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Virat boost for Ranji Trophy as Delhi aim to end on high



Afghanistan relocates families of banned TTP from border regions

Kareena Kapoor Khan to pay Raj Kapoor a tribute at IIFA awards

FILM

PAGE-10

WORLD

PAGE-9

FILM

PAGE-12

3 DELHI
Kejriwal opposed to reservation against Dalits, minorities: Rahul Gandhi

4 DELHI
DU teaching students concepts of patriotism compassion under 'Acharsala' initiative Varsity

7 NATIONAL
Industry lauds ISRO for 100th mission from Sriharikota

8 STATE
Ayodhya witnesses unprecedented influx of devotees on Mauni Amavasya

9 BUSINESS
India Targets 1,800 GW Renewable Energy by 2047, says Pralhad Joshi

11 SPORTS
India strengthening its infrastructure, research capabilities for Olympics: PT Usha

MARKET	
SENSEX	NIFTY
76532.96	23163.10
6311.55	205.85
GOLD SILVER	
80,329.00	92,030.00
40.00	979.00

WEATHER	
Sunrise	7:11 AM
Sunset	5:59 PM
Moonrise	7:52 AM
Moonset	6:55 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	24°C
Minimum	11°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	23°C
Minimum	11°C

30 dead, 60 injured in Mahakumbh stampede

DIG Vaibhav Krishna says stampede took place between 1 and 2 a.m., when a huge crowd broke the barricades, which led to casualties; 25 of the victims identified, at least 36 among the 60 injured undergoing treatment; official helpline number: 1924

Mahakumbh Nagar
At least 30 people were killed and 60 injured in a pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of one of the most auspicious days of Mauni Amavasya.



Several hours after the incident took place between 1-2 am, Maha Kumbh DIG Vaibhav Krishna gave the details of the casualties at a press conference here in the evening.

The incident took place due to the pressure of the crowd. The crowd broke barricades and jumped to the other side, crushing those waiting there. Over 90 injured were rushed to the hospital, of whom 30 died, he said.

The officer said 25 of the deceased have been identified. Four of them are from Karnataka and one each from Assam and Gujarat.

Among those injured, 36 are undergoing treatment at the hospital and the rest have been sent with their families.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered his condolences to the devotees who lost their family members in the stampede, describing the tragedy as "extremely saddening".

ISRO scores a 100 PSLV takes the cake with most to space



Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh)
The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday achieved a historic milestone with its 100th mission and revealed an ambitious future plan of crossing the next 100 launches in five years.

Starting off with the SLV in 1979, the space agency crossed the 100-mission mark after 46 years, but what stands out is the PSLV's dominance through the years with 62 missions.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has turned out to be ISRO's most trusted rocket, thanks to its unmatched reliability.

Waqf committee adopts recommendations, revised Bill

New Delhi
The Joint Committee of Parliament scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill on Wednesday adopted its report and the amended version of the proposed law with a majority vote, the panel's chairperson Jagdambika Pal said.



Opposition members voiced their strong criticism of the adopted Bill, which was approved with 15-11 votes, alleging that it was "unconstitutional" and will destroy the Waqf board by allowing for the government's interference in the religious matters of Muslims.

Pal, however, claimed that many of the amendments approved by the committee have addressed several concerns of opposition members as well, adding the Bill once enacted

will help Waqf board in discharging its duties transparently and more effectively.

HIGHLIGHT

The committee held 38 meetings in Delhi since its constitution in August 2024 and toured across the country as it consulted stakeholders to arrive at its conclusions.

member said the report will be submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday. It is now for him and Parliament to decide the next course of action, he told reporters when asked if the Bill will be passed in the Budget Session starting from January 31.

'Poison in Yamuna': Modi, Rahul slam Kejriwal, Haryana court issues summons

New Delhi
amid an escalating row over AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's claim of Haryana poisoning the Yamuna water, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday lashed out at former Delhi chief minister, alleging that he has failed to fulfil his promise to clean the river in the last 10 years.



Later in the day, Kejriwal responded to the Election Commission (EC) notice over his claim that the Haryana government was "mixing poison" in Yamuna and said raw water received from the state re-

cently has been "highly contaminated" and "extremely poisonous" for human health.

In a related development, a court in Haryana's Sonapat on Wednesday summoned Kejriwal on February 17 on a complaint over his claim that the BJP-ruled state was mixing "poison" in the Yamuna river. The court of Sonapat

context of an "urgent public health crisis" over drinking water quality in the city.

In the 14-page reply to the EC, he said the "alleged statements" attributed to him were made as his public duty to highlight the "severe toxicity and contamination" of raw water received from the BJP-ruled state.

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30 dead, 60 injured in Mahakumbh stampede

CONT FROM PAGE-1

After the stampede, Amrit snan, the traditional bathing ritual of akharas, was deferred but it resumed in the afternoon. The bathing for devotees, however, continued at the tightly-packed Sangam and other ghats along the Ganges which were less crowded.

Nearly six crore devotees took a dip Wednesday.

Around 2 am, the blaring sirens of ambulances and police vehicles rushing to the Sangam pierced through the continuous chants of mantras and shlokas echoing from loudspeakers across the Kumbh Mela area.

Those injured were taken to the central hospital set up in the Mela area. Relatives of many injured also reached there, as did some senior administrative and police officials.

Security personnel and rescue workers were seen carrying many of the injured on stretchers. People's belongings, including blankets and bags, lay strewn around. Sarojini, a devotee from Karnataka said, "We came in a batch of 60 people in two buses, we were nine people in the group. Suddenly there was pushing in the crowd, and we got trapped. A lot of us fell down and the crowd went uncontrolled." "There was no chance for escape, there was pushing from all sides," the woman told PTI Videos.

A man from Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh said his mother was injured and hospitalised, while a middle-aged couple from Meghalaya walked away from the crowd, both of them sobbing and narrating to reporters their harrowing experience of getting caught up in the ruckus.

Another woman at the hospital, whose child suffered injuries in the chaos, narrated her ordeal, claiming, "There was nowhere to go. Some people who pushed us were laughing while we begged them for kindness towards the children." In a post on X around noon, Modi said the local administration in Prayagraj is giving all possible help to the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured.

'Mismanagement VIP movement self promotion' Oppn slams Centre, UP govt

New Delhi: The opposition on Wednesday hit out at the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government over the Maha Kumbh stampede, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying that mismanagement and administration's special focus on VIP movement were responsible for the tragic incident.

Gandhi also said "VIP culture" should be reined in and the government should make better arrangements to fulfil the needs of common devotees at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said "half-baked arrangements, VIP movement, paying more attention to self-promotion and mismanagement are responsible for this". Such arrangements despite spending thousands of crores of rupees are condemnable, he said.

At least 30 people were killed and 60 others injured in the stampede that broke out at the Maha Kumbh Mela in the early hours of



Wednesday, officials said. The pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area broke out as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on Mauni Amavasya, considered one of the most auspicious days during the mela.

Opposition leaders in Uttar Pradesh targeted the Adityanath government over the stampede. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav demanded that the man-

agement of the world's largest religious event should be immediately handed over to the army. Yadav also said that those who claimed "world-class arrangements" in the Maha Kumbh should resign from their posts taking moral responsibility for the stampede.

In order to re-establish faith in the system among the saint community and devotees who have come to the Maha Kumbh, it is necessary

that the administration and management of the Maha Kumbh should be immediately handed over to the army instead of the UP government," he said on X.

"Now that the truth of the claims of making world class arrangements has come out in front of everyone, those who were claiming and spreading false propaganda about it should resign from their posts taking moral responsibility for the people

Gandhi also said "VIP culture" should be reined in and the government should make better arrangements to fulfil the needs of common devotees at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

killed in this accident," he said. BSP supremo Mayawati said the incident was saddening and worrisome.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee offered her condolences to the bereaved families.

Banerjee in a post on X emphasised the need of "maximal planning and care" to handle huge assemblies such as the Kumbh, citing her experiences of organising the annual Gangesagar Mela in West Bengal.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also offered his condolences to pilgrims who lost their family members in the stampede. Soren hoped that the Union government

would investigate the incident thoroughly and take necessary steps to prevent such accidents in the future.

"We all must learn from such tragedies and ensure proper safety arrangements in the future so that such incidents do not happen again," he said.

Congress chief Kharge said the news of "many people losing their lives" and many getting injured due to the stampede on the banks of the Triraj Sangam during the Maha Kumbh is extremely heartbreaking.

"Our deepest condolences to the families of the devotees and we wish for the speedy recovery of the injured," he said.

"Half-baked arrangements, VIP movement, paying more attention to self-promotion and mismanagement are responsible for this. Such arrangements despite spending thousands of crores of rupees are condemnable," the Congress chief said in a post in Hindi on X.

Delhi HC tribunal confirms extension of 5-year ban imposed by SFJ founded by Pannun

New Delhi: A tribunal of the Delhi High Court has confirmed the extension of a five-year ban imposed on pro-Khalistan separatist group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) founded by US-based lawyer Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, citing a slew of subversive activities carried out by the outfit.

The activities include threats to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on July 10 last year extended the five-year ban imposed on SFJ under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 for its relentless anti-India activities.

The Delhi High Court tribunal, consisting of Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, was constituted on August 27 to adjudicate whether or not there is sufficient cause for extending the declaration of SFJ as an unlawful association. The tribunal on January 3 issued an order confirming the extension of the ban on SFJ for five more years with effect from July 10. The order was made available on Wednesday.

Advt Contact :
9818-799941

Students from India achieve top results in Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards

Chandigarh:

The International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment (Cambridge) is delighted to announce the winners of the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards in India. The awards celebrate the outstanding academic achievements of secondary school learners in India in the November 2023, March and June 2024 Cambridge examination series.

In total, 228 students in India received awards, for exceptional performance in Cambridge IGCSE™ and International AS & A Level examinations across a wide range of subjects. The winners, felicitated at a ceremony in Mumbai, include 82 students who won 'Top in the World' awards for achieving the highest mark in the world in a single subject, and 110 students who attained the highest mark in India in a single sub-

ject. The awards show that students in India are performing particularly well in Mathematics followed by English. In India, 88% of the students who have excelled in the 'Top in World' Award category are from Mathematics and English disciplines, with Mathematics alone accounting for 80%.

The Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards programme celebrates the success of students taking examinations awarded by Cambridge International Education in over 40 countries around the world. Cambridge qualifications prepare and equip learners with the skills they need to thrive at university and beyond. The world's best higher education institutions recognise Cambridge qualifications and value the critical thinking skills, independent research abilities and deep subject knowledge that Cambridge learners bring to university.

Will quit ministry if Fadnavis or Ajit Pawar ask me: Dhananjay

Mumbai:

Amid opposition call for his resignation over the Beed sarpanch murder case, Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde said he is ready to quit if asked by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis or deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

Munde's close aide Walmik Karad has been arrested in an extortion case linked to the murder. Munde, 49, who belongs to the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, is now the Food and Civil Supplies minister.

Social activist Anjali Damania said she would file a Public Interest Litigation and make Fadnavis a respondent if the state government did not act against Munde within four days, while NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule the NCP minister should quit on "moral grounds."



Massajog village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh was abducted, tortured and murdered on December 9, 2024, for allegedly trying to stop an extortion bid targeting an energy firm in Beed. Munde's home district.

"My morality is rooted in my honesty towards my people. I speak with complete sincerity. I do not consider myself morally guilty. If I am guilty, my senior leaders will tell me so," asserted the MLA from Parli.

Damania, who met Ajit Pawar two days ago, said she had given all necessary documentary evidence about Munde's 'nexuses' with Karad.

"I have given the government an ultimatum of 96 hours...I will wait for four days...to see if action is taken against Munde. Else I will file a PIL and make chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, deputy CM Ajit Pawar respondents and personally liable," she said.

She said she had provided evidence about alleged financial dealings of Karad and Munde and also about a firm in which they are partners getting a contract from a government company.

PUBLIC NOTICE
We, Sh. Naman Das Nanda S/o Shri Sarjaj Nanda & Sh. Mayank Nanda S/o Shri Nareesh Nanda Both P/o 16/5, AB, Tikal Nagar, New Delhi-110015 and lawful purchaser of Property/Flat No. 20, EF, New Market Situated at Tikal Nagar, New Delhi-110068 do hereby inform that the original Lease deed dated 16/11/1992 issued by the L&DO, New Delhi has been lost/misplaced. An FIR No. 25389/2023 dated 01/01/2024 in this effect has been lodged. If any one find the same may contact us at above address or Call 9910605710

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that I KRISHNA KUMARI TANDON W/O Late Sri Ramesh Chander Tandon is/are filing application in L&DO for substitution of property No. 60/15 Old Eajidur Nagar New Delhi-110068 in the her name on the ground of, Reimbursement, Debt, Death certificate, Affidavits, Indemnity Bond & Surviving member certificate. If there are any objections/claims from the general public on this application, the same shall be communicated to L&DO with supporting documents through registered post or by visiting L&DO at Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi or through an email at ldo@nic.in, within 30 days of the publication of this notice.
Smt. Krishna Kumari Tandon R/o 60/15 Old Eajidur Nagar New Delhi-110068 Phone 999995658

Beating Retreat: Foot-tapping music soulful renditions mark end of R-Day celebrations

New Delhi:

Foot-tapping melodies and the majestic backdrop of a setting sun over Raisina Hills mesmerised the audience at Vijay Chowk on Wednesday during the Beating Retreat ceremony, marking the culmination of the 76th Republic Day celebrations.

From "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja" and "Aye Watan Tere Lye" to "Ganga Jamuna" and "Bharat Ke Jawan" — bands from the Indian Army, Navy, Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) played 30 foot-tapping tunes before a distinguished audience comprising President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, among others.



cheering as her open gold-plated carriage rolled down the Raisina Hill. The ceremony began with the massed band's "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja" tune, followed by several captivating numbers such as "Amr Bharati", "Indradhanush", "Jai Janam Bhumi", "Nati in Himalayan Valley", "Ganga Jamuna" and "Veer Siachen" by the Pipes and Drums band.

The CAPF bands played "Vijay Bharat", "Rajasthan Troops", "Aye Watan Tere Lye", and "Bharat Ke Jawan". "Galaxy Rider", "Stride", "Rubaru" and "Millennium Flight Fantasy" were the tunes played by the IAF band, while the Navy band played "Rashtriya Pratham", "Nishak

Nishpad", "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", "Spread the Light of Freedom", "Rhythm of the Reef", and "Jai Bharat". It was followed by the Army band which played "Veer Sapoot", "Tagat Watan", "Mera Yuva Bharat", "Dhruv" and "Faulad Ka Jigar". The Massed Bands then played the tunes of "Priyam Bharatam", "Aye Mere Watan Ke

Logon" and "Drummers Call", drawing loud cheer and applause from the audience.

The event came to a close with the ever-popular tune "Sare Jahan Se Acha", played by the Buglers.

The principal conductor of the ceremony was Commander Manoj Sebastian.

The Army band conductor was Subedar Major (honorary captain) Bishan Bahadur, while M Antony, MCPO MUS II, and Warrant Officer Ashok Kumar were the conductors of the Navy and IAF bands, respectively.

The conductor of the CAPF band was Head Constable GD Mahajan Kailash Madhava Rao. The Pipes and Drums band played under the instructions of Subedar Major Abhilash Singh, while the Buglers performed under the leadership of Naib Subedar Bhupal Singh.

Formal G-7
(For political parties to publish in newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)
Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.
(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in conferred petition (C) no. 2132 of 2016 in WP (C) no. 536 of 2011.)
Name of the Party: **PEOPLES PARTY OF INDIA (DEMOCRATIC)**
Name of the Election: **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**
Name of State/UT: **NCT DELHI**
Name of the Constituency: **38-BELHI CANTT**
Name of the candidate: **SURENDER KUMAR**

Sr. No.	Cr. No.	Cr. Description	Cr. Status
1/1	Criminal Antecedents		
a	Nature of the offences	FIR No. 489/2019, P.S. South Campus, New Delhi, US 30/04/19	
b	Case No.	32/23/2019	
c	Name of the Court	Court of Ms. Aparna Swain, Lt. ASJ PNC, New Delhi	
d	Whether Charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	Yes	
e	Date of conviction, if any	Not applicable	
f	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not applicable	
g	Any other information required to be given	No.	
1/2	Criminal Antecedents		
a	Nature of the offences	FIR No. 20/2024, P.S. South Campus, New Delhi	
b	Case No.	CR CASE/28/23/2024	
c	Name of the Court	Ms. Kavita Bhat, Lt. JMFC	
d	Whether Charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	Yes	
e	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable	
f	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not applicable	
g	Any other information required to be given	No.	
2	Reasons for the selection of the candidate	The candidate has been considered by the party. He has also been a social worker, working for the people of constituency for a long period of time.	
3	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	Candidate is a young and dynamic person, who has received substantial support among the youth and the society as well. He has been able to gain the faith of the people of his constituency and was found to be a better choice than 100 words) amongst other contenders.	

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jewar airport to be connected with bus services

Noida
As many as 17 districts of West UP will get connectivity to the Noida International Airport. For this, a route chart is being prepared in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC).

A proposal is being made to operate roadways buses and send it to the government. The districts of four divisions will be connected to the Noida International Airport through transport service. About 24 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan are coming under this scope.

At present, efforts are being made to connect the districts of Meerut, Saharanpur, Aligarh and Agra divisions. Currently, no special facility is available to reach the airport being built in Jewar. Metro and Namo Bharat project may take many years to start. In such a situation, direct connectivity to the airport will be provided through buses.

There are plans to operate buses from the Noida International Airport to Meerut, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Hapur, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Aligarh, Hathras, Kasganj, Etah, Agra, Firozabad, Mathura and Mainpuri.

It is claimed that the bus service will start even before the flights start operating. After its launch, buses will also run to Gurugram, Jhajjar, Rewari, Rohtak, Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal, Faridabad, Palwal, Meerut (Nuh), Bhiwani, Mahendragarh in the future.

Noida
The Delhi, Greater Noida and Yamuna Authorities have prepared a chart for operation of e-buses on 23 routes. All the buses running in the city will be electric.

Add. CEO' inspects cleaning work in Noida

Ajeet Kumar
Noida
The Additional Chief Executive Officer (SK) on Wednesday inspected cleaning work in the Public Health II area of Noida, accompanied by General Manager (Public Health), Project Engineer (Public Health)-I, and Project Engineer (Public Health) II.

The inspection revealed several issues, including C&D waste, broken tiles, cow dung cakes, and garbage heaps.

The Industrial Department was directed to inform the owner of the plot and impose a fine of Rs. 1.00 lakh on the agency collecting C&D Waste.

A fine of Rs. 1.00 lakh was also imposed on the agency M/s Lion Services working on the road. C&D waste was found in various locations, including behind the footpath in the Green Belt, ahead of the water tank in Sector-67, and in the empty land between FNG Marg and Hindon Pusta.

The green belt was developed by building a boundary wall, encroachment by building new slums and nurseries, and a central verge being constructed. Silt was found in the KC drain and pavement pipes, and a report was submitted within three days.

A large amount of C&D waste was dumped in the empty plot in front of plot No. C-09 in Hosier Complex Industrial Sector, and the concerned junior engineer was asked for an explanation and action to be taken to stop his salary.

Kejriwal opposed to reservation against Dalits, minorities: Rahul

Rahul Gandhi said he and his party do not fear Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on the contrary, "the PM is afraid of the Congress".

New Delhi

Stepping up his attack on AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that the former Delhi chief minister is opposed to reservations and is against Dalits, backwards, minorities and the poor.

Addressing an election rally in Bawana here, Gandhi said he and his party do not fear Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on the contrary, "the PM is afraid of the Congress".

He also attacked Kejriwal with the 'sheesh mahal' jibe for the second straight day and said that though he talked about clean governance, the "biggest scam" in Delhi took place under his watch.

Gandhi said Kejriwal reneged on his promise of bathing in and drinking Yamuna water and challenged him to drink the water from the river.

He said both Prime Minister Modi and Kejriwal are opposed to reservations and are against Dalits, minorities, backwards and the poor.

"Kejriwal should say clearly that he would get caste survey done and breach the wall of 50 per cent cap on reservation, but he will not do so as he is against Dalits,



and minorities. When riots were taking place, where was he. Did he stand with you?" Gandhi said, slamming the former chief minister.

Training his guns specifically on Kejriwal, Gandhi said he used to move around in a small car wearing muffler and claim that he will do clean politics but the biggest scam in Delhi worth crores of rupees was done by his party and his people.

"He (Kejriwal) ran a corrupt government. Modi ji lies in his speeches and just like him, Kejriwal does the same. Five years ago, he (Kejriwal) had stated that he will take a bath in the Yamuna and drink its water. Five years have gone by and he did not do so. You have to drink dirty water but Kejri-

wal lives in 'sheesh mahal' which is worth crores and lies to you," the former Congress chief said.

Gandhi said he had told PM Modi in Parliament that the Congress will get a caste census done. "When our government comes in Delhi, we will do a caste census. I had said that we will breach the wall of 50 per cent cap on reservations. We will break down this wall. I want to ask Kejriwal whether he wants to remove the 50 per cent cap on reservation. Kejriwal and Modi ji are against reservation and are against Dalits, minorities, backwards and the poor," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader said it is his guarantee that Kejriwal will not assure that he will breach 50 per cent cap on reservation because he is

also like Modi. He also hit out at the media, saying that instead of focussing on real issues, it only shows Amban's wedding, Modi's face and talk of hatred 24x7.

"Modi and RSS have spread hatred and they make people of different religions, caste and languages fight and hand over your money to people like Adani and Ambani. The Modi government has waived off loans worth Rs to lakh crore of billions," he said, attacking the central government.

He also claimed that no matter what people do, they will not get employment under Modi and Kejriwal governments.

Gandhi also asserted that the Congress is party with an ideology and does not make false promises. "We have to open shops to spread love in Modi's market of hate," Gandhi said.

He said people can see his past speeches and they will not be able to point out even one lie in his remarks. "I and the Congress party never lie, we had said loans will be waived off, there will be a caste census, women will get free bus rides in Karnataka, Telangana. These promises were fulfilled by the Congress (in these states). Whenever any citizen

in India is attacked, tortured or faces injustice, Rahul Gandhi is seen standing there to help," he said.

The Congress talks about employment, development and progress, he asserted. "During Sheila (Dikshit) ji's time, roads were built in Delhi, development took place because we do not make false promises. But both Kejriwal and Narendra Modi make false promises 24 hours a day," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader had launched a blistering attack on Kejriwal on Tuesday as well in his poll rallies in Patparganj and Okhla. He had said the former chief minister came talking about bringing in clean politics but the biggest "liquor scam" took place in Delhi under his watch, while he got engrossed in "sheesh mahal politics".

The BJP has often used the 'sheesh mahal' jibe to attack Kejriwal with allegations of corruption in the renovation of the chief minister's residence when he was the CM.

The Congress and the AAP are part of the INDIA bloc. The two parties had fought the Lok Sabha elections together in Delhi, but are contesting the February 5 assembly polls separately.

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The Congress and the AAP are part of the INDIA bloc. The two parties had fought the Lok Sabha elections together in Delhi, but are contesting the February 5 assembly polls separately.

Delhi Police nabs key member of ATM robbery gang

New Delhi
The Delhi Police arrested a 32-year-old key member of the Farooq Adbar gang, involved in various ATM robberies across multiple states, an official said on Wednesday.

Police stated that the accused, Jahid, a proclaimed offender, is a resident of Mevat in Haryana.

"Jahid was traced and apprehended in Gurugram on January 28 following a tip-off. He had been declared a proclaimed offender by a Delhi court after skipping trial proceedings. Jahid's criminal record includes over 35 cases across Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Chennai, involving ATM thefts and armed robberies," said the

police officer. According to the police, Jahid specialised in targeting unguarded ATMs, using gas cutters to break in. His gang often disabled security cameras by spraying paint and carried weapons to evade capture. The criminals frequently changed locations to escape the police.

The police learned about his movements and a team tracked him to Gurugram, where he was arrested. Jahid's criminal activities date back to 2012 when he was first arrested in an ATM theft case in Delhi. He later expanded his operations, orchestrating a major heist in 2019, stealing Rs 32 lakh from ATMs in Maharashtra.

"Why waste your votes on the Congress? The Congress will not win, it will just cut our votes. The Congress and the BJP are fighting this election together to defeat the AAP. Vote to make someone win, not to make someone lose," Kejriwal said.

In Badli, the AAP has fielded its sitting MLA Ajesh Yadav, who is contesting against Congress' Delhi unit president Devender Yadav. Ajesh Yadav has won the seat in the last two elections (2015 and 2020), while Devender Yadav previously held it in 2008 and 2012. The BJP has nominated Deepak Chaudhary as its candidate for the constituency.

Kejriwal also targeted the BJP-led Haryana government over rising ammonia levels in the Yamuna river, accusing it of "poisoning" Delhi's water supply. "The BJP has crossed all limits in politics. The BJP-

led Haryana government has put poison named ammonia in the water. But we saved the people of Delhi by diverting the toxic water. We all are one—the people of Haryana are also us, and the people of Delhi are also us," he said.

Kejriwal's attack on the Congress comes amid growing rifts within the opposition INDIA alliance. On Tuesday, tensions escalated further after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused Kejriwal of being "afraid" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and alleged his involvement in the "liquor scam".

Responding to Gandhi's remarks, Kejriwal hit back on social media platform X, stating, "Don't preach on fear and bravery. The country knows who is a coward and who is brave." He also targeted the Congress over the National Herald case and land-grab allegations against Robert Vadra.

Although the AAP and Congress had allied for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, their decision to contest the Delhi Assembly polls separately has highlighted underlying tensions.

Raised water contamination issue in public interest: Kejriwal to ECI

New Delhi
AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday responded to the Election Commission notice over his claim that Haryana government was "mixing poison" in Yamuna, and said raw water received from the state recently has been "highly contaminated and extremely poisonous" for human health.

In his reply, the former Delhi chief minister also said his remarks were made in context of an "urgent public health crisis" over drinking water quality in the city.

In the 14-page reply to the Election Commission, he said the "alleged statements" attributed to him

were made as his public duty to highlight the "severe toxicity and contamination" of raw water received from the BJP-ruled state.

Following a complaint filed by the BJP over the matter, the Election Commission issued the notice to Kejriwal on Tuesday, giving

him time till Wednesday 8 pm to furnish his reply. Kejriwal also said the ammonia level in raw water treatment plants in Delhi was "extreme" that water used in Delhi are unable to process it down to safe and permissible limits for human consumption.

She asked Saxena not to "follow the orders of his political masters (BJP)" but to prioritise the welfare of the people in the national Capital. CM Atishi's letter to the LG came a day after Saxena sent her a communication expressing concern over the AAP's National Convener Arvind Kejriwal's remark that the Yamuna River was being "poisoned" by the Haryana government.

The LG had also advised the Delhi CM to "rise above narrow politics" and slammed her for "failing" to condemn statements that can sow discord between neighbouring states. In a letter to the LG on Wednesday, CM Atishi said, "Instead of addressing the pressing issue of dangerously high ammonia levels in Delhi's water, you have placed baseless accusations and peddled a false narrative to deflect from your utter fail-

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GRAP 3 curbs invoked in Delhi-NCR amid rise in pollution

New Delhi
The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Wednesday invoked curbs under stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) amid a sharp rise in pollution due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order.

The air quality in Delhi deteriorated sharply amid calm winds, smoggy situation and low mixing height with the 24-average AQI rising to 365 at 4 pm, prompting the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to implement curbs under stage 3 of GRAP.

GRAP Stage 3 entails a ban on non-essential construction work.

Classes up to grade 5 are required to shift to hybrid mode under Stage 3. Parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available.

Under Stage 3, the use of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars (4-wheelers) is restricted in Delhi and nearby NCR districts.

The BNP has often used the 'sheesh mahal' jibe to attack Kejriwal with allegations of corruption in the renovation of the chief minister's residence when he was the CM.

The Congress and the AAP are part of the INDIA bloc. The two parties had fought the Lok Sabha elections together in Delhi, but are contesting the February 5 assembly polls separately.

He said people can see his past speeches and they will not be able to point out even one lie in his remarks. "I and the Congress party never lie, we had said loans will be waived off, there will be a caste census, women will get free bus rides in Karnataka, Telangana. These promises were fulfilled by the Congress (in these states). Whenever any citizen

in India is attacked, tortured or faces injustice, Rahul Gandhi is seen standing there to help," he said.

The Congress talks about employment, development and progress, he asserted. "During Sheila (Dikshit) ji's time, roads were built in Delhi, development took place because we do not make false promises. But both Kejriwal and Narendra Modi make false promises 24 hours a day," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader had launched a blistering attack on Kejriwal on Tuesday as well in his poll rallies in Patparganj and Okhla. He had said the former chief minister came talking about bringing in clean politics but the biggest "liquor scam" took place in Delhi under his watch, while he got engrossed in "sheesh mahal politics".

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PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mr. Naveen Tyagi S/o Mr. Mam Chand owner of Residential House No. 81/6, area 60.20 sq. meter., Kharsa No. 124, at Gali No. 13, Kasampur (Sainik Nagar), village Khurrampur, Pargna & Tehsil Meerut, vide Gift Deed dated 06.10.2022, doc no. 17011, executed by Mr. Yogesh Tyagi S/o Mr. Mamchand Tyagi, SR-III-Meerut in the property chain Original Sale Deed dated 23.07.1990 doc. No. 6720 was lost and on line FIR already lodged Vide LR No:2455295/2025, and said property to be financed by AU Small Finance Bank Ltd, if anybody has any charge/interest/title/third party in the said property of any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing and with proof on the below mentioned address, failing which and I am aware that in case default with the mortgage property that all borrower / Owners are responsible for the same.
Satvendra Gautam Advocate
Shop no. 3, Property no. 126, Lal Kauna Ghaziabad, U.P

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Savita Devi W/o Mr. Sunder Singh owner of Plot land area 416.056 Sq. yds., village Nyazpur Khilya Pargna & Tehsil Garhmukteshwar, Dist. Hapur, U.P., vide Sale Deed dated 04.02.2016, doc. No. 1067, executed by Mr. Narendar Yadav S/o Mr. Jay Veer Yadav, SR- Garhmukteshwar and said property to be financed by AU Small Finance Bank Ltd, if anybody has any charge/interest/title/third party in the said property of any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing and with proof on the below mentioned address, failing which and I am aware that in case default with the mortgage property that all borrower / Owners are responsible for the same.
Satvendra Gautam Advocate
Shop no. 3, Property no. 126, Lal Kauna Ghaziabad, U.P

PUBLIC NOTICE

1. Advocate Rachit Sehajpal (Enrollment Number: D/2383/2024) certifies that upon the instructions and knowledge received by my clients namely, Sh. Radheyshyam Singh (Father), Smt. Sangeeta Devi (Mother), Sh. Anmol Kumar (Brother), Ms. Simpi Singh (Sister), Ms. Kajal Singh (Sister), Ms. Soni Singh (Sister), residing at RZ-F-107/A, Nihal Vihar, Nanagol, West Delhi, Delhi, 110041, hereby certifies that Roshni D/O Radheyshyam Singh, has been disowned from all family relations and properties of my clients. This decision has been taken due to her hostile attitude and behavior towards our clients, and henceforth, Our Clients have no connection, relation, liability and responsibility towards her in any manner whatsoever. She shall not be entitled to any share, claim, or right in our movable or immovable properties. Our Clients, hereby inform the general public that any person dealing with Roshni shall do so at their own risk, and we shall not be responsible for any of her acts, liabilities, or obligations.
Rachit Sehajpal Advocate
115 A, EKTA ENCLAVE, PEER-AGARI METRO STATION NEW DELHI
CHAMBER NO 310, 30 DDU MARG, ROUSE AVENUE, NEAR ITO DELHI 110002
CH NO 137, BAHADURGARH CIVIL COURT, BAHADURGARH, DIST JAJHAR, HRY 124507

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Preeti Kashyap W/o Mr. Bithnal owner of Residential Plot land area 50 sq. yds., Kharsa No. 469, at Mohalla Indrapuri Modnagar, in village Sikri Khurd, Pargna Jajalabad Tehsil Modnagar, dist. Ghaziabad vide Sale Deed dated 27.06.2024, doc no. 12926, executed by Mrs. Pooja W/o Mr. Rakesh Kumar, SR-Modnagar in the property chain Original Sale Deed dated 25.03.2011 doc. No. 4016 was lost and on line FIR already lodged Vide LR No:2455290/2025, and said property to be financed by AU Small Finance Bank Ltd, if anybody has any charge/interest/title/third party in the said property of any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing and with proof on the below mentioned address, failing which and I am aware that in case default with the mortgage property that all borrower / Owners are responsible for the same.
Satvendra Gautam Advocate
Shop no. 3, Property no. 126, Lal Kauna Ghaziabad, U.P

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed that on the Aadhar card number-9426 02611282 of Sagar Rathore son of Satish Chandra resident of 28/470 Gudadi Mansoor Khan Agra the name of the applicant is recorded as Bhagwan Sagar, which is wrong, whereas in the PAN card number: BMDR9531T and other documents the name of the applicant is recorded as Sagar Rathore, which is correct.

DU teaching students concepts of patriotism compassion under 'Acharsala' initiative Varsity

New Delhi
Delhi University, under its "Acharsala" program, is teaching students concepts and virtues such as patriotism and compassion, the varsity said on Wednesday.

The university held the third session of its lecture series under the "Acharsala" program, organised by the Office of the Dean of Student Welfare, a statement from DU said.

The theme of this lecture was "Delhi University's Contribution to the Development of Human Values" it added.

"Acharsala" is an initiative



Program, the chief guest, Rajeev Gupta, CEO of Delhi University's Institution of Eminence, delivered a lecture on the integral role of educational institutions in fostering human values, integrity, and ethical responsibility, according to the statement.

"Acharsala is one of the ambitious plans of Delhi University's Vice Chancellor, Yogesh Singh. The initiative aims to reflect the university's glorious traditions in the behavior of students, with the goal of naturally developing feelings of patriotism and compassion," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

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Delhi Congress releases manifesto with 22 guarantees

Staff Reporter New Delhi
AICC general secretary in-charge of communications Jai Ram Ramesh accompanied by Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav, released the party manifesto with 22 guarantees for the Delhi assembly elections at a press conference here on Wednesday.



Ramesh said that Congress was the first to use the word "guarantee" in May, 2023 before the Karnataka assembly elections, but copycats like AAP and BJP tried to emulate Congress only to deceive the people. He said that people trust the Congress to fulfil its guarantees as it had done in Congress-ruled states, and the guarantees given in the manifesto for the Delhi assembly elections will be fulfilled.

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He said that air pollution has made people gasp for breath, both the Modi and Kejriwal governments were responsible, as they did not take this issue seriously, like the cleaning of the Yamuna.

The Congress government headed by the Sheila Dikshit government introduced 7000 CNG buses on Delhi roads to check air pollution, and put in place a Yamuna action plan and the expansion

NOIDA CEO Lokesh M visited various areas of Noida; Inspects new Authority building

Ajeet Kumar NOIDA
Chief Executive Officer Lokesh M on Wednesday visited various areas of Noida for a sudden inspection of the progress work. During his visit, Additional Chief Executive Officers, Special Executive Officers, Additional Chief Executive Officers, and officers from the Civil, Electricity, Public Health, and Garden Departments were present.

The Chief Executive Officer gave suggestions and instructions for executing projects and setting the tender process.

He also inspected the main administrative building under construction in Sector-96.



A presentation was given regarding wall cladding and false ceiling in the gallery, which was approved and started immediately.

Instructions were given to beautify entry and exit routes, make windows in cabin partitions to allow natural light to enter the office building, and create work stations in various department offices.

The Chief Executive Officer directed the completion of the administrative building construction work by March 31.

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BJP will continue all free schemes, women to get Rs 25K if voted in power: Anurag Thakur

Staff Reporter New Delhi
Anurag Singh Thakur, former Union Minister and MP from Himachal's Hamirpur Lok Sabha constituency, on Wednesday expressed his commitment to the economic empowerment of women through free water, electricity, and bus travel.

Anurag Singh Thakur, while addressing a huge public meeting at Majnu Ka Tila under Chandni Chowk Assembly stated that if BJP forms a government in Delhi, the public will benefit from the implementation of existing schemes.



Thakur criticized Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party for lying to the public and looting Delhi.

"If BJP forms a government, women will receive Rs 25,000 per month under the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, along with financial assistance of Rs 21,000 and six nutrition kits to pregnant women under the Chief Minister's Matritva Suraksha Yojana," Anurag Thakur said.

The BJP will also form an Auto Driver Welfare Board for auto and taxi drivers, provide life insurance up to 10 lakhs and accident insurance up to five lakhs, and offer scholarships to their children.

public and looting Delhi.

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No custody parole for Naresh Balyan in MCOCA case: Delhi HC

New Delhi
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to release AAP MLA Naresh Balyan, arrested in a MCOCA case, on custody parole to enable him to "guide" his wife contesting the upcoming assembly polls.

Delhi Police opposed the grant of custody parole to the lawmaker, saying investigation in the case was underway and certain witnesses also came forward.

Considering the police's stand, Justice Vikas Mahajan said he was not inclined to grant relief, and noted Balyan's case was different from that of riots' accused Tahir Hussain who was given a similar relief by the Supreme Court.

"Had he (Balyan) been contesting, it would've been different. Tahir Hussain is on a different footing. He is not contesting, Supreme Court also said Tahir Hussain is not a precedent," the judge held.

The court posted Balyan's bail plea for hearing on January 30 after his counsel said he would not press the relief of custody

parole at this stage.

Balyan's lawyer M S Khan said the police's apprehension that the probe would be hampered was without any basis.

"I will be in custody. How will I go to witness-ees? My wife is contesting the elections. No one is there to guide her. No one can substitute her husband. Phone is also not provided to me (in jail)," he argued.

The lawyer said the case had "protected" witnesses and therefore their identity was not known to him.

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The lawyer said the case had "protected" witnesses and therefore their identity was not known to him.

Mull guidelines to issue passports to medically incapacitated: Delhi HC

New Delhi
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to examine the possibility of processing passport requests of medically incapacitated persons without asking them to visit office.

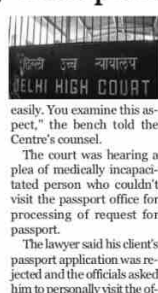
A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tuskar Rao Godea asked if a person, whose "will" could be registered at home as they were unable to visit the registrar's office, why couldn't passport applications be processed in a similar manner.

"This can be done very easily. You examine this aspect," the bench told the Centre's counsel.

The court was hearing a plea of medically incapacitated person who couldn't visit the passport office for processing of request for passport.

The lawyer said his client's passport application was rejected and the officials asked him to personally visit the office which was not possible.

The court issued notice to the home and external affairs ministries and sought their responses to the petition within three weeks.



NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DDM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender for the under noted works:

- 1) Name of Work with its location: Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 25 KV AC, OHE modification work at Mauz station on ROR-BT1 section in connection with provision of direct reception/inspect facility at reed siding (goods handling line) by converting it to running line at Mauz Station on ROR-BT1 section.
- 2) Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 41.75,129.86/-
- 3) Earnest Money Deposit: Rs. 83,500/-
- 4) E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period: 10.02.2025 (00.00 Hrs.) to 24.02.2025 (15.00 Hrs.)
- 5) E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time: 24.02.2025 (15.00 Hrs.)
- 6) Fund Allocation: Capital (P&I-10)
- 7) Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.irps.gov.in

No. 48-TRD-NLS-2024-28 Dated: 27.01.2025 311/2025

LET'S GET TOGETHER WITH A SMILE

Aakash institute launches 'Invictus Program' for JEE preparation

New Delhi
Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, proudly announces the launch of Aakash Invictus, a groundbreaking and first-of-its-kind Advanced program for JEE preparation designed for the best and brightest engineering aspirants.

Mr. Deepak Mehrotra, MD & CEO of Aakash Educational Services Limited, emphasized the program's significance, stating, "Aakash Invictus is not just a coaching program; it is a transformational journey for students aiming to secure top IIT ranks.

This elite, high-intensity, personalized, AI-driven and result-oriented initiative is engineered to enable students preparing specifically for IITs or reputed Universities abroad.

Aakash Invictus brings together around 500 best JEE Faculty, offering unparalleled mentorship backed by a track record of success in guiding over one lakh students to IITs.

The curriculum is cutting-edge and meticulously designed for ambitious students aiming for top IIT ranks. The program features integrated physical learning and exclusive study resources, ensuring precision-focused, AI-enabled, and adaptive preparation for JEE Advanced.

J&K DGP directs forces to neutralise terrorists sighted in Kathua areas

Jammu

J&K DGP Nalin Parhat on Wednesday directed forces to work in coordination and make all efforts to neutralise terrorists whose presence has been sighted.

The DGP visited various locations in the Kathua district along with top police, Army, and CRPF officers. He visited Machodi, Baddnota, Sadrota, and Dugaini Police Posts and interacted with jawans and officers of the Special Operations Group (SOG) Kathua and Billawar.

ADGP (Jammu zone) Anand Jain briefed the DGP on the ongoing anti-terrorist operations in these areas. DIG (JKS Range) Shiv Kumar, DDB (Jammu), Kathua SSP Shobit Saxena, SP (Operations) Amir, Dy SP (Operations) Malhar Sukhvir Singh, and the Billawar SHO accompanied the DGP during his visit to these far-flung areas in Kathua district.

Brigadier TS Sekhon, CO Sikh Unit, and Commandant CRPF gave a detailed presentation about the operational preparedness in these areas. Agency

Haryana court summons Kejriwal over 'poison in Yamuna' claim

Chandigarh

A court in Haryana's Sonapat on Wednesday issued a notice to AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal over his claim that the BJP-ruled state was mixing "poison in the Yamuna" river, and asked him to appear on February 17.

The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Neha Goyal issued the notice to the former Delhi chief minister on a complaint filed by an executive engineer of the Rai Water Services Division, Sonapat.

"He is directed to appear in-person before this court on the next date of hearing, if he has to say anything in the matter. If he does not appear before this court on next date of hearing, it is deemed that he has nothing to say in the matter and further proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with law," said the court, asking Kejriwal to appear on February 17.

Earlier in the day, Haryana's Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Vipul Goel said the state government will file a case against Kejriwal over his remark.

Kejriwal has made an irresponsible statement spreading panic among the people of Delhi and Haryana. The Haryana



na government is going to get a case registered against him before CJM Court in Sonapat under the Disaster Management Act," he told reporters. "Can anything be more disgusting than this?" "The poison that is being mixed in the water cannot even be cleaned in water treatment plants. For the safety of the people of Delhi, the water supply has to be stopped in many areas," Kejriwal had said.

Top BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Haryana ministers criticised Kejriwal for his remarks, which came in the midst of the ongoing election season in Delhi. Haryana Revenue

Minister Goel accused Kejriwal of speaking "big lies".

"What kind of water we give them (to Delhi), all our officers have checked the water being supplied. Kejriwal has done cheap politics by making such allegations on Haryana, prompting the state government to take legal action," he said.

He accused Kejriwal of spreading fear not only among the people of Delhi but also the people of Haryana with his "false claims".

He also accused the AAP dispensation in Delhi of completely failing to clean the Yamuna river. Kejriwal is making

Chandigarh

The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Neha Goyal issued the notice to the former Delhi chief minister on a complaint filed by an executive engineer of the Rai Water Services Division, Sonapat.

baseless allegations against Haryana "just to save his political image before the (Delhi) elections", Goel said.

He said the people of Haryana consider the Yamuna sacred, and spreading false propaganda is both an insult to Haryana and an attempt to mislead the people of Delhi.

He claimed that Kejriwal has an old habit of covering up his failures by making false statements.

After Kejriwal made the allegations, the Aam Aadmi Party doubled down on it.

On Monday, it accused the BJP government in Haryana of intentionally draining industrial waste into the Yamuna.

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi had also alleged that the BJP is "deliberately disrupting" Delhi's water supply as a "historic loss" awaits the saffron party in the February 5 assembly polls in the national capital.

Punjab BJP meets Guv seeks independent probe into Ambedkar statue vandalism bid

Chandigarh

A delegation from the state BJP unit met Punjab Governor Gurbaj Singh on Wednesday, demanding an independent probe into the incident involving an attempt to vandalise a life-size statue of B R Ambedkar by a man in Amritsar.

While strongly condemning the incident, the delegation sought that the conspiracy and masterminds behind this incident should be exposed.

On January 26, police arrested Akash Singh, a resident of Dharamkot in Punjab's Moga district, for allegedly attempting to damage the Ambedkar statue at the Town Hall on Heritage Street, which leads to the Golden Temple.

A video clip purportedly showing the incident went viral on social media, in which the man is seen climbing atop the statue using a steel ladder and carrying a hammer. He is seen hitting the statue multiple times with the hammer.

The man also caused damage to the Constitution book, which is part of the statue. He was later apprehended and handed over to the police.

The delegation included former union minis-



ter Som Parkash, former MLA Manoranjan Kalia, senior vice president Fateh Jang Singh Bajwa, general secretary Anil Sarin and former MP Sushil Rinku.

Speaking to the media after meeting the governor on Wednesday, Kalia said the delegation sought a high-level inquiry into the incident.

Stating that the accused had previously been clean-shaven and later began wearing a turban, Kalia said this incident reflects a conspiracy to disturb peace and mutual brotherhood in Punjab.

Lashing out at the Punjab Police, Kalia said the deterrent effect of the state police force against miscreants has vanished.

Former MP and party leader Sushil Rinku said the incident exposes the state government's "failure" in preventing such acts.

Chandigarh mayoral polls: High-stakes contest between BJP and AAP-Cong alliance

Chandigarh

The Chandigarh mayoral poll is set to witness a keen contest between the BJP and the AAP-Congress alliance with officials stating that all necessary arrangements have been made for the elections, set to take place on Thursday.

The elections for the posts of mayor, senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor will be held in the assembly hall of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, officials said.

Meanwhile, the Chandigarh administration on Wednesday imposed Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, banning the gathering of five or more persons within 100 meters of the Chandigarh MC building's perimeter.

AAP's Kuldeep Kumar Dhalor is the incumbent mayor of Chandigarh. The AAP and Congress are contesting the mayoral elections as an alliance. While AAP is contesting the mayor's post, Congress has put up its candidates -- Jasbir Singh Bunty and Taruna Mehta -- for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, respectively.

The AAP has fielded its councillor Prem Lata for the mayor's post, while the BJP has nominated Harpreet Kaur Babla.



For the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, the BJP has nominated Binla Dubey and Lakshvir Singh Billu, respectively.

In the 35-member house of the Chandigarh MC, the AAP has 13 councillors and its ally Congress has six, meanwhile the BJP has 16 councillors.

A few days ago, Congress councillor Gurbax Rawat joined the BJP, increasing the BJP's strength to 16.

Additionally, the Chandigarh MP also has a voting right as an ex-officio member of the 35-member municipal corporation. The current MP is Manish Tewari of Congress.

Meanwhile, officials on Wednesday confirmed that necessary arrangements are in place for the mayoral polls on Thursday.

Nominated councillor Ranmeet Singh Bedi has been appointed as the presiding officer for the election while former Punjab and Hary-

ana High Court Justice (ret'd) Jaishree Thakur has been appointed as an independent observer for the mayoral poll by the Supreme Court.

The January 27 order came in response to a plea by AAP councillor and mayor Kuldeep Kumar, seeking a "show of hands" instead of a "secret ballot" to ensure fairness in the polling process.

Officials on Wednesday confirmed that the polls will be conducted through a secret ballot.

The top court also directed that the election proceedings be conducted in the presence of the observer and should be duly videographed.

In the 2024 mayoral elections, AAP's Kuldeep Kumar was declared the mayor of the Chandigarh MC by the Supreme Court on February 20 last year, after overturning the result of the Chandigarh mayoral poll in which the BJP candidate had been declared the winner.

The then presiding

Haryana CM Saini takes sip of Yamuna water to counter Kejriwal's 'Poisonous' claims

Komal Ramola

Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini visited the banks of the Yamuna River in Delhi's Palla village on Wednesday, where he took a sip of water to counter accusations made by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Kejriwal had alleged that the Haryana government had "poisoned" the water supplied to Delhi, with the intention of causing harm to its residents. Saini termed Kejriwal's statement as "unfortunate" and accused him of making the remarks to "create fear in the minds of people" for political gain.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "An unfortunate statement by Arvind Kejriwal was given to create fear in the minds of people for his political benefits."

Saini further stressed, "Today, I have come here to the banks of River Yamuna and took a sip of water from Yamuna. He said that the BJP Government of Haryana has poisoned the Yamuna River. He spoke about mass genocide."

"The water resource authority took samples from here and no poison was found in the water," he added, alleging that Arvind Kejriwal has "tied



all his life."

The controversy originated from Kejriwal's remarks on Monday, where he accused the Haryana government of "poisoning" the Yamuna water supplied to Delhi, claiming it could have caused mass fatalities. Kejriwal said, "If this water would have entered Delhi only to be mixed with the drinking water, many people would have died in Delhi. It would have caused mass genocide."

Kejriwal's accusations have sparked a backlash from the BJP ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, scheduled for February 5, 2025.

Earlier, Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi also slammed Kejriwal's remarks, saying, "People of aapda say that people of Haryana mix poison in water sent to Delhi."

This is not just an insult to Haryana but to all Indians. Ours is a country where providing drinking water is considered a good deed... Such fear of losing that they are saying anything. I am sure Delhi will teach a lesson to people who say such things. In aapda walon ki lutiya Yamuna mein hi doobe gi..."

The Delhi Assembly elections will take place on February 5, with the counting of votes scheduled for February 8. A

total of 699 candidates are contesting for 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly. The Congress party, which held power in Delhi for 15 years, has faced major setbacks in the past two elections, while AAP has secured overwhelming victories in 2015 and 2020.

Arvind Kejriwal swiftly responded, alleging that Nayab Singh Saini had only pretended to drink the Yamuna water but actually spat it out. In a post on X, the AAP leader claimed that the Haryana government wanted Delhi residents to consume the same contaminated water that its own leaders avoided. He vowed not to let this happen.

Haryana embarks on ambitious affordable housing mission with PMAY-U 2.0

Chandigarh

The Haryana Government has taken a big step towards providing affordable housing to urban poor and middle-class families with the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0).

In order to realize the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide a roof to every urban poor and middle-class family, this ambitious scheme of the Central Government aims to provide financial assistance for affordable housing to urban poor and middle class fami-

lies across the country in the next five years.

In accordance with the vision of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana has taken decisive steps to ensure the smooth implementation of PMAY-U 2.0.

Haryana Chief Secretary Dr Vivek Joshi on Wednesday chaired the 17th meeting of the State Level Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (SLSMC) for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) and the first meeting of the SLSMC for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0).

Dr Joshi emphasized

the need to eliminate loopholes in fund distribution and directed officials to implement an OTP-based verification system to prevent financial mismanagement. He also called for a detailed sample survey to assess the genuineness of beneficiaries and ensure that banks should disburse loans in a hassle-free manner.

"The benefits of this scheme must reach the poor without leakage," the Chief Secretary asserted, underscoring the importance of strict monitoring and accountability in the implementation process.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need for a wide public awareness campaign through print and electronic media, display of flex banners/hoardings at prominent places, distribution of leaflets or handbills in major slums and colonies, and advertise-



ments on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, X, etc. The meeting was informed that 15,256 applicants have been allotted one marla plots for constructing pucca houses under the Mukhya Mantri Shehri Awas Yojana and financial assistance under

Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) vertical of PMAY-U 2.0 will be provided to these 15,256 beneficiaries.

PMAY-U 2.0 offers a multi-pronged approach to addressing the housing deficit, encompassing construction and purchase options. The scheme caters to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Lower Income Groups (LIG), and Middle Income Groups (MIG) residing in urban areas.

A beneficiary family, defined as husband, wife, unmarried sons, and/or unmarried daughters, must not own a pucca house (a perma-

nent dwelling unit) anywhere in India to be eligible under the scheme. PMAY-U 2.0 offers affordable housing opportunities to EWS families (annual income up to Rs 3 lakh), LIG families (Rs 3 lakh to Rs6 lakh) and MIG families (Rs6 lakh to Rs 12 lakh).

The scheme prioritizes vulnerable groups, including widows, single women, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, transgenders, individuals from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, and other vulnerable sections such as street vendors and construction workers.

Marriage between two Hindus sacrosanct can't be dissolved within a year Allahabad HC

Pravrajaj (UP)

The Allahabad High Court has observed that marriage between two Hindus is sacrosanct and it cannot be dissolved within one year of marriage unless there is exceptional hardship or exceptional depravity as provided under the Hindu Marriage Act.

A double-judge bench comprising Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Justice Donadi Ramesh noted that Section 14 provides for a one-year limitation from the date of marriage to file for divorce with the exception that such petition can be entertained if there is exceptional hardship or exception depravity.

The couple -- Nishant Bhardwaj and Rishika Gautam -- had filed for mutual dissolution of marriage under Section 13-B of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, it was rejected by the principal judge of the Family Court in Saharanpur on the ground that the minimum period for moving the application as provided under Section 14 of the Act had not elapsed.

In its judgment dated January 15, the division bench dismissed the first appeal filed by Bhardwaj challenging the order of the Family Court, leaving it open for the two parties to move a fresh application after the expiry of the one-year period.

It was observed that except for the routine ground for mutual incompatibility, no exceptional circumstance was shown to exist to allow the parties to file for divorce within one year of marriage.

It said that the application showed "no exceptional hardship or exceptional depravity" to invoke jurisdiction under the proviso to Section 14 of the Act.



By Priyanka Saurabh

The WHO is becoming sick due to the US funding being stopped

The U.S. withdrawal has strained the World Health Organization's finances. The U.S. was the largest donor to the World Health Organization's budget, accounting for 13% of voluntary contributions and 22.5% of assessed contributions in 2023. The sudden stop of funding created a huge resource gap, threatening critical health initiatives, especially in low- and middle-income countries (L&M). The U.S. played a key role in contributing scientific knowledge to World Health Organization committees through organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The withdrawal severed partnerships essential to global surveillance and pandemic preparedness. U.S. efforts to create a single worldwide framework for pandemic preparedness, fair vaccine distribution, and response coordination were hampered by its decision to exit the World Health Organization-led pandemic treaty negotiations. Because the withdrawal put national interests ahead of international solidarity, it undermined multilateralism. Other countries may do the same, undermining trust in global organizations such as the World Health Organization. The first impact on global health governance is a shift in the balance of power. The US exit gave China and the global South an opportunity to fill the gap. As China expanded its resources and influence, countries like India became



more vocal about low- and middle-income countries and promoted fair health policies. Vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income countries were disproportionately affected by the World Health Organization's reduced capacity to support vaccination programs and disease elimination initiatives. The end of the U.S.-World Health Organization partnership delayed the dissemination of critical research and innovations and interfered with international epidemic surveillance networks. There is an opportunity for India and other global South countries to have greater influence on the restructuring of global health governance. India is positioned as a key player due to its leadership in vaccine diplomacy and overall health initiatives. However, its ability to assume the leadership role left by the United States is hampered by a lack of resources and conflicting priorities, such

as regional conflicts. As long as the government allows, the World Health Organization participates in national health initiatives. Additionally, it collaborates with and supports many health initiatives run by the Indian government, including those on HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), antimicrobial resistance, and more. The World Health Organization is vital to India's vaccination program; WHO teams also monitor vaccine coverage. If US funding stops, the World Health Organization will be unable to carry out these initiatives, including in India. The US will no longer play a key role in influencing international health policy. Today, the United States uses public health diplomacy to influence how the rest of the world responds to and protects people's health. Many Eastern European countries, including

The United States is the largest financial supporter of the World Health Organization (WHO), providing about 18% of its total funding. Withdrawing these funds would have a significant impact on many global health initiatives, such as efforts to eradicate tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and certain infectious diseases. The WHO also works to prevent and detect disease outbreaks, build strong health systems, and guarantee that everyone in the world has fair access to life-saving medicines. Trump's annoyance makes it clear that strict postures and physical boundaries cannot keep germs out of one's territory and that global health efforts do not work in a vacuum. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that no one is safe until everyone is safe. The World Health Organization has approached the US in the hopes that he will change his mind and join them again. As amazing as this may sound, scientific miracles have also impacted the medical field, and the medical community is hopeful that another miracle will reconnect the United States with the World Health Organization.

Breaking Time Sudoku

What to do
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digit 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only correct solution.

	8	3			2		1	
	9				3	7		5
1					5		9	6
6		7						3
4			5	8			7	
	1	6					4	2

Solution, Sudoku

7	9	2	4	3	8	1	6	5
6	8	4	1	7	5	2	9	3
5	3	1	9	6	2	7	8	4
3	6	5	7	1	9	4	2	8
4	2	7	8	5	3	9	1	6
9	1	8	2	4	6	3	5	7
1	7	9	5	8	4	6	3	2
2	5	6	3	9	7	8	4	1
8	4	3	6	2	1	5	7	9

THE WISDOM TREE BY SUVEEN KUMAR

COMMITMENT

Commitment is a moral value that all of us want to see in all of us yet all of us fail to see in all of us. Ever wonder why commitment is not practiced as we all want it? Ever wonder why commitment is not committed by any of us? Ever wonder why commitment is kept as it is supposed to be? It happens because now the situation has become bigger us, our weakness has become stronger than us and our values have become cheaper than us. Now we promote our weaknesses not because our acceptance level has increased but because it is hard to change them into our strength, now we don't stand for our strengths not because we want to show our humility but because we are not even sure if that is our strength, now we don't like to verbalize our values not because we have stopped believing in show off but because we know that we don't honestly practice them.

Commitment is a good thing but it is not an easy thing. Commitment binds us and we like freedom, commitment compels us and we hate to be forced, commitment has some rules to follow and we always tend to lead. To be committed with commitment we will have to practice it every time possible, with everyone possible, start staying committed with little things that don't matter, then start staying committed with bigger things that somewhat matters and then if you feel that you are getting better then you should only commit for things that matter. One of the easiest ways of start practicing commitment is, not to say what you know you can't do. The constant failure in fulfilling the commitment makes your feel that commitment is just your cup of tea and this way you take yourself so for granted that it doesn't matter what you commit, you know that you are not going to fulfill it. A commitment has a lot of responsibility and even if you keep it there is a lot of uncertainty if your commitment will be rewarded.

Moral: A commitment is a promise that doesn't know no settlement.

Beijing scores Diplomatic Victory in Myanmar

China has scored a major diplomatic victory in Myanmar by helping the conclusion of a truce between the ruling military junta and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in the provinces bordering China. The MNDAA rebels took control of large areas around the border by driving out the junta troops last month. China was negotiating a deal as the mediator for the last two weeks and it was finally announced on Saturday.

The Myanmar war began from February 1, 2021 after the military took over power in the country overthrowing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. It is the second such pact in little over a year, a previous one in January 2024 not having been honoured by either side. The new ceasefire agreement brokered by China gives the Chinese government big advantage in reshaping the nature of the future government in this neighbouring country where China has big investments.

China, on the other hand, has not taken any action against the military regime but at the same time called upon them to have negotiations with the rebels and the Suu Kyi supporters of the Movement for Democracy. In the provinces bordering China, the rebels got assistance from the Beijing authorities also. In all, China is most advantageously placed in Myanmar now in respect of its relationship with all stakeholders.

Besides engaging this alliance, the ruling government of the State Administration Council (SAC), also contends with other anti-SAC forces in areas under its control. Defence experts observed the insurgents are apportioned into hundreds of armed groups scattered across the country.

As of March 2023, the United Nations estimated that since the coup in February 2021, 17.6 million people in Myanmar required humanitarian assistance, while 1.6 million were internally displaced, and over 55,000 civilian buildings had been destroyed. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said that over 40,000 people had fled into neighboring countries, such as Bangladesh, India and Thailand.

As of October 2023, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, controlled under 40% of the country, although they maintained that they controlled around two-thirds of the country's 330 townships. In the second half of 2023, Chinland Defense Forces in Chin State had captured a majority of the state, with a few holdouts in urban areas and along the India-Myanmar border remaining.

In October 2023, the Tatmadaw began facing manpower issues, with desertions and low morale being extremely common. This coincided with a major offensive by the People's Defense Force and Three Brotherhood Alliance in the west of the country, which was successful in taking 80 bases, 220

SAC positions and several towns by 28 November 2023. October and November 2023 saw a series of concurrent anti-SAC offensives, including Operation 1111 besieging the state capital of Loikaw and renewed conflict by anti-SAC forces in northern Rakhine and Chin states. In Operation 1027, anti-SAC forces seized Laukkai, the capital of Kokang Self-Administered Zone, in early January 2024. Northern Shan State fighting stopped with the Haigeng ceasefire after the fall of Laukkai. The Rakhine offensive, however, continued in northern Rakhine state with Mrauk U, among others, falling to the Arakan Army in February 2024.

As of February 2024, thousands of the SAC's soldiers surrendered without a fight, including six generals of the Tatmadaw. The SAC used terror tactics against the population, including burnings, beheadings, mutilations, war rape, torching villages, and a massive aerial bombing campaign that has displaced nearly 3 million people. The Myanmar Air Force has dropped more bombs per capita than have been dropped in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In late March 2024 anti-SAC forces in southeastern Myanmar captured Demoso and Papun, bringing the number of district-level towns captured by anti-SAC forces up to eight. The ninth district-level town, Matupi, was captured by Chin resistance in mid June 2024. In late June 2024

the Three Brotherhood Alliance restarted Operation 1027 after claiming that Tatmadaw forces had broken the ceasefire, capturing the tenth district level town, Kyaukme, by the end of the month.

On 17 July, two more district level towns were captured by the Brotherhood Alliance, Thandwe and Mongmit, bringing the number up to twelve. On 3 August, the MNDAA as part of a wider effort from the Three Brotherhood Alliance and other resistance groups captured Lashio, the largest town in northern Shan State, as well as the headquarters of the SAC's Northeastern Command. On 20 December 2024, the Arakan Army (AA) claimed to have captured a large tracts of areas near the Chinese border belonging to Rakhine province.

China took maximum interest in this and organized mediation resulting in the latest truce.

India, despite its large investments in Myanmar had no active contacts with the rebels. Only late last year, a move was initiated to organize a meeting with the representatives of the rebels. The follow up meetings were not held. For India, China is a big power rival in Myanmar and its increasing presence and influence can hurt the interests of India as China has its own geopolitical goals.

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TOP STORY

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Appoint prosecutors on merit not political factors, says SC

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday chided the practice of state governments appointing public prosecutors in high courts on "political considerations" and said favouritism and nepotism compromised merit.

Observing judges were humans and at times they made mistakes, a bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said the defence counsel and the public prosecutor owed a duty to correct the court if it was falling in some error.

The bench said law officers were one of the "important wheels of the chariot", driven by judges to attain the cherished goal of human beings to secure justice against the wrong doers.

"Judges are human beings and at times they do commit mistakes. The sheer pressure of work at times may lead to such errors. At the same time, the defence counsel as well as the public prosecutor owes a duty to



The Supreme Court on Wednesday chided the practice of state governments appointing public prosecutors in high courts on "political considerations" and said favouritism and nepotism compromised merit.

correct the court if the court is falling in some error and for all this, we hold the state government responsible," it said.

"This judgment is a message to all the state governments that the AGPs and APPs in respective high courts should be appointed solely on the merit of the person," it said.

The bench's verdict came on appeals against an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a criminal case lodged in Haryana.

For the bench, the "most disturbing feature" of the litigation was the high court

compromising merit," said the top court.

The bench said the state government owed a duty to ascertain the ability of the person — proficiency in law, overall background, integrity, etc.

Time and again, said the apex court, it was observed that such appointments — be it high court or district judiciary — should only consider a candidate's merit.

Observing public prosecutors held a "public office", the bench said they were not a part of the investigating agency but an "independent statutory authority".

"The criminal law enforcement system investigates crimes and prosecutes offenders. It must also protect valued rights and freedoms, and convict only the guilty. The prosecutor must recognise these different and competing interests," it said. Outlining a prosecutor's duty, the court said they should assist the court in reaching a proper conclusion in regard to the case

which was brought before it.

"A public prosecutor is not expected to show a thirst to reach the case in the conviction of the accused somehow or the other irrespective of the true facts of the case," it added.

In the case at hand, the bench allowed the appeals and set aside the high court's verdict which held the appellants guilty of murder and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

The bench directed Haryana to compensate the appellants with Rs 5 lakh each within four weeks.

The case related to an incident which took place on March 13, 1998.

The top court said the high court committed an "egregious error" in reversing the acquittal and passing an order of conviction in exercise of its revisional jurisdiction and that too without any opportunity of hearing to the appellants.

"Reputation of an individual is an inalienable right of his right to life with dignity," it added.

SC seeks details of FIRs chargesheets against men who invoked triple talaq for divorce

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to furnish data on FIRs and chargesheets against men who invoked instant triple talaq to divorce their wives in violation of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act, 2019.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was hearing about 12 petitions filed by various Muslim individuals and organisations challenging the constitutional validity of the 2019 Act that criminalises the practice of instant triple talaq.

"The respondent (Centre) shall file the total number of FIRs and chargesheets pending under Section 3 and 4 of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act 2019. The parties to also file written submissions not exceeding three pages in support of their contention," the bench said.

It asked the Centre and other parties to file written submissions to the plea while the posting of the matter for final hearing in the week commencing March 17.

Referring to the legal position, the bench said as triple talaq was held invalid, there was no dissolution of marriage and the point now was the criminalisation of the pronouncement.

"If the divorce itself is not recognised, the relationship then continues and no separation. But now you have penalised the very act of pronouncing it...we want the list of cases all over India where FIRs are led, now in all states FIRs are centralised, just give us a list of that," the CJ said.

The list was directed to include data from rural areas.

"In no civilised section, such a practice is there," said solicitor general Tushar Mehta.

The bench said the petitioners were not arguing for making triple talaq valid but opposed its criminalisation.

"I am sure none of the lawyers here are saying that the practice is correct, but what they are saying is whether it can be criminalised."



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Industry lauds ISRO for 100th mission from Sriharikota

New Delhi

India's space industry on Wednesday lauded the ISRO for the launch of its 100th mission from the spaceport at Sriharikota, terming it as a defining moment and expressed resolve to clock the next 100 launches in five years.

ISRO's GSLV-Mk2 rocket placed in orbit NVS-02 satellite for India's home-built global positioning system — Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) — early Wednesday, making it the 100th mission to be launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota.

"This carries the decades-long legacy of India's space exploration and also signifies our resolve ahead. Along with private launches, I look forward to witnessing the next 100 in five years," said Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) Chairman Pawan Kumar Goenka.

Hyderabad-based Ananth Technologies Limited CMD Subha Rao Perumuri said the 100th launch was not just a celebration of the ISRO's technological prowess but also a reflection of India's growing capabilities in the global space arena. "Over the years, we have had the privilege of contributing to several of ISRO's missions, providing cutting-edge avionics, systems and solutions that have played a pivotal role in the success of these endeavours," he said.

Aerospace, a part of the Godrej Enterprises Group, said the ISRO's 100th mission launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre marked a defining moment in India's space journey.

"For over four decades, Aerospace has been a committed partner in India's ascent as a global space power, contributing precision-engineered components, including liquid engines, Vikas engine, and high-performance thrust chambers," a statement from Godrej said.

"The capabilities and infrastructure that ISRO has built over decades are the reason Skyroot Aerospace is able to do what we do," said Pawan Chandana, co-founder and CEO of space sector start-up Skyroot Aerospace.

Due legal process followed in RJD MLC expulsion Bihar legislative council to SC

New Delhi

The Bihar Legislative Council on Wednesday informed the Supreme Court that due legal procedure was followed in expelling RJD MLC Sunil Kumar Singh from the House and he was actually challenging the will of the council.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh, which reserved its verdict on the plea of the former legislator, was informed by senior advocate Ranjit Kumar that he was involved in misconduct previously too and the decision of the ethics committee recommending his expulsion was properly debated in the House.

Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for

Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the RJD leader, argued the doctrine of proportionality was not followed and Singh had only said that people say Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar was "palturam".

The RJD leader, argued the doctrine of proportionality was not followed and Singh had only said that people say Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar was "palturam".

"I never said that it is my word but people say that Bi-

har chief minister is Palturam. Rules provide for graded punishment. I have questioned the report on the ground of doctrine of proportionality," submitted Sankaranarayanan.

The bench said, "You were a respected member of the House. You have to express some maturity in your statements. You should lead by example and not indulge in these kinds of statements."

The top court asked the parties to submit their written submissions in next three days and reserved its verdict.

On January 16, the council justified its decision saying neither did the MLC attend the ethics committee meetings nor did he express any regret over the remark against the chief minister.

SC acquits man jailed for over 12 years in murder case

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday acquitted a man jailed for over 12 years in a murder case in Kerala.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan found it "very difficult" to believe the testimonies of two eyewitnesses and held the man's guilt was not proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

The top court's verdict came on an appeal filed by one Vinobhai who challenged a September 2016 judgement of the Kerala High Court upholding his conviction and life sentence in the case.

"The appellant has undergone incarceration for more than twelve years. Hence, he shall be forthwith set at liberty unless required in connection with any other case," said the bench.

Vinobhai was convicted by a trial court on murder charges and sentenced to life imprisonment.

He was accused of fatally stabbing one Ramakrishnan on December 31, 2010.

The prosecution alleged a previous enmity between Vinobhai and Ramakrishnan who was allegedly involved in the murder of the former's elder brother.

In its verdict, the bench dealt with the evidence given



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by two eyewitnesses and said, "The statement made by both the eyewitnesses that the appellant inflicted two to three stab wounds on the back of the deceased with a knife are omissions."

Both did not report the incident to the police, it added.

The court underlined the existence of material omissions amounting to a contradiction.

"Coupled with the material omissions, if we consider the conduct of both the witnesses, their version does not inspire confidence," it said.

One of the witnesses, said the court, said Ramakrishnan was a supporter of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) whereas Vinobhai was a BJP worker.

RG Kar case: Supreme Court asks hospitals to regularise doctors' absence during protests

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed hospitals, including AIIMS New Delhi, to regularise the unauthorised absence of doctors who were part of protests against the rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Hospital, Kolkata.

The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal. The hospital staff and doctors took part in nationwide protests after the body of the post-graduate trainee doctor was found in the RG Kar hospital's senior room on August 9, last year.

During its probe, Kolkata police arrested civic volunteer Sanjay Roy the next day in the case.

On Wednesday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of a doctors' body that some hospitals had regularised the absence of the doctors following its August 22, 2024 order whereas a few others, including AIIMS Delhi, decided to treat the period as leave of absence.

"We deem it appropriate to clarify that if protesting workers had joined work post the Supreme Court order then their absence shall be regularised and not be treated as absence from duty. This is issued in peculiar



facts and circumstances of the cases and is not laying down any precedent," the CJ said.

The lawyer appearing for the body said the decision to treat the protest period as leave could create trouble for some of the medical PG students.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, said as the case was non-adversarial, the hospitals would abide by the top court's directions.

Mehta said AIIMS Delhi, decided to treat the period as leave of absence availed by the doctors.

"By an earlier order, it was stated that no coercive step would be taken against the protesting doctors for protests till the date of the order. Pursuant to this, the AIIMS such as Kalyani and Gorakhpur and the PGI Chandigarh have regularised the absence. However some other institutes have treated

the said period as if doctors were on leave," the bench said.

On August 22, last year, the bench made an imprisoned appeal to the protesting doctors across the country, asking them to resume work.

"The counsel said the application was filed before the (trial court) judgment was pronounced. The application is dismissed as withdrawn with the liberty as prayed for," the CJ said.

On January 20, Roy was sentenced to "life term imprisonment till death" in the case. On December 10 last year, the top court took note of the CBI's latest status report and expressed confidence that the trial would conclude within a month.

The bench had directed the parties to share their recommendations and suggestions on preventing gender-based violence and developing safety protocols for doctors and medical staff at hospitals across the nation with the court-appointed national task force (NTF).

The bench directed the NTF to file a report and said, "All recommendations and suggestions be sent to the National Task force and a reply be filed by the states and

in the case... What is there in your application has a lot of things which are debatable. Everything you say in the court through an affidavit will have consequences," the CJ said.

Mehta, representing the CBI, said unintentionally, the plea could help the convict.

"The details of the application, relating to the case, were not known."

"The counsel said the application was filed before the (trial court) judgment was pronounced. The application is dismissed as withdrawn with the liberty as prayed for," the CJ said.

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The bench directed the NTF to file a report and said, "All recommendations and suggestions be sent to the National Task force and a reply be filed by the states and

UTs (union territories) to the last report of the NTF."

While taking a suo motu notice of the case, the bench considered the NTF on August 20 to formulate a protocol to ensure safety and security of medical professionals in the wake of the crime.

In November last year, the NTF in its report — part of the Central government's affidavit — said a separate central law to deal with offences against health care professionals was not required.

The panel said the state laws had adequate provisions to address minor offences besides serious ones under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

In a slew of recommendations, the NTF said 24 states had enacted laws to address violence against health care professionals while defining the terms "health care institutions" and "medical professionals".

The bench then said the case would be next heard in the week commencing March 17, 2025, but said the parties could seek an early hearing if the rape and murder case trial was delayed or an urgency.

Initially investigated by the Kolkata police, the case was transferred to the CBI on August 13 after the Calcutta High Court expressed dissatisfaction over the former's investigation.

'Minor incidents' do happen in such a big event: UP minister

Ayodhya witnesses unprecedented influx of devotees on Mauni Amavasya

Hardoi (UP): Uttar Pradesh minister Sanjay Nishad on Wednesday expressed grief over the stampede in Mahakumbh Nagar and said "minor incidents" do happen in such a big event.

Nishad is the chief of the Nishad party and fisheries minister in the Yogi Adityanath government. "In such a big event and when there is such a huge crowd, minor incidents do happen," he said while calling it sad.

He said Chief Minister Adityanath is looking into this matter. One should take a bath wherever one finds space and one should not believe in rumours, he added.

Asked about Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's allegation of mismanagement in Maha Kumbh, he said, he would not want to comment on it.

"The arrangements that have been made and the crowd that is there will not be anywhere else in the world. Where such big arrangements are made and such a huge crowd gathers, some small incidents take place somewhere or the other," he said.

"This incident is sad for us and I was not this not to happen in the future. We people and the entire government are alert," he said.

The stampede took place in Mahakumbh Nagar in which 30 people died and 60 suffered injuries.

HP govt nod for Sadhbhawana Legacy Cases Resolution Scheme

Shimla: Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led government has approved the rollout of the Himachal Pradesh Sadhbhawana Legacy Cases Resolution Scheme, 2025, extending its scope to include cases under non-subsumed enactments.

Sukhu said the new scheme is expected to resolve approximately 3,500 cases with an anticipated revenue realization of Rs 10 crore.

The State Value Added Tax Act, which governs petroleum products like diesel and petrol, remains outside the purview of the Goods and Service Tax (GST), a statement issued here on Wednesday said.

Under this new scheme, the cases related to petroleum products up to the financial year 2017-18 will be addressed, aiming to further reduce the backlog of cases under non-subsumed enactments.

The government, which is committed to reducing litigation and enhancing revenue realization, has periodically launched Legacy Cases Resolution Schemes, the statement added.

Following the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act on July 1, 2017, state taxes such as Entry Tax, Entertainment Tax and Luxury Tax were subsumed under the GST.

To address the pending cases and disputes under these taxes, the state has introduced three Legacy Cases Resolution Schemes to date.

The chief minister said that these schemes have successfully resolved 48,269 pending cases, generating a revenue of Rs 452.68 crore and providing significant relief to the litigants.

Ayodhya (UP): On the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, Ayodhya witnessed an overwhelming surge of devotees who took a holy dip in the Sarayu River.

Experts estimate that over 50 lakh devotees have arrived in Ayodhya in the past 72 hours and the influx is expected to continue until Vasant Panchami, an official statement issued here said.

The temple town remained packed with worshippers throughout the day, with long queues outside Ram Mandir and Hanuman-garhi temple extending late into the night.

Anticipating a surge as pilgrims are now travelling from the Maha Kumbh to Ayodhya, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to ensure seamless crowd management, it said.

Adityanath is personally monitoring the situation to ensure efficient management of the influx, the statement said.

On Mauni Amavasya, thousands of devotees thronged the Sarayu ghats for a holy dip, with Chaudhary Charan Singh



ghat seeing the largest influx, it said. After their ritual bath, many proceeded to Hanuman-garhi and then the Ram mandir.

A massive crowd stretched from Shringar Haat to the temple premises. Similar scenes were observed at the Ram Temple, where devotees queued up in large numbers for darshan.

The statement said the influx of pilgrims has boosted local businesses like 'prasad' sellers, ho-

tels and homestays.

Entry of all types of vehicles into the fair area has been completely restricted, with heavy police deployment at key locations to maintain order. The health department is also on high alert, with all doctors' leaves cancelled until Vasant Panchami.

Emergency services will remain operational 24x7 to handle any medical needs, the statement said.

Chief Medical Officer

In the early morning, worshippers observed silence as they took a holy dip in the Sarayu River, later breaking into chants of 'Shri Ram' that echoed throughout Ayodhya Dham.

Authorities have also increased accommodation capacity in Ayodhya. Municipal Commissioner Santosh Sharma said that arrangements have been made to house around 30,000 devotees in shelter areas to ensure their comfort, according to the statement.

In light of the ongoing preparations, ADG Zone Lucknow, SB Shirodkar, visited Ayodhya on Wednesday to assess security and management efforts, including arrangements at Ayodhya Dham Railway Station. Divisional Commissioner Gaurav Dayal and IG Praveen Kumar confirmed that 13 temporary health camps will continue to function until February 26 to provide immediate medical assistance to pilgrims. Large vehicles have been stopped on the highways, and alternative routes have been designated to prevent congestion in and around Ayodhya.

Yogi govt's ambulance service proves lifeline of devotees at Mahakumbh

Mahakumbh Nagar: A major accident was quickly contained thanks to the Yogi government's swift response. Over 50 ambulances, using a Green Corridor, reached Sangam Nose within minutes, making over 100 trips to transport the injured. Expert doctors arrived within 2-3 minutes, providing immediate medical aid.

Central Hospital doctors confirmed that specialist doctors in Mahakumbh Nagar treated the injured promptly, with the Yogi government's emergency ambulance service playing a key role. Following the accident, ambulances were swiftly dispatched via a Green Corridor. Within just 2-3 minutes, expert doctors and a medical team arrived and began administering first aid.

Over 50 ambulances rushed nonstop to transport the injured to the central hospital. After providing immediate first aid at the site, critically injured patients were swiftly

taken for advanced treatment. Those needing specialized care were later shifted to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital or Tej Bahadur Sapru Chikitsalaya (Behl Hospital). The Police, SDRF, and NDRF teams played a vital role in facilitating ambulance movement and ensuring continuous medical assistance. A Green Corridor was quickly established, enabling ambulances to navigate the crowded area with full speed and reach locations within minutes. This rapid response was crucial in saving lives.

All medical shifts were merged, ensuring the presence of over 1,000 healthcare professionals at the hospital to treat the injured. Doctors from both morning and evening shifts remained on duty, supported by a large team of ward boys and nurses working tirelessly to save lives.

Additionally, doctors from various locations across the fairgrounds reached the hospital within three minutes, ensuring swift medical attention.

People of Himachal Pradesh burdened by hefty water bills: JR Thakur

Rajan Panchhi

MANDI: Former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday said that the people of the state are suffering due to hefty water bills.

In a statement, Thakur criticised Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's government for its 'yavastha parivartan' stating that the people are constantly troubled by arbitrary orders.

The Jal Shakti Department is also contributing to this distress, with reports of poor water quality leading to the spread of diseases like jaundice.

He mentioned that people in Jogindernagar had seen an increase of Rs 1,000 in their water bills, which led to protests and a warning of a larger movement if the increased bills were not withdrawn.

Similarly, in Theog, the department issued a bill of Rs 45,000 to a consumer despite no water connection or pipeline being installed.

Thakur accused the government of troubling the people and making



them pay for its failures.

He called the sudden increase in water bills unjust and stated that the government was using the people as a means to increase its revenue. He claimed that the government was exploiting the situation to fill its coffers by manipulating the billing system.

Thakur sought intervention at the administrative level to resolve these issues, warning that if the problems were not addressed, the BJP would be forced to protest on the streets.

Thakur also pointed out that under the central government's 'Har Ghar Nal Jal' initiative, over 12 lakh wa-

ter connections were provided in Himachal Pradesh, but the current state government had imposed a Rs 100 per month charge on each connection.

He further noted that the previous government had waived water bills in rural areas, benefiting millions of people, but now the state government was looking to charge for every connection.

Thakur expressed surprise at the Chief Minister's decision to raise funds through these charges and warned that the involved ministers would soon face consequences when the public votes them out.

Maha Kumbh management should be handed over to army: Akhilesh

Lucknow:

Opposition leaders in Uttar Pradesh targeted the Adityanath government over the stampede at the Maha Kumbh on Wednesday, with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav demanding that the management of the world's largest religious event should be immediately handed over to the army.

UP Congress president Ajay Rai said the tragic incident highlighted the failure of the state government.

Yadav said that crores of devotees are stuck on the roads leading to Prayagraj in various cities and request people of UP and NGOs to arrange food and water for them.

He demanded that those who claimed "world-class arrangements" in the Maha Kumbh should resign from their posts taking moral responsibility for the stampede.

"In order to re-establish faith in the system among the saint community and devotees who have come to the Maha Kumbh, it is necessary that the administration



and management of the Maha Kumbh should be immediately handed over to the army instead of the UP government," the SP chief said on X.

"Now that the truth of the claims of making world class arrangements has come out in front of everyone, those who were claiming and spreading false propaganda about it should resign from their posts taking moral responsibility for the people killed in this accident," he said.

At least 30 people were killed and 60 others injured in the stampede that broke out at

the Maha Kumbh Mela in the early hours of Wednesday.

"The news of casualties of devotees in the mismanagement accident in Maha Kumbh is very sad," Yadav said in another post on X.

He said air ambulances should be deployed to transport those seriously injured and called for "swift arrangements to identify the deceased and return their bodies to their families".

Yadav emphasised the need for enhanced surveillance at the event, particularly through helicopters, to maintain order and security.

'Sudden surge of devotees led to stampede'

Mahakumbh Nagar: Shoes, slippers and clothes scattered at the site speak about the chaos that unfolded at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday. Devotees recounted the horrific incident saying people were pushing each other to take a dip at the auspicious time on Mauni Amavasya.

Several people were killed and many injured in the stampede which took place at around 2 am as crores of pilgrims jostled for space to take the holy dip.

Going by eyewitness accounts, one of the reasons for the tragedy was the sudden surge of pilgrims at the Sangam who had gathered at the Maha Kumbh from across the country to all drive by a bus to the site to take the holy dip at 3 am, the start of the auspicious hour.

"Many devotees had patiently waited for the auspicious hour. Several of them were sitting on the ground, and some were even lying down near the ghats. The bathing site was barricaded.

"Past midnight a sudden surge of devotees led to barricades coming apart, and in the



melee many people who were sleeping or sitting on the ground were run over," said Madhumita, a devotee from Assam who claimed to have witnessed the tragedy.

Badama Devi, an elderly woman from Bihar's Begusarai, broke down while recounting the tragedy, saying she had come to the Maha

Kumbh to take the dip at the propitious moment.

"We knew that this moment would not come again in our lifetime, and that is why we had travelled from so far and waited all this while to be able to take the bath in the Ganga at the auspicious moment," Devi said.

"Lagta hai Ganga Mai

ka ihai manzoor rahan (it seems that mother Ganga will let it so)."

Ram Sumiran from Palamu, Jharkhand, reflected on the stampede. "We were aware that this sacred moment was coming after 144 years. None of us wanted to miss it. Scores of devotees were lying on the ground waiting for the auspicious hour to begin to take the dip. A sudden surge out of nowhere led to a stampede. Many were got trampled as crowd pressure escalated after barricades collapsed," he said.

"Scattered shoes, slippers, and clothes at the site speak about the chaos that unfolded," said Sumiran, who was still in a state of shock.

He said that many people waited for long not just for the auspicious hour to take the dip but also to catch a glimpse of Naga sadhus.

Before the tragedy, a video of the Prayagraj Divisional Commissioner, Vijay Vishwas Pant urging devotees to take precautions has gone viral.

In the video, Pant is seen advising the devotees against overcrowding the Maha Kumbh bathing area and avoiding lying down in the passage leading to the ghats.

In the video, Pant could be heard saying, "Get up, get up...take a bath. Many people are expected, and there's a possibility of a stampede."

He was seen requesting devotees to prioritize their safety, especially those who had arrived early, suggesting they should quickly vacate the area after the dip.

The Triveni Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and

Saraswati -- is considered the holiest of Himachal, with a belief that taking a dip in it during the Maha Kumbh and particularly on special bathing dates like Mauni Amavasya washes away people's sins and provides them 'moksha' or salvation.

According to data released by the Mela administration, till 2 pm on Wednesday, more than five crore people, including 10 lakh 'Kalpavasis', took the holy dip in the Ganga and the Sangam. Since the start of the Mela, 19.94 crore devotees have taken a dip in the Ganga.

The Maha Kumbh-2025 kicked off on January 13 in Prayagraj and will continue till February 26. The UP government expects a total footfall of around 40 crore pilgrims at the largest spiritual gathering of the world.

Plane crash in South Sudan kills 20

JUBA: A plane has crashed in the north of South Sudan killing at least 20 people, leaving only one confirmed survivor, United States' minister for information said Wednesday.

The aircraft came down near the oil fields in Unity State at around 10:30 am local time (08:30 GMT) shortly after taking off for the capital Juba.

"The plane crashed 500 metres away from the airport," Gatewatch Bipal Both told AFP by phone.

"21 people were on board. As for now, there's only one survivor."

The survivor, a South Sudanese engineer working at the oil field, has been rushed to Bentiu State hospital, the minister said.

He said the Ukrainian Passenger aircraft, chartered by the Greater Pioneer Operating Company (GPOC) and operated by Light Air Services Aviation Company, was on a routine mission to the area.

"The state government is in a deep sorrow by this accident", he added, saying there would be an investigation.

"Although most people predicted that this might be a mechanical collision," he added, without giving more details.

All of the passengers are employees of GPOC: 16 South Sudanese, two Chinese nationals and 1 Indian, according to the manifest seen by AFP, confirmed by local authorities.

Afghanistan relocates families of banned TTP from border regions

Islamabad: Afghanistan's interim Taliban government has relocated some family members of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from border regions to other parts of the country, in an effort to placate Pakistan's growing anger.

A senior Pakistani official confirmed the development on Tuesday but emphasised the move was too little to address the country's long-standing concerns, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

It is believed that the latest move by the Afghan Taliban came after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) judged the Kabul administration to address Pakistan's concerns over the terrorist hideouts, the paper said.

Taliban's acting interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, along with the Taliban intelligence chief recently travelled to the UAE and held talks with the Gulf country's leadership. Ahead of their visit, a Pakistani delegation also visited the Gulf country as part of efforts to address the issue of TTP, the paper said.

There was no official confirmation from either side about the development and potential



role being played by the UAE to ease tensions between the two countries. However, the Pakistani official acknowledged the role of UAE and Qatar to broker some kind of path forward on the issue of TTP, the paper said.

The official said certain family members of the TTP, mostly women and children, were relocated from border areas of Pakistan to other areas of Afghanistan.

However, the official made it clear that the Taliban government made similar arrangements in the past with

little impact. Given the fact that only members of the TTP were relocated and not the fighters, this would have little impact on the ground.

Moreover, the official said that the process of relocation of TTP from border areas was to be completed a long time ago, but it was painstakingly slow.

According to some estimates, there are between 6,000 to 8,000 terrorists of TTP operating from Afghanistan. Besides, another 20,000 family members have taken refuge across the border.

In view of this large number, the relocation of a few hundred family members of the TTP was not the answer to Pakistan's demand, according to another official.

The official said the idea of relocation of TTP from border areas came from the Taliban after they expressed their reluctance to use force against them.

UK report flags 'pro-Khalistan, Hindu nationalist extremism' as threats

London: Two types of extremism with their origins in the Indian subcontinent — pro-Khalistan extremism and Hindu nationalist extremism — have been flagged as threats to "understand" in a leaked report into the UK government's 'Extremism Review'.

'Extremely Confused: The government's new counter-extremism review revealed', authored by Andrew Gilligan and Dr Paul Scott for the Policy Exchange think tank released earlier this week, claims 'Hindu nationalist extremism' has found a mention in such a review for the first time.

UK Home Office Security Minister Dan Jarvis told the House of Commons on Tuesday that it was "not entirely clear which version of the report was leaked" and stressed that its claims did not represent government policy.

It follows Home Secretary Yvette Cooper ordering a 'Rapid Analytical Sprint' last August to determine the Labour government's policy on extremism.

As per the leaked report, the longest section is la-

belled "Understand" and lists nine types of extremism in the following order: "Islamist, extreme right-wing, extreme misogyny, pro-Khalistan extremism, Hindu nationalist extremism, environmental extremism, Left wing, anarchist and single-issue extremism (LASH), violence fascination and conspiracy theories".

"Pages 17-18 of 'Understand' are devoted to two types of extremism which have their origins in the Indian subcontinent — what is described as pro-Khalistan extremism and Hindu nationalist extremism. With regards to the former, the report offers a caveat that support for a Sikh state of Khalistan is not necessarily extremist; the problem is when this outlook leads to the advocacy of violence in support of that cause," reads the Policy Exchange report.

Saudi Minister Calls for Bold Steps to Prepare for Future Labour Market

Rivadh: The world has been witnessing rapid technological advancement, fundamental demographic changes and various emerging issues, and these developments require "pro-active and bold steps" to prepare humanity for the future, a Saudi minister said Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia is "proud to host this conference" as part of its continuous efforts to play an "active



role" in global change, sources and Social Development Eng. Ahmed

bin Sulaiman AlRajhi said in his address at the second edition of the Global Labour Market Conference (GLMC) here.

"We all united in our efforts to discuss current challenges, draw the future roadmap for the labour market," said AlRajhi, who delivered the opening remarks on behalf of the King of Saudi Arabia at the global conference being hosted at King Abdulaziz Interna-

tional Conference Centre (KAICC).

A group of participants from over 100 countries, including government leaders, experts, innovators, and policymakers are attending the conference.

"The world is witnessing rapid technological advancement, fundamental demographic changes and emerging issues such as climate adaptation. These developments require us to

take proactive and bold steps to prepare humanity for the future," the Saudi minister said.

The GLMC, he said, is a crucial hub for collaboration and a global think-tank supporting labour market research and studies.

He asserted that "together we will continue to work to provide positive transformation in the global market".

Recalling the first edition of the conference held in December 2023, AlRajhi said this year "we continue our journey and join efforts to deal with contemporary challenges facing labour markets and explore ways to address them".

"Our vision remains clear and our goals steadfast to work together to build a flexible and inclusive labour market that is resilient to future challenges and changes efficiently and effectively," he added.

BUSINESS

Symphony Launches Hair Fall Control Geysers for Healthier Hair & Skin



Ahmedabad: Symphony Ltd has forayed into the water heating solutions. The company has launched a range of water heaters with a 9-layer PuroPod Technology that converts hard water into soft water, filtering out harmful chemicals and sediments—one of the causes of hair fall.

The company has launched 3 models — 9 SKUs in the water heater segment — Symphony Spa, Symphony Sauna, and Symphony Soul in 10-litre, 15-litre, and 25-litre capacities. Aesthetically appealing, the five-star-rated water heater range comes with a heavy-duty heating element, Titanium Pro Coating for

enhanced durability, a Magnesium Rod for a longer lifespan, and comprehensive safety features.

Additionally, the company has introduced SmartBath technology in its Symphony Spa range — this makes it India's first water heater powered by Artificial Intelligence. The technology is built into a splash-proof Controller that allows consumers to operate their geysers effortlessly from within the shower area as well as from a distance, ensuring ease of use and enhanced safety. The Controller also has smart features including time and temperature control, gesture control, child safe mode, etc

India Targets 1,800 GW Renewable Energy by 2047, says Pralhad Joshi

New Delhi: India is eyeing a long-term target of 1,800 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2047 under 'Viksit Bharat@2047' vision when the nation will celebrate 100 years of independence, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

Addressing the India Energy Transit Summit here, Joshi, who has the portfolio of 'Ministry of New & Renewable Energy', said, "Overall, things are very fast. Now we are not thinking about 2030 (when 500 GW of renewable energy capacity will be achieved), we are thinking about 2047."

He said whatever is planned for 2030 will be done but we are also thinking about 2047 (target of 1,800 GW). "We have a long-term vision and roadmap under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for 2047... We will definitely achieve 500 GW capacity by 2030, that



is for sure. We are even working for 1,800 GW installed non-fossil capacity by 2047."

The minister said 500 GW by 2030 is a short-term plan and the government is focusing on a long-term goal for 2047.

He said, "We have reached almost 100 GW solar capacity in the country. In the coming years, we are hopeful to add approximately 50 GW of new capacity annually. This is the speed at which we are going forward."

He said the installed RE (renewable energy) capacity has surged almost 200 per cent, from 75.52 GW in March 2014 to 220 GW today.

"Our journey in the past decade has been

transformative," he noted.

About solar rooftop initiative, PM Surya Char Yojana aiming installation of one crore solar rooftops, he noted that India has already achieved 8.5 lakh installations so far.

He said initially the scheme was not picking up but now bankers are also financing.

Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said public sector banks can finance about Rs 10 lakh crore for RE target of 500 GW by 2030 while the remaining Rs 23 lakh crore will have to come from other institutions.

India requires Rs 33 lakh crore finance to achieve the 2030 RE target, he said.

India's Crypto Conundrum: Why Immediate Regulation is Crucial for Growth

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Commenting on the development, Mr. Achal Bakari, Chairman and Managing Director, Symphony Ltd, said, "At Symphony, we think about tomorrow, today. Guided by our 'Thinking of Tomorrow' philosophy, we developed this unique geyser after gathering consumer insights on the impact of hard water on hair and skin, as well as the inconvenience of operating geysers installed at a height. With advanced filtration to reduce water hardness

and an AI-enabled, splash-proof wireless controller, our geysers ensure effortless operation—even while showering—making every bath smarter, safer, more luxurious."

The company has launched its water heater range nationally via e-commerce and on D2C platforms. The product is also available in modern trade channels in select states, with plans for nationwide expansion shortly.

Marketing efforts, including Live in Cinema, social media campaigns, and outdoor

Digital Payments Rise 11.1% in India: RBI Data

Mumbai: Digital payments across the country registered an 11.1 per cent year-on-year rise as on September 2024, according to RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions.

RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) for September 2024 stands at 465.33 as against 445.5 for March 2024, the Reserve Bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The increase in RBI-DPI index was driven by growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance across the country over the period, it said.

The central bank had announced the construction of a composite RBI-DPI in March 2018 as a base to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

The index comprises five broad parameters that enable the measurement of the deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different periods.

These parameters are Payment Enablers (weightage 25 per cent); Payment Infrastructure — Demand-side factors (10 per cent); Payment Infrastructure — Supply-side factors (15 per cent); Payment Performance (45 per cent); and Consumer Centricity (5 per cent).

The index is published on a semi-annual basis from March 2021 onwards with a lag of four months.

Cricket

Gongadi Trisha follows Mithali's footsteps, paces innings like her 'idol'

Kuala Lumpur
Teen sensation Gongadi Trisha, who became the first player to score a hundred in the ongoing Women's T20 U19 World Cup, has credited her 'idol' and the legendary Mithali Raj for influencing her game, particularly in how she would pace her innings.
 On Tuesday, the Indian opener struck an unbeaten 110 from just 53 balls that powered India to a commanding 150-run victory over Scotland.
 India posted a huge 208/1 before bowling Scotland out for just 58 in their Super Six encounter.
 "I've grown up watching Mithali Di, and I really like how she paced her innings. I've always wanted to do the same. She's always been my idol," Trisha, who plays for Hyderabad, said in a video posted by BCCI.
 Trisha's dazzling century was part of her remarkable form in the tournament. Earlier, she had scored 49 against Sri Lanka and 40 against Bangladesh, proving to be one of standout players for



the defending champions.
 "Yes, it's really special for me. I wanted to do this in the first World Cup match, but I got another opportunity. Against Scotland, although we lost the toss, I always wanted to bat first so that we could play the full 20 overs and score big," she added.
 Trisha, who doesn't often glance at the scoreboard or keep track of her runs, realised she had scored a century only when her teammates erupted in celebration.

bration.
 "I only realised I scored a hundred when the entire team started cheering for me. I usually don't look at the scoreboard or count my runs. So, yeah, it was really special," she said.
 Trisha also played a key role in India's victory at the U-19 Asia Cup last year with a half-century, emerging as one of the rising stars. She also spoke about the importance of her family's unwavering support, particularly her father, who was in attendance to witness the historic moment.
 "My father is my biggest supporter, so scoring a hundred in a U-19 World Cup in front of him is truly special," she said.
 "He comes to see all my domestic matches, but for the first match here, he somehow missed it.
 "However, he made sure to be at the next match because he doesn't want to miss a single innings.
 "So, I want to dedicate this hundred to him as well as to my mother, as I don't think it would have been possible without her," added Trisha.

Tilak Varma rises to No. 2 in ICC T20I Rankings



Dubai
 Talented India batter Tilak Varma climbed one spot to second, while mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthi made a massive leap of 25 places to break into the top five in the latest ICC men's T20I rankings released on Wednesday.
 Varma now sits just behind Travis Head in the batters' list, with the Australian maintaining a 23-point lead at the top.
 The young Indian left-hander has been in sublime form, posting scores of 19 not out, 72 not out, and 18 in India's ongoing T20I series against England.
 With two matches remaining in the series, Varma has a chance to overtake Head and become the youngest-ever player to top the rankings – a record currently held by Babar Azam, who reached No. 1 at the age of 23 years and 105 days.
 Varma's current rating of 832 points is the fourth-highest ever achieved by an Indian batter in T20I history, behind only Suryakumar Yadav, Virat Kohli, and KL Rahul.
 India's Abhishek Sharma also made significant strides, jumping 55 places to 40th, while England's Liam Livingstone (up five spots to 32nd) and Ben Duck-

ett (up 28 places to 68th) were the biggest gainers from the visiting team.
 Chakravarthi's rise – Chakravarthi's magical 5/24 in India's 26-run loss in the third T20I propelled him to the top five in the T20I bowling rankings.
 Meanwhile, fellow spinner Axar Patel moved up five places to 11th, just outside the top 10.
 England's Adil Rashid has reclaimed the No. 1 spot among T20I bowlers.
 Rashid first claimed the top position at the end of 2023 and held it for much of last year until West Indies' Akeal Hosein briefly surpassed him before Christmas.
 Bumrah continues to dominate Test rankings – India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah remains the top-ranked Test bowler following his sensational performances in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia.
 His dominance across formats also earned him the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year 2024.
 Among Test all-rounders, West Indies' Jomel Warrican has climbed to 24th, while Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan moved up two places to 15th in the Test batters' rankings, which continue to be led by England's Joe Root.

Virat boost for Ranji Trophy as Delhi aim to end on high

New Delhi
 Virat Kohli's magnetic presence has not only lifted the profile of the Ranji Trophy, but also the Delhi team's sagging spirits as it eyes a winning end to an otherwise listless campaign in the final group D game against Railways starting here on Thursday.
 Interestingly, Railways (17 points from six games) have more than a fair shot at making the knock-out stages if they beat Delhi with bonus points and take their tally to 24.
 Delhi (14 from six games) only has mathematical impossibility to rely upon but the 10,000-odd crowd expected to watch isn't bothered about the results.
 Tamil Nadu (25 points from six games), Chandigarh (19 from six games), and Saurashtra (18 from six games) are in a better position compared to these two teams in terms of probability of qualification.
 If Delhi bowls first, the turnout is not going to exceed 3000 but in case Delhi is batting first, the crowd would prefer a Sanat Sangwan or Arpit Rana to get out quickly and make way for Kohli.
 But what would happen if the 'King' gets out early? For starters, Ranji Trophy will go back to being 'Ranji Trophy' with four journalists and 200 odd spectators taking interest in the proceedings.
 Such has been the interest level in Kohli's comeback that the Feriz Shah Kotla ground will have broadcasters joining the festivities and gearing up for the live stream of the match, which is the star batter's first Ranji outing in 12 years and three months.
 "I have played against Virat bhैया in the IPL. It is an honour that in back-to-back matches I have now led Rishabh and Virat bhैया," Delhi skipper Ayush Badoni told reporters on the eve of the game.
 It is expected that Kohli will come in place of left-hander Jonty Sidhu, whose form has tapered off in the past few games as he didn't get enough chances.
 The skipper would be vacating his batting slot so that Kohli can bat at his usual position.
 "He will bat at No. 4. He has told us to be positive and express ourselves confidently," Badoni said.
 Kohli wouldn't mind getting a big one before the Champions Trophy which solves his purpose of playing this particular game.
 While the BCCI has made it mandatory for all players to turn up in Ranji Trophy, the result of this particular game will have no bearing on whether Kohli will be picked in the Indian team after the Champions Trophy. The Kotla track has a greenish tinge to it and Badoni indicated that they will play an extra pacee looking at the conditions.
 Money Grewal looks set for a comeback in the playing XI as he provides extra pace. One of the two left-arm spinners among Sumit Mathur and Harsh Tyagi will be cooling his heels.

Karnataka get KL Rahul boost in crucial tie against Haryana; Kerala push for QF berth

Bengaluru
 Locked in a three-way tussle for a quarterfinal berth, Karnataka will have KL Rahul's experience to bank on in the quest for a bonus point win over table-toppers Haryana in their final league match of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C, beginning here on Thursday.
 Karnataka currently have 19 points and Haryana have 26 points, but Kerala with 21 points are putting pressure on both the teams.
 If the former champions manage a bonus point victory (7 points) at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, their tally will be swelled to 26 points.
 In that scenario, the home side can enter the last eight either as the top team or the second-placed team of the group, depending on Kerala's outing against Bihar at Thumba, Thiruvananthapuram.
 A win even without a bonus point will take Kerala to 27 points, and they will end up as Group C leaders.



In that event, Haryana, who will stay on 26 points, will be knocked out as Karnataka will have more bonus point wins (2) to their credit than Haryana (1).
 The group-toppers are decided by virtue of bonus point wins this season as against the net run rate or head-to-head record as it has been the case in the previous editions of the tournament.
 If Karnataka garner six points here, then they will have 25 points and will

have to hope that Kerala do not get anything more than a draw against Bihar, who will then have a maximum of 24 points.
 If the match here ends in a draw and Karnataka gain first innings lead for three points, then the eight-time champions will have 22 points and will require Kerala to go down against Bihar to advance to the quarterfinal.
 For Kerala and Haryana, a draw is enough to serve their purpose.
 Rahul boost for Karnataka
 This will be Rahul's first Ranji match since 2020, and it could not have come at a more appropriate time.
 Karnataka coach Yesh Goud said the seasoned batter will come out at No. 3 against Haryana.
 "He brings a lot of experience and also adds a lot of value to the side in all aspects of the game. We will see who (Rahul will replace in the eleven)... depending on the conditions and who suits where."

Adil Rashid is the most important player for us, says Jos Buttler

Rajkot
 England skipper Jos Buttler sees veteran leg-spinner Adil Rashid as the team's most important player in the T20 setup after his special skills were on display in the third match against India here.
 Rashid put up a masterclass of leg-spin to help England pull one back in the five-match series. He varied his pace beautifully and got the ball to turn a lot more than all other spinners in operation on Tuesday night.
 The India batters were not even looking for boundaries against Rashid who ended up with figures of one for 15 in four overs. He applied the choke in the middle overs alongside Jamie Overton and got rid of in-form Tilak Varma with a peach of a delivery.
 Even in Chennai during the second T20I, Rashid conceded less than four runs per over.
 Following the 26-run win, Buttler couldn't gush enough about the 36-year-old, who has been playing T20I Internationals since 2009.
 "He's the most important player for us, and he always just seems to keep getting better. He's got so many different styles of bowling, he's got so much variety.
 "One of his great skills is that the first couple of balls he bowls, he seems to



work out exactly how he needs to bowl on that wicket, and yeah, he's an absolute trump card to have as a captain, so yeah, he's been brilliant the last couple of games," said Buttler in his post-match press conference.
 England had the Indian batters under the pump even in the previous game but Varma's brilliance got the home team over the line.
 The visitors were even sharper with the ball on Tuesday and were able to defend 171 comfortably. Besides Rashid, pacer Overton also kept the batters quiet with his variations.
 "Yeah, it's the beauty of being an all-rounder, isn't it? He (Overton) missed out tonight with the bat, but still impacts the game so much with the ball, so yeah, we know he'll come good, he's been playing great for a while now, and he's a dangerous hitter with the ball."

Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh to battle for Ranji Trophy QF spot from Group B

Ahmedabad
 Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh are set for a high-stakes clash as they battle for the final quarterfinal spot from Elite Group B during their final Ranji Trophy league game, starting here on Thursday.
 Group B leaders Vidarbha (34 points) have already sealed their place in the knockouts after a stunning 221-run comeback win against Rajasthan in the previous round.
 Now, all eyes are on Gujarat (26 points) and Himachal Pradesh (26 points). They are the two teams that remain in contention to join Vidarbha in the last eight.
 Meanwhile, Hyderabad (16 points), Rajasthan (16), Uttarakhand (10), Andhra (7), and Puducherry (3) are out of the reckoning.
 Himachal Pradesh has struggled with consistency all season and must regroup after a crushing 110-and-43-run defeat to lowly-placed Hyderabad, which denied their knockout hopes. The Rishi Dhaswan-led side paid the price for an overly aggressive approach.
 Left-handed batter Ankit Kalsi, who struck an unbeaten double-century earlier in the season, has been Himachal's standout performer with 549 runs in six matches. The onus will be on him and the top order to deliver in this



must-win clash.
 Gujarat, on the other hand, will enter the match brimming with confidence after a dominant 110-and-28-run victory over Uttarakhand.
 Left-arm spinner Siddharth Desai was the star of Gujarat's win, registering sensational figures of 9 for 36 – the best by any Gujarat player in first-class cricket. He was well-supported by Rinkesh Vaghela (3/63) and Vishal Jayswal (3/71), and the team will be banking on a similar effort, especially in the absence of spinner Ravi Bishnoi, who remains on national duty for the T20I series against England.

Meanwhile, two-time champions Vidarbha have already locked their quarterfinal berth and will advance as the top-ranked team from Group B, regardless of the final league-round results. They take on Hyderabad in Nagpur in their final league engagement.
 Middle-order batter Yash Rathod (583 runs) and skipper Akshay Wadkar (517) have been Vidarbha's key contributors with the bat, while 22-year-old all-rounder Harsh Dubey has impressed with the ball.
 Dubey is the leading wicket-taker this season, having claimed 47 scalps at an outstanding average of 14.55.

With no dew in second innings, pitch became very slow: Varun Chakravarthi

Rajkot
 India's in-form spinner Varun Chakravarthi feels the Rajkot pitch playing slower in the second innings than the team's expectations contributed to its first loss of the five-match T20I series against England.
 The match was expected to be a high-scoring affair but it wasn't to be. England did rather well to post 171 for nine from 127 for eight.
 But India fell way short of the target, by 26 runs to be specific, as leg-spinner Adil Rashid produced a de-

cisive bowling effort in the middle overs.
 "I thought the dew might set in and the ball would start skidding on. But the pitch became very slow and their cutters and their leggies started working more. While if you see in the first innings it was not that slow. So, that played in their favour.
 "And obviously, Adil Rashid is a legend and he knows how to bowl. He has that control over his speed," said Chakravarthi on Tuesday night.
 Rashid, who found Tilak Varma's

middle stump with a classical leg-break, got welcome support from Jamie Overton, who struck thrice at run a ball in his four overs.
 It was the second time that Chakravarthi's five-wicket haul came in a losing cause. The mystery spinner has been India's standout bowler since his comeback last year and had the England batters guessing once again.
 "No, I can't, I can't complain because that's the nature of the game. There have been times, even when I

don't take five wickets, we might end up losing. So, I can't complain.
 "But my job is to just keep focusing on what I can do, what I can perform for the team. And that's all in my control," he said.
 Putting more overspin on the ball has yielded rich dividends for Chakravarthi and he is also working on perfecting the flipper. He has attempted anything new of late? "Nothing new, but the work doesn't stop because consistency is a constant work."
 "As in, even if I can bowl a ball – a

stock ball, I need to keep working on it, keep pushing it. I need to get nine on ten consistency. That work is always there. So, right now my focus is on consistency and line and length," said the 33-year-old from Tamil Nadu.
 Chakravarthi also defended leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi who leaked 46 runs in four overs.
 "Bishnoi is a top-class bowler. Last match I went for 38 runs. He bowled around 26 runs (27 actually in four overs). So, it's just this match or that match anyone can get hit.



“Look its tough and there is always going to be hype when you have a 19-year-old making debut because he is in rare company at his age.” — Simon Katich

India strengthening its infrastructure, research capabilities for Olympics: PT Usha

Ahmedabad
India is focussing not just on strengthening infrastructure capabilities, but also intellectual preparedness as it eyes hosting rights for the 2036 Olympic Games, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha said on Wednesday.

The former track and field star noted India's engagement with the quadrennial international games goes beyond competitive sports to embrace its true spirit of promoting peace and cultural exchange.

She was addressing the 1st International Olympic Research Conference at Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) near Dehgam in Gandhinagar district. The four-day conference has been organised by the Bharat Centre for Olympic Research and Education (BCORE) of the RRU, an institution of national importance under the Union home ministry.

In her address, Usha said thanks to the conference, representatives of various Olympic studies and research centres from across the world as well as experts from diverse fields have converged in India.

"India's engagement with the Olympic movement is at a transformative moment, one that goes beyond competitive sports to embrace the true



spirit of Olympism -- that is promoting peace, education and cultural exchange through sports," she insisted. "What makes this conference significant is its timing. As India intends to host the (2036) Olympics, we are not just strengthening our infrastructure capabilities, but our intellectual and research preparedness too," said the former athlete, who dominated Asian track and field in the 1970s.

The IOA president maintained the conference will serve as a platform where global expertise meets Indian innovation through discussion on urban transformation, technological advancements, sustainability and inclusive governance.

One of the main purposes of the conference is to demonstrate India's holistic approach to sports development and its role in societal progress, Usha emphasised. "This gathering gave a powerful

message to the international sporting community - that is India's commitment to contributing meaningfully to the global Olympic movement through research, innovation and knowledge exchange," she opined.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 38th National Games in Dehradun on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government is putting all its might behind the ambitious bid to bag the hosting rights of 2036 Olympics, which will take Indian sports to new heights and create opportunities across different sectors.

In his address at the conference, which will conclude on January 30, IOA vice-president Ajay Patel said the conclave is a reflection of India's evolving sporting vision.

Under the leadership of PM Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, India is transforming sports into a national mission of empowerment and innovation, he maintained.

"Research is our most powerful tool. During the conference, we should discuss critical questions, such as how sports infrastructure can drive urban regeneration, what economic models can make mega events financially sustainable and how do we ensure technological innovation benefits people," Patel noted.

Chasing maiden LIV Golf title, Lahiri determined to 'stick to basics'



Gurugram (Haryana)

Ace Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri is focused on achieving greater consistency and breaking his LIV Golf title drought when he tees up at the International Series India at DLF Golf and Country Club to kickstart the 2025 season on Thursday.

One of India's most accomplished golfers, the 37-year-old secured four top-10 finishes, including a runner-up finish at LIV Golf Andalucia, where he narrowly lost to Sergio Garcia in a playoff.

Lahiri acknowledges that while he has been competitive, his performances have been inconsistent and he's determined to "stick to the basics". "I am very excited to come back to DLF. It's in brilliant condition. Having played here so many times, I've had good rounds and not-so-good rounds, but I've learned from all those experiences," the two-time Olympian said in an interview.

"I'm just going to stick to the basics -- hit fairways and greens -- and focus on doing things right this week." The world-class field boasts of LIV Golf stars like reigning US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau and Joaquin Niemann, the 2022 International Series rankings winner along with top Indian contender SSP Chawrasia, a four-time European Tour winner.

"The last time I felt this kind of buzz was when Tiger Woods visited DGC. This is a similar vibe, and it's fantastic to be part of it."

"I'm trying to stay focused because I'm here as a competitor first. But I love the responsibility and I am grateful to Bryson, Joaquin, and everyone who agreed to come," he said.

Lahiri further acknowledged the challenges posed by the course, especially with its length and windy conditions.

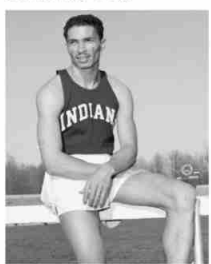
"It's a long course, and it's in fantastic shape. If the winds pick up, it'll be challenging for everyone. With an elevated field this time, I expect the setup to be harder. It'll be interesting to see how things unfold," he added.

Post COVID-19, Lahiri moved to Dubai and also switched to LIV Golf, a Saudi-backed lucrative breakaway league of team and individual competitions that challenges the PGA Tour's dominance.

Lahiri believes his move to Dubai has been a game-changer, allowing him to balance his professional and personal

"We struggled to impose our game, some faced Indian spinners for first time: Jos Buttler"

American Greg Bell, oldest living Olympic gold medallist in athletics dies



Washington

American long jump great Greg Bell, who had been the oldest living Olympic gold medallist in athletics, has died at the age of 94.

Bell breathed his last on January 25, according to World Athletics which paid tribute to the 1956 Olympic long jump gold medallist.

"World Athletics is deeply saddened to hear that Greg Bell, the 1956 Olympic long jump champion, died on Saturday at the age of 94. He had been the oldest living Olympic gold medallist in athletics," it said.

Bell was the world's leading men's long jumper of the 1950s. As well as winning the Olympic title in Melbourne, his personal best of 8.10m he produced in Austin, USA in 1957 was just three centimetres off the world record that had been set by Jesse Owens in 1935.

He also jumped 8.09m in 1956 and 8.10m again in 1959. Bell was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in the USA on November 7, 1930 and he attended Garfield High School.

After starting work and then serving in the army, he joined Indiana University and remained undefeated in the long jump throughout his collegiate career, including wins at the NCAA Championships.

At the 1956 Olympic Games, a 26-year-old Bell jumped 7.83m in challenging conditions to win by 15cm ahead of his compatriot John Bennett.

Bell went on to secure silver at the Pan American Games in Chicago in 1959 and retired after finishing fourth at the US Olympic Trials in 1960.

After earning his undergraduate degree from Indiana University, Bell later became a dentist. He was the director of dentistry at Logansport State Hospital for 50 years, before his retirement in 2020 at the age of 89.

As well as being an Indiana University Hall of Famer, Bell was inducted into the US National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1988.

Chennaiyin FC target for first win in seven games in match against Kerala Blasters

Chennai

Chennaiyin FC will aim to notch up their first win in seven games when they host Kerala Blasters in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday.

Chennaiyin are currently 10th in the points table with 18 points from as many matches, having won four games and drawn six.

Kerala Blasters, on the other hand, are placed eighth with 21 points from 18 matches, with six wins and three draws. The Kochi-based side are aiming to enter the top-six in the table.

TG Purushothaman's side are looking to complete a league double over Chennaiyin for the second time in ISL history (also in 2021-22), having won the reverse fixture 3-0 on November 24 last.

However, Chennaiyin FC have never lost a home game against Kerala Blasters in ISL history, including a 1-0 victory in their most recent meeting in Chennai (February 16, 2024).

Chennaiyin have not tasted victory in their last five matches, drawing three and losing twice. Kerala Blasters, on the other hand, have emerged victorious in two games, lost an equal number of encounters, and been defeated once in the preceding five matches heading into Thursday's game.

Both the sides have six games left



to produce positive results that could potentially take them into the play-offs positions, and their current situations are such that they cannot afford to concede an inch in this neck-to-neck battle for the top-six.

Chennaiyin FC head coach Owen Coyle said that his team needs to maximise points from home matches.

"We have to capitalise on our home games. We have got some good results against some good teams, but it is about working hard together, which the boys are do-

ing," he said. Kerala Blasters FC interim head coach TG Purushothaman hoped that his team will create more goal-scoring opportunities.

"In the last match, we didn't create enough scoring chances. We have to overcome everything as a team and I hope to rectify this in the next match," he said.

The two teams have faced each other 23 times in the ISL, with Chennaiyin FC and Kerala Blasters FC winning seven games each. Nine matches have produced draws.

Paris Olympian swimmer Desinghu scoops 3 gold as Karnataka top medal tally on Day 1

Haldwani/Dehradun

Fourteen-year-old swimmer Dhimithi Desinghu was the cynosure of all eyes as she stamped her authority with three gold medals as Karnataka made a splash on the pool, grabbing five gold and two silver to take the top spot in the 38th National Games medal tally here on Wednesday.

At the end of the first day of competitions, Karnataka were the early leaders with seven medals (5 gold, 2 silver) while Manipur (4 gold, 4 silver) were close second and Maharashtra (2 gold, 3 silver, 3 bronze) third in the standings.

The day certainly belonged to Desinghu, who first won the women's 200m freestyle event in a Games record time of 2 minutes and 3.24 seconds before adding a gold each in 100m butterfly and 4x100m freestyle. She was the youngest Indian athlete at Paris Olympics last year.

Srihari Nataraj, a Paris Olympian like Desinghu, won two gold medals -- in men's 200m freestyle and men's 4x100m freestyle -- on the opening day of swimming competitions at Manasikand Tarantal at Golapur here.

The earlier 200m freestyle national record of 2:07.08 was in the name of Desinghu's state-mate Hashika Ramachandra set during the 2022 Games in Gujarat.

Bhavya Sachdeva (2:08.68) of Delhi and Aditi Satish Hegde (2:09.74) of Ma-



harashtra were distant second and third respectively in the women's 200m freestyle.

In the women's 100m butterfly, Desinghu clocked 1:03.62 to climb to the top of the podium for the second time in the day.

It was 1-2 for Karnataka as Naisha Shetty (1:04.81) took the silver while Sripradi Upadhyaya (1:05.20) of Odisha grabbed the bronze.

It was not done yet for Desinghu as she anchored the Karnataka quartet to women's 4x100m freestyle gold in a time of 4:01.58. The other members of the team were Nina Venkatesh, Shalini R Dixit and Latiesha Mandana.

Maharashtra (4:02.17) and Tamil Nadu (4:08.81) won the silver and bronze respectively.

Another Games record was erased with Karnataka also pocketing the men's 4x100m freestyle gold with the team of Srihari Nataraj, Aneesh S Gowda, Akash Mani and Chinatan S Shetty clocking 3:26.26.

Tamil Nadu (3:29.92) and Gujarat (3:32.23) took the silver and bronze respectively. Nataraj won his second gold of the day, clocking 1:50.57 in the men's 200m freestyle with state-mate Aneesh S Gowda (1:52.42) and Kerala's

veteran swimmer Sajjan Prakash (1:53.73) finishing second and third respectively.

The lone swimming event of the day in which Karnataka did not win a gold was in men's 100m butterfly in which Tamil Nadu's Benedict Rohit stood on top of the podium with a time of 53.89 seconds.

Mihir Ambre (54.24) of Maharashtra was second while Sajjan Prakash (54.52) won his second bronze medal of the day.

At the brand new Trishul Shooting Range in Dehradun, Haryana's Asian Games bronze medallist shooter Ramita Jindal turned in a world class performance to top the qualification round in the women's 10m air rifle event.

The 21-year-old Ramita, who won a bronze in the Hangzhou Asian Games and a team gold in the 2023 World Championships, shot 634.9, bettering the 634.5 by Korea's Ban Hoyjin in the Paris Olympic Games qualification round, to top the chart on the first day of shooting competitions.

Ramita's score gave her a 0.4-point margin over Arya Borse of Maharashtra. Tamil Nadu's Narmada Raju was only 0.1 points behind to be at the third place. Kerala's Vidara K Vinod, who was leading the chart at one stage, was fourth with 633.0 points.

Shreya Agarwal of Madhya Pradesh (632.0), Elavenil Valarivan of Gujarat (631.9), Meghana Sajjanar of Karnata-

ka (631.2) and Maniyata Singh of Odisha (630.1) completed the set of eight finalists who will do battle on Thursday. Meanwhile, Punjab's Vijayveer Singh Sidhu shot 587 to emerge on top in the men's rapid fire pistol. Anish Bhanuvala of Haryana (582), Neera Kumar of Services (579), Bhavesh Shekharwar of Rajasthan (577), Omkar Singh of Services (574) and Gurpreet Singh of Services (574) completed the list of finalists.

2012 London Olympics silver medallist Vijay Kumar of Himachal Pradesh was in the running for a place in the final, but a sub-par final series put paid to his aspirations.

Had he shot 94 instead of 90 in the four-second series in the second stage of qualification, the veteran may have forced a shoot-off for the sixth place. In men's kyo kyo, Odisha beat West Bengal 144-28. Karnataka thrashed Uttarakhnad 36-18 and Andhra Pradesh defeated Chattisgarh 35-22.

In women's kyo kyo, Maharashtra clocked out a narrow 24-20 win over West Bengal while Odisha beat Gujarat 26-16 and Karnataka thrashed Uttarakhnad 41-12.

In women's rugby sevens, Delhi beat West Bengal 19-12 and Odisha overwhelmed Uttarakhnad 57-0 in Pool A matches while Bihar mauled Kerala 58-0 and Maharashtra won with another huge margin of 68-0 against Tamil Nadu in Pool B games.



Kareena Kapoor Khan to pay Raj Kapoor a tribute at IIFA awards

Mumbai
Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan will be celebrating the legacy of her grandfather the legendary Raj Kapoor at the upcoming edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) awards in March, the organisers announced Wednesday.

The Silver Jubilee edition of IIFA 2025 will feature a heartwarming special segment dedicated to Kapoor, commemorating his contribution to Indian cinema, a press release said.

Kareena said she is thrilled about honoring her grandfather at the IIFA Awards, scheduled to take place on



March 8 and 9 in Jaipur.

"This performance is especially close to my heart as it pays tribute to my legendary grandfather, Raj Kapoor, whose 100th birth anniversary was recently celebrated across the country

with so much love.

"It's a surreal moment for me to be able to connect these dots and be a part of this celebration of legacy, family, and the enduring power of cinema," the actor said in a statement.

The Kapoor family celebrated Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary with a three-day RK Film Festival, which was held in December last year and showcased his acclaimed movies like "Awaraz", "Shree 420", "Sangam", "Mera Naam Joker", and "Bobby".

Kareena further said she is thrilled to be returning to the IIFA stage after many years. "And what better time than for their Silver Jubilee edition? In a sense, IIFA's journey and mine have almost run parallel—we're celebrating 25 years together in the cinema," she said.

Actor Kartik Aaryan will host the 2025 award ceremony of the IIFA Awards.

Sad to watch new govt dismantling all freedoms we've been fighting for: Madonna

Los Angeles

Pop icon Madonna has criticised the newly elected Donald Trump administration for its decision to remove protections for transgender people and end diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, urging citizens to keep fighting for their rights.

It's the latest push by Trump to reverse policies set by former president Joe Biden's government to protect transgender people and their care.

On Monday, Trump directed the Pentagon to conduct a review that is likely to lead to them being barred from military service. Madonna, a longtime advocate for the LGBTQ community, expressed her disappointment in an X post on Tuesday.

"It's so sad to watch our new Government slowly dismantling all the Freedoms we have been fighting for and WON over the years. Don't give up the Fight! (sic) she wrote, adding the LGBTQ pride flag and broken red heart emojis.

Earlier, singer-actor Selena Gomez, whose father is of Mexican descent, got emotional over the Trump administration's stand over the deportation of undocumented immigrants on social media in a now-deleted Instagram video.

"All my people are getting attacked ... the children. I don't understand. I'm so sorry. I wish I could do something but I can't. I don't know what to do. I'll try everything, I promise," she tearfully said.

Applause Entertainment, Kabir Khan to collaborate on two films

Mumbai
Filmmaker Kabir Khan has joined hands with content studio Applause Entertainment for two new movies.

The films will be co-produced by Applause Entertainment with Khan taking on the role of director for one film and creatively producing both.

Khan, known for films such as "Bajrangi Bhaijaan", "Ek Tha Tiger", and "83", said he is thrilled to embark on this creative journey with Applause Entertainment.

"This collaboration with Applause is a natural fit as we both share a passion for stories that resonate with people at their core. The beauty of this partnership lies in the creative freedom it offers," the

director said in a statement. Sameer Nair, managing director, of Applause Entertainment, said through this partnership they are committed to narrating groundbreaking stories that resonate with people.

"Our partnership with Kabir is fuelled by our mutual love for storytelling. At Applause, our vision is to collaborate with powerful creative voices to tell stories that are unique, distinctive, and popular, and resonate with audiences in meaningful ways," added Nair, known for backing acclaimed series like "Black Warrant" as well as "Scam" and "Criminal Justice" franchises.

Key details regarding the genre and star cast of the two movies are yet to be announced.



"I always like jumping between two things": Pooja Hedge

New Delhi

Pooja Hegde, who is one of the few actors to have made a name for herself in both South Indian and Hindi films, recently opened up about the challenges of managing her busy schedule and traveling between cities while working in both film in-

dustries. When asked if she finds it difficult to work in both industries at the same time, Pooja admitted that "managing travel" and balancing everything together could be "challenging."

"Some days it is, I mean, the traveling part. I have to travel, so I always like jumping between two

things. But also, for example, when I was shooting for Deva, I was also shooting for my film Retro, and they both are really different characters. So being able to snap out of one and go back into the other, balancing everything together, is challenging," Pooja said.

The 'Retro' actress also shared that she chooses her

projects based on the quality of the work rather than the language of the film.

"I have always gone with what the work is, and where I feel my role is good or if the film is good. I think that is more important to me than the language. I think if the work is good, it will reach people," she added.

American Society of Cinematographers ropes in Ravi Varman as a member



New Delhi

National Award-winning cinematographer Ravi Varman has become a member of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC).

Varman, known for his work with filmmakers like Mani Ratnam, Shankar, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali, has become the second Indian cinematographer, after Santosh Sivan, to join the ranks of the world's leading cinematographers' organisation.

"I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to the board of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) for inducting me as a member. Cinematographers from all over the world dream of joining this association," Varman said in a statement.

"It gives me great joy and pride to be included in a platform where the world's leading cinematographers who have won awards including Oscars are members. I wholeheartedly thank those who made me realise this dream," he added.

The American Society of Cinematographers was founded in 1919 with the purpose of advancing the art and science of cinematography and bringing cinematographers together to exchange ideas, discuss techniques and promote the motion picture as an art form, according to the organisation's official website. Varman is also a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) since 2024.

In a career spanning over 25 years, Ravi Varman has shot films in Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and English.

He has collaborated with noted Indian filmmakers such as Rathnam, Shankar, Bhansali, Raj Kumar Hirani, Anurag Basu, Imtiaz Ali and American filmmaker Dune Adler.

His filmography include award-winning movies such as "Ponniyin Selvan", "Dasavatharam", "Vettaiyaadu Vaidyaadu", "Barfi", "Sanju", "Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela" and "Tamasha".



Karan Johar confirms Saif's son Ibrahim Ali Khan's acting debut

New Delhi

Filmmaker Karan Johar on Wednesday confirmed that Ibrahim Ali Khan, the son of actors Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, is set to make his acting debut soon with a film backed by his banner Dharma Productions.

In a long post on Instagram, Johar expressed excitement about launching a new talent from a family he has known for 40 years.

"I know this family for the heart they have. Films are in their blood, their genes, and their passion. We make way for a new wave of talent, one that I cannot wait for the world to see. So, stay tuned as @iakptauidi makes his way into your hearts and soon...onto the screens!" the filmmaker said.

Johar, however, didn't dis-



close any details about Ibrahim's maiden project, including its name and the rest of the cast. Ibrahim earlier served as an assistant on Johar's 2023 directorial "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani".

The filmmaker recalled meeting Ibrahim's mother

Amrita when he was just 12. "She did a film for @dharma-movies with my father called 'Duniya', and I remember so vividly the grace, the energy & the commandment over the camera she had. But, what I remember the most is the warmest Chinese dinner with her and

her hairstylist of the time after our first meeting, followed by a James Bond movie! 'She treated me like her own the second we met and that was the power of her grace...which lives on through her and her children too,'" he wrote.

Besides "Duniya", Amrita also starred in Dharma Productions' 2014 film "2 States", headlined by Arjun Kapoor and Alia Bhatt.

His first meeting with Saif was at film producer Anand Mahendru's office, Johar said. They later collaborated on films such as "Kal Ho Naa Ho" (2003) and "Kurbaan" (2009).

"Young, suave, charming & effortless...VERY much like the first time I met Ibrahim. And a strong friendship that continues from our generation to luckily our kids!!!" (sic) he said.

