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MARKET	
SENSEX	NIFTY
75939.18	22932.90
-28.21	-12.40
GOLD SILVER	
86,050.00	96,320.00
-63.00	-528.00

WEATHER	
Sunrise	6:56 AM
Sunset	6:15 PM
Moonrise	12:23 AM
Moonset	10:55 AM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	13°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	12°C

BJP picks Rekha Gupta as Delhi's new chief minister

A former Delhi University Students' Union president, Gupta, the Shalimar Bagh MLA, started her journey in electoral politics by winning the MCD elections in 2007. She is a first-time MLA.

New Delhi
First-time MLA Rekha Gupta will be the new chief minister of Delhi, the BJP announced on Wednesday.

She was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly at the BJP legislative party meeting. The party has returned to power in Delhi after over 26 years, ending the 10-year rule of the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP.

Accompanied by BJP leaders Ravi Shankar Prasad, O P Dhankar, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva and others, Gupta (50) later met Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena and staked claim to form a government.

She and her Cabinet ministers will take the oath of office at the Ramlila Ground on Thursday. She will be the fourth woman chief minister of Delhi after Sushama Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit and Atishi.

Upon taking the oath, she will be the second incumbent woman chief



minister of the country along with Mamata Banerjee. Also, she will be the only woman chief minister among the states being ruled by the BJP at present.

There was no official word from the party whether there would be a deputy chief minister in the BJP government.

Party sources said representation will be given to all communities in the Delhi cabinet.

Gupta defeated AAP candidate Bandana Kumari in the Shalimar Bagh seat by a margin of more than 29,000 votes in the February 5 Assembly polls.

All 48 newly elected

BJP MLAs attended the legislative party meeting held in the presence of Central observers Ravi Shankar Prasad and O P Dhankar. Gupta's name was proposed by senior party leaders. Parvish Verma, Vijender Gupta and Satish Upadhyay.

The announcement came 11 days after the

“I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the top leadership for entrusting me with the responsibility of the chief minister's post. This trust and support has given me new energy and inspiration. I pledge to work with full honesty, integrity, and dedication for the welfare, empowerment, and overall development of every citizen of Delhi. I am fully committed to this important opportunity to take Delhi to new heights.”

-CM-designate Rekha Gupta

results of the Delhi Assembly polls were declared on February 8.

Soon after the announcement, Gupta thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said she would work with full honesty, integrity and dedication for the welfare, empowerment and overall development of every resident of Delhi.

"I am fully committed to this important opportunity to take Delhi to new heights," Gupta said in a post on X.

CONTD ON PAGE-2

SC defers hearing on pleas against CEC, ECs appointments

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned the pleas against the appointments of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners (EC) under the 2023 law.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh indicated that the matter would be listed after the Holi festival break due to paucity of time. However, no date was fixed for hearing the matter.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, said it was an important issue which required an urgent consideration.

He said the matter involved a short legal question — whether the 2023 Constitution bench verdict should be followed for the appointment of the CEC and ECs through a panel involving the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and the Chief Justice of India or the 2023 law, which excludes the CJI from the panel.

At around 3 pm, Justice Surya Kant told Bhushan that he would be sitting in a special bench and the court had



numerous matters listed before the Holi break.

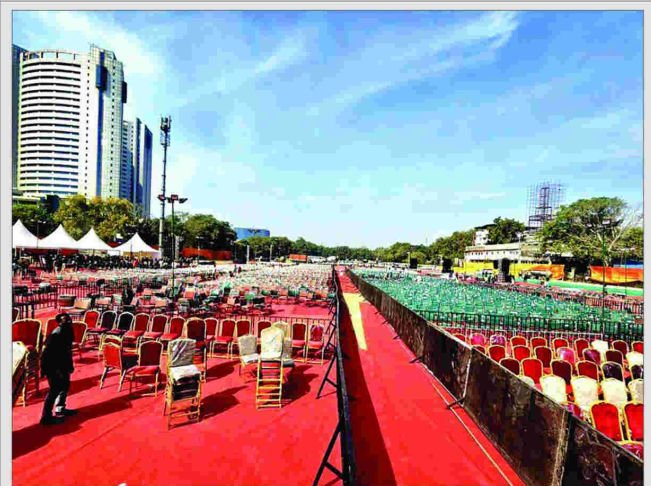
Bhushan requested the matter to be listed on any day in the coming week and assured the petitioners would not take more than an hour to advance submissions.

Advocate Varun Thakur, appearing for petitioner Jaya Thakur, also mentioned the matter for an urgent hearing saying it was "very important for the survival of democracy."

Justice Surya Kant said, for the court, all matters were equally important and no single matter was superior to others.

Earlier, solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, expressed his inability to address the court on the issue saying he was appearing before the Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna on the issue of arbitration.

Agency



New Delhi: Preparations underway for the oath ceremony of the New Delhi government at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on Wednesday. TSN

SC highlights critical need for accuracy and fairness in media reporting



New Delhi
The Supreme Court has said persons working in key positions in the media must exercise utmost caution and responsibility before publishing any statements, news, or opinions and observed the right to freedom of speech and expression was paramount.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan reiterated that the power of the media in shaping public opinion was significant and the press possessed the

HIGHLIGHT
The top court emphasised that those working in key positions in the media must exercise caution and responsibility before publishing statements, news, or opinions

ability to influence public sentiments and alter perceptions, with remarkable speed.

The bench's observation came when it quashed a defamation case against English daily Times of India's editorial director and other journalists, who were accused of publishing alleged defamatory contents over the authenticity of certain paintings to be auctioned by Bid & Hammer - Fine Art Auctioneers.

Trump hits back at Zelenskyy, calls him 'dictator'



Washington
President Donald Trump on Wednesday called Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "dictator without elections", lashing out after the Ukrainian president said Trump was being influenced by Russian disinformation as he moves to end the Kremlin's war against Ukraine on terms that Kyiv says are too favourable to Moscow.

Govt explains why deportation flights land in Amritsar

New Delhi:
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann taking exceptions to United States flights carrying Indian deportees landing in Amritsar, government sources Wednesday defended the move, saying the state makes up for the biggest share of these illegal immigrants.

Sharing figures of the three flights that have arrived in India since February 5, they said Punjab residents total 126 of the 323 people deported in US military aircraft, followed by 110



from neighbouring Haryana and 74 from Gujarat.

Eight of them were from Uttar Pradesh, five from Maharashtra, two each from Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Rajasthan and Goa, and one each from Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhnad.

HIGHLIGHT
The second flight had 65 deportees from Punjab, 33 from Haryana and eight from Gujarat. The corresponding numbers for the third flight were 31, 44 and 33.

Each of the three flights on February 5, 15 and 16 carried over 100 Indians and 333 of them have been deported so far, they added. The total includes 262 men, 42 women and 29 minors, the sources added.

Agency

Lokayukta finds no evidence against Siddaramaiah, wife

Bengaluru
The Lokayukta police probing the MUDA site allotment case on Wednesday said the charges against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his wife Parvathi could not be proved for want of evidence.

The probing officers said they had submitted the final report to the high court.

"Since the above allegations against accused 1 to accused 4 in the case have not been proven due to lack of evidence, the final report is being submitted to the high court," the Lokayukta



police said in a letter to activist Snehamayi Krishna, who is a complainant in the MUDA case.

Besides Siddaramaiah and his wife, his brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and the land owner Devaraju are also the accused.

The Lokayukta police said further investiga-

tion would be conducted into the allegations of Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) providing compensatory plots in the ratio of 50:50 from 2016 to 2024 and an additional final report submitted to the High Court under Section 173 (8) of the Cr.P.C.

In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by MUDA.

Agency

NEWS IN BRIEF
Five runways to be built at Jewar Airport

Noida
A total five runways will be built at the Jewar Airport and land of 14 villages will be acquired for expansion. More than 70 percent of the farmers have given their consent for the airport expansion.

About 42,433 people of 14 villages will be affected by this acquisition. A total of 2053 hectare of land is required for the third and fourth phase of the airport. Out of these, 1888.98 hectare of land of 14 villages will be acquired, the remaining land is already with the administration.

Consent was being sought from the farmers for land acquisition. Now more than 70 percent of the farmers have agreed to give land. A total of 5 runways will be built at the airport. In the first phase, one runway is being built on 1334 hectare.

Two runways will be built in the second phase and two in the third and fourth phases. There will be a distance of 1.5 km between each runway so that everyone can work independently. If the distance is less than this, there will be no problem in take off and landing of flights from the runway.

In the second phase, a runway will be built on 490 acre of 1265 hectare of land, a service runway will be built and aviation industry will be set up on about 800 acre. By the year 2025, it is estimated that there will be 1800 aircrafts in the country, whereas at present there are 700 aircrafts.

Multi-sports complex to be built in Ghaziabad at Rs 103 cr

Ghaziabad
A multi-sports complex will be built at Rajnagar Extension in Ghaziabad at a cost of Rs 103 crore.

Municipal commissioner Vikramaditya Singh Malik said that the wait of the players of Ghaziabad is now over. After the approval of the government, the obstacle to build the multi-sports complex has ended.

For this, the department concerned has now been instructed to start the tender process. The agency responsible for the multi-sports complex is C&DS Uttar Pradesh Jai Nigam. About 22 types of games will be arranged for the players in the multi-sports complex.

Chief engineer (Construction) Narendran Kumar Chaudhary said that getting permission to build a multi-sports complex under the leadership of Ghaziabad municipal commissioner is a big success. Spa, yoga room, physiotherapy room, air shooting room, combat hall, squash court, doctor clinic, management room, children's activity room, command and control room, common toilet block to name a few will be built in the multi-sports complex.

The multi-sports complex has been approved in Ghaziabad under the State Smart City Scheme. The construction of the multi-sports complex will not only encourage sports persons but will also be beneficial for the youth of the city.

Delhi govt bureaucrats ready draft schemes on BJP's poll promises centred on women's welfare

New Delhi
With the BJP set to form the government in Delhi, bureaucrats working in the city government have been instructed to prepare drafts of schemes centred around women the party said it would launch in its manifesto for the elections.

The Delhi Women and Child Development Department has been instructed to prepare drafts by Thursday for schemes on providing Rs 2,500 monthly to all women, financial aid to pregnant women and assistance to poor families for their daughters' marriages, an official said.

The BJP is expected to name its chief minister for the national capital by Wednesday evening and the swearing-in ceremony is set to be held on Thursday at the Ramilla Maidan. The BJP returned to power in Delhi, defeating the Aam Aadmi Party com-



fortably in the elections held earlier this month. The Delhi government official said that the Mahila Samman Yojana would be renamed Mahila Samridhi Yojana and beneficiaries will now receive Rs 2,500 per month, up from Rs 1,100 given by the previous government under AAP.

In its poll manifesto, the BJP also promised to launch the Mukhya Mantri Kanyadan Yojana (MMKY), which will provide financial assistance of Rs 50,000 to poor families for their daughters' marriages.

Earlier, only widows received financial assistance of Rs 30,000 under the Widow-Daughter Marriage Scheme to marry off their daughters. However, under the newly proposed MMKY scheme, girls from underprivileged backgrounds will also receive Rs 50,000, the official explained.

Additionally, the department is working on nutritional charts to prepare kits for pregnant women under the Mukhya Mantri Matritva Suraksha Yojana (MMMSY).

As per the BJP's manifesto, under MMSY, all pregnant women will receive financial assistance of Rs 20,000 along with six nutritional kits.

Rekha Gupta meets LG stakes claim to form govt

New Delhi
BJP MLA and Chief Minister-designate Rekha Gupta met Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena Wednesday evening and staked claim to form government in the national capital.

She was accompanied by state BJP observers Ravi Shankar Prasad and OP Dhanraj along with city BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, and Delhi MPs including Bansuri Svaraj, Praveen Khandelwal and Kamaljeet Sehrawat.

BJP national vice-president Bajajayant Jai Panda was also present at the Raj Niwas.

Gupta, 50, was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly during a BJP legislature party meeting on Thursday. A former Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) president and civic body councillor, she is set to become the fourth woman Chief Minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit, and Atishi.

The new BJP government, led by Gupta, will be sworn in at a grand ceremony at the Ramilla Maidan on Thursday afternoon in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries. She will also be the fourth Chief Minister from the BJP in Delhi after Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma, and Sushma Swaraj. Notably, Gupta is going to be the only incumbent woman chief minister in any BJP-ruled states.

Man held for toddler's death in celebratory firing at wedding procession

Noida
A man was arrested on Wednesday in connection with the killing of a two-and-a-half-year-old boy in celebratory fire during a wedding procession here earlier this week, police said.

The accused, Deepanshu (24), from a village in Gurgaon, was arrested and a country-made pistol used in the firing was recovered by a team from Sector 49 police station, officials said.

The incident occurred around 10 pm on February 16, in Agahpur village when a wedding procession was underway at the residence of Balveer Singh, police had said.

Deepanshu and his accomplice, Happy, allegedly opened fire while celebrating their friend Rohan's wedding, they said.

Police said that Vikas Sharma and his family were watching the wedding procession from their balcony when a bullet struck his child, who was in the lap of a person.

Following the incident, a case has been registered under Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Arms Act, a police officer said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Ram Badan Singh said two men were identified on the basis of the video footage recorded by the child's family.

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Saras Mela to be held in Noida from Feb 21

Noida
Saras Ajeevika Mela 2025 is going to be organised for the fifth time here from February 21, 2025, to March 10, 2025. The theme of the fair is "Development of export potential of Lakhpati SHG Didi".

The fair is being organised in sector-33A Noida Haat. Organised by the Union Ministry of Rural Development and the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, this fair will mainly showcase the crafts of rural India.

More than 400 woman craftspeople will participate in the festival. Apart from this, more than 85 cultural programmes will be organised. This information was given by Swati Sharma, joint secretary of the Union Ministry of Rural Development and Gautam Buddha Nagar district magistrate Manish Kumar Verma.

This time in Saras Ajeevika Mela, a group of 80 enterprising housewives from 20 states will set up stalls of famous regional cuisines of their states in which visitors will get the taste of regional cuisines of every state. This time more than 400 Lakhpati Didi from all over the country will be the special guests of Saras Mela.

Giving information about the fair, Sharma said that some excellent exhibits in Saras Ajeevika Mela 2025 will include handloom, saree and dress material. These include Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh, Mekhela Chhadar from Assam, Cotton and Silk from Bihar, Kasa Sarve from Chhattisgarh, Bharat Gunthan and Patchwork from Gujarat, Tasar Silk and Cotton from Jharkhand as well as Dupatta and Dress Material, Chanderi and Bagh Print from Madhya Pradesh, Eri Products from Meghalaya, Tasar and Banda from Odisha, Kanchipuram from Tamil Nadu, Povipuram from Telangana, Pashmina from Uttarakhand, Katha, Batik Print, Tant and Baluchari from West Bengal. Organic food stalls will also be set up in the fair.

BJP national vice-president Bajajayant Jai Panda was also present at the Raj Niwas. Gupta, 50, was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly during a BJP legislature party meeting on Thursday.

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CHANGE OF NAME
Gripa Devi, W/O Narendar Singh Chauhan, have corrected my name in Birth Certificate (issued by Municipal Council) of my daughter (Aanchal Chauhan) Vide Affidavit dated 17th Feb, 2025 before District Notary Kalka Incharge name of mother in Birth certificate: GRIPA CHAUHAN; correct name: GRIPA DEVI

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform public at large that my client, PREM SWAROOP BHATNAGAR (UID No.4967-0576-1208) Son of LAXMAN SWAROOP BHATNAGAR aged 52 Years resident of C-29, BLOCK - C, SITAPURI PART-1, PALAMGARH ROAD, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110045, have cut off her family relations and have Disowned her Son UTSAV BHATNAGAR (UID No.2688-7623-1083) from his Movable & Immoveable Properties due to his disobedient and quarrelsome nature and my client shall not be responsible for any act of UTSAV BHATNAGAR (UID No.2688-7623-1083) in any manner in future started from 17th October 2024 onwards.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that my clients Sh. Veer Singh Gosain, S/o. Sh. Pratap Singh Gosain and Smt. Maheshwari Devi, W/o. Sh. Veer Singh Gosain both R/o. C-236, Pavata Aanchal, Street No.5, Near Hanuman Mandir, Sant nagar, Barai, delhi-110086 have severed all their relations whatsoever in any manner from their elder son namely Sh. Sa-tender Gosain, his wife Smt. Kiran Gosain, and their minor daughter Shree Priya and younger son Sh. Sandeep Gosain his wife Smt. Sapna, and two minor daughters Aradhya and Ishana due to misconduct, cruelty and disobedient nature by them and also disowned from all moveable and immovable properties and my clients shall not be responsible for any act done by them and if any person deal with them they solely responsible for that in future.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NAVEEN K SHARMA ADVOCATE
9498, Library Road, Azad Market Delhi-110006

EASTERN RAILWAY
Tender No. EL-MLD7-E-Tender-340, dated 18.02.2025. Open e-Tender invited by Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (E) Eastern Railway, Main Town Office Building, P.O. Jyehata, Dist. Malda, Pin-732102 (West Bengal). Eligible Contractors of requisite having experience and financial solvency for the following work: Name of Work : Augmentation of wire sub-station, electrical assets with other ancillary work under jurisdiction of SSE/EG/EGH/General. Tender Value : ₹ 19.74 Lacs. Estimated Monthly : ₹ 1.59,500/- (Rupees One Lakh Only). Date & time for submission of e-tender : From 26.02.2025 to 15.30 hrs. of 12.03.2025. Website particulars & Notice Board : (Website : www.irps.gov.in) In Notice board: Sr. OEE/EG, Eastern Railway, Main Town office. Tenderers are requested to go through the detailed Tender Notice & document on the website www.irps.gov.in No manual offer will be accepted in any circumstance. (M.D-2232024-25) Tender Notice is also available at website : www.irps.gov.in

Jamia students protest at Jantar Mantar over suspension of 17

New Delhi
Jamia Millia Islamia students staged a protest at the Jantar Mantar here on Wednesday against the suspension of 17 students for participating in demonstrations on the campus.

Students Federation of India (SFI), All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO) and others - took part in the Jantar Mantar protest.

The students demanded revocation of the suspension of 17 students and also no disciplinary action for taking part in demonstra-

tions. There was no response available from the Jamia administration.

The issue started after the university administration suspended two PhD scholars for allegedly leading an unauthorised protest in December last year. Student activists, however, ar-

gue that the administration is attempting to suppress dissent. Some students alleged that police contacted their parents, warning them of possible FIRs against their wards if they continued to participate in protests. The protesters demanded that no disciplinary action be

taken against students for engaging in demonstrations. According to the AISA, the university administration suspended 17 students overnight, which prompted their peers from various departments to declare a boycott in solidarity. A disciplinary commit-

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
No. 125-W280e Tender Notice/NT/44/2024-25-W-3 Dated: 19.02.2025
Sr. Divisional Engineer (E), Northern Railway, Delhi Division invite e-Tender for the following work:

1. Name of work	Upgradation and repairing of PE surface PF chakra foundation, replacing to alumina pedestal of various PF from 1 to 16 of Delhi main station in the section of SSE/WDL/Ch. under ADE/LSL
2. Approx cost of work	₹99,58,017.50 (Rupees Ninety Nine Lakh Ninety Eight Thousand Seventeen and Ninety only)
3. Earnest Money to be deposited	₹2,00,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Only)
4. Cost of tender document	₹0/-
5. Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender	13.03.2025 at 15:00 hrs.
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen.	www.irps.gov.in
7. Allocation	04-410-32

The tenderers must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. www.irps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.
No manual offers are acceptable.
Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or post-dated cheques only.

SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE

Delhi pollution control panel presents action plan to PMO for Yamuna rejuvenation

New Delhi
With the change in government in the national capital, an action plan to rejuvenate the Yamuna river has been submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), focusing on boosting sewage treatment capacity and other critical measures, officials said on Wednesday.

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) under the Department of Environment presented a document to the PMO last week regarding the cleaning and rejuvenation of the Yamuna.



The plan also outlines key measures, including tapping of major drains, setting up new sewage treatment plants (STPs), connecting drainage system in JJ clusters, trapping all drains, upgrading common effluent treatment plants (CETPs), removing encroachments from floodplains and beautifying the riverfront.

Cleaning of the Yamuna was at the centre of politics

in the run-up to the Delhi assembly polls with the BJP slamming the then ruling AAP for failing to rejuvenate the river during its 10-year rule.

The BJP, which has come to power winning 48 out of the 70 assembly seats in the recent polls, has said cleaning of the Yamuna will be among the top priorities of its government in Delhi.

According to the document sent to PMO last week, the DPCC has high-

lighted that the 48-km stretch of the Yamuna from Palla to Assarpur village in the city has been classified as a 'Priority-1' (top priority) polluted stretch.

A key concern raised in the document is the high Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels, which remain far above the desired standard of 3 mg/l. To improve water quality, the document has emphasised the need for a minimum environmental flow (E-flow)

of 23 cumecs (437 MGD). However, due to existing water shortages, the current flow into Delhi is nearly nil. Pending dam projects, including Remuka, Lakhawar and Kishau, could help address this gap, it said.

The plan to curb pollution includes a 100 per cent sewage treatment initiative, which involves upgrading 37 existing STPs and constructing new ones.

The city's sewage treat-

ment capacity is set to increase from 792 MGD (million gallons per day) in 2023 to 964.5 MGD by December 2026, with a new STP planned at Delhi Gate and 40 new decentralised STPs (DSTPs) in the pipeline. Additionally, 14 existing STPs are scheduled for upgradation by December 2026.

Efforts are also being made to trap and divert 22 drains that flow into the Yamuna.

According to the DPCC's document, 10 drains have already been tapped, two are partially tapped and eight remain untapped.

Five major drains - Najafgarh, Ghazipur, Barapally, Maharanji Bagh and Morji Gate - are yet to be developed to divert 48.14 MGD of waste water by December 2025.

The plan also focuses on expanding the sewerage network in unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters, with 1,799 unauthorised colonies currently undergoing work. The target for completion is December 2026.

Addressing concerns over encroachment, the report states that over 1,500 acres of floodplain have been cleared in the past 31 months, with drone surveys assisting in further removal.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has been tasked with restoring riverfront areas, developing biodiversity parks and removing construction debris. A drone survey is also being conducted to assess and clear further encroachments, the plan stated.

For the beautification and restoration of the Yamuna riverfront, the plan includes the development of 11 biodiversity parks and wetland areas covering approximately 1,600 hectares.

The restoration of historical ghats is also a key focus, with Vasudev Ghat already developed and DDA working to conserve the old ghats.

Additionally, the removal of construction waste and debris from the floodplains is being prioritised, with the DDA coordinating efforts to clear materials left from bridge, metro and rail projects.

PM degree row Awarding degree public act under RTI Delhi HC told



New Delhi
In a hearing over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational records, the Delhi High Court was on Wednesday informed that awarding a degree to a student was not a private, but a public act, covered under the ambit of Right to Information (RTI).

Appearing before Justice Sachin Datta, senior advocate Shadan Farasat while representing RTI applicant Irshad who sought disclosure of the PM's degree, argued the Delhi University (DU) was undoubtedly a "public authority" under the RTI Act and divulging information on a degree could not be contested on the ground of locus or intent of the seeker.

The matter relates to an order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) on December 21, 2016, allowing inspection of records of all students who cleared the BA exam in 1978 -- the year Prime Minister Modi also passed it. The high court stayed the CIC order on January 23, 2017.

Prashad also informed the bench that UPPCB had filed an action-taken report on February 18 to which the bench said that faecal coliform levels were not mentioned in the report and that the report related to dates before January 12.

The AAG assured the bench that the state was taking corrective measures and a new report would be filed within a week.

Advocate Saurabh Tiwari appeared as the petitioner in the case.

city and refuted the existence of a fiduciary relationship between DU and its students in this instance.

"This is information, the creator of which is DU. It is not given by DU. It is not my degree given to DU," added Farasat.

"The RTI Act, he said, was "applicant agnostic" and "reason agnostic" and the onus was on the authorities to make out any case of exemption from disclosure.

"(The questions) 'Why do you need it? why you?' have been done away with. Public or citizen has an interest in everything public and the (question of) 'why are you canvassing?' is irrelevant in RTI. Any information with the public authority is included and exceptions have to be shown," submitted Farasat.

Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, appearing for another RTI applicant Neeraj, said under the election law, the educational qualification of a candidate had to be disclosed as public has the right to know.

In its plea challenging the CIC decision, DU called it an "arbitrary" order which was "untenable in law" as the information sought to be disclosed was a "third party personal information".

DU, through solicitor general Tushar Mehta, on February 11 argued that it held the information in a fiduciary capacity and "mere curiosity" in the absence of public interest did not entitle anyone to seek private information under RTI law.

Rahul Gandhi citizenship row Delhi HC asks status of Swamy's representation to govt



New Delhi
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to apprise it of the status of BJP leader Subramanian Swamy's representation given to the Ministry of Home Affairs over Rahul Gandhi's Indian citizenship.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela posted the hearing on March 26. "List on March 26 to enable the counsel for the Centre/additional solicitor general to complete their instructions especially keeping in view the document enclosed in the petition which is a letter dated April 29, 2019, issued by the foreign division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, to respondent number 2 (Rahul Gandhi)," the bench said.

Swamy said he wished to know the status of his representation.

His plea, filed by advocate Satya Sabharwal, argued on August 6, 2019, a letter was sent to the ministry alleging Gandhi had "voluntarily disclosed" to the British government that he was a citizen of British nationality, amounting to holding a British passport.

Swamy therefore said the Congress leader, being an Indian citizen, had violated Article 9 of the Constitution, read with the Indian Citizenship Act, and would cease to be an Indian citizen.

He claimed to have made several representations to the ministry inquiring about the status of his complaint but neither was any action taken nor was he intimated about it.

In the MHA's April 2019 letter to Gandhi, he was informed about Swamy's representation regarding his citizenship and he was reportedly asked to intimate the factual position in the matter within a fortnight of receipt of the com-

munication.

During the Wednesday's hearing, BJP worker from Karnataka S Vignesh Shishir, who has filed a petition in the Allahabad High Court on the issue of Gandhi's citizenship, said Swamy's plea was infructuous in view of the Centre's statement in the Allahabad High Court.

He said the Centre submitted before the Allahabad High Court that they were in the final stage of taking a decision based on his representation to them.

On being asked what he wanted from the Delhi High Court, Shishir said, "I am trying to submit that this particular case here has become infructuous particularly in view of the submission of government of India before the Allahabad High Court in my petition".

The bench questioned him whether the pendency of a plea in the Allahabad High Court created a bar on it to entertain this petition.

He said he was just making "supportive" submissions.

The bench asked the Centre's counsel to get instructions on the status of Swamy's complaint given to the authorities.

"This petition seeks a prayer only to the extent of decision on the representation given by the petitioner. That is all. We are not deciding substantively the issue raised by the petitioner in either of the matters, whether pending here or in Allahabad. We are not called upon to make any decision on the substantive issue raised," it said. The bench went on to add that based on Swamy's complaint some reply was called for by the government of India from Gandhi.

"What happened thereafter, he is anxious to know that. That's all. So seek instructions please," the court said.

CPCB report NGT slams UP body asks if it disputes water contamination finding

New Delhi
The National Green Tribunal on Wednesday slammed the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, asking whether it disputed the Central Pollution Control Board's finding on high levels of faecal coliform being found in the water at various locations in Prayagraj during the ongoing Mahakumbh.

A bench comprising NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Expert Member A Senthil Vel was hearing the issue of preventing sewage discharge into the



Ganga and Yamuna rivers in Prayagraj.

Additional advocate general Garima Prashad said the CPCB did not inform it about the places from where the water samples were taken.

The bench however asked

her if the UPPCB was disputing or challenging the report and said there was no statutory requirement for the CPCB to provide information before taking samples.

The bench also slammed the UPPCB saying the sam-

ple collection points did not matter and that it was enough that the stretch of the river was polluted.

Prashad also informed the bench that UPPCB had filed an action-taken report on February 18 to which the bench said that faecal coliform levels were not mentioned in the report and that the report related to dates before January 12.

The AAG assured the bench that the state was taking corrective measures and a new report would be filed within a week.

Advocate Saurabh Tiwari appeared as the petitioner in the case.

New Delhi Railway Station stampede: Delhi HC asks railways to take note of pti-preview-theweeek

New Delhi
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Railways to examine the fixing of maximum passengers and sale of platform tickets - issues raised in a PIL over the recent stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the authorities concerned to state in its affidavit, the details of its measures on the issues.

"Let the issues raised in the petition be examined, as suggested by the solicitor general, at the highest level at the Railway Board and thereafter an affidavit be filed by the respondent giving details of the decisions which might be taken by the Railway Board," the court ordered.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the matter was not taken in an adversarial manner and the Railways was bound to follow the law.

He said there was an "unprecedented" situation and assured the court that the is-



ssues raised in the PIL would be considered at the highest level.

The court said the PIL was not confined to the recent incident of stampede as it sought implementation of the existing legal provisions with respect to maximum number of passengers in a compartment and sale of platform tickets.

If the legal provisions were perhaps implemented adequately, such incidents of stampede could be avoided, it added.

The matter would come up on March 26.

A PIL was also filed in the Supreme Court on February 17, two days after the tragic incident that claimed 18 lives and left 15 injured, and sought immediate action to prevent such disasters in the future.

Murder trial of Dr. Asha Goel begins after 21-year delay

New Delhi
After more than two decades, the long-awaited trial for the brutal murder of Dr. Asha Goel has officially started, with the first witness testimony marking a critical step toward justice.

The case, which has faced repeated delays despite substantial evidence, is now moving forward in the Indian courts.

Dr. Asha Goel, a 63-year-old Canadian citizen and esteemed Obstetrician and Gynecologist, was murdered while visiting her brother's residence in Mumbai on August 22, 2003. She was attacked in her sleep and fought back against multiple assailants before being bludgeoned to death with a granite rock. The crime occurred in the upscale Malabar Hill area, inside the Sudhakar building on the 14th floor. Investigations initially focused on the Akhil brothers, Suresh Agrawal and Subhash Agrawal, and suspicions of an inheritance dispute as the motive. While Suresh Agrawal passed away in 2003, law enforcement continued its probe, leading



to the arrest of four individuals in 2006: Pradeep Parab, Manohar Shinde, PK Goenka, and Narendra Goel. Authorities allege that these men were hired by Suresh and Subhash to carry out the murder.

Dr. Goel had been advocating for her youngest brother, Shekhar, to receive a fair share of their father's estate, a position that reportedly placed her in conflict with Suresh and Subhash. The disputed assets, including high-value real estate in Mumbai, were at the center of the conflict.

Despite compelling evidence, including a confession

and even one of the accused have already passed away during this prolonged process.

Renowned prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, a recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri award, is now leading the case. Having handled numerous high-profile criminal and terrorism trials, Nikam has acknowledged the excessive delays and commended the Goel family's resilience in their pursuit of justice.

The case underscores broader issues, including delays in the judicial system, inheritance-related family disputes, and women's safety. The international nature of the case has also drawn attention from Canada, where Dr. Goel's family continues to await justice.

A key development is expected later this month with the testimony of Pradeep Parab, the key witness who turned approver. Dr. Goel's husband and three children - Sanjay, Rashmi, and Seema - who reside in North America, remain hopeful that justice will finally be served.

From RSS to Delhi CM office via student politics Rekha Gupta kept focus on women welfare

New Delhi
Former DUSU president and first-time MLA Rekha Gupta, who has had a long association with the RSS and is set to become the fourth woman chief minister of Delhi, has worked extensively for women's welfare.

The 50-year-old legislator from Shalimar Bagh was chosen as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly at the BJP legis-

lature party meeting on Wednesday. The party has returned to power in Delhi after over 25 years, ending the 10-year rule of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led AAP. Born in Haryana's Jajala, Gupta is a BCom graduate from Delhi University's Daulat Ram College. She later earned a law degree from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, and also practised as an advocate.

Gupta, who has had a 32-year association with the RSS, began her political journey with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) at Delhi University's Daulat Ram College in 1992. In 1995-96, she was the secretary of the Delhi University Students' Union and was its president in 1996-97.

In 2002, she joined the BJP and has been the national secretary of the party's youth wing. Gupta has also served as the BJP's women wing in charge in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

She is also the national vice-president of BJP Mahila Morcha.

After being elected as a councillor from North Pitampura in 2007, Gupta worked for the welfare of women and children. She launched initiatives like the Sumedha Yojana,

which supported economically weaker female students in pursuing higher education.

She was elected councillor thrice -- 2007-2012, 2012-17 and of Shalimar Bagh from 2022-25. As the head of the Women Welfare and Child Development Committee of the civic body, she led empowerment campaigns for women.

As the Leader of the

House in Delhi Assembly she is going to be the fourth woman chief minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit and Atishi. Also, she will be the fourth BJP chief minister in Delhi after Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Sushma Swaraj.

Following her swearing-in, she will be the only woman chief minister in any of the states being currently ruled by the BJP.

Union Minister accuses Chandigarh Police of abuse, breach of security upon visit to Punjab CM

Chandigarh
Union Minister for Railways, Ravneet Singh Bittu has filed a complaint with the Director General of Police (DGP), Chandigarh Police, alleging physical and verbal abuse by Chandigarh Police officers during his visit to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's residence in Chandigarh.

In his letter, Bittu detailed the incident: "They misbehaved with me, using verbal and physical abuse. A team led by DSP Uday Pal Singh consisting of two Assistant Sub-Inspectors and three constables verbally and physically abused me."

He described how the situation escalated when his vehicle was blocked by the police.

"After that, I entered my vehicle to leave, but DSP Uday Pal and his team stopped my car, surrounded by blocking my way with their cars. My security was alerted by this ambiguous action of Chandigarh Police of trying to breach my Z+ security," Bittu stated.

Perpetrators caught: Punjab DGP on recent cases of alleged blasts

Chandigarh
Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav has informed that the perpetrators behind the recent cases of alleged blasts in the border state have been arrested.

On the recent cases of alleged blasts in Punjab, DGP Gaurav Yadav said, "All the so-called grenade blasts, there have been 12 such cases, and all of them have been traced. In all the cases, we have caught the perpetrators."

He was speaking to reporters at a press conference on Wednesday. DGP Gaurav Yadav warned that "black sheep" in the police force are not going to be tolerated.

DGP Yadav said, "The police authorities in Punjab are undertaking an exercise to identify instances where police officers have been booked into FIRs, or there are allegations of misconduct against them. Seeing the evidence, action is being taken."

He said, "So far, there have been 52 dismissals of police officers, from constables to inspectors, for being involved in corrupt practices."

The officer pledged that Punjab Police is committed to rendering citizen-friendly police services.

Punjab CM Mann hands over govt job letters to 497 youth

Komal Ramola Chandigarh
Containing the mission employment, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Wednesday handed over appointment letters to 497 youth for government jobs. Along with this, the Chief Minister has set a new milestone by brightening the lives of 50,892 families within about three years of his tenure.

The Chief Minister today handed over appointment letters to the youth recruited in the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation, Department of School Education, Higher Education and Languages, Rural Development, and Department of Science, Technology and Environment.

Addressing the gathering at the Municipal Bhavan here, the Chief Minister said that it is a memorable occasion when these youths are becoming part of the family of the Punjab government. He hoped that these youths would become active participants in the socio-economic development of the state by joining these respective departments. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that for the first time in the history of the state, any government has given a record 50,892 jobs to the youth within 35 months of coming to power.

The Chief Minister said that it is a matter of



great pride for him that all the jobs have been given purely on the basis of merit without any corruption or nepotism. He said that the opposition parties make noise about jobs only because they were discriminating and never looked at these deserving youths. He said that during his tenure he never gave a single job to deserving youth. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the few jobs that were given during the previous governments were reserved only for close relatives or close relatives, while the common man was completely ignored.

The Chief Minister said that the state government fills all the posts as soon as they become vacant in any department. He said that a strict methodology has been adopted for the entire recruitment process, due to which not a single

appointment in these nearly 50,000 jobs has been challenged in any court so far. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that it is a matter of pride for the Punjab government that these youths have been given government jobs purely on the basis of merit.

The Chief Minister said that the incident of deporting the youth from America is a big lesson for all of us and the youth of the state should work hard here and achieve success in various fields instead of going abroad in search of a better future. He said that the state government is providing many opportunities to the youth to achieve success in various fields. Giving an example, Bhagwant Singh Mann said that more than 51,000 youths in the state have secured government jobs with hard

work, dedication and commitment.

The Chief Minister said that there are instances where the youth have got two to three jobs in the state during the last one year. He said that due to this there has been a reduction in the trend of migration as the youth who had earlier settled abroad are now returning to get government jobs. He said that even in today's program, a couple has come back from Canada to join government service and similarly a young man gave up the idea of going abroad because he got a job here. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that his government is giving jobs to the youth every day and the youth should take advantage of this situation and work here.

Calling it a historic turning point, the Chief Minister hoped that

The Chief Minister today handed over appointment letters to the youth recruited in the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation, Department of School Education, Higher Education and Languages, Rural Development, and Department of Science, Technology and Environment.

these jobs would change the fortunes of the youth. He said that this auditorium has witnessed many such programs in which the youth have got jobs in various government departments. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that this shows the commitment of the state government to ensure the welfare of the youth and open new avenues of employment for them.

Congratulating the youth, the Chief Minister said that now they have become an integral part of the government and now they should serve the people with missionary zeal. Bhagwant Singh Mann hoped that the newly recruited youth would use their pen for the welfare of the needy and backward sections of the society. He said that the newly recruited youth should ensure the greater welfare of the people so that every section of the society can benefit from it.

52 Punjab cops dismissed from service in a week on corruption charges

Chandigarh
Fifty-two Punjab Police officials booked for corrupt practices have been dismissed from service in a week, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Wednesday.

He said the dismissed police personnel including those from the rank of constables to inspectors.

"The message is very clear that black sheep in the police force will not be tolerated and strict action will be taken against them," the state police chief said, adding the force is committed to the zero tolerance policy on corruption.

Addressing the media here, Yadav said the action is being taken in accordance with the instructions of the Punjab government issued on February 13, emphasising transparency, accountability and integrity in public service delivery.

Since the instructions were issued, "we have dismissed 52 officers from the rank of constables to inspectors for being involved in corrupt practices and malpractices," he said.

"Police authorities in the state of Punjab in all the districts are undertaking an exercise, as per facts of each case, to identify instances where police officers have been booked and there are serious allegations of misconduct," he said.

"And seeing the evidence in each case, action as deemed fit is being taken," the DGP said.

He also referred to a recent case in which a



Station House officer in Faridkot was booked on corruption charges.

Yadav informed that the Punjab Police remains committed to delivery of citizen-friendly services through online platforms.

He said the state police will follow a model of the Delhi Police for 'E-FIRs' in motor vehicle theft cases, where a complainant can go to either to 'Saanji Kendra', or pushed onto a 'E-state level police station' which is going to be notified by the state government.

"From there an FIR will be registered and pushed to the concerned police station," he said.

"If the case is not traced within 21 days, then an untraced report will be generated and will be submitted in a court. For this, we are taking up the matter with the High Court and for obtaining its approval for completion of the entire process," he said.

This project is expected to be launched by the Punjab Police by mid-march, he added.

Full state honours for last rites of ex-MLAs distinguished people in Uttarakhand: Dhami

Dehradun
The last rites of former MLAs and people who make a mark in public life in Uttarakhand will be performed from now onwards with full state honours.

The announcement was made by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday during an obituary reference being made to former prime minister Manmohan Singh and former Bhagwanpur MLA Chandrasekhari Bhattewale by the state Assembly during its ongoing Budget Session.

Dhami rose from his seat to announce the decision when BSP MLA from Laksar Muhammad Shahzad said it was sad to see the former Bhagwanpur legislator not accorded state honours at his cremation.

"I attended his (Bhattewale's) funeral, MLAs Sanjay Batra and Adesh Chauhan were also there. "It was sad to see the former legislator not accorded state honours during cremation. It would not have cost



the state government much. I request the chief minister to make an announcement ensuring that all former MLAs get state honours during their last rites," Shahzad said.

Shahzad who represents the BSP thanked the chief minister for the announcement.

Earlier, paying tribute to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Dhami said the country will always remember his contribution as the finance minister in the Narasimha Rao government.

He also described Bhattewale as an MLA who worked tirelessly for the welfare of his constituency.

CM Slams Sukhbir and Jakhar for Enjoying Feasts While Food Growers Are Undergoing Fast

Chandigarh
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Wednesday slammed the traditional political leaders especially Sukhbir Badal and Sunil Jakhar for posing while enjoying weddings, receptions and feasts whereas food growers of the state are undergoing fast to get their demands met.

The Chief Minister said that this clearly reflects the insensitivity and insincerity of this 'elite' political class that has ruled the state for decades. He said that these political leaders have always hobbled with each other to secure their interests while ignoring the matters of the state and its people.

Bhagwant Singh Mann said that these leaders spit venom against each other from their respective stages but embrace each other in such private functions which expose their dubious face.

The Chief Minister quipped that these leaders will justify their move by saying that this is their social obligation but they forget



that due to their venomous speeches the social fabric of the state is disturbed adding that these leaders divide the people for their vested political interests but shamefully are hand in glove with each other. He said that these political leaders befooled the people as in villages of state people fight with each other on the name of political parties but these leaders attend the marriages and functions of each other and

The Chief Minister said that this clearly reflects the insensitivity and insincerity of this 'elite' political class that has ruled the state for decades.

embrace them which is surprising. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that such people should be taught a lesson and people should always elect the government of the common man.

The Chief Minister reiterated that the traditional parties are envious of him because he hails from a common family. He said that these leaders who believed that they have divine right to rule the state due to which they

Haryana Power Utilities: Efficiency, Losses & Renewable Energy Focus

Chandigarh
Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC) Chairman Nand Lal Sharma on Wednesday directed power utilities to enhance efficiency, reduce losses and accelerate renewable energy adoption, according to a statement.

HERC Chairman has directed power utilities to enhance efficiency, reduce losses and accelerate renewable energy adoption, said the HERC statement.

HERC convened its 31st State Advisory Committee meeting under Sharma's chairmanship at Panichkula.

The meeting focused on enhancing operational efficiency, minimising power losses, and accelerating the adoption of renewable energy in Haryana's power sector, it said.

Senior officials from power utilities, including Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN), Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (UHBVN), Haryana Vidut Parsaran Nigam (HVPN), and Haryana Power Generation Corporation Ltd (HPGCL), presented their progress reports.

Sharma emphasised the significant need to improve operational efficiency and reduce the gap between the average cost of supply and average revenue realisation.

Strict Action against those involved in Sex Determination Practices: CM Saini

Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini directed officers to ensure the timely implementation of public welfare schemes and policies of both the Central and State Governments at the ground level, ensuring that the common people receive quick benefits. He emphasized that it is the government's responsibility to make citizens' lives easier and more prosperous. To achieve this, all officers must prioritize addressing the problems and complaints of the public.

The Chief Minister gave these directions

while chairing the State Level DISHA Committee meeting via video conferencing with Administrative Secretaries and Deputy Commissioners, here today.

The Chief Minister issued strict instructions to the Deputy Commissioners to complete the geo-tagging of applications from about 77,000 beneficiaries pending under the scheme within the next 15 days. This will ensure the timely release of installments for house construction to these beneficiaries.

Additionally, the Chief Minister directed that the survey work be expedited to prepare



a new list under the Pradhan Mantri Awas

Yojana (Rural). During the meet-

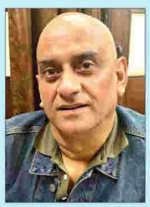
ing, it was informed that under

the Mukhyamantri Gramin Awas Yojana 2.0, launched to provide housing for poor families with an annual income of up to Rs 1.80 lakh, plots of 50 square yards have been allocated in Mahagram Panchayat and 100 square yards in general Gram Panchayats. In the first phase, plots were allotted to 4,533 families through a draw in 62 Gram Panchayats (61 general Gram Panchayats and 1 Mahagram Panchayat). These beneficiaries will receive funds to construct houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).

Additionally, 1,000 Panchayats have been identified for the next phase.

The Chief Minister directed that strict action be taken against those who conduct or facilitate fetal sex determination. He emphasized that the Health and Women and Child Development departments should collaborate and work swiftly in this regard. Additionally, the Deputy Commissioners were directed to identify locations for 'Sanjha Bazar' to provide to construct houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).

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By Dr. Anil Singh, Editor, STAR Views

“Rekha Gupta: BJP’s Strategic Bet to Empower Women and Transform Delhi Politics”

and continuity. Rekha Gupta’s appointment is not just about gender representation; it is a well-thought-out strategy that merges governance goals with political symbolism. The BJP has effectively played the women empowerment card, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to giving greater political roles to women. At the same time, it aims to win back urban voters for a fresh alternative to AAP’s governance model.



political novice; she has been deeply involved in Delhi’s civic affairs and party organization for years. As a leader, she carries an impeccable record of grassroots engagement, organizational leadership, and a strong connection with women voters.

BJP’s Multi-Pronged Political Strategy:

The BJP’s move to install Rekha Gupta as Delhi’s CM is not just about making history; it’s a calculated political maneuver designed to shut out multiple challenges in one go. The strategy operates at several levels. Positioning BJP as a Party Committed to Women’s Leadership

By placing a woman in the top post, the BJP effectively counters criticism that it lacks female representation in leadership roles. It builds on the party’s broader narrative of empowering women through policy initiatives. Weakening the AAP Stronghold. The BJP has been seeking to make inroads in Delhi for over a decade, but AAP’s dominance has been a roadblock. With Arvind Kejriwal and his party facing credibility issues, Rekha Gupta’s appointment allows the BJP to present a fresh, corruption-free, and governance-focused alternative. Realigning Voter Perception. AAP’s brand of politics, initially rooted in anti-corruption and welfare schemes, has started to lose its appeal. The BJP, with Rekha Gupta at the fore-

front, is crafting a new governance model that prioritizes law and order, infrastructure, and urban planning. Strengthening BJP’s 2029 Roadmap

Looking beyond Delhi, this move is also significant for the BJP’s long-term electoral goals. By projecting strong women leaders in key positions, the party is laying the groundwork for expanding its support base in urban India, particularly among female voters.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Rekha Gupta Government:

While the political symbolism of a woman CM is powerful, governance in Delhi is a different challenge altogether. The new BJP-led government will have to navigate several complex issues. Centre-State Relations – Delhi’s unique governance model requires a careful balance between the CM’s authority and the Lieutenant Governor’s powers, which often lead to friction. Infrastructure and Urban Planning – Rekha Gupta’s administration must deliver on Delhi’s pressing infrastructure needs, including traffic congestion, pollution control, and

public transportation. Law and Order – Women’s safety remains a top concern, and as a woman CM, Gupta will be under pressure to implement concrete measures to improve security. Education and Healthcare – AAP’s governance model has focused heavily on these two sectors, and BJP will need to present an alternative vision that builds upon or improves existing frameworks.

A way Forward: Defining Moment in Delhi’s Political Evolution:

Rekha Gupta’s appointment as Delhi’s first woman Chief Minister is more than just a political move—it is a defining moment in the city’s political evolution. The BJP has demonstrated that it is willing to break conventional norms to reshape Delhi’s governance model.

By leveraging the symbolism of women empowerment while strategically countering AAP’s influence, the BJP has positioned itself as the party of change in Delhi. However, the success of this move will ultimately depend on Gupta’s ability to deliver on governance and address the pressing issues that Delhi’s citizens face daily.

As the new BJP-led government takes shape, all eyes will be on how Rekha Gupta navigates the complex political and administrative landscape of Delhi. If she succeeds, she will not only cement her place in history but also set a powerful precedent for women leaders in Indian politics.

(The writer is an Editor, STAR Views, New Delhi)

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has always been known for its strategic political moves, and its latest decision to install Rekha Gupta as the Chief Minister of Delhi is no exception. By choosing a woman leader for the top post in the capital, the BJP has sent a powerful message—one that aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s commitment to women’s empowerment and marks a significant shift in the political dynamics of Delhi. This move not only strengthens the party’s positioning in the city but also addresses multiple political, social, and governance challenges in a single stroke.

Women Power in Delhi Politics: A Calculated Move:

Delhi, despite being the national capital, has never had a woman Chief Minister since Sheila Dikshit, whose 15-year tenure under the Congress rule from 1998 to 2013 set a benchmark in governance. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has dominated Delhi’s political landscape since 2015, with Arvind Kejriwal at the helm. However, with the AAP now embroiled in multiple controversies, including governance failures, corruption charges, and internal rifts, the BJP has seized the moment to present an alternative leadership that embodies both change

Historical Context: Women in Indian Politics and BJP’s Approach:

Women have played a crucial role in Indian politics, from the time of Indira Gandhi to contemporary leaders like Manama Banerjee, Mayawati, and Vasundhara Raje. However, despite their contributions, women have often been underrepresented in chief ministerial roles, particularly in large urban states like Delhi.

The BJP, under Modi’s leadership, has made women’s empowerment a cornerstone of its policies, as seen in initiatives like the Ujjwala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and the recent Women’s Reservation Bill, which ensures 33% reservation for women in legislatures. The decision to install Rekha Gupta as Delhi’s CM aligns perfectly with this broader ideological narrative.

For decades, Delhi politics has been male-dominated, with governance largely shaped by strong male figures like Sheila Dikshit, Arvind Kejriwal, and before them, leaders like Madan Lal Khurana. By making Rekha Gupta the face of its government, the BJP aims to disrupt this norm and establish a new leadership paradigm.

Rekha Gupta: The Right Candidate for BJP’s Vision:

Rekha Gupta is not a

political novice; she has been deeply involved in Delhi’s civic affairs and party organization for years. As a leader, she carries an impeccable record of grassroots engagement, organizational leadership, and a strong connection with women voters.

Her elevation as Chief Minister is designed to appeal to multiple voter segments. Women Voters – By placing a woman at the helm, the BJP seeks to attract women voters who have been central to its electoral successes in other states. Middle-Class and Urban Electorate – Given her urban political background, Gupta resonates with the aspirations of Delhi’s educated middle class, which has been disenchanted with AAP’s governance in recent years. Youth and First-Time Voters – As a fresh face, she embodies change and progress, key factors that can drive voter enthusiasm among the younger demographic.

Hindu Consolidation – The BJP has been strategic in its approach to consolidate the Hindu vote bank, and Gupta’s leadership further reinforces this identity politics in a city where communal and ideological debates are deeply entrenched.

A strong and constructive opposition is essential for a healthy democracy

Priyanka Saurabh



By Priyanka Saurabh

To strengthen democracy, the government and the opposition must work together constructively. But the quality of legislative deliberation in India has deteriorated further due to growing polarization in parliamentary debates, frequent disruptions, and the dominance of rhetoric over substantive debates. Inadequate policy debate hinders genuine dialogue between the government and the opposition. Partisan issues are often used to derail discussions on important subjects that require broad national consensus, such as foreign policy and technological development. The effectiveness of parliamentary debates is diminished when political animosities lead to chaos rather than debate. The government’s legislative agenda and its unwillingness to meaningfully engage with the opposition show that it is unwilling to take responsibility for its actions. Parliamentary processes should facilitate debate and policy reform, but growing partisanship has weakened these processes. Pre-legislative consultations and discussions on important policies are not taking place with much

effort.

Government needs a strong opposition to maintain checks and balances. Recognizing this, the American Founding Fathers established multiple levels of government. They were very wary of big government, which is why they thought it was difficult and complicated to run. They were unaware of other members using legitimate but unethical means to prevent legislation from being passed. “Talking over a bill” or “not talking over a bill” refers to unnecessary speechmaking and time-wasting aimed at preventing a meaningful bill or law from actually being passed. The opposition can sabotage the government and prevent laws from being passed, rendering them ineffective. In the absence of a strong opposition, the current government becomes autocratic and unaccountable and can create laws that benefit a few people or a specific tribe or group. As the saying goes, “Power corrupts, and sadly, this does happen. The so-called ‘benevolent’ kings of the past were not actually in positions of authority. Before the first Nigerian military takeover in the 1960s, there was a strong opposition in the country.

However, divide-and-rule tactics and imprisoning leaders on charges of treason succeeded in crushing it.

As a result, people killed all those they considered corrupt because they felt their complaints were not being heard and the government had become irresponsible and corrupt. This resulted in coups. Civil wars broke out after politicians belonging mainly to a particular tribe were assassinated. Even if the leader believes he is acting in the best interest of the people, people will feel oppressed if they have no say in the matter. The ability of a current or former leader to address representatives of the people and hold them accountable for their actions is amazing. All dictators start by suppressing any form of dissent in the press, which is another important element. This then gives them the opportunity to attack non-governmental organizations.

One way to improve parliamentary functioning is to focus on policy rather than political rhetoric. Parliamentary debates should prioritize governance issues rather than old-fashioned blame games or election campaigning.

Frequent, organized contact between the opposition and the ruling party can promote issue-based dialogue and help avoid confrontation. Mechanisms such as parliamentary committees should be strengthened to ensure that policy debates remain fruitful.

Explaining the government’s actions through regular discussions on urgent national issues is something the Prime Minister and other important ministers should do. It is possible to guarantee accountability by reviving forums like Question Hour and organized policy discussions. Instead of creating political divisions, foreign policy, development, and economic transformation should be seen as party issues that require long-term consensus. Parliamentary disruptions should be reduced by establishing more stringent rules and ethical norms for discussions. It is necessary to enhance the role of the Speaker and parliamentary committees in maintaining decorum and guaranteeing equitable participation. Constructive criticism should be the role of the opposition party. Issues and bills are more debated and discussed because of the opposition; otherwise, they will be

passed without any discussion or consideration of the needs of others, which would not stand the test of time and could turn it into autocracy. On any important issue, it is the opposition party that will go to war.

Effective governance requires constructive cooperation between the government and the opposition. Since the government is the main body in charge, it is its duty to lead efforts to reach a compromise and ensure that debate in Parliament focuses on solving India’s problems rather than widening political divides. In a democracy, the vigor and strength of the opposition is often an indicator of its health. Strengthening the opposition in India requires strengthening not just political parties but the overall democratic system. Important policies include promoting internal democracy within parties, providing equal access to the media, and allocating state funds. A strong and successful opposition is essential to make democracy dynamic, responsive, and accountable.

(Priyanka Saurabh, Research Scholar in Political Science)

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.

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

Solution, Sudoku

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

THE WISDOM TREE

BY SUVEEN KUMAR

STORY OF HAPPINESS

‘This moment. The moment that you have right now. The moment that is passing right now is the only moment you own. The rest of the moments are far away in the future that you have no access to. The moment you can spend is ‘this’ and the only thing you can buy it ‘now’. If you not sure how to live this moment, let this moment live in you. If you are not sure how to feel at this moment feel you deep. If happiness can’t convince you to follow it, let also sadness not trick you to shallow it. I know you have heard enough about happiness, you have learned enough about happiness, you have lived enough around happiness, you have slipped enough around happiness. I accept it did not stand with you when you needed it the most, it did not bond with you when you wanted it the most, it did not plan with you when you thought about it, it did down with you when you

when you were flooded in sorrow. Yet, keeps coming to you, yet it keeps begging to you, yet it keeps fighting with you, to come with it, to sit understand with it that is bonded by its nature, it comes and goes it can’t stay, it walks so wide it can be late. It is happiness but it has its own sorrow, it makes you smile but it also cries. It cries like a baby because everyone wants it, a few of them have it but no one can keep it. It is happiness it has its own story, its own fate, its own language its own state. Some laugh with it, some laugh at it, some swings with it some check at it.



One who is child lives in it, one who is young sings in it, and one who is old bleeds in it. Some who are high stay in it, some who are wise stay away from it, some who are wrong dies for it and some who are right sighs for it.

Moral : Happiness makes you story and you make its.

TOP STORY

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India, Malaysia agree to form joint focus group to address non-traditional maritime security threats

■ The two sides held wide-ranging discussions on effective and practical initiatives to further expand bilateral defence engagements, and on regional and global issues.

New Delhi
India and Malaysia on Wednesday identified ways to deepen existing defence collaborations between the two nations, particularly in the fields of maritime security, multilateral engagements and defence industry, as they agreed to form a "joint focus group" to address non-traditional maritime security threats.



Both sides also identified steps to further enhance cooperation in emerging areas such as cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Indian defence ministry said.

The 13th Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) meeting took place in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday.

The meeting was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Lokman Hakim Bin Ali, Sec-

retary General, Ministry of Defence, Malaysia.

"Both sides expressed happiness at the growing bilateral defence cooperation with regular engagements between the two armed forces in recent years," the defence ministry

said in a statement. The two sides held wide-ranging discussions on effective and practical initiatives to further expand bilateral defence engagements, and on regional and global issues.

"Both chairs identified

steps to further enhance cooperation in emerging areas such as cybersecurity and AI. They identified ways to deepen the existing collaborations, particularly in defence industry, maritime security, and multilateral engagements," the statement

said. "They also agreed to form a joint focus group to address non-traditional maritime security threats," it said.

"Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the new initiatives under the defence pillar of the comprehensive strategic partnership, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim during the latter's visit to India in August 2024," the statement said.

India and Malaysia also exchanged the finalised terms of reference (TOR) on the establishment of a strategic affairs working group, the defence ministry said.

"This forum will act as a consultative mechanism intermediate between the MIDCOM (Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee) and the two sub-

committees to progress all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation," the statement said.

The two sides also exchanged the finalised TOR on the establishment of an Su-30 forum as an outcome of the MIDCOM.

The Su-30 forum will "enable closer cooperation between the two air forces in exchanging expertise and best practices in Su-30 maintenance," the statement said.

Rajesh Kumar Singh highlighted the capability of the Indian defence industry, particularly its potential to collaborate with the Malaysian companies and the armed forces in their capability enhancement and modernisation efforts.

He also congratulated Malaysia on assuming the chairmanship of ASEAN and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus, and wished

its defence ministry the best for conducting the ADMM Plus and ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' meetings this year, the statement said. "India supports ASEAN centrality and unity, which is a crucial element of India's Indo-Pacific vision. The defence secretary reiterated India's support to Malaysia's endeavours as the ASEAN chair in promoting a stronger, unified, and prosperous ASEAN that plays a central role in shaping the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region," it said.

India considers Malaysia as an "important partner" in the Indo-Pacific as Malaysia lies at the confluence of three key foreign policy visions, i.e., the Act East Policy, SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, the statement said.

Misri briefs Parliamentary body following PM Modi's visit to US



New Delhi
India-US relations were at the centre of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's briefing to a parliamentary committee here on Wednesday, with members quizzing him on a host of issues, including the deportation of illegal Indian immigrants from the US.

Sources said Misri assured members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs about the measures being taken by the Indian government to ensure that deportees are not mistreated.

The committee's chairperson Shashi Tharoor said it was a "very thorough briefing", noting that the discussion focused mostly on the US because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the country.

"The meeting's agenda was 'current foreign policy developments'," Tharoor said. "Every question you can imagine to do with the Indo-US relationship in the context of the prime minister's visit was raised, discussed and the foreign secretary gave all necessary answers."

Other issues involving current developments, including the visit of the Qatar Amir to India, will be taken up at another meeting of the committee, he added. Sources said Misri's remarks on deportation echoed the statement of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Parliament on February 6.

Jaishankar had said the process of deportation is not new and has been ongoing for several years and added that the government is engaging with the US to ensure that deported Indians are not mistreated.

Modi govt diverting attention instead of creating employment: Congress

New Delhi
Hitting out at the Centre over the issue of unemployment, the Congress on Wednesday claimed that the situation is so bad that lakhs of youth are forced to go abroad to find employment and alleged that the Modi government is constantly engaged in diverting the country's attention.



Congress general secretary-in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared a media report which cited a report by Mercer-Mettl - India's Graduate Skill Index 2025 - which claims that only 42.6 per cent of Indian graduates are employable, meaning 57.4 per cent are unable to find work.

In a post in Hindi on X, Ramesh said, "Today the youth is frustrated and disappointed with unemployment. The situation is so bad that lakhs of youth are

forced to go abroad to find employment, but the Modi government is constantly engaged in diverting the country's attention instead of creating employment."

The frightening figures of the report show that 57.4 per cent of graduates in India are unemployed because private companies and industries are not considering them employable, considering there is a difference between degree and skill, he said.

"The entire focus is on benefiting a few of its selected friends, due to which more than half of the youth in India fail to get a job," Ramesh said.

Youth are the future of the country, but if they remain unemployed, then what kind of development will there be, Ramesh asked.

"The government should answer: Why has the education system not been changed according to the needs of the industries? When will skill development and vocational training be brought into the mainstream?" he said.

What is the government's strategy to provide employment to degree holders, Ramesh further asked.

The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy and raising concerns over increasing unemployment and price rise.

Amit Shah, Nadda among BJP leaders attend meeting at new RSS office

New Delhi
Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other BJP leaders, including party chief J P Nadda, visited the RSS' new office here on Wednesday to participate in a conference held in the presence of the organisation's chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Rashtriya Swamiseswark Sangh national general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale was also present at the "karyakata sammelan" at the office in Jhandewalan along with other senior functionaries of the organisation as well as office-bearers and volunteers, including those representing RSS affiliates.

The newly constructed high rise complex, Keshav Kunj, has been built over eight years at a cost of nearly Rs 150 crore.



According to sources, the three 12-storey towers with around 300 rooms and offices were built with contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to RSS ideology and its work.

The RSS' Delhi office along with that of some organisations associated with it have gradually shifted to the new high-rise complex

over the past few months. The organisation had been carrying out its activities out of rented premises since 2016 when the rebuilding and renovation exercise started at the place from where it had been working since 1962.

The new premises are a vast change from the earlier two-storey building, fusing modern technology with ancient architectural practices to make it airy and exposed to ample sunlight.

The three towers (ground floor plus 12 floors) are named Sadhna, Prerna and Archana. One of its biggest auditoriums is named after Ashok Singhal, a leading Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) functionary closely linked to the Ram temple movement. This modern auditorium can seat 463 persons. Another hall can accommodate an audience of 650 members.

The RSS office has accommodation facilities for its functionaries and members besides a library, health clinic and a sewage treatment plant. It also has solar power facilities to provide for part of its total electricity needs.

Mullaperiyar Dam row: SC asks supervisory panel to resolve issues raised by TN

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the newly-constituted panel overseeing the safety of Mullaperiyar Dam to examine the issues of repair and maintenance raised by the Tamil Nadu government and file a report.



A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh said the chairman of the committee, reconstituted on January 3 by the Centre, would convene a meeting of officials from the warring states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in a week and try to settle the issues raised by Tamil Nadu amicably.

The bench said there were multiple cases pending before the top court seeking overlapping reliefs for or against either of the states, and one of the benches listed an issue before a three-judge bench.

In the interest of justice, said the court, it would be prudent that all the petitions on Mullaperiyar Dam were clubbed and heard by a three-judge bench. The bench, therefore, directed for clubbing all the pending matters and placing it before the Chief Justice for the matters to be listed before an appropriate bench.

The National Human Rights Commission chief's remarks came during an open house discussion on "Ensuring privacy and human rights in the digital era: A focus on corporate digital responsibility" held at its premises, with some participants joining virtually, according to an NHRC statement on Wednesday.

Some of the important suggestions that emanated from the discussion include simplifying user agreements and policy frameworks to enhance consumer understanding and control over personal data; establishing "clear accountability" structures for data breaches, especially for research institutions and third-party data processors; and strengthening user consent frameworks for greater transparency and informed decision-making.

Having "explicit penal provisions for non-compliance; need for bilateral agreements to address cross-border security and

Safeguarding privacy as a human right in digital world is necessary: NHRC chief

New Delhi
NHRC chairperson Justice (ret'd) V Ramasubramanian emphasised that safeguarding "privacy as a human right" in the digital world is necessary, even as he pointed out that there is a "significant decline" in value systems and one must bear its consequences.

The National Human Rights Commission chief's remarks came during an open house discussion on "Ensuring privacy and human rights in the digital era: A focus on corporate digital responsibility" held at its premises, with some participants joining virtually, according to an NHRC statement on Wednesday.

Addressing the participants, the NHRC chairperson "emphasised that safeguarding privacy as a human right in the digital



Justice Ramasubramanian highlighted that "maintaining digital hygiene is crucial". He also pointed out the "significant decline in value systems, cautioning that one must bear the consequences of this shift", it said.

The NHRC chairperson reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to fostering inclusive discussions on digital rights and corporate accountability for developing a robust regulatory framework that balances innovation, security, and individual privacy.

The intensity of the problem that arises due to misuse of data and data breaches were extensive-

ly discussed during the meeting.

Further, several key provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 were also discussed, it said.

Many participants raised concerns over the "extensive control exerted by global technology companies on user data, which complicates regulatory enforcement". Law enforcement agencies often face challenges in accessing critical data due to data storage in offshore centres, the statement said.

Additionally, the increasing reliance on digital platforms makes maintaining individual privacy more challenging, it said. The participants noted that consumers have limited choices in consenting to data collection, as many business models mandate data sharing. The existing Do-Not-Disturb (DND) mechanism by TRAI was deemed ineffective, the NHRC said.

The participants included Shashiendra Trivedi, Chief General Manager in Charge, Department of Information Technology, Reserve Bank of India; Deepak Goel, Group Coordinator (Cyber Law), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology; Ankur Rastogi, Principal Project Engineering, EGSTM, Centre For Railway Information Systems, among others.

Ensure child care feeding rooms in public buildings: SC to states

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday outlined the importance of separate spaces for child care and feeding of infants in public buildings and asked states to ensure such facilities were provided.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Prasanna B Varale said setting up such facilities would ensure privacy of mothers and prove beneficial for infants.

In existing public spaces, as far as practicable, the state governments may ensure such facilities were provided, added the court.

"In so far as public buildings which are at the stage of planning and construction at public places, the state governments may ensure that sufficient space is reserved for the purposes referred to above," said the bench.

The top court was hearing a plea seeking directions to construct feeding rooms, child care rooms or any other facilities for infants and mothers in public spaces.

The Centre's counsel said the secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development on February 27, 2024, issued a communication on the issue to chief secretaries and administrators of all states and union territories (UT).

Saying it was conscious that it issued no notice to states and UTs, the bench

expressed satisfaction over the secretary's communication incorporating the prayers mentioned in the plea.

"On a perusal of the same, we find that the advice for setting up of the aforesaid facilities at public places is for the purpose of ensuring privacy and ease of discharging duties of mothers who have young children and for the benefit of the infants," it added.

The bench said if the advice was acted upon by the states, it would go a long way in facilitating privacy to young mothers and infants at the time of feeding. "We find that the said advice which has been issued by the central government is in accordance with the fundamental rights ensured under Articles 14 and 15 (3) of the Constitution," said the court.

The court directed the Centre to incorporate the advisory in the form of a reminder communication to the chief secretaries and administrators of the states and UTs along with a copy of its order.

The petitioner's counsel said states complying with the advisory issued by the Centre on February 27, 2024, would serve the purpose of filing the plea.

The bench disposed of the plea and asked the Centre to comply with its direction within two weeks.

Won't tolerate disrespect to Maha Kumbh, Sanatan Dharma: CM Yogi

Won't tolerate Opposition's attempt to malign Mahakumbh with false narratives: Adityanath

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday lambasted opposition parties for their critical statements on the Maha Kumbh, saying their attempts to 'malign' the event with false narratives and disrespect Sanatan Dharma will not be tolerated.

Speaking in the state assembly, he said the Maha Kumbh was not just a religious event but a symbol of India's cultural and spiritual heritage but the opposition has been spreading "false propaganda", disregarding its significance.

Adityanath assured full support to the devotees affected by the January 29 Maha Kumbh with false narratives will not be tolerated," he said on the second day of the Budget Session.

Responding to statements made by opposition leaders in the Assembly, he said they are trying to disrupt the sacred event with baseless allegations. He accused parties like the Samajwadi Party (SP), of politicising the tragedy.

They are trying to "mislead people", but the state's BJP government is committed to making the event historic and grand, he said.

"Sanatan Dharma is the soul of India, and it is our duty to uphold its dignity. The opposition's attempts to malign the Maha Kumbh with false narratives will not be tolerated," he said on the second day of the Budget Session.

Referring to critical statements made by opposition leaders in the Assembly, he accused them of trying to disrupt the sacred event with baseless allegations.

He added that the opposition had been constantly engaged in spreading "false propaganda" against the Maha Kumbh, disregarding its spiritual and cultural significance.

U'khand Vidhan Sabha goes paperless proceedings to be digitised

Dehradun:

The Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha has worn a new look by adopting the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) under which the proceedings and day-to-day workings of the assembly will be digitised.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami inaugurated the e-Vidhan Sabha at the state assembly here at the start of the budget session on Tuesday.

Assembly Speaker Ritu Khanduri and cabinet ministers were present during the inauguration.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs described it as a "momentous leap for Uttarakhand".

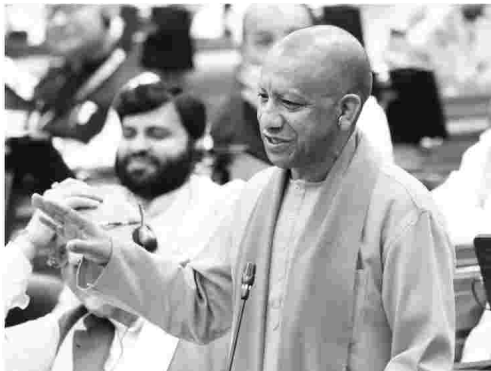
By embracing the NeVA, Uttarakhand Assembly has become a digital House, it said. The e-Vidhan Sabha system has been adopted to make the work of the Uttarakhand Assembly digital and paperless.

Through this, the agenda of business, answers to questions asked in the Assembly and other documents will now be made available online to the MLAs.

Under this, tablets have been installed on the tables of the MLAs in the Assembly, and all the documents are being made available to them digitally.

Big screens have been put up on three walls of the assembly to display the proceedings of the House live.

This will not only help in environmental protection, but the proceedings of the Assembly will also be conducted with more efficiency, it said.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday lambasted opposition parties for their critical statements on the Maha Kumbh, saying their attempts to 'malign' the event with false narratives and disrespect Sanatan Dharma will not be tolerated.

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expenditure of the Maha Kumbh, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had "falsely" claimed "thousands" died in the stampede. Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee called it "Mrityu Kumbh", or Kumbh of Death, he said.

Jaya Bachchan of the SP alleged dead bodies were thrown into the Ganga, and RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav dismissed the event as useless, Adityanath said.

These "irresponsible statements" are "a direct insult to Sanatan Dharma's biggest event", he said.

He reaffirmed that his government had made every effort to make the Maha Kumbh a remarkable event, and so far, over 56 crore devotees have taken the holy dip. Further taking a jibe at the opposition, he said those who opposed the Maha Kumbh initially, quietly came and take a dip in the Sangam.

"Journalists' Grand Convention in Shimla: Assembly Speaker and Former Minister Participated, Several Journalists Honored"



Shimla: The four-day National Symposium and Felicitation Ceremony, organized by the Indian Journalists Welfare Forum, concluded grandly in Shimla. On this occasion, Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania attended as the chief guest, while former Cabinet Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Suresh Bharadwaj was present as the special guest.

Several journalists from across the country participated in the event, discussing the evolving nature of journalism and its challenges. Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania emphasized the importance of press freedom and its

social role, stating that journalists play an invaluable role as the fourth pillar of democracy. He assured that he would recommend a pension scheme for journalists in Himachal Pradesh, similar to that of the Haryana government.

During the felicitation ceremony, journalists from various states were honored for their outstanding contributions. Indian Journalists Welfare Forum's National President Pawan Ashri, General Secretary Jasbir Singh Duggal, and other senior officials were also present at the event. Discussions were held on journalists' issues and rights, aiming to strengthen the field of journalism in the future.

Himachal Govt committed to strengthening healthcare sector: CM

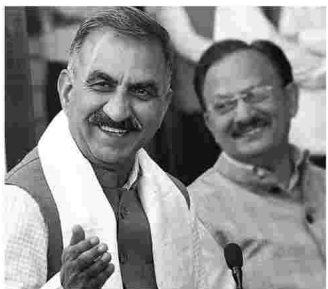
Shimla:

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu has said that the state government is committed to strengthen the healthcare sector and has taken a significant step by granting full salary to MBBS doctors pursuing post-graduate studies or specialized training in India or abroad.

"Previously, doctors on study leave received only 40 percent of their salary, which was discouraging them from advancing their medical education," he said.

These doctors balance patient care responsibilities with their educational commitments, which was vital for both their professional growth and the state's healthcare system, he added.

"By ensuring full pay during study leave, the government aims to support doctors in balancing their educational aspirations with their professional responsibilities. This move would enhance the quality of medical



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training, encourage specialization, and ultimately improve healthcare services across the state," said the Chief Minister.

Once these doctors complete their higher studies, they would serve in government health institutions, contributing to a more advanced and well-equipped healthcare system in Himachal Pradesh, he added.

"The present state government has prioritized healthcare by launching various initiatives to provide specialized medical ser-

VICES within the state. Significant investments have been made to procure advanced medical equipment for medical colleges, reducing the need for patients to seek treatment outside the state," said Sukhu.

Super-specialist doctors and MDs would play a crucial role in strengthening healthcare services, ensuring better patient outcomes and making quality medical care more accessible to the people of Himachal Pradesh, he added.

Prayagraj makes history with the Namami Gange Mission initiative

Mahakumbh Nagar:

Mahakumbh 2025 has transcended beyond a spiritual ritual; it has evolved into a mass movement dedicated to cleanliness and environmental conservation. Under the Namami Gange Mission, 10 sewage treatment plants (STPs) have been activated to preserve the purity and sanctity of the Ganga, while work is progressing rapidly on three new STPs in Salori, Rasulabad, and Naini. Additionally, 37 drains have been fully tapped and treated, ensuring the cleanliness of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

To provide a clean and hygienic experience for devotees, the fair area has been equipped with 12,000 FRP toilets, 16,100 prefabricated steel toilets, 20,000 community urinals, and 20,000 garbage bins. Waste disposal is managed efficiently with 37.75 lakh liner bags, ensuring the area remains spotless despite the massive footfall.

A team of 1500



trained 'Ganga Sevadoots' is actively raising awareness among devotees about cleanliness and Ganga conservation. This mission is being reinforced through street plays, poster campaigns, and public dialogues, transforming cleanliness into a collective movement.

Namami Ganga Communication Head, Najeeb Ahsan, stated that efforts toward biodiversity conservation, cleanliness, and the Ganga's ecology are being presented innovatively at

to environmental protection efforts. New ghats constructed under the Namami Ganga Mission have been designed with eco-friendly technologies and solar lighting, modern changing rooms, and comfortable seating arrangements. Regular cleanliness drives at the ghats ensure the continuous preservation of the Ganga's sanctity.

Under the 'Paint My City' campaign, the walls and public spaces of Prayagraj are adorned with vibrant artwork and messages promoting environmental conservation. This initiative blends cleanliness with cultural awareness, leaving a lasting impact on visitors.

At Mahakumbh 2025, river ghats are being cleaned with the help of Ganga Task Force, voluntary organizations, and devotees. Special efforts are being made in waste management, water purification, and public awareness to ensure the Ganga remains clean and uninterrupted.

MP Rajkumar Chahar organised 'MP Jan Chaupal'

Rajesh Tomar/ Akash Jain

Member of Parliament Rajkumar Chahar organised MP Jan Chaupal on Wednesday in Gandhi Smarak Inter College, Jaingara campus of Fatehpur Sikri Vidhan Sabha to make the public welfare schemes of the central and state government to reach the common people.

Addressing the Chaupal, the MP said that the officers should solve the problems of the public and not complicate them. Regarding the large number of problems of the Revenue Department in the Chaupal, MP Chahar asked SDM Kiravali to resolve all the problems within a week. He said that after the problems are resolved, he will take problems of the complainants himself.

He said that the MP immediately gave the



responsibility of resolving the complaints to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kiravali Rajesh Kumar present on the spot and directed that the complaints should be resolved with the help of the concerned department by calling the complainants through phone within 7 days.

Addressing the Chaupal, the District Magistrate said that the Honorable MP has organized a huge Chaupal and through the Chaupal, the villagers are getting information about government schemes on a large scale and their problems are being resolved, many congratulations to the MP for

that.

He said that the objective of this Chaupal is to quickly resolve the problems of the common man and to make the government schemes reach the people sitting at the lowest rung of the society. This Chaupal will also benefit those people who are unable to convey their views at the district/tehsil level due to any reason.

The District Magistrate instructed all the district level officers to select the eligible persons through the schemes related to their respective departments and benefit them and if they do not have the form yet, then they should be benefited by getting it through their family members.

The District Magistrate instructed the Sub-District Magistrate Kiravali to ensure that the team of the Revenue Department is de-

ployed in the upcoming Chaupal and the share determination form is amended and distributed to the MP and public representatives.

During the Chaupal, District Development Officer Mr. Rakesh Ranjan informed that stalls have been set up by 24 departments including Electricity Department, Health Department, Agriculture Department, Animal Husbandry Department, Panchayati Raj Department, Social Welfare Department in the Chaupal, in which district level officers are resolving the problems of the common people immediately and giving them information about the schemes run by the Central and State Government and eligible persons are also being benefited by immediately covering them with the schemes.

Court grants interim bail to kin of SP leader Azam Khan

Rampur (UP):

A special court on Wednesday granted interim bail to the kin of SP leader Azam Khan, a day after his other son Abdullah was given the reprieve in a property related case.

MP MLA special court magistrate Shobhit Bansal granted the relief to the veteran politician's wife Dr Tazeen Fatima and son Aadeb Azam Khan in the case registered in 2020.

Advocate Zubair Ahmed Khan, who appeared for the applicants, said, "This was a case of 2020 in which there were allegations related to the destruction of records in the record room related to enemy property. In this case three including Fatima, her son Aadeb Azam Khan surrendered before the court today and after hearing the arguments the court has released them on interim bail."

Abdullah, former Uttar Pradesh minister Azam Khan's son is in the Hardoi jail since October, 2023.

The lawyer said that this was the only case pending against Abdullah after the Supreme Court granted him bail on February 10, 2025.

Abdullah was in jail since his conviction in a separate case. Azam Khan, who is charged in multiple cases, continues to languish behind bars in the Sitapur jail. Azam Khan was disqualified from the legislative assembly in 2022 after a court sentenced him to three years in jail in a 2019 hate speech case.

The veteran politician won the Rampur Sadar assembly seat in the 2022 assembly polls for a record tenth time. He then gave up the Rampur parliamentary seat, which he won in 2019.

Pakistan authorities decide to clear violence-torn Kurram district of militants

Peshawar: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in north-west Pakistan has decided to launch an operation to clear the Kurram district in the province of militants in the wake of constant attacks on the security forces and aid convoys, official sources said here on Wednesday.

Residents of four villages of Lower Kurram district — Ochat, Daad Kamar, Manduri and Bagan — have been asked to vacate their areas, after which the operation will begin, the sources said.

The government has also decided to fix reward money against people involved in the unrest and their masterminds, they said adding the distribution of compensation cheques has also been stopped due to recent attacks in Kurram district.

Four paramilitary personnel were killed and five others injured on February 17 when unknown militants attacked their squad in Pakistan's violence-hit Kurram, where an aid convoy was also targeted.

However, demolition of bunkers would continue unabated in the district, according to the earlier peace agreement. So far, 182 of the total 250 bunkers have been demolished.

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Zelensky accuses Trump of living in a Russian-made 'disinformation space'

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday of living in a Russian-made "disinformation space," pointed comments that risk further souring relations with Washington as the American leader pushes for an end to the war.

Zelensky said he "would like Trump's team to be more truthful" in his first response to a series of striking claims the U.S. president made the previous day, including suggesting that Kyiv was to blame for the war, which enters its fourth year next week.

Russia's army crossed the border on Feb. 24, 2022, in an all-out invasion that Putin sought to justify by saying it was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine and prevent the country from joining NATO. Ukraine and its allies de-



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

noted it as an unprovoked act of aggression. The comments from Trump and Zelensky were a remarkable back-and-forth between leaders of two countries that have been staunch allies in recent years under Trump's predecessor, as the U.S. provided crucial military equipment to Kyiv to fend off the

invasion and used its political weight to defend Ukraine and isolate Russia on the world stage.

The Trump administration has started charting a new course, reaching out to Russia and pushing for a peace deal. Zelensky spoke shortly before he was expected to meet with Keith Kellogg, the U.S. special

envoy for Ukraine and Russia as part of the administration's recent diplomatic blitz.

Ukraine and its European supporters have expressed concern that they weren't invited to the talks between top American and Russian diplomats in Saudi Arabia — amid larger worries that the deal taking

The Trump administration has started charting a new course, reaching out to Russia and pushing for a peace deal.

shape could be unfavorable to Kyiv.

At a news conference Tuesday, Trump showed little patience for Ukraine's objections to being excluded from the talks. He also said, without providing the source, that Zelensky's approval rating stood at 4%, while telling reporters that Ukraine "should have never started" the war and "could have made a deal" to prevent it.

Zelensky replied in his own news conference Wednesday that "we have seen this disinformation. We understand that it is coming from Russia." He said that Trump "lives in this disinformation space."

Russia praises Trump for criticising Ukraine-NATO moves

MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday praised US President Donald Trump for blaming the Ukraine conflict on moves to admit Kyiv into the NATO military alliance.

Trump has repeatedly blamed the conflict on his predecessor, Joe Biden, and has said the nearly three years of fighting would "never have started" had he been president in 2022.

"He is the first, and so far, in my opinion, the only Western leader who has publicly and loudly said that one of the root causes of the Ukrainian situation was the previous administration's pushy line of dragging Ukraine into NATO," Lavrov said of Trump in a question-and-answer session with lawmakers in Russia's State Duma.

The comments came a day after US and Russian officials met in Saudi Arabia for their first high-level talks in over three years.

Trump's diplomatic overtures towards the Kremlin have alarmed

Ukraine, which fears it will be sidelined in any future peace negotiations and forced to make massive concessions to end the fighting.

The Republican has upended US foreign policy since coming to office last month, making support for Ukraine dependant on access to its rare minerals while echoing Russian President Vladimir Putin's positions on the conflict.

In a press conference in January, before his inauguration, Trump directly blamed Biden's move to admit Ukraine as a NATO member for spurring the conflict.

"A big part of the problem was Russia for many, many years — long before Putin — said: You could never have NATO involved with Ukraine," Trump told reporters at a press conference on Jan. 17.

"And somewhere along the line, Biden said: 'No, they should be able to join NATO.' Well, then, Russia has somebody right on their doorstep, and I could understand their feeling about that."

UK's knife crime crackdown named in memory of Indian-origin boy

London: The UK government on Wednesday announced stricter rules for online retailers selling knives, along with tougher penalties for failing to enforce them, as part of a new crackdown named in memory of an Indian-origin boy killed in a stabbing attack.

Ronan's Law will require retailers to report suspicious and bulk purchases of knives on their platforms to police, with tougher sentences for selling knives to under-



Ronan Kanda, 16.

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Ronan's Law will require retailers to report suspicious and bulk purchases of knives on their platforms to police, with tougher sentences for selling knives to under-

18s. Ronan, to knife crime and mistaken identity. In 2023, we sat in the courtroom where we were shown a Ninja sword and over 25 bladed articles. Looking at them, I knew my son didn't stand a chance," Pooja Kanda said in a statement.

"Retailers, social media, and sellers need to take on more responsibilities. We welcome the proposal of a registration scheme, where the government will continue to implement stricter

measures on the online sale of bladed articles...

"This part of Ronan's Law will provide much-needed barriers against knife crime. I wish this was done years ago, and my son would be with me today," she said.

The campaigner has been raising the issue of online sale of bladed articles being allowed without proper ID checks after Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that her son's teenage killers illegally bought lethal

weapons online and collected them from the Post Office on the day of the attack — with no age or identity verification taking place. It was later revealed that one of them had bought more than 20 knives online, including by using his mother's ID.

"I knew we could not go on like this, and our fight for what was right had begun. Proper ID checks by retailers, as well as postal and delivery services, played a crucial role," noted Kanda.

BUSINESS

Boult expands Mustang Partnership with New Audio Lineup

New Delhi: India, Boult Audio continues its collaboration with Ford Mustang, introducing a new range of high-performance audio products. This latest launch builds on the success of their previous partnership, reinforcing Boult's position in India's fast-growing smart audio market and its commitment to bringing cutting-edge technology to consumers.



The Boult x Mustang Collection — Mustang Q, Mustang Dyno, and Mustang Torq (in two new colours) — is available at www.boultaudio.com, as well as Amazon & Flipkart. Pricing starts at Rs.1299, with exclusive launch offers on the website.

Boult's collaboration with Mustang has significantly strengthened its position in the market, driving both brand recognition and business growth. Since the first launch in June 2024, Boult TWS saw a 55% YoY growth in Q3 and 36% in Q4, re-

flecting the strong demand for aspirational, high-performance audio products. Additionally, this partnership has fueled a ~10% market share increase in the ₹1500-₹2000 TWS segment, solidifying Boult's leadership in this competitive space. By combining cutting-edge technology with bold design, Boult continues to attract Gen Z and aspirational buyers looking for feature-rich wearables.

"India's audio wearables market is expanding rapidly, and demand for aspirational, high-quality TWS products remains strong. At BOULT, we see this as an opportunity to lead with innovation and deliver unmatched audio experiences.

For growth, the structural and infrastructure-driven careers. One of the most notable trends is the substantial surge in hiring for architects, with a growth of 35%. This reflects the rising need for skilled architects in the country's booming infrastructure and urban development sector. In contrast, interior design roles, including interior designers, witnessed significant declines, with interior design roles dropping by 100% and interior designers seeing a 99% fall. These shifts indicate

Union Budget Prudently Manages Fiscal Consolidation & Growth: RBI

Mumbai: The Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman "prudently manages" fiscal consolidation and growth objectives, an article by Reserve Bank staffers said on Wednesday.

In the article, which may not reflect the central bank's views, Akash Raj, Harshita Yadav, Kovuri Akash Yadav, Aayushi Khandelwal, and others said the document reaffirms the Centre's commitment to fiscal discipline.

It also aims to foster inclusive and long-term economic growth, the article published in the RBI's monthly bulletin for February said.

"With a fiscal deficit target of 4.4 per cent of GDP, the Budget prudently manages fiscal consolidation and growth objectives," the article said.

For growth, the



Budget focuses on four pillars of agriculture, small businesses, export sector and investments, it added.

The Budget articulates

reforms in taxation, power, urban development, mining, financial sector and regulatory frameworks, it said.

The Rs 1 lakh crore

of tax relief to the middle class is expected to bolster household disposable incomes and stimulate consumption, it said.

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Earlier this month, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra had lauded the Union Budget for FY26 as an "excellent" document that will help both in economic growth and also in the central bank's core objective of curtailing inflation.

Malhotra, a career bureaucrat who took over as RBI Governor in December, also said the Rs 1 lakh crore of tax relief given to the middle class is expected to spur consumption will not have any major impact on inflation.

India Economy Shows Sequential Pickup: RBI Bulletin

Mumbai: High frequency indicators, like vehicles sales, air traffic, steel consumption, and GST E-way bills, point towards a sequential pickup in momentum of economic activity during the second half of the fiscal 2024-25 and sustain moving forward, RBI Bulletin said on Wednesday.

However, a strong dollar, driven by US economic resilience and trade policy pivots, could exacerbate capital outflows from emerging economies, push risk premiums higher, and intensify external vulnerabilities, said an article on 'State of the Economy' published in RBI's February bulletin.

Economic activity momentum is poised to be sustained, strong rural demand is expected to receive a further fillip from the robust performance of the agriculture sector. Urban demand is also poised for a recovery, tracking decline in inflation as well as a boost to disposable incomes from the sizeable income tax relief announced in the Union Budget 2025-26.

High frequency indicators point towards a sequential pick-up in momentum of economic activity during H2:2024-25, which is likely to sustain moving forward," it said.

The economic activity index (EAI) is constructed by extracting the common trend underlying 27 high frequency indicators of economic activity using a Dynamic Factor Model. It also noted that the global economy continues to grow at a steady but moderate pace, with divergent outlook across regions, particularly in evolving political and technological landscapes.

WorkIndia Report Reveals 81% Surge in Construction Job Seekers, Engineering Roles Double Amid Infrastructure Growth in India

New Delhi: WorkIndia, a leading platform connecting job seekers with employers, has witnessed significant hiring growth in the construction sector during the year 2023-2024. The sector has witnessed an 81% increase in candidates choosing construction as their preferred field, highlighting its growing appeal among job seekers. Within the sector, the preference for architect roles surged 100%, while those opting for engineering roles doubled, indicating a shift towards

structural and infrastructure-driven careers.

One of the most notable trends is the substantial surge in hiring for architects, with a growth of 35%. This reflects the rising need for skilled architects in the country's booming infrastructure and urban development sector. In contrast, interior design roles, including interior designers, witnessed significant declines, with interior design roles dropping by 100% and interior designers seeing a 99% fall. These shifts indicate

a transformation in the types of talent needed as the construction sector focuses more on structural and engineering advancements.

The engineering sector saw extraordinary growth, with hiring demand rising by 25% to 68% for roles such as engineers and architects. Most notably, Tier 3 cities reported an exceptional 132% increase in demand, pointing to the rapid development of smaller cities and towns.

WorkIndia's data further highlights the dominant presence of young professionals in the construction sector. Most candidates selecting construction as their preferred industry fall within the 20-30 age group, with a strong concentration in the 22-24 range. Notably, 24-year-olds alone accounted for 9.11% of candidates, reinforcing the role of a younger, dynamic workforce in driving industry growth.

Mr. Nilesh Dugarwal, Co-Founder and CEO of WorkIndia, commented, "The construction sector is witnessing an unprecedented rise in job seekers, with an 81%

increase in candidates choosing it as their preferred field. The surge in engineering and architecture roles highlights the industry's shift towards large-scale infrastructure development, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. This trend signifies the growing demand for skilled professionals who will play a crucial role in shaping India's urban and rural landscapes."

Overall, the data from WorkIndia reveals a transformative shift within the construction sector, where engineering and

Cricket

In-form India aim to replicate recent heroics in campaign opener against Bangladesh

Dubai
India, the finalists of the 2023 edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup and winners of last year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup will look to make an impact in the ICC Men's Champions Trophy from the word go by getting one over Bangladesh in their tournament opener.

The side are no strangers to success in the global event, having previously secured CT title wins in 2002 (co-winners with Sri Lanka) and 2013, as per a press release from ICC. But this time around, Rohit Sharma's side will be without their finest bowling asset and the 'National Treasure' as dubbed by batter Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, and have banked on a spin-heavy setup to get the job done for them in the tournament.

Their opponents first up are also good exponents of spin and have the capacity to dish out a surprise in big events. The Tigers will take inspiration from their 2007 50-over World Cup heroics against India and will back their experienced players to come good on Thursday.

Recent form:

India: The tournament fancies enter the Champions Trophy in fine touch, after a wildly successful recent white-ball run against England. Hosts India clean-swept the visitors 3-0 in



the ODI series that recently ended.

Before that, India handled England comfortably in the pair's five-game T20i series, winning 4-1. Those seven wins, all in the last month, should give the squad confidence.

Bangladesh: Reading the form is not as straightforward with the Tigers. The national side had not

played any cricket since December, when they toured the West Indies.

Bangladesh were comprehensively beaten in the three-match ODI series with the Windies, losing 3-0. They saved face somewhat by claiming all three T20is in the Caribbean that followed the One-Day International cricket. In November, before they

toured the West Indies, Bangladesh went down 2-1 to Afghanistan in an ODI series in the UAE.

Players in focus:

India: Arshdeep Singh
With Jasprit Bumrah unavailable for India, there will be an added spotlight on the team's bowling attack. But heading into the tourna-

ment, there is optimism that 26-year-old left-arm Arshdeep Singh can handle new ball duties and potentially step into the incredibly large shoes left by Jasprit, who is recovering from a back injury. In nine ODIs of his career, he has taken 14 wickets at an average of 23.00.

Bangladesh: Mehidy Hasan Miraz

The 27-year-old all-rounder is at the peak of his powers and will need to deliver in all departments for the Tigers to make a dent at the Champions Trophy. From the aforementioned West Indies tour in December, Mehidy Hasan Miraz smoked 152 runs across three ODIs with an average of 50.66, striking at 84.91. He also claimed eight combined wickets across the T20i series in the Caribbean.

Squads: India: Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakaravorthy.

Bangladesh: Nazmul Hossain Shanto (c), Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan, Tawhid Hridoy, Musfirur Rahim, MD Mahmud Ullah, Jaker Ali Anik, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Farveez Hossain Emon, Nasum Ahmed, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Nahid Rana.

BCCI VP Shukla backs India to win Champions Trophy despite Bumrah's absence



New Delhi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla said on Wednesday that Team India will win the ICC Champions Trophy despite star pacer Jasprit Bumrah's absence due to injury.

India's ICC Champions Trophy campaign will kick off with a match against Bangladesh at Dubai on February 19, followed by matches against arch-rivals Pakistan (February 23) and New Zealand (March 2). As per the hybrid model, India will play all its matches in Dubai instead of Pakistan.

India will miss the services of its pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah as he has been ruled out due to a lower back injury. Young pacer Harshit Rana has made his way into the team as a replacement. Bumrah has been missing from on-field action since January. His last appearance was in Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test against Australia in Sydney. After bowling 10.1 overs in the first innings, the A-Lister was visibly in discomfort and went for scans. He was advised by the Australian doctors not to participate in the remainder of the Sydney Test. He came out to bat in the second innings but did not take up his duties with the ball.

Speaking to ANI, Shukla said, "Champions Trophy has started today in Karachi (Pakistan). Tomorrow, we have a match with Bangladesh. Our team is in full form and paying with determination. I am confident that we will win both tomorrow's match and the match with Pakistan on February 23. We will reach the finals of the tournament... There is no doubt that Bumrah's absence will have an impact. Our three bowlers and four spinners will perform very well. India will win the finals to become the champions of the Champions Trophy."

Also, spinner Varun Chakaravathy has been drafted into the squad fol-

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On the other hand, young opener Yashvi Jaiswal has been omitted from the team and placed in non-travelling reserves after being named in the main squad initially. This comes after his ODI debut in the three-match series opener against England.

In his ODI debut, the young southpaw failed to deliver with the bat and flopped with a knock of 15(22). In the second ODI, Jaiswal was dropped from the playing XI for Virat Kohli, and Chakaravathy made his ODI debut. He returned with figures of 1/54 in his 10-over spell.

India's squad for ICC Champions Trophy, 2025: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill (Vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakaravathy.

Non-travelling substitutes: Yashvi Jaiswal, Mohammed Siraj and Shivam Dube. The three players will travel to Dubai as and when required.

Najmul Hossain Shanto focused on execution as Bangladesh gears up for India clash

Dubai

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto is confident in his team's abilities. Shanto emphasized the importance of executing their game plan rather than focusing on individual opponents.

He addressed the media ahead of their crucial Champions Trophy Group A clash against India in Dubai.

When asked about Jasprit Bumrah's absence from the Indian squad, Shanto dismissed any notion of it being an advantage.

"I am not someone who thinks about any individual. The entire Indian team is a quality side. Our focus is on executing our plans," he stated.

Reflecting on the overall competition, Shanto acknowledged the high standard of all participating teams.

"All eight teams in the tournament are strong. If we execute our plans well, we will have a good match against India," he said.

Discussing the conditions in Dubai, where they will play against India, the Bangladesh skipper noted the difference in playing surfaces compared to Pakistan, where they recently played Test matches.

"Here in Dubai, we need to adjust. If you compare this wicket to Pakistan's, it is not as high-scoring. We have played in Pakistan in the Test matches, so we are aware of the conditions there," he explained.

Shanto expressed confidence in the balance of his squad and their ability to



compete at the highest level.

"We have a well-balanced team. If we perform well and execute our plans, I believe we can beat any team," he said. He also highlighted Bangladesh's growing strength in the pace department.

"Over the last couple of years, we have developed some good fast bowlers. If they bowl in the right areas, it will be a big advantage for us," he noted.

He further praised the versatility within the squad. "We have some good all-rounders, and I hope they will perform well tomorrow," he added.

When questioned about the absence

of veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan from the Champions Trophy squad, Shanto kept his response brief and clear. "No."

"In first-class cricket, we play with the Duke ball," Shanto said.

He also acknowledged the unwavering support of Bangladeshis fans worldwide.

"Whenever we play, we get a lot of supporters," he noted.

With Bangladesh aiming to make a strong start in the tournament, all eyes will be on their performance against India as they look to turn confidence into results on the field.

Ponting backs Smith to succeed as opener during Australia's Champions Trophy campaign

New Delhi

ICC Hall of Famer and former skipper Ricky Ponting has backed Steve Smith to play as an opener during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, saying that he could anchor the innings for Aussies at the top of the order.

Australia's ICC Champions Trophy campaign will kickstart on February 22 at Lahore against arch-rivals England, followed by matches against South Africa (February 25) at Rawalpindi and Afghanistan (February 28) at Lahore.

Ponting was speaking about Australia's current injury woes with host Santiago Ganesan on the latest episode of the ICC Review, with regular skipper Pat Cummins, fellow fast bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, all-rounders Cameron Green and Mitchell Marsh, plus even recently-retired all-rounder Marcus Stoinis (retired from ODIs) all missing from their 15-player squad for the event.

While Travis Head looks certain to feature in Australia's top order at the Champions Trophy, Ponting thinks



promoting Smith up from his regular role at number four is something selectors may be considering ahead of their first match at the tournament against England in Lahore on February 22.

It is a role Smith has relished domestically in T20 cricket, for the Sydney Sixers in Australia's domestic Big

Bash League, which recently included a searing 121* off 64 balls against the Perth Scorchers in January.

From 151 ODI innings for Australia, Smith has batted everywhere from third in the line-up right down to eighth, but has never opened.

The decision centres around the faith Australian selectors have in talented hit-

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The decision centres around the faith Australian selectors have in talented hitter Jake Fraser-McGurk, who is still yet to deliver on the promise he's shown in recent years.

Fraser-McGurk averages just 14 from the seven innings he's played in ODIs, since making his debut in February 2024, with a top score of 41 off 18 deliveries against the West Indies in Canberra. Six of those seven innings were as an opener. Matt Short (197 runs in 13 matches with one fifty), J Fraser McGurk (98 runs in seven matches with the best score of 41) and Josh Inglis (543 runs in 27 ODIs at an average of 23.66 with three fifties in middle order) have not proven themselves in ODIs to be able to become Head's opening partner.

"Yeah, he is making it harder and harder (for selectors to stick with Fraser-McGurk)," Ponting said on the latest episode of the ICC Review.

"He has not had the greatest of summers. I mean, there is just so much talent there. There is so much ability and skill and talent that we have no sort of seen consistently enough just yet. And that is one of the big calls (selectors) are going to have to make now as well." Do they think about opening the batting with Steve Smith, which is something that they could actually think about as well. I think, because of how well he has done in white ball cricket when he has opened the batting.

ter Jake Fraser-McGurk, who is still yet to deliver on the promise he's shown in recent years.

Fraser-McGurk averages just 14 from the seven innings he's played in ODIs, since making his debut in February 2024, with a top score of 41 off 18 deliveries against the West Indies in Canberra. Six of those seven innings were as an opener. Matt Short (197 runs in 13 matches with one fifty), J Fraser McGurk (98 runs in seven matches with the best score of 41) and Josh Inglis (543 runs in 27 ODIs at an average of 23.66 with three fifties in middle order) have not proven themselves in ODIs to be able to become Head's opening partner.

"Yeah, he is making it harder and harder (for selectors to stick with Fraser-McGurk)," Ponting said on the latest episode of the ICC Review.

"He has not had the greatest of summers. I mean, there is just so much talent there. There is so much ability and skill and talent that we have no sort of seen consistently enough just yet. And that is one of the big calls (selectors) are going to have to make now as well."

“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





Chinelle Henry set for WPL debut, ready to make an impact

Vadodra
With Alyssa Healy sidelined due to a stress injury in her foot, West Indies all-rounder Chinelle Henry is set to make her debut for UP Warriors in the Women's Premier League (WPL). The powerful middle-order batter and fast bowler received a late call-up as Healy's replacement and is eager to seize the opportunity, reported ESPNcricinfo.

Henry's recent performances highlight why she was chosen to step in. On her maiden tour of India in December, she showcased her form with a blistering 16-ball 43 and a wicket in the third T20I against India in Navi Mumbai. She followed it up with a composed 61 off 72 balls in the third ODI in Vadodra, reaffirming her credentials as a dynamic player.

"This is a really huge, huge opportunity for me," Henry told ESPNcricinfo's Powerplay podcast, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"My only other franchise league would've been the CPL, so to be a part of one of the biggest franchises around in female cricket in the WPL is a really big thing for my career going forward. Next year maybe I could secure a place to be actually a part of a team permanently coming in the next edition of the WPL, so this year is definitely kind of like a test run, a trial run, for me," she added.

"Coming in has a replacement, that's a huge set of responsibilities on me, huge



shoes to fill. The atmosphere playing along with some of the best in the world from their respective regions is going to be huge. This will be a lot of learning this year and I'm hoping that I can actually go there and deliver on the field when called upon, because that's the reason why I'm here. Obviously they saw something. Healy, unfortunately the team lost to injury, and to be that replacement is a huge honour," she said.

"A lot of people have been talking about it, that I have been in form lately, and that's something that I actually want to continue to do because obviously the pressure of the WPL is different from everything else," Henry said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"Being here in the WPL, I'm not going to lie, I was a little bit nervous at first, but after coming back here, adjusting to the atmosphere, it's just about getting to know the girls a little bit better and just picking up where I left off the last time I was in India. It's just about continuing that confidence, continuing to play with

that freedom and to know that I have the backing of the coaches and team," she said. At 29 years old, with 111 international appearances across both white-ball formats, Henry is looking to expand her presence in global franchise leagues. She aims to follow in the footsteps of fellow West Indian cricketers Hayley Matthews, Deshira Dattin, and Stafanie Taylor, who have made significant marks in franchise competitions worldwide.

Henry hopes to bring valuable experience back to the West Indies team, particularly as they gear up for crucial tournaments. In April, the West Indies will compete for one of two qualifying spots at the upcoming 50-over World Cup in India. Additionally, the team is set to play its first women's Test match in over two decades when they host Australia in 2026, marking a significant moment for women's cricket in the region.

"When you talk about West Indies, we always want to be at the big stage, big competitions, we always want to be competing," Henry said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"The same amount of confidence, the same amount of enthusiasm that we play the T20s with, that's something we are trying to go out there and play the longer version with. The longer version of the game is something that we are going to have to take more responsibility for as a person, as a team, and know that to avoid these situations [going through the qualifier] this is what we have to do," she said.

"We won the T20 World Cup once and definitely the ODI World Cup is something that we talked about. We just don't want to keep dwelling on the past that, 'hey, we won the 2016 T20 World Cup.' Teams are evolving, teams are getting better, players are getting better. We know that we have to get better and these are things that we have to do in order to be better at the longer version of the game," she added.

Henry will face England in a limited-overs series in May and June, consisting of three T20Is and three ODIs. The last time the two sides met, West Indies knocked England out of the T20 World Cup at the group stage. England, fresh off a demoralizing 16-0 points loss in the Women's Ashes, is undergoing an internal review to address their recent struggles. Henry expects a determined response from the English side, setting the stage for a fiercely contested series.

"The World Cup, it was good for us, the things that we achieved," she said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"England being one of the best in the world, we were able to overcome that hurdle. Unfortunately we couldn't make it to the final, but I was definitely proud of the team, proud of the performance. It is definitely going to be a challenge [playing in England] because I'm pretty sure they'll remember that we're the reason why they didn't make it further in the T20 World Cup, so there would be a lot to settle there," she said.

"But that happened and we know what it takes to beat teams that are ranked above us. We know what it takes individually and as a team and there's a lot we could take from that World Cup and bring into this series that we have coming up against them in May. They will be coming out guns blazing so as a unit we have to be up for the challenge and we have to be ready to know that when the pressure happens we just know how to deal with it," she added.

International Masters League 2025 trophy revealed in Mumbai

Mumbai
The highly-anticipated International Masters League (IML) unveiled its magnificent trophy on Wednesday in the presence of the icons who will lead their respective teams in the inaugural edition.

India's cricket icon and Bharat Ratna Sachin Tendulkar was joined by Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara, West Indies maestro Brian Lara, England's World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan, Australia's Shane Watson and South Africa's Jonty Rhodes, who represented captain Jacques Kallis, at the Captains' Day, which was held at the DY Patil University campus on Wednesday, as per a press release from IML.

"The IML is set to capture the imagination of cricket fans by providing a thrilling experience of high-octane action, featuring stalwarts of the sport. India Masters and Sri Lanka Masters will play the opening fixture of the IML at the DY Patil Stadium on Saturday, February 22.

Sachin Tendulkar, captain of India Masters, said, "Stepping back onto the cricket field is like returning to the place that has given me my identity as a sportsman. Reuniting with my former teammates and peers, reliving our experiences, and sharing our cherished memories is truly special. I am as excited today as I was on the day of my debut to represent our country, and I have no doubt that every player shares the same passion to play the game we all love, once again."

Brian Lara, captain of West Indies Masters: "I am truly excited to be back in India, a country that has always felt like a second home to me. Its vibrant culture and the passion of its diverse fans make playing here an unforgettable experience. Taking the field once again with old friends in the International Masters League is something I deeply look forward to, and I can't wait to reignite some of our fabled rivalries. The stage is set, the energy is electric, and I am ready for the action!"

Kumar Sangakkara, captain of Sri Lanka Masters: "I am delighted to be part of this incredible competition. Cricket is a huge part of my life, and having the chance to play alongside some of the greatest ambassadors of the game makes the IML even more special. I can't wait for that opening match against India Masters—it's going to be a fantastic contest!"

Shane Watson, captain of Australia Masters, said: "India has always been one of my favourite countries, and the love and support I've received here is second to none. I am really chuffed to be playing in the International Masters League, sharing the field once again with friends and old colleagues.

Chennai reinforces global sports hub status with WTT star contender

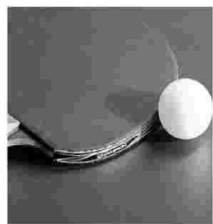
Chennai
The partnership between Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) continues to redefine Indian table tennis and is set to enhance it further by bringing world-class international competition to Chennai for the first time with WTT Star Contender, as per a release from WTT.

Set to take place from March 25-30 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, this premier event will offer a USD 275,000 prize purse and 600 crucial ITTF ranking points, attracting elite international talent while providing Indian players with an unparalleled stage to compete at the highest level in a city that has become synonymous with Indian table tennis, not least for its producing international icons like Aishwarya Sharath Kamal, Sathiyan Gnanasekaran, and more.

Chennai has also hosted the successful fifth edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT), India's top professional table tennis league, reinforcing its strong connection with the sport. Now, with WTT Star Contender coming to Chennai, the city is further cementing its status as a global sporting hub, having already played host to prestigious events such as the Chess Olympiad, night street circuit races, and marquee cricket and football matches.

"This premier tournament is organised by Stupa Sports Analytics and UTT under the aegis of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI). By blending UTT's league excitement with WTT's elite global competition, Indian table tennis is set for a new era of growth on the back of India's historic Olympic team event appearance.

Speaking on the occasion, Deepak Malik, Founder of Stupa Sports Analytics, which has played a key role in



bringing the WTT Star Contender to India and successfully hosted it for the two Goa editions, said, "Bringing the WTT Star Contender to Chennai reaffirms WTT's confidence in us since we brought the first edition of the tournament in 2023 to Goa. Stupa, alongside its stakeholders, has been driving table tennis growth in India through cutting-edge technology and hosting world-class events. Having Chennai, a city and a region so crucial to Indian table tennis, as the host city aligns with this vision to elevate the sport and enhance the tournament's global stature," as quoted from a release by WTT.

Tamil Nadu's Deputy Chief Minister, Thiru Udhayanidhi Stalin expressed his excitement about the event, stating, "Hosting the WTT Star Contender in Chennai is a proud moment for Tamil Nadu and reaffirms our dedication to positioning the state as India's premier sports destination. This event not only showcases our world-class infrastructure but also inspires our youth to embrace sports as a way of life. We welcome players from around the globe and are committed to making this event a grand success."

Formula 1 delivers incredible 75th anniversary celebration and 2025 season launch at The O2

London
Formula 1 made history at The O2 in London tonight with its first-ever season launch event, bringing together all 10 teams, 20 drivers, and Team Principals for an unforgettable night of motorsport and entertainment, as per F1 press release.

The sold-out event hosted more than 15,000 fans and marked the official start of the 2025 season while celebrating the sport's 75th anniversary in spectacular fashion.

The evening featured the highly anticipated unveiling of the 2025 liveries from Alpine, Aston Martin, Ferrari, Haas, Kick Sauber, McLaren, Mercedes, Racing Bulls, Red Bull, and Williams. Fans were treated to exclusive interviews with the biggest names in the sport, as Team Principals and drivers took to the stage to share their excitement for the upcoming season. Adding to the theatre of the show, acclaimed comedian and actor Jack Whitehall hosted the event, keeping the crowd entertained with his signature wit and energy. Multi-platinum recording artist Machine Gun Kelly delivered a show-stopping performance, while country music star Kane Brown brought his distinct sound to the celebration. The night concluded with an electrifying performance by legendary British band Take That, who closed the show with their iconic hits Greatest Day and Rule The World.

Formula 1 is known for pushing the boundaries of innovation, and the show was no different, as the largest LED screen ever used at The O2 stretched across the width of the venue, while hidden beneath it was a garage-style door, which opened to introduce each team's drivers for the 2025 season. The cars were suspended



up to eight metres in the air, and above that a flying LED screen, embedded with dynamic lighting effects, moved fluidly throughout the night telling each team's story and revealing each one in turn in an unforgettable sequence.

This world premiere event was brought to life by creative visionary Brian Burke of BrianBurkeCreative, alongside Stufish Entertainment Architects, DX7 Design, and production company i826. Burke and his world-renowned team, who previously delivered the groundbreaking opening and closing ceremonies for the inaugural Las Vegas Grand Prix, ensured the night was nothing short of spectacular. Celebrities flocked to attend the unique event, with Jidris Elba, Gordon Ramsay, and Jerry Bruckheimer spotted on the red carpet. They were joined by a host of other high-profile figures from the worlds of sport, entertainment, and fashion, all eager to witness the thrilling fusion of motorsport and live entertainment.

India men's team bounce back with 1-0 win over World Champions Germany

Bhubaneswar
India men's team won their second match in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 season on Wednesday after beating World Champions Germany 1-0 at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar. Gurjant Singh scored the only goal of the match as India climbed to seventh in the standings.

India responded well after losing 4-1 to Germany on Tuesday. Captain Harmanpreet Singh marshalled the Indian defence, which put in a solid display to secure an important win. After a bright start, India took the lead four minutes into the match as Gurjant Singh scored in back-to-back matches.

Rajinder Singh sent the ball into the circle hoping for Mandeep Singh to put it into goal. Alexander Stadler saved Mandeep's effort but the German goalkeeper did not clear the loose ball away. An unmarked Gurjant dove in to sweep the ball into the empty goal.



India deployed a half-court press as they looked to protect their lead and pounce on any German mistakes. Germany nearly got the equaliser as Thies Prinz showcased his incredible 3D skills to beat his markers. Krishan

in the quarter but Gonzalo Peillat's drag-flick flew wide of the goal as the first quarter ended 1-0 in India's favour. India resorted to sitting deeper in their half and forcing the Germans to try and find ways to penetrate the circle. Suraj Karera, who replaced Pathak in the Indian goal in the second quarter, was rarely called into action.

It was India who had the better chances from counterattacks as Shilansand Lakra, Nilam Sanjiv Kess, and Raj Kumar Pal tested Stadler. India won three penalty corners in the final minute but the German defence made sure they went into the break trailing only by the solitary goal. Germany began the third quarter with more urgency, and it needed an instinctive save from Pathak to deny Prinz a goal in the 32nd minute. A couple of minutes later, Pathak was called into action as he denied Peillat a penalty corner with a superb save with his foot.

Germany won the first penalty corner of the match with 46 seconds left

India had a big chance to double their advantage towards the end of a cagey third quarter. However, Stadler pulled off an incredible double save to deny Sukhjot Singh and Vivek Sagar Prasad. The Indian defence was tested early in the fourth quarter as Germany won a penalty corner in the 46th minute. Karera did well to save Peillat's drag-flick. India won a penalty corner two minutes later but Amit Rohidas sent his drag-flick wide.

With time against them, Germany upped the ante in the final five minutes. The World Champions won a penalty corner with four minutes to go but captain Harmanpreet successfully used India's review to reverse the decision.

Germany took off Stadler soon after for an additional outfield player as they hunted for a late equaliser. The Germans won four penalty corners in a row, only to be thwarted by a resolute Indian defence led by Karera.

Get ready for 'Mayhem': Lady Gaga unveils track list for seventh studio album

Washington
Lady Gaga has officially unveiled the track list for her highly anticipated seventh studio album, 'Mayhem', which marks a return to her pop roots. The pop icon had been teasing the album for months, with a series of cryptic countdowns and billboard promotions across the country. Now, after much anticipation, fans can finally dive into the details of the 14-track LP, set to release on March 7, 2025. The album includes previously released singles like 'Disease' and 'Die with a Smile,' alongside a new track, 'Abracadabra.' The music video for 'Abracadabra' made a splash during the 2025 Grammy Awards, giving fans an early taste of what's to come from 'Mayhem'.



Shweta Tripathi to turn producer, says she feels 'inspired to tell my own stories'

New Delhi
"Mirzapur" star Shweta Tripathi has announced her foray into production, saying she is inspired to tell her "own stories" now. Tripathi broke out with her role of Shaalu Gupta in Neeraj Ghaywan's 2015 film "Masaan" and went on to feature in critically-acclaimed movies such as "Haraamkhor", "Gone Kesh" and "Cargo". She became a household name courtesy her performance as Gajgami Gupta aka Golu in crime thriller show "Mirzapur". She has also starred in shows like "Made in Heaven", "Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein" and "Kaalkoot". "As an actor, I've been fortunate to receive immense love, support, and respect from the industry, critics, and audiences. I've always been drawn to stories that challenge conventions and offer fresh perspectives. "Over the years, I've worked on projects that resonate deeply and break stereotypes, and now, with all the support I've received, I feel inspired to tell my own stories," Tripathi said in a

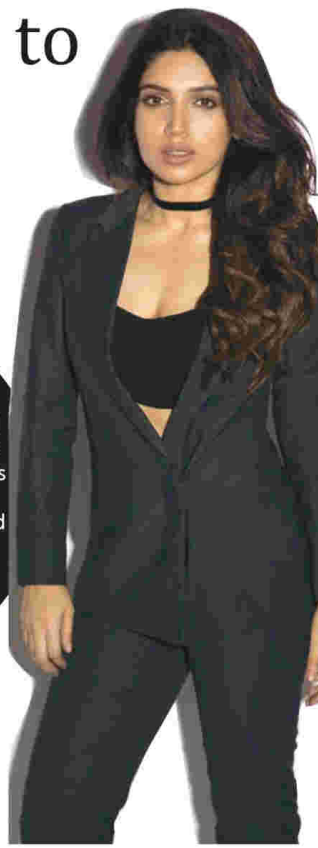


statement. She said she is excited about starting a new chapter in her professional journey and looks forward to collaborating with talented storytellers to bring impactful narratives to life. "I want to create a space for stories that spark meaningful conversations, challenge norms, and inspire change. While acting will always be my passion, producing offers me the chance to contribute to the industry in a new and fulfilling way. I'm currently working on my first project, and I look forward to sharing more details very soon," Tripathi added. The actor was most recently seen in the second season of her Netflix series "Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein".

Need my characters to have agency, says Bhumi Pednekar

Mumbai
Actor Bhumi Pednekar, who is completing a decade in the industry this year, says she is happy that she has built her career on playing women with agency, right from her debut with 2015's "Dum Laga Ke Haisha". Bhumi, known for films such as "Toilet: Ek Prem Katha", "Bala", "Bheed", and "Bhaskhak", said it is a surreal feeling that she gets to live her dream of being an actor everyday through movies. "I realised I wanted to be an actor when I was 12 so I am grateful that even after 10 years I am doing what I love so deeply. I constantly seek agency in my characters. If they don't have agency, I wouldn't do them because I just wouldn't enjoy being a part of that process. I am lucky that I had the opportunity to play such diverse women," the actor said. Bhumi will next be seen in "Mere Husband Ki Biwi", which also features Rakul Preet Singh and Arjun Kapoor. The 35-year-old actor said "Mere Husband Ki Biwi" is a fitting role to conclude her first decade in the industry. "Mere Husband Ki Biwi" has a very special place in my life because when I read the script, I felt, I have never played such a character of Prableen, she is a little off in a nice way... There is so much comedy in her unpredictability, and I have never played such a character before. I've played this part with a lot of dedication, so, it's a very special film for me," she said. The comedy film celebrates the quirks and complexities of romantic relationships. It is directed by Mudassar Aziz of "Khel Khel Mein" fame. The actor said co-star Kapoor's humor and friendship helped create a comfortable atmosphere on set while Singh was

just like a sister. "Arjun has a gift for comedy; he can do it well because he thinks like a human. Rakul is a... with him on the 2019 rom-com "Pati Patni Aur Woh". "The backbone of "Mere Husband Ki Biwi" has a very special place in my life because when I read the script, I felt, I have never played such a character of Prableen, she is a little off in a nice way... There is so much comedy in her unpredictability, and I have never played such a character before. I've played this part with a lot of dedication, so, it's a very special film for me," she said. The biggest thing I learnt from Mudassar sir in this film is that comedy is of different styles. Like, the dialogues are written in a specific metre, and as an actor, you need to deliver in that metre, or else the punch won't land," she said.



Richa Chadha, Ali Fazal bring LGBTQ+ love drama 'TAPS'



Mumbai
Star couple Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal bring their LGBTQ+ relationship drama that celebrates love beyond boundaries. "TAPS" tells the intimate story of a couple navigating their way back to each other. It stars debutants Ullas Samrat and Rohit Mehra.

The film has been lauded for its delicate yet powerful portrayal of LGBTQ+ relationships, winning the KASHISH QDrishish Film Grant. Speaking about the project, Richa Chadha said, "Cinema is powerful because it can shift perspectives. 'TAPS' is one of those stories that gently yet powerfully peels back the layers of identity, love, and self-acceptance. We want people to open their hearts a little more," in a press note. Ali Fazal added, "Love has always been painted in broad strokes—roses, candlelight, grand gestures. But love is so much more than that. 'TAPS' captures something intimate, raw, and real. It reminds us that love isn't just about who we love but how we love with honesty, courage, and resilience." Producer Sudhanshu Saria said, "TAPS reminded me of when I was making my first film, LOEV, ten years ago. It felt like the perfect way to build on LOEV's legacy in queer cinema by supporting another story that normalizes queer representation on our screens."



"Always excited to play variety of roles": Divya Dutta

New Delhi
Actress Divya Dutta opened up about her diverse and evolving career while reflecting on her transformative roles, her journey in the industry, and her recent experiences with the "Chhaava" movie. Dutta, known for her versatile portrayals, delved into what drives her choices as an actress, the importance of strong female characters in films, and her exciting upcoming projects. "Chhaava" marks Divya Dutta's second collaboration with Laxman Utekar, a filmmaker she praises for his ability to offer her roles that challenge her creatively. Recalling her first experience with him in the 2022 film "Nazar Andaz", she fondly remembers the film's playful and mischievous tone, which contrasted with her role in "Chhaava". "Laxman sir called me for Chhaava and asked me to play a Maratha queen. At first, I wondered how it would look on me, but he reassured me, saying, 'Yes, absolutely, it will look very good.' And it did," she recalled. On set, Dutta was fully immersed in the world of Sooryabai's palace. "When I first stepped into my queenly costume and saw the palace, it felt like I'd stepped into another era. The atmosphere was magical, and the unit worked so beautifully to make me feel the essence of the role," Dutta said.

Vikrant Massey celebrates third wedding anniversary with wife Sheetal Thakur

Mumbai
Actor Vikrant Massey and his wife Sheetal Thakur celebrate their third wedding anniversary, the couple is making the day extra special with an adorable family moment. The actor took to his Instagram account to share a priceless picture featuring their son, Vardaan. The picture showed the couple posing alongside their little one, flashing big smiles. Along with the picture, the actor added a caption that read, "Happy Wedding Anniversary Sheetal!!! (18/2/2022)." A couple of days ago, the actor and his wife shared the first glimpse of their son, Vardaan, as they celebrated his first birthday. The couple, who have mostly kept their

child away from the public eye, finally introduced him to the world with adorable pictures from the birthday bash. The birthday party had a blue theme, with little Vardaan dressed in a cute brown pant and white shirt. Vikrant looked dapper in a blazer with a well-groomed beard, while Sheetal wore an elegant summer dress. The 12th Feb actor took to his Instagram account to share pictures from the birthday bash along with a caption that read, "Say HELLO! to our Oneedful Vardaan." Last year, Vikrant surprised everyone with his cryptic post regarding his decision to take a break from acting. However, many speculated that the actor had announced his 'retirement' from the industry.

