before tying the knot in 2014.

# Go skintastic This summer!

Are skin woes dampening your summer spirit? Fret not, here's addressing a host of skin-related queries so that you can make the most of that gorgeous summer shift dress. Sweltering weather is synonymous with rising hems and plunging necklines. So don't let problem-ridden skin come in the way of daring summer dressing. "Eat for beauty," advises nutritionist and food consultant, Naini Setalvad. Paying a little attention to the changing needs of your body this summer can go a long way.

## What are the diet essentials for the summer months?

Setalvad recommends a heavy breakfast, a light lunch and a medium dinner. "Fried food, red meat and dry fruits (except raisins) should be avoided. Eggs are heat producing and should be kept to a minimum; fish is a good option. Light grains like rice and wheat are okay for the diet but millets should be avoided," she states. "Yoghurt cools down the digestive system. So try to include raitas in your meals or use yoghurt as a salad dressing," she adds. Dr. Apratim Goel, dermatologist, says that antioxidants helps to counter the damage caused by over exposure to the sun. "Raw tomatoes are an excellent source of antioxidants. The bottom line for great summer skin, however, is maximum hydration," she explains.



## Does a predominantly fruit and vegetable diet ensure great skin?

Not all veggies are ideal for summer. Pumpkins, snake gourds, cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce are good for light

peppermint or coriander drinks are ideal.

summer meals. Setalvad suggests incorporating slices of raw mango into salads or snacks. "Mango pickle is an excellent option since it helps to replenish the essential salts lost due to perspiration," she explains. Melons and mangoes are well known 'summer fruits'. However, the innocuous mango is often thought to be responsible for pimples. "Don't blend mangoes with milk or sugar," warns Setalvad. Mango is alkaline while milk is acidic, resulting in a disrupted pH. This causes indigestion and skin break outs when

it with a little water and applying this to the face and neck. She suggests a natural remedy to rejuvenate tired, summer skin. "Pack grated cucumber in a piece of muslin cloth and place this on the face for 20 minutes," she suggests. Fungal infections proliferate in summer due to dampness induced by excessive perspiration. Using a light antifungal dusting powder can help nip rashes and infections.

How does one choose the right

sunscreen?

'Sunscreen' is a golden word in summer. But it is a fact that it doesn't agree with all skin types. In such cases, make the most of physical protection in the form of broad-rimmed hats, sunglasses, full-sleeved cotton clothing, etc. "If sunscreen is too greasy for you, use aloe vera and calamine. This is especially good for acne-prone skin," says Dr. Goel. He explains that over-the-counter sunscreens are of two kinds chemical and physical. "The chemical ones need to be applied 20 minutes prior to sun exposure whereas the physical ones (that contain titanium or zinc oxides and benzones) act instantly," she says.

Handy tips

- As inviting as they are, avoid pack aged facial wipes as most of them contain alcohol that could eventually harm your skin.

- Mineral water sprays are a good alternative when there is no provision for a face wash.

- Use a cold compress after long periods of sun exposure. It helps to instantly cool down the skin. Applying tomato juice or buttermilk relieves minor sunburn.

Hand makeup

What it is

People doing their eye makeup on their hands.

How it started

The idea behind the trend is to practise your eye makeup on your hand before committing to putting it on your face. But then, these designs just took on a life of their own. Some of them are so intricate that they look like the real deal.

How it's done

All you have to do is apply eye makeup the way you would normally, except that you do it on the upper part of your hand. You can experiment with all sorts of trends - glitter, cut crease and winged eyeliner, for instance..

yet effective tips that you can try to rejuvenate your eyes...

1. If you get conjunctivitis, ensure that you consult a doctor and use your eye drops regularly. Maintain hygiene so that it doesn't spread to people around you. Conjunctivitis is highly contagious so try to wash your hands as much as possible.

2. Do simple eye exercises every morning. This is especially essential for those who spend hours in front of the computer screen everyday. Wash your eyes with a splash of cold water at least twice a day.

3. To relax, place cucumbers on your eyes. This will provide a lot of relief to tired eyes.

4. If you are prone to dust allergy, use an eye compress.

5. Eat a lot of green veggies and protein-rich foods — these are excellent for eye health.

6. Don't expose your eyes directly to air conditioner. This may cause your eyes to get dry and sensitive.

7. Don't share your makeup products, especially the ones that are applied on your eyes. This may also result in spreading infection.

8. Give yourself an eye massage. Use your thumb and index finger to give your eyes a soothing massage. Much needed this summer!

9. If you are a swimmer, make sure to wear water goggles.

10. Sleep for at least six to eight hours a day. That in itself is a good way to rejuvenate your eyes. If you suffer from dry eyes, use soothing eye drops to get some relief. Don't forget to blink your eyes often.

## How mommyhood Changes a woman

Becoming a mother is one of those experiences that changes a woman forever — and not just physically. These alterations are subtly visible in the way her personality undergoes a makeover once she gives birth and becomes engrossed in rearing her child. There are psychological, physiological and emotional changes, most of which are for the better — thereby elevating this phase in a woman's life to be one of the epitomes of her existence.

### The deeply satisfying phase enriches her

Motherhood is demanding, however, at the same time, it is deeply satisfying too and this contentment enriches the mother to a large extent. Weight management and Ayurveda professional Dr Amrapali Patil says, "A mother instinctively knows that she is a special creation because she alone has been given the power to bring forth another human life and this builds up her resilience, character, strength, happiness, confidence, faith, love — all these characteristics reflect externally, making the mother look more charming and charismatic."

### Hormones play their magic and enhances her beauty

A new mom -to-be's body is flooded with pregnancy-related hormones, say doctors. These tend to add a lovely glow to the skin, which make her appear radiant and fresh. The quality of her hair also improves, and hair fall reduces due to these hormones, say experts. The body develops soft curves and the breasts look fuller. Cosmetologist Dr Jaishree Manchanda says, "A woman's blood flow changes during pregnancy. This increased blood flow happens in order to help nourish the growing baby, but by a happy accident, it can make a woman look gorgeous and radiant too. So, once a woman is pregnant, her skin glows with an unmistakable radiance."



### Motherhood becomes a source of strength

Being a mother requires strength and the process of going into labour and delivering a baby requires a woman to have faith and vanquish fear. Patil says, "This enhances her confidence further (a concept referred to as the Aishwarya Bhava in Maharishi Patanjali and Ashthanga Yoga). This adds to her internal stamina to take on life and manifests externally as enhanced body confidence." And one of the best things that a woman can wear is her confidence.

### The immense power of pure love becomes a reality

Becoming a mother increases a woman's ability to love by many folds. Patil adds, "Love is a very powerful emotion and tends to make the facial features become tender, soft and less fierce. Such a face is more joyful, appealing and attractive."

### Tips a mother can follow to enhance her beauty

Though one day in the year is not enough to celebrate motherhood, at least on Mother's Day, many acknowledge the mother who is invariably taken for granted on all other days. Mothers need to take care of themselves — their hair, skin etc and Dr Manchanda gives us tips...

#### Hair:

Have a healthy diet that is rich in antioxidants to strengthen the roots of your hair.

#### Acne:

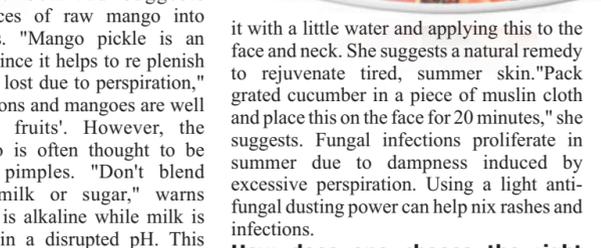
The best natural ingredients to deal with this are aloe vera and eucalyptus.

#### Dark circles and puffy eyes:

Sleep for seven to eight hours, eat healthy and stay hydrated.

#### Skin:

Eat a lot of green leafy vegetables. Use cocoa butter, almond or olive oil on skin to avoid stretch marks.



## 10 Tips to rejuvenate your eyes this summer