



Harbhajan Singh backs India, predicts big knock from Virat Kohli

Hamas hands over first 2 of 6 Israeli hostages to be freed in latest exchange

Jennifer Lopez, Ben Affleck officially declared single post settling their divorce



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MARKET	
SENSEX	NIFTY
75311.06	22795.90
-424.90	-117.25
GOLD	SILVER
85,848.00	96,197.00
-176.00	-916.00

WEATHER	
Sunrise	6:54 AM
Sunset	6:16 PM
Moonrise	2:19 AM
Moonset	12:23 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	12°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	26°C
Minimum	12°C

Govt examines need for law to regulate digital content

New Delhi
The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is examining the existing statutory provisions and the need for a new legal framework to regulate "harmful" content on digital platforms, indicating the government's move to sharpen its vigil over them following the outcry over Ranveer Allahbadia's crass comments on a YouTube programme.

In its reply to a parliamentary panel's communication over the issue, the ministry said there is a growing concern in the society that the constitutional right of "freedom of expression is being misused to showcase obscene and violent content on digital platforms."

It told the Standing

Advocates Amendment Bill withdrawn following natinawide lawyers' protest

The Minister assured that all contentious issues would be thoroughly examined and appropriately addressed before finalizing the Bill.

New Delhi
After strikes by lawyers and objections of the Bar Council of India, the Union Law and Justice Ministry on Saturday withdrew the draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025 published on February 13, and said it "will be processed afresh for consultation with stakeholders".

In a statement, the Ministry said that the draft Bill had been published on the Department of Legal Affairs



website on February 13 "demonstrating the government's commitment to transparency and broader engagement with stakeholders and the public."

However, after receiving numerous suggestions and concerns, the

government has decided to halt the consultation process and rework the draft bill. The revised version will undergo fresh deliberations with stakeholders before being considered for further action.

This decision comes amid strong opposition from legal bodies, including the Bar Council of India, which had raised concerns over several provisions of the bill. Manan Kumar Mishra, Chairman of the

Reciprocal tariffs 'soon' for India, China: Trump

Washington
US President Donald Trump has said that his administration will soon impose reciprocal tariffs on countries such as India and China, reiterating what he had said during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the US capital.



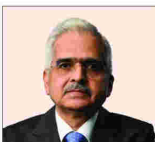
Trump was speaking at the swearing-in of Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Friday when he made the announcement, reiterating what he told Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week during the latter's visit to the US capital.

reciprocal. Reciprocal meaning, 'they charge us, we charge them', Trump said in Washington.

We haven't done that, we have never done that. We are getting ready to do it, he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Fox News aired a joint television interview with Trump and billionaire Elon Musk when the president said that he made it clear to Prime Minister Modi that India will not be spared from Washington's reciprocal tariffs and emphasised that nobody can argue with me on tariff structure.

Shaktikanta Das appointed Principal Secretary II to PM



New Delhi
Former RBI governor Shaktikanta Das has been appointed the second Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

PK Mishra, a retired IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, is currently serving as the Principal Secretary to the PM.

"The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Shri Shaktikanta Das, IAS (Retired) as Principal Secretary-2 to Prime Minister with effect from the date he assumes the office," said a central government order.

"His appointment will be co-terminus with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the order added.

Das had served as the RBI Governor for six years from December 2018 to December 2024. He was originally appointed for three years and then got an extension for three more years.

CONTD ON PAGE-2

38th Surajkund International Crafts Mela

February 7 - 23, 2025 | Surajkund, Faridabad, Haryana

Closing Ceremony

February 23, 2025 | 5 PM

Chief Guest

Sh. Manohar Lal

Union Minister, Housing & Urban Affairs and Power

August Presence

Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma

Heritage & Tourism Minister, Haryana

You are cordially invited

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SAWAD: 10889/10/987/2025/52844

Advocates Amendment Bill withdrawn following nationwide lawyers' protest

CONT FROM PAGE-1 Bar Council of India, had earlier written to the government highlighting potential issues that could affect the legal profession. The withdrawal of the bill marks a significant development, signaling the government's responsiveness to public and professional concerns while reaffirming its commitment to transparent policymaking. However, Bar Council of India (BCI) expressed its gratitude to the Union Government. In a statement, BCI announced that, in response to numerous suggestions and concerns raised by the legal community, the Ministry of Law and Justice has decided to conclude the consultation process and rework the revised draft of the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025, for further discussion. BCI said that the decision was officially communicated through a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Bar Council of India. BCI has been in continuous dialogue with the Union Law Minister, Arjun Ram Meghwal, raising the legal fraternity's concerns, the statement read.

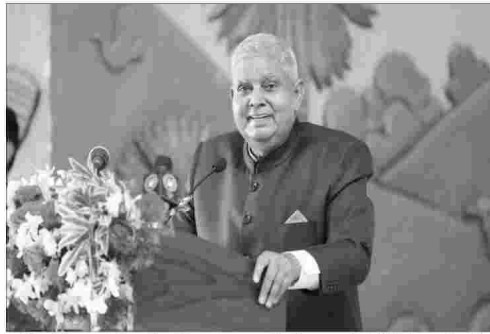
Shaktikanta Das appointed Principal Secretary II to PM

CONT FROM PAGE-1 Had the government tapped him for a third term, he would have surpassed the tenure of Benegal Rama Rau, who served as the longest RBI governor for 7.5 years between 1949 and 1957. Incidentally, Das was the first non-economist in 28 years to be appointed as RBI Governor, but it took him no time to prove himself running a central bank needed no expertise in monetary economics, and one need not necessarily be a monetary economist. During his stint as RBI Governor, Das was twice ranked as the top central banker by the US-based Global Finance magazine. Before joining the RBI, he spearheaded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2016 demonetisation drive while then RBI Governor Ujit Patel took a backseat through the whole process. A retired IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, Das has vast experience in various areas of governance for over 40 years. He has held important positions in the central and state governments in the areas of finance, taxation, industries and infrastructure, among others. The 25th governor of the RBI had also acted as India's G20 Sherpa and member, 15th Finance Commission. Those who have interacted with him recall Das as being amiable and likable, without being too interesting. If his composed and easy-going manner helped overcome the toughest of challenges during his various stints, his faith in 'doing your best as an individual, while working as a team,' defined his core working style. He always had a sense of mission about him, but absolutely no interest in leaving a legacy or stardom, they say.

Illegal migrants intervening in electoral process, becoming decisive players: VP Dhankhar

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar

on Saturday voiced serious concerns over illegal migration in India, stating that millions of undocumented individuals are residing in the country without legal rights. Addressing the issue, he said, "In our Bharat, millions of people are living here who have no right to stay. And they are not just living; they are also engaging in livelihood activities. They are making their livelihood here, placing demands on our resources—education, health, and housing sectors—and now, the issue has escalated further. They are intervening in our electoral process. Within our democratic system, they are becoming significant and even decisive players," he noted. The Vice President was addressing the 65th Convocation ceremony of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra. Dhankhar cautioned against conversions through allurements and temptation, saying, "Every individual has the right to follow any religion; every person has the right to adopt a religion of their choice. However, when a conversion happens through enticement, greed, allurements, and temptation, its objective is 'we will get supremacy by changing the demography of the Nation'. History bears witness,



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there are examples from some countries in the world. You are more knowledgeable than me, more informed, you can find out." "The very character of those nations was erased; the majority community that existed there disappeared. We cannot allow this demographic invasion; organic demographic growth is acceptable, but if this is disruptive with a sinister design to control, we must be on high

alert. This is a matter for our deep contemplation and reflection. This poses a challenge to our philosophy that is centuries old," he emphasized, while affirming every individual's right to follow their chosen religion. VP Dhankhar also raised concerns about systematic attempts to undermine national institutions, and called for thorough investigations into recent revelations about attempts to manipulate electoral pro-

The Vice President was addressing the 65th Convocation ceremony of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra.

level, expose everyone connected with these sinister designs aimed at destabilizing our nation, trying to manipulate our democracy," he added. VP, in his address directed the concerned authorities to initiate a thorough investigation in this regard. "I appeal to organisations concerned, time has come to engage into deep investigation, thorough investigation, investigation at micro level, expose everyone connected with these sinister designs aimed at destabilizing our nation, trying to manipulate our democracy," he added. Speaking on fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, VP remarked that these rights must be earned through the diligent performance of fundamental and civic duties. "Our constitution has given us fundamental rights, but passage to fundamental rights has to be earned and that passage is when you perform fundamental duties, when you perform civic duties."

"AAP will announce LoP after party MLAs take oath on Feb 24": Gopal Rai

New Delhi: AAP leader Gopal Rai announced that the party has initiated the process of restructuring its core and frontal wings following the Delhi Assembly election results. Gopal Rai emphasised the party's commitment to playing the role of a strong opposition and confirmed that the oath-taking ceremony for all AAP MLAs is scheduled for February 24, after which the party will announce its Leader of Opposition. Addressing the media, Gopal Rai revealed that AAP has held a meeting with state office bearers from its major wings, including the Purvanchal wing, auto wing, and women's wing. The meeting discussed the ongoing restructuring process within the party's main wing and its other organisations to strengthen their operations. "Today, after the election (Delhi Assembly) results, we have held a meeting with the state office bearers of all the frontal organisations of AAP, in which all our major frontal organisations—Purvanchal wing, auto wing, women's wing have participated today. We have started the process of restructuring the main wing. Similarly, the party will restructure its other wings," said Gopal Rai. "Our legislative party will raise its voice in the House, similarly, our wing in the society will be given the responsibility to raise its voice on those (promises made by the elected government in its manifesto) to strengthen its operations. AAP will further intensify its preparations to play the role of a strong positive opposition," he added.

India Japan joint military exercise to be held from Feb 24-Mar 9



New Delhi: India and Japan are set to take part in a joint military exercise starting February 24, aiming to enhance interoperability between the two forces while undertaking joint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under UN mandate. The exercise underscores the shared commitment of India and Japan towards regional security, peace and stability while advancing their common vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, the defence ministry said in a statement on Saturday. The Indian Army contingent departed on Saturday for the sixth edition of the India-Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian'.

The exercise is scheduled to be conducted in the East Fuji Manoeuvre Training area of Japan from February 24 to March 9. "The aim of the exercise is to enhance interoperability between the two forces while undertaking joint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under UN mandate," it said. Exercise 'Dharma

Guardian' is an annual event conducted alternatively in India and Japan. Its last edition was conducted in Rajasthan in February-March 2024. The Indian contingent comprising 120 personnel will be represented mainly by troops from a battalion of the Madras Regiment along with troops from other arms and services, it said. The Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF) contingent, also comprising similar strength, will be represented by the 34th Infantry Regiment.

Maha MahaSivratri 2025: A Once-in-a-Century Event to Awaken Global Consciousness

New Delhi: In a remarkable convergence of ancient spiritual traditions and rare celestial phenomena, millions of seekers worldwide are set to unite and celebrate Maha MahaSivratri 2025 on February 26, 2025. This year's observance is uniquely significant, coinciding with the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, India - a massive pilgrimage occurring once every 12 years - and an extraordinary planetary alignment that happens once every 144 years, where the Sun, Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn synchronize, creating an unparalleled gateway for consciousness expansion. Leading this global spiritual event, Nandhiji will host Maha MahaSivratri World Yogi Day, an immersive virtual day, an immersive virtual day, an immersive virtual day designed to elevate consciousness, unlock leadership potential, and harness the power of higher awareness. "This once-in-144-years rare alignment of cosmic events amplified by Maha Kumbh Mela where 600+ million



prayers converge alongside the 12-year orbit of planet Jupiter is exalted as the Guru, which is consciousness. The magnitude of grace of this Maha MahaSivratri can be activated by anyone alighting their inner lamp. As with the cleansing, renewal and healing in the divine rivers of the Maha Kumbh Mela, we are prepared to merge in unions with Lord Siva. 'Saivam vetri,' a Tamil expression meaning 'goodness triumphs' said Nandhiji, founder of World Yogi Day MahaSivratri and CNESS, a conscious social platform fostering global enlightenment. Inspired by the global recognition of International Day of Yoga by Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and adopted by the United Nations in 2014, MahaSivratri World Yogi Day celebrates International Yoga Day's objective - the empowerment and attainment of higher Consciousness to be the Yogi, Lord Siva. This global multi-day virtual event is open to all. Event dates: 26 and 28 February 2025.

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Govt examines need for law to regulate digital content

CONT FROM PAGE-1 The ministry said that many high courts and the Supreme Court, MPs and statutory bodies like the National Commission of Women have spoken on the issue, which has made headlines after the tasteless comments of social media influencer Allahbada drew wide condemnation. Criminal cases have been registered against him, and his apology has done little to damp down the controversy. While the Supreme Court granted him protection from arrest, it also made very critical observations at his comments, deeming them vulgar and a product of "dirty mind" which has "shamed" the society. The apex court also flagged the "vacuum" in law then it comes to content on platforms such as YouTube and said "all kinds of things were going on". The ministry told the committee that it will submit a detailed note after due deliberations. The committee had asked the ministry on February 13 regarding the amendments needed in the existing laws to clamp down on controversial content in the wake of the emergence of new technology and media platform. Agency

Successful organisation of Vidya Prakash Conclave-25 under aegis of KR Mangalam University

Gurugram: K.R. Mangalam University proudly hosted the prestigious "Vidya Prakash Conclave-25," on the theme of "Excellence in School Education Leadership." The conclave witnessed the participation of distinguished principals from leading schools across India, who shared their valuable insights and experiences in advancing the field of education. This event served as a significant platform for fostering leadership and innovation in education, while also highlighting the importance of inclusiveness in the sector. "The conclave shared thoughts and experiences towards developing the education system and enhancing leadership skills. On this occasion, Dr. Raghuvir Singh, Vice-Chancellor, K. R. Mangalam University, while addressing



all the academicians present in the conclave said, "The importance of innovation and leadership in the field of education is very important and we have to incorporate traditional and modern technologies to make the future education system more effective and functional. This conclave provides a powerful platform to our academia where ideas are exchanged, and innovative strategies are discussed". During the conclave, panel discussions were organized in coordination with Dr. Tania Gupta and Dr. Mamta Shankar in which in-depth discussions were held on New Education Policy, Digital Technology in Education, Leadership Development, New Role of Teachers, Value-Based Education, and Use of Advanced Technologies

like Artificial Intelligence in Education. At the end of the conclave, 70 principals, leading educationists from across the country who have made unparalleled contributions in the field of school education, were felicitated in various categories. Dr. Rahul Sharma- Registrar, Director-IQAC, Dean Academic Affairs, Director-International Relations, Dean-Research, Dean-Student Welfare, Controller of Examinations, Deans of all faculties and Ms. Sunita Sharma- Deputy Director Admissions were present in the conclave. K.K. Mangalam University's "Vidya Prakash Conclave-25" is a major step forward in shaping the future of school education leadership, promoting innovation, and empowering educators to drive change for a better tomorrow.

Run/Walkathon event organized in the area of Shahdara Traffic Circle during Police Week



Run/Walkathon event has been organized in the area of Shahdara Traffic Circle to make people aware about traffic rules and achieve road safety goals. People from all sections of society like Traffic Inspector Vikas Kumar, Bhavya Ramila Pradhan Satish Luthra, students, businessmen, working professionals, police officers participated. More than 125 participants took part in the event. The event started from Gate No. 4 of Yamuna Sports Complex, went around Yamuna Sports Complex and ended at Gate No. 4 of Yamuna Sports Complex. Participants wore T-shirts and caps with road safety slogans and also distributed pamphlets to make people aware about road safety rules. The aim of this run/walkathon event was to educate people about the dangers of careless or irresponsible driving, promote road safety awareness and reduce road accidents and casualties. Agency

Ravi Dalmiya New Delhi: Run/Walkathon event has been organized in the area of Shahdara Traffic Circle to make people aware about traffic rules and achieve road safety goals. People from all sections of society like Traffic Inspector Vikas Kumar, Bhavya Ramila Pradhan Satish Luthra, students, businessmen, working professionals, police officers participated. More than 125 participants took part in the event. The event started from Gate No. 4 of Yamuna Sports Complex, went around Yamuna Sports Complex and ended at Gate No. 4 of Yamuna Sports Complex. Participants wore T-shirts and caps with road safety slogans and also distributed pamphlets to make people aware about road safety rules. The aim of this run/walkathon event was to educate people about the dangers of careless or irresponsible driving, promote road safety awareness and reduce road accidents and casualties. Agency

AAP Atishi writes to CM Rekha Gupta over promise of Rs 2,500 monthly aid for women

New Delhi
Former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Atishi has written a letter to Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, urging her to meet the AAP legislative delegation on February 23 to discuss the implementation of the Rs2500 monthly scheme for women, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised during the election campaign.

Extending her wishes to CM Rekha Gupta on assuming office, Atishi, in her letter, stated, "During an election rally in Dwarca on January 31, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured the mothers and sisters of Delhi that after the formation of a BJP government, the first cabinet meeting would approve a Rs2500 per month scheme for them. He had said - 'This is Modi's guarantee.'"

However, Atishi pointed out that the promised scheme was not approved despite the first cabinet



meeting being held on February 20. She further stated, "The women of Delhi trusted Modi Ji's guarantee, and now they feel deceived." Seeking a meeting with CM Rekha Gupta, she wrote, "The AAP legislative delegation wishes to meet you on February 23 to discuss this issue. On behalf of lakhs of women in Delhi, I humbly request you to spare some time from your busy schedule

so that we can present our case for concrete action on this scheme."

Earlier on Friday, the AAP leader held a press conference, questioning the BJP's commitment to its promises, particularly the Rs2,500 financial assistance scheme for women.

During a press conference, Atishi said, "If Modi Ji's guarantee was real, the women's financial assistance scheme would have

been passed in the first cabinet meeting. But on her very first day as Chief Minister, Rekha Gupta exposed Modi Ji's false claims and proved that his guarantee is no less than 'Jumla,'" Atishi said.

She further stated, "Modi Ji repeatedly assured from every platform that women would receive Rs2,500, and even BJP President JP Nadda said in a press conference that the scheme would be ap-

proved in the first cabinet meeting. However, this has not happened." "Modi Ji also promised that the Rs2,500 amount would be transferred to women's bank accounts by March 8. I want to ask Rekha Gupta - will she once again prove Modi Ji's guarantee to be false on March 8?" Atishi questioned on Friday.

Three gangsters arrested after gunfight in Delhi

New Delhi
The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police on Saturday arrested three members of the Himanshu Bhai and Neeraj Bawana gang following an encounter that prevented a potential firing incident intended to take revenge and extort money in Rohini, North West Delhi.

The arrests led to the seizure of a sophisticated pistol, two country-made pistols, and five bullets. One of the arrested gangsters was involved in making extortion calls to a politician, the police said.

The action followed a tip-off regarding the movement of shooters towards Bawana in outer North Delhi on a motorcycle with the intent to carry out a shootout, said Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Sanjay Bhatia.

The Additional Commissioner of Police further said that around 10.30 pm on Friday, a police team intercepted the criminals on a 100-foot road in Rohini, following which they fired at



overpowered and arrested, he added. During interrogation, one of the suspects, Atul, disclosed that he was arrested in 2016 in connection with a case related to the murder of an individual. Later, he met Neeraj Bawana and Naveen in the prison. He also disclosed that he made extortion and threat calls to a Bawana politician from the prison to influence a key witness in the murder case.

Bhatia said that the other two arrested shooters were involved in murder, robbery, and snatching cases, among others.

Delhi PWD Minister inspects development projects

New Delhi
After assuming office of the Public Works Department (PWD), Minister Pravesh Verma swung into action on Saturday inspecting several important development projects in the National capital alongside officials wherein he reviewed the progress of road construction and directed the officials to expedite the work.

During the inspection, Minister Pravesh Verma took stock of three important projects. The first is from Bhoro Marg to Sarai Kale Khan where road strengthening work is going on till the ring road.

The second is Barapullah Phase-3 where road construction work is going on from Sarai Kale Khan to Mayur Vihar. The third is the review of the work of Moolchand underpass pump upgradation.

Speaking to reporters during the inspection, Verma said that many roads in the city are in bad shape

with the presence of potholes. The government is working fast to make these roads strong and traffic friendly.

While discussing the Barapullah Phase-3 project, he said that this new road to be built from Sarai Kale Khan to Mayur Vihar will ease the traffic in Delhi and people will get relief from traffic jams.

Moreover, he added that the Moolchand underpass faces severe waterlogging during the monsoon season. The Minister directed officials to complete the pump upgradation work soon so that the drainage of rainwater can be smooth.

The minister said after the inspection that PWD officials have been instructed to complete all the projects within the stipulated time. He said that the Delhi government is paying full attention to strengthening the roads and other infrastructure for the convenience of the public.

Delhi LG appoints BJP's Arvinder Singh Lovely as protem speaker

New Delhi
Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has appointed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Arvinder Singh Lovely appointed as protem speaker.

The first session of the Delhi legislative assembly will be held on February 24, where the election of the legislative assembly speaker will be held at 2:00 PM.

Prior to this, the newly elected MLAs will participate in the oath-taking ceremony at 11:00 in the morning.

According to the Delhi assembly bulletin, LG Saxena will address the assembly on February 25, after which the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports will be tabled. Later in the day, the assembly will be open for motion of thanks on LG's address.

On February 26, the discussion on motion of thanks on LG's address will commence at 11:00 AM, after which the Deputy Speaker of the Delhi assembly will be elected.

"Notice of motion for the election of the speaker can be given up to Saturday, February 22, 2025, before noon to the secretary, legislative assembly," the bulletin read.

BJP leader Rekha Gupta,

who took oath as Delhi Chief Minister earlier on Thursday, chaired the first meeting of her cabinet hours later and announced two key decisions - to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme with Rs 5 lakh top-up and table the 14 pending CAG reports in the first sitting of Assembly. Addressing a press conference, Rekha Gupta also announced portfolios of her council of ministers.

She said that the Delhi government will implement the Central flagship scheme in the national capital. This was a pre-poll promise of the BJP, which had targeted the AAP government for not implementing the scheme.

She also announced the tabling of CAG reports, which had not been tabled by the AAP government.

"In the first Cabinet meeting, we discussed and passed two agendas - to implement in Delhi the Ayushman Bharat scheme with Rs 5 lakhs top up and tabling of 14 CAG reports in the first sitting of the Assembly. We will fulfil all the commitments that we have made to the people," Rekha Gupta said.

She said the Delhi government will pay the MoU top-up and will sign a MoU with the Centre.

Government of Haryana

सत्य को ग्रहण करने और असत्य को छोड़ने में सर्वदा उद्यत रहना चाहिए।
- महर्षि दयानंद

Remembering
the Great Social Reformer
and Founder of Arya Samaj

**Maharishi
Dayanand Saraswati Ji**

on his
Birth Anniversary

February 23, 2025

Scan the QR code to join the WhatsApp channel of Information and Public Relations Department, Haryana

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

Mahakumbh: India's Grand Spiritual Confluence and Economic Powerhouse



Dr Anil Singh, Editor, STAR Views

Mahakumbh Mela, the world's largest religious gathering, is a testament to India's deep spiritual roots and economic potential. Held every twelve years in Prayagraj, the festival draws millions of devotees, saints, and tourists from across the globe. While it is primarily a spiritual event, its impact extends far beyond religious significance—it plays a crucial role in India's economy, fosters social harmony, and reinforces India's soft power. The successful organization of Mahakumbh, particularly under the Uttar Pradesh government, has made it a model for event management and economic benefits, significantly contributing to the GDP.

Having personally visited Prayagraj and observed both the interiors and exteriors of the Kumbh arrangements, I can affirm that the Uttar Pradesh government's efforts under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were commendable. The festival was managed with an exceptional level of efficiency, ensuring smooth logistics, hygiene, and security, making it a benchmark for other large-scale global events.

Historical and Religious Significance of Mahakumbh Mela:

Mahakumbh Mela is rooted in Hindu mythology and scriptures, with its origins traced to the Samudra Manthan (churning of the ocean). According to legend, when the divine nectar (amrit) was being transported by celestial beings, a few drops fell at four places—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain—where Kumbh Melas are now held. Among them, the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is the most significant, occurring every 12 years.

For centuries, Mahakumbh has been a melting pot of Indian traditions, bringing together sadhus, spiritual seekers, and devotees irrespective of caste, creed, or economic background. The ritualistic holy dip in the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati is believed to cleanse sins and grant salvation.

Mahakumbh as an Economic Driver:

While Mahakumbh Mela is deeply spiritual, its economic impact is staggering. The 2025 Kumbh in Prayagraj contributed an estimated



of ₹1.2 lakh crore (\$17 billion) to the Indian economy, surpassing the GDP of several small nations. The festival generates direct and indirect employment for thousands across various sectors, including tourism, transport, hospitality, food, handicrafts, and media.

Tourism Boom and Hospitality Industry:

The influx of domestic and international visitors transforms Prayagraj into a vibrant economic hub. Hotels, guesthouses, and homestays experience an unprecedented surge in bookings, creating employment for thousands of locals. The hospitality industry, including restaurants, dhabs, and street food vendors, sees exponential growth, with revenue reaching record levels.

Small-Scale Businesses and Local Artisans:

Mahakumbh offers a lucrative platform for small businesses and artisans selling religious artifacts, rudraksha beads, idols, handwoven textiles, and other cultural items. Street vendors and handicraft makers thrive as visitors purchase souvenirs, contributing to rural economic growth.

Transport and Infrastructure Development: The event necessitates large-scale infrastructure development, including improved roads, sanitation facilities, digital connectivity, and expanded railway and airport services. These upgrades not only benefit Kumbh visitors but also enhance long-term connectivity and economic activity in the region. Transport services, including taxis, rickshaws, and boat rides, experience a significant rise in demand, directly benefiting the local population.

Employment Generation:

Mahakumbh provides opportunities to thousands, from security personnel and healthcare workers to temporary event staff. Event management firms, cleaning agencies, and logistics companies experience a surge in demand, contributing to job creation.

Contribution to India's GDP: With millions of pilgrims, tourists, and businesses participating, Mahakumbh plays a pivotal role in economic growth. The spending during the festival fuels consumption, increases tax revenues, and enhances trade, directly contributing to India's GDP. Government investments in infrastructure and tourism promotion further stimulate economic activity, with ripple effects lasting beyond the event.

Mahakumbh and Social Harmony: One of the most striking aspects of Mahakumbh is its ability to unite people across social, economic, and religious divides. Unlike many other gatherings, Mahakumbh does not distinguish between rich and poor—everyone partakes in the same rituals, stands in the same queues, and bathes in the same sacred waters. This unique characteristic strengthens India's unity in diversity.

Caste and Social Barriers Diminish: People from all backgrounds, including Dalits, Brahmins, traders, and laborers, gather to participate in the festival, fostering social inclusivity. The egalitarian nature of the event reinforces the core principles of India's spiritual traditions—equality and universal brotherhood.

Religious Pluralism and Cultural Exchange: While Mahakumbh is a Hindu festival, its appeal transcends religious boundaries. Scholars, spiritual leaders, and tourists from diverse

backgrounds engage in discussions on philosophy, yoga, and Indian heritage, promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange. The presence of international visitors also bolsters India's soft power and global cultural influence.

Yogi Adityanath; The Architect of Modern Kumbh's Success:

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has played a transformative role in making Mahakumbh a global event. Under his leadership, the Uttar Pradesh government executed a meticulously planned and flawlessly managed event.

Efficient Infrastructure and Public Services: The seamless coordination between different administrative departments ensured a hassle-free experience for pilgrims. Improved roads, and uninterrupted electricity. The seamless coordination between different administrative departments ensured a hassle-free experience for pilgrims.

Security and Crowd Management: Managing over 240 million visitors is no small feat. The state government deployed advanced security mechanisms, including AI-based crowd control, facial recognition cameras, and drones for aerial monitoring. Over 20,000 police personnel ensured law and order, making it one of the safest large-scale events in the world.

Hygiene and Cleanliness Drive: One of the most appreciated aspects of Yogi Adityanath's management was the emphasis on cleanliness. The government set up 1.22 lakh toilets, introduced efficient waste disposal mechanisms, and ensured Swachh Bharat guidelines were strictly followed. This was a significant departure from previous editions, making Kumbh an eco-friendly event.

Promotion of Digital and Smart Kumbh: The integration of technology played a crucial role in Kumbh's success. Digital signage, mobile apps, and live streaming enhanced the visitor experience, helping pilgrims navigate the city efficiently. This digital transformation positioned Mahakumbh as a smart religious festival in modern India.

Several prominence personalities and other vips resonance among the masses. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Sacred Dip

On February 5, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. This act underscored the festival's national importance and showcased the government's commitment to preserving cultural traditions. President Droupadi Murmu's Participation

President Droupadi Murmu graced the Mahakumbh with her presence on February 10, 2025, performing the sacred ritual at the Sangam. Her involvement highlighted the festival's spiritual significance at the highest echelons of governance.

Other Political Luminaries

The event also saw participation from Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, numerous Union Ministers, and Chief Ministers from various states, all partaking in the holy dip. Their collective involvement not only amplified the festival's stature but also fostered a sense of unity and shared cultural pride among the populace.

A way forward

Mahakumbh Mela is not just a religious congregation but a phenomenon that shapes India's economy, social fabric, and global cultural identity. It showcases India's ability to manage an event of unparalleled scale while fostering economic growth, employment, and social harmony. The Uttar Pradesh government's remarkable execution under Yogi Adityanath's leadership has further cemented Mahakumbh's position as India's most successful religious festival in modern history.

As someone who personally witnessed the grandeur of the arrangements in Prayagraj, I can say that Mahakumbh 2025 promises to be an even more spectacular event. The synergy of tradition and modernity makes it an exemplary model for large-scale event management worldwide. In a rapidly globalizing world, Mahakumbh remains a shining example of India's spiritual strength and economic resilience.

(The writer is an Editor, STAR Views)

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.

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

Solution, Sudoku

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

THE WISDOM TREE BY SUVEEN KUMAR

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

If one thing that will ever make a difference in someone's life is not how smart-mouth you are but how sweet-heart you are, if one thing that would ever make a difference in someone's life is not how much you could impress someone but how well you cared someone, if one thing that would ever make a difference in someone's life is not how much favour you got but how much favour you gave to ones who didn't have. Have your own rules of life but most importantly, believe in them. Words we speak out of our ego are meant to be overheard, actions we take out of our ego are meant to be ignored, things we give out of our ego are meant to be passed on.

You have to be different to make a difference in your life but you don't have to be different to make a difference in someone else's life. You can be just you and they will be no more they, you can just smile and they will fall in love, you can just hug and they will forever be yours. When your love is not working for someone you want to give them give it to someone who wants to receive, when your wealth is not making someone you want to make then give it to someone who lacks it great. Say good words because they don't hurt, be nice because that is how you were, be kind because it is vanishing from the world. You don't have to have a perfect reason to do good things, to do good things even bad excuses are accepted. Making a difference is not always making things different, it is sometimes keeping things from being different that is beautiful, it is sometimes stopping things from changing to different that is best in form.



TOP STORY

Trump's Gaza Plan

US president Donald Trump's proposal to annex the Gaza Strip and transfer its two million Palestinian inhabitants to Egypt and Jordan has provoked a predictable outcry. Virtually all Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, oppose the idea. Human rights organizations and international lawyers note its violation of international law.

By contrast, most Israelis welcome the proposal, and its supporters point to precedents from the first half of the last century: the Turkish-Greek population exchange of 1923, the imperial statecraft Germans expelled from Eastern Europe at the end of World War II,

and the partition of India in 1947. Ruling out the transfer of Palestinians indicates a double standard against Israel, they complain.

Five historical truths are required to make sense of this debate. These truths are not proof of a double standard but evidence of how the restraints imposed by the global order founded eighty years ago have eroded. That order, however, did little to prevent repeated mass expulsions. If the emerging order repeats the violent logics of nation-state consolidation and imperial statecraft, it will lay bare the conditions that underpinned the founding of

states after the World Wars, especially in the Global North. It is no accident that African states, the Gambia and South Africa, are among the strongest defenders of the norm against ethnic cleansing and genocide.

One truth is that large-scale population expulsions have indeed been a feature of imperial statecraft and nation-state foundation for at least two hundred years. Multinational empires deported peoples when it suited their security interests. The new nation-states carved out of them expelled "alien" peoples that threatened their ideal of demographic

homogeneity, access to resources, and sense of security.

Indigenous peoples in the Americas and colonial Australia were shunted off to unwanted land when they were not outright massacred. In the struggle with Greek Orthodox insurgents to establish a Greek nation-state in the 1820s, Ottoman authorities contemplated expelling them to Egypt, while the Greeks set out to remove all Muslims from the Peloponnese as well as massacring many. In the 1860s and 1870s, the Russian Empire induced the flight of thousands of Muslim Circassians into the Ottoman Empire as it con-

quered Black Sea territory, settling Greeks in their stead.

In subsequent decades, hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Muslims were expelled or fled from Christian Balkan states after they defeated Ottoman forces in establishing nation-states. When Greece absorbed the largely Jewish and Muslim Ottoman city of Salonika during the Balkan Wars in 1912, it set about "Hellenizing" the place with Greeks from Turkey.

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Double-engine govt will boost spiritual eco-tourism in UP: CM Adityanath

Lakhimpur Khuri (UP)
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday declared that the double-engine government will drive development in spiritual and eco-tourism, creating ample employment opportunities.

He made the statement while inaugurating and laying the foundation for 373 development projects worth Rs 1,622 crores at Rajendra Giri Memorial Stadium in Gola Gokarnath, Lakhimpur Khuri including Gola Gokarnath Shiva Temple Corridor.

As per a press statement, Adityanath while addressing the gathering emphasised, "Lakhimpur Khuri is no



longer a backward district. The fertile land here is like gold." He highlighted the district's transformation from its past, noting that when the country gained independence, Lakhimpur Khuri lagged in development. "Malaria was a major issue, and Dudhwa National Park lacked proper access. However, now, even an airport is being developed in Paha.

The chief minister also outlined steps for addressing the region's flood challenges, including measures to implement flood prevention and river channelization, without any hindrances from the NGT or other authorities.

Adityanath said, "The double-engine government will increase the development of spiritual and eco-tourism, and ensure that there is no shortage of employment."

He also mentioned that Lakhimpur Khuri's fertile land is a major asset and highlighted the inauguration of projects worth Rs 4,500 crores in the district, including the Gola Gokarnath temple corridor and India's first PLA (bioplastic manufacturing) plant by Balrampur Sugar Mill Limited. He also referred to the Rs 2,850 crore plastic plant being set up in Kumbhi.

In addition, he announced the inauguration of Dudhwa National Park and the commencement of a medical college in the district. He praised Prime Minister Modi for promoting products from the Tharu tribe that preserve their culture and noted that public representatives are committed to supporting development efforts.

The event was attended by Tourism and Culture Minister Jai Singh, Executive Minister Nitin Agarwal, and Gola MLA Aman Giri.

JP Nadda and CM Yogi take holy dip at Sangam



Mahakumbh Nagar
BJP National President JP Nadda, accompanied by his family, took a sacred dip at Triveni Sangam on Saturday, embracing the spiritual essence of Mahakumbh. Before the holy bath, he was joined by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP State President Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, Cabinet Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, Minister Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi,' and revered spiritual leader Satwata Baba.

The Nadda family also offered a sacred 'chunari' to Maa Ganga, praying for the welfare of all. JP Nadda arrived in Prayagraj on Saturday with his family, where he was warmly welcomed by CM Yogi Adityanath at the Triveni Sankul in Mahakumbh Nagar. From there, the leaders proceeded to the sacred Sangam via a floating jetty from Arail Ghat.

Amid the serene waters, the BJP National President, alongside CM Yogi and his family, fed the Siberian migratory birds—a symbolic gesture of peace and harmony. Following this, he first took a collective holy dip with BJP leaders before performing rituals and immersing himself in the sacred waters with his wife and family members.

As the leaders participated in the sacred bath, a massive crowd of devotees present at the Sangam chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Har Har Gange' in their honor. After the ritualistic dip, Nadda, CM Yogi, and other BJP leaders performed a special puja dedicated to Maa Ganga, seeking blessings for the prosperity and well-being of the people.

The delegation then proceeded to the revered Bade Hanuman Mandir, where they offered prayers to the deity. Continuing their spiritual journey, they also visited and worshipped the sacred Akshayvat tree, a significant pilgrimage site believed to grant eternal blessings.

Punjab CM flags off 216 State-of-the-Art machines



Komal Ramola Chandigarh
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Saturday flagged off 216 state-of-the-art machines including super suction-cum-jetting machines to give a push to the cleaning of sewage lines in seven districts ensuring better sanitation across cities.

The Chief Minister also stressed that the Punjab government is prioritizing the cleanliness of its cities and will soon equip all urban areas with such modern tools. He acknowledged that the existing sanitation infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing population leading to sanitation challenges in larger cities.

Addressing the gathering at Bahir College after the flagging off ceremony, the Chief Minister stated that these machines purchased at a cost of Rs 14.30 crore, will be deployed in seven districts including Sangrur, Barnala, Bathinda, Mule-Kota, Muzra, Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib. He further announced that 730 additional machines have been procured at a cost of Rs 40 crore to improve sanitation facilities in various cities across the state.

The Chief Minister emphasized that these ultra-modern super suction-cum-jetting machines will significantly aid in cleaning sewage lines in urban areas. He highlighted that with the introduction of these machines, sanitation workers will no longer need to enter manholes manually as they will be trained to operate the equipments efficiently.

Bhagwant Singh Mann stated that these advanced machines will effectively address sewage-related issues bringing much-needed relief to city residents.

The Chief Minister also stressed that the Punjab government is prioritizing the cleanliness of its cities and will soon equip all urban areas with such modern tools. He acknowledged that the existing sanitation infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing population leading to sanitation challenges in larger cities. The Chief Minister assured that the government is committed to resolving these issues by providing new machinery and ensuring proper sanitation facilities across the state.

The Chief Minister announced that all obstacles hindering the establishment of a medical college in Sangrur have been resolved and the project will commence shortly. He revealed that certain indi-

Books are our true friends, it help to become successful in life: Chandershekhar

Rajan Panchhi Mandi
Books are our true friends, those who are friends books become successful in life, said MLA Chandershekhar. He was speaking over the annual prize distribution ceremony of Vallabh College Mandi on Saturday.

Chandershekhar has called for a campaign in colleges to save students from drug addiction. For this, he said that micro planning should be done in colleges to form small groups of students and through these groups, students should spend as much time as possible in the library. The one who has the most correct information will be successful in life. He said that the present time is going through serious climate change. When I was studying in this college, scientists used to tell that if we do not take strict steps to stop climate change, then in the coming time there will be cold in summer and heat in winter.

Today we are suffering the consequences of this. He stressed on collective efforts

to stop climate change. Chandershekhar remembered the teachers from whom he studied on this occasion and said that whatever I am today is all because of them. He appealed to the students to follow the path shown by their teachers, only then they will be able to move forward in life.

On this occasion, the MLA honored the students who were top in academic, sports, cultural, NCC and NSS activities. He also released the handbook of the College Alumni Association.

CM Mann hands over cheque worth Rs. 1 cr to family of Shaheed constable



Bhawaniagarh
The Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday handed over cheque worth Rs 1 crore to the family of martyr as a mark of respect for his supreme sacrifice for country.

The Chief Minister said that Constable Harshveer Singh had attained martyrdom while performing his duty in Sadak Surkhya Force. He said that Rs 1 crore has been given as ex-gratia by state government whereas another payment of insurance cover worth Rs 1 crore had been made by the HDFC bank. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that this initiative is in recognition of the immense contribution of this son of soil towards discharging his duty in the state.

The Chief Minister said that the state government is duty bound to help the families of the soldiers who sacrifice their life at the altar of motherland. He said that financial assistance to family of martyr Harshveer Singh is in consonance with the commitment of the state government to ensure the well being of the soldiers (from Armed forces, paramilitary and Police) and their families. He hoped that this humble initiative by the state will go a long way in helping the aggrieved family on one hand and securing their future on the other.

With People's support, a strong triple engine govt to be formed in Haryana: CM Saini

Komal Ramola Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that the people's support is with the BJP, and a strong triple-engine government will be formed in Haryana during the upcoming civic elections. The state government has always prioritized development and public welfare. It remains fully committed to safeguarding the interests of every section of society.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing the gathering at a program held in Yamunanagar on Saturday. Earlier, he paid his respects at the Pracheen Devi temple and Shri Kheeda Maharaj Ji's shrine, offering prayers for the well-being and prosperity of the people.

He said that the current state government is consistently working towards the progress and upliftment of all of Haryana and every Haryanvi, in line

with Prime Minister Sh Narendra Modi's vision, "Sabka Saath-Sabka Vikas" and principle of "Haryana Ek-Haryanvi Ek." He further said that after the civic elections, develop in the state will be ensured at three times the speed.

Speaking to media persons after the program, the Chief Minister said that the public is highly satisfied with the policies and development initiatives of the current government. With tremendous public support for the BJP in the civic elections, he assured that the party will secure a historic victory, leading to the formation of a strong triple-engine government in Haryana.

The Chief Minister added that the formation of a streamlined government will not only accelerate the pace of development but also ensure that the people directly benefit from government schemes.

CM Saini slams opposition on nepotism & regionalism

Komal Ramola Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that nepotism and regionalism were widespread in previous Congress led governments. He pointed out that development projects were only carried out in areas where the Chief Minister hailed from, leaving other regions neglected. The BJP government has worked to eliminate these practices at their roots. The current government is committed to ensuring equal development across all areas, with the pace of progress accelerating statewide. No area remains untouched by the development, with the construction of a robust road network underway.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing the gathering at a function held in Barara, Ambala district, on Saturday.

Nayab Singh Saini further said that the "double-engine" government at both the Centre and the state is ensuring equal distribution of development across Haryana. He assured that there is no dearth of funds for these initiatives. In addition, he highlighted that the youth are now securing jobs that align with their qualifications, and their trust in the government has grown significantly.

He said that the resolution set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to transform India into a developed nation by 2047 must be fulfilled. Today, citizens are directly benefiting from the welfare schemes of both the Central and State Governments. People's lives have become more convenient, as they no longer have to stand in long queues for services. The online process has introduced transparency, ensuring timely delivery of benefits to the public.

The Chief Minister also highlighted that the current state government has worked diligently to implement the promises made in the Sankalp Patra during its 100-day tenure. Free dialysis services are now available in government hospitals. Continuous efforts are also being made for the empowerment of women.

He further said that present government is committed to the upliftment of all sections of society. Efforts are consistently underway for the welfare of farmers.

Yogi govt gears up for seamless crowd management ahead of Mahashivratri Snaan

Mahakumbh Nagar
As the grand and divine Mahakumbh 2025 enters its final phase, preparations for the last major bathing day on Mahashivratri (February 26) are in full swing. Every day, crores of devotees are flocking to Prayagraj to take a holy dip in the sacred Triveni Sangam before the grand confluence.

Aligned with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the administration has turned preparations into a mission, ensuring seamless crowd management for the final weekend rush and last Snaan. Strategic plans for railway operations, traffic diversions, and parking facilities are being implemented to provide a smooth pilgrimage experience.

To prevent inconvenience to devotees, senior officials have taken charge on the ground, actively monitoring and executing management strategies. With unprece-

NORTHERN RAILWAY
e-OPEN TENDER NOTICE

No: 128-W/260/Tender Notice/24-2504 (INT-59) Dated: 21.02.2025

Divisional Engineer (Workshop) Railway, New Delhi is hereby invited for the President of India invites e-tender on the prescribed form for the under noted work.

Name of work: 1. Bridge No. 196 U/P & O/R replacement of channel sleepers with H-beam in 130 Kmph rail of DWR section of Bar. No. 7A, 31, 37 & location: 65A in the NK section.

cost of work: 2. TRR (P) 125-128 B T KM in the section of ADELNUR.

Estimate No: 39-889 TRM on DWR section.

Approx. Cost: 1. Rs. 1150985.00; 2. Rs. 7921199.38; 3. Rs. 7821139.65.

Earnest Money: 1. Rs. 207500; 2. Rs. 154000; 3. Rs. 515100.

Earnest Money should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. FDR or Demand Draft will not be accepted as EMO for tender unless on IREPS as per Railway Board letter No. 2015CE-11CT/1/51 dated 31.08.2016.

Completion period: 1 & 2. 06 Months; 3. 12 Months.

Date and time of submission of tender and opening of tender: 1. TRR (P) 39-889 TRM on DWR section (e-tender) at 15.00 hrs on 18.03.2025.

Website particulars, published tender notice location etc complete details of tender can be seen at web site where the tender form can be downloaded.

Similar nature: 1. Fabrication & laying of channel sleepers in running track. 2. & 3. CTTR/RR/P/RTTR including raising of track, screening, distressing of track, g/w & post works for track maintenance machine like stamping machines/hoists screening/regulating machines & TRR by 1.28.

NOTE: All attachments must be self attested by the tenders and the affidavit should be submitted in the new format attached with tender conditions as per Annexure-XIV is compulsory. 597225

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Champions Trophy: India aim for semifinal, Pakistan eye survival in marquee clash

■ While India are on high after claiming measured six-wicket win over sprightly Bangladesh, Pakistan are evidently tense after 60-run loss in tournament-opener against New Zealand

Dubai
Hyped as a marquee showdown but mostly lopsided on the field, India and Pakistan lock horns in the ICC Champions Trophy here on Sunday with Rohit Sharma's men aiming to seal a semifinal spot and Mohammad Rizwan's team desperate to avoid early elimination from the tournament.

While India are on a high after claiming a measured six-wicket win over a sprightly Bangladesh, Pakistan are evidently tense after the 60-run loss in the tournament-opener against New Zealand.

The sub-continental rivals' last Champions Trophy clash was the 2017 final in which Pakistan walked away with the win and the trophy. Rizwan and Co. would look to draw inspiration from that triumph in London but would also need to scale up their performance in every department.

Though the buzz surrounding the match is nowhere close to being what it used to be at the peak of diplomatic tensions between the two countries, there is an air of quiet anticipation for the Group A clash at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

India will have a distinct advantage in every aspect. The side has settled in nicely while Pakistan have flown in a couple of days ago after the drabbing handed by the Black Caps in Karachi.

More often than not, an India-Pakistan clash is as much a battle of nerves as cricketing abilities and India would be in a much better space on both counts come Sunday afternoon.

For starters, skipper Rohit, whose form was a major concern in the run-up to the tournament, seems to be getting



back to his best if the lucid stroke-making against Bangladesh was anything to go by.

His 41-run cameo was a crucial contribution in the tricky chase of 229 which was masterfully anchored by Shubman Gill with his eighth ODI hundred.

In contrast, Pakistan would be fretting over the form and approach of their biggest star Babar Azam. The 90-ball 64 against New Zealand in a chase of 320 has been roundly criticised for being too slow.

Azam's inability to accelerate even when the asking rate kept climbing has come under scrutiny and he would be under tremendous pressure against India.

Adding to their woes is the injury-ravaged outcast of game-changing opener Fakhar Zaman from the squad. Imam ul Haq has replaced him in the side and has joined the squad here.

However, middle-order batter Khushdil Shah's counter-attacking 69 in the tournament-opener is a positive. Shah has amusingly stated that he has no idea how he made the squad given his lean run in the recent past but Pakistan would be happy that the punt has paid off.

Pakistan would also be hoping to prove a point by getting the better of India, who refused to travel across the border for the tournament which is otherwise wholly scheduled in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

The man who is feeling the heat in the Indian team right now is Virat Kohli after yet again failing to convert a fairly decent start. His focus hasn't looked the same for a while but Kohli does have the knack of coming up with special efforts against Pakistan.

However, in the larger scheme of things, it could well boil down to key defining moments from the bowlers and

here too Pakistan have lots to ponder after the hammering that the Shaheen Afridi-led attack took from the Kiwis.

On the other hand, India have a fit-and-in-form Mohammed Shami, who is being brilliantly backed up by Harshit Rana. Shami's fier against Bangladesh ensured that India did not miss injured talisman Jasprit Bumrah just yet.

All-rounder Hardik Pandya has always turned up with his best against Pakistan in major ICC tournaments. He will be hoping to make up for the 2017 Champions Trophy final disappointment where he fought as a lone warrior for India but failed to take his team over the line.

India are likely to continue with their winning combination and remain unchanged.

The spin trio of Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, and Axar Patel will be included once again on the tweaker-friendly surface to exploit the conditions.

Squads:
India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill (vice captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wicketkeeper), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper), Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakravarthy.

Pakistan: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (vice captain), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Kamran Ghulam, Saud Shaqueel, Tayyab Tahir, Faeem Ashraf, Khushdil Shah, Usman Khan, Abrar Ahmed, Harris Rauf, Mohammad Hasnain, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Match starts at 2.30pm IST.

Harbhajan Singh backs India, predicts big knock from Virat Kohli

New Delhi
As the much-anticipated India-Pakistan clash in the ICC Champions Trophy approaches, former India cricketer Harbhajan Singh has expressed strong confidence in India's chances while also backing Virat Kohli to deliver a match-winning performance.

Speaking ahead of the high-voltage encounter, Harbhajan highlighted Kohli's potential to turn the tide with a big innings, emphasizing that a century from the star batter would make people forget recent struggles.

"Everyone is saying that Virat Kohli did not score runs. I am saying that Virat Kohli does not have a better chance than this. Whatever happened in the last four to five months, everything will be forgotten if tomorrow he scores a century in this match. Then the world remembers. So there is full hope for Virat, and I want to make a prediction that tomorrow is Virat's day. Virat will score runs, and if Virat scores runs, India always wins," Harbhajan said.

Harbhajan Singh also backed India as the favourites for the match, citing their balanced squad.

"India are favourites because their batting and bowling both are good, and also they won their last match here [Dubai], and with that experience, they will move forward. Whereas Pakistan has come to Dubai after losing in Pakistan, and they have played on better pitches, but here they will get a little slow pitch, and adjusting to a slow pitch will be difficult for them. India is the favourite in my point of view, and I will win this match because India's team



is the best," he said.

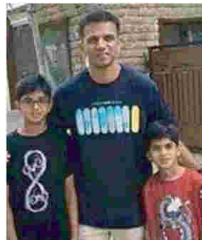
With the world's eyes on this marquee clash, India will look to continue their dominance against Pakistan in major ICC events.

Former Pakistan skipper Shoaib Malik has picked India as the favourite for the high-octane clash against the defending champions, Pakistan, in the ongoing Champions Trophy in Dubai on Sunday, reported RevSports.

The stakes will rise when India and Pakistan share the same field and fight for bragging rights. Pakistan will fight to keep their campaign alive, while India will look to exude dominance and maintain its impeccable record over its arch-rival.

Ahead of the high-stakes encounter, Shoaib picked India as the clear favourite but warned that a moment of individual brilliance from any player could change the outcome. As the countdown to the big game continues, anticipation is at an all-time high, with both teams preparing for what promises to be an intense battle on the field.

Dravid returns to play for 3rd-division club alongside younger son Anvay



Bengaluru

Legendary Indian cricketer Rahul Dravid, who last played a professional cricket match back in 2014 and concluded his coaching stint with Team India, made his return to the sport to take part in 2024-25 Sri Narsara Memorial Shield For Group I-III Division tournament along with his son Anvay.

Dravid played for Vijaya Cricket Club against Young Lions Club at the SLS Kreedangana ground during this 50-over competition, walking out to bat at number six in the first innings, with his son batting at the other end. "This was a rare instance of a father son duo playing a game of cricket together, as per Wisden."

Dravid made 40 runs in eight balls before being dismissed by Ar ULias, with his brief knock having a boundary. He contributed a partnership of 15 runs in 17 balls with his son, who scored 58 in 60 balls, with eight fours. His teammate Swapnil Yelave top scored with 107 in 50 balls, with the club making 345/7 in their 50 overs.

This is not the first time Dravid has featured in a club game after retiring. Following his international retirement in 2013, a couple of months after pulling down curtains on his international career, Dravid went back to his roots, donning the colours of his childhood club, the Bangalore United Cricket Club. He made a crucial century for the team and prevented their relegation from the competition.

Dravid also has his elder son Samit, who was picked for India Under-19 squad last August. He also featured in last year's Maharaja T20 Trophy last season, scoring 82 runs in seven matches.

KKR's domestic contingent begin pre-season preparations in Mumbai

Mumbai
Indian Premier League's (IPL) defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have kickstarted their preparations for the 18th season with a week-long training camp in Mumbai, before their Kolkata leg of the main pre-tournament camp begins in March. The ongoing program aims to bring together their core domestic talent for seven days of comprehensive training and team bonding activities, according to a release from KKR.

The camp, which runs from February 21-28, features nine of KKR's domestic players, focusing on building early momentum ahead of the upcoming season. Leading the pack is Venkatesh Iyer, alongside Rinku Singh, Ramanand Singh, Vaibhav Arora and others. "The camp also features young talents like Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who had an impressive debut season in 2024, and newcomers Mayank Markande and Lavith Sisodia."

The training camp, overseen by head coach Chandrakant Pandit and his support staff, encompasses specialised strength and conditioning sessions, skill training in the nets, match simulation exercises and team bonding activities.

"The players who are not currently involved in domestic cricket are available and have joined us for this short pre-season camp. This is a normal routine for us every season. We will also have a camp in Kolkata from March 12 onwards, where we will have the international players available post the ICC Champions Trophy. Our real preparation will start when the whole squad assembles, but this camp will help us get into a rhythm. We have our core group intact which gives us confidence, and I am sure that with the players we have brought in (at the Auction), our combinations will be very strong like last season," cited head coach Chandrakant Pandit, as quoted from a release by KKR.

Adding to this, spin bowling coach Carl Crowe said, "We've got lots of nets, lots of match simulation planned for the next few days. So, it's an opportunity for most of the group to get back together. It's good to see a lot of known guys here, but also a few new faces. It's important to keep the squad fresh. Obviously, we had a very successful year last year, but you got to keep thinking about ways to get forward. Everyone is really excited for the whole tournament."

The coaching setup at the camp will also include bowling coach Bharat Arun, Strength & Conditioning Coach Sagar V and Head Physio Prasanth Panchada. In addition to spin bowling coach Carl Crowe, ensuring the players receive expert guidance across all aspects of their preparation.

FIH Hockey Pro League: India women's team script 1-0 victory over Germany

Bhubaneswar

It was redemption for the Indian women's hockey team as they defeated Germany 1-0 in the ongoing FIH Hockey Pro League 2024/25 clash at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Saturday.

Deepika (12) was the sole goal scorer, ensuring India climbed to the seventh spot on the points table.

India started the first quarter with a disciplined defensive setup and a proactive high press, matching Germany's early dominance in possession with attacking intent.

In the 12th minute, the hosts won a penalty corner, their best opportunity of the period. Deepika made no mistake, precisely driving her shot into the back of the net to give India the lead. Moments later, Vaisnavi Phalke nearly set up Sunelita Toppo for a deft deflection, but the effort fell short.

The second quarter delivered end-to-end action with India eager to build on its advantage. Germany found themselves pinned in their own half for the first five minutes, with forward Sophia Schwabe closely marked by the Indian defence.

Deepika's sublime form continued as she sliced through the German team with a silky run, weaving her way to the edge of the circle before threading a pass to Sharmila Devi in the 25th minute. However, Sharmila could only direct her shot into the pads of goalkeeper Finja Starck.

On the counter, Germany's Yara Mandel won the visitors a penalty



corner in the 26th minute, but Indian Goalkeeper Sivita Punia gloved away Lena Michael's low-driven shot to keep the scoreline at 1-0.

After halftime, India remained on the prowl, immediately earning a penalty corner through Navneet Kaur in the 31st minute. Deepika stepped up once again, unleashing a powerful strike, but the German defence held firm to deny her a second goal.

India was firmly in control of the game despite Germany holding the lion's share of possession in the third quarter. Germany's lack of urgency limited their shots on goal before Germany won two consecutive penalty corners in the 38th minute, but the scoreline remained unchanged.

India was steadfast in its defensive endeavours in the final quarter. An ear-

ly penalty corner for Germany was derailed as Stine Kurz's strike was courageously closed down by Sunelita Toppo.

In the 47th minute, Schwabe let go of a venomous shot from close range, but Goalkeeper Bichu Devi dropped down to deny her. Lisa Nolte fired on the rebound, but Devi's reflexes ensured a second save in quick succession.

In the dying embers of the match, Germany moved forward cautiously, stringing a series of passes in search of a breakthrough, but the equaliser evaded them as they could not pierce the Indian defence.

India will be in action again when they take on the Netherlands on February 25 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

Car & Bike rally begins in Agra under Taj Mahotsav

Rajesh Tomar/Akash Jain

Agra
The Agra Taj Car and Bike Rally was flagged off here on Saturday under Taj Mahotsav.

Chief Guest Brigadier Naveen Kumar, Lieutenant Colonel Mohit Sharma, Patron Harvijay Vahia, Chairman Ram Mohan Kapoor, Dr. Ranjana Bansal, Anil Sharma, Rinesh Mittal were present.

Rally coordinator Sudev Bar provided road books to 125 drivers and navigators riding 75 bikes and 50 cars and explained the rules again to the navigators assisting the drivers.

Riders from Agra accompanied the participants from states like Uttar

Rally coordinator Sudev Bar provided road books to 125 drivers and navigators riding 75 bikes and 50 cars and explained the rules again to the navigators assisting the drivers.

Pradesh, Maharashtra, South India, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal etc.

Chief guest Brigadier Naveen Kumar said that the Agra Taj Car and Bike Rally is a well-known vehicle rally of the country. This thrill of speed held under the Taj Mahotsav also attracts tourists and also increases the

visit to the Brj region.

Motor Sport Club Chairman Ram Mohan Kapoor said that under the Taj Mahotsav, a two-day car and bike rally has been organized by the Motor Sport Club of Agra, Taj Royal Rider Club, Pro Biking Club in collaboration with the UP Tourism Department. On the second day rally will be flagged off from Malpura dropping station for Fatehpur Sikri, Jodhpur, Jhal, Yamuna Paar, Gajuli Ghat, Pipa Pul.

Patron Harvijay Vahia said that the first task for any driver is to complete the set distance within the set time and speed. Such rallies teach discipline as well as cooperative behavior.



BNP leader beaten to death in front of wife in Dhaka

ABNP leader was beaten to death in front of his wife by his rivals in Dhaka, police said.

Mohammad Babul Mia, the former vice-president of BNP's Kulla union unit, was killed when he and her wife were harvesting mustard near Akshirnagar Housing of Dhamrai upazila on Friday afternoon, Daily Star Bangladesh reported.

Babul's wife Yasmin Begum said villagers had a long-standing dispute over Akshirnagar Housing, a real estate business. "Although my husband was not involved in the matter, local criminals Afzar, Arshad, and Monir had been threatening both of us for days," she alleged.

"They beat him with sticks and SS pipes, seriously injuring him. They even gouged out both his eyes. When I and some locals tried to intervene and take him to a hospital, they stopped us. Only after he became unconscious did they leave the place," she said.

Babul was later taken to Savar Enam Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station, said primary investigations said Babul was killed over a previous dispute.

"Preparations are underway to recover the body from the hospital and send it to the morgue," the official said.

Hamas hands over first 2 of 6 Israeli hostages to be freed in latest exchange

Rafah
Hamas freed the first two of six Israeli hostages due to be released Saturday even as heightened tension between the adversaries clouded the future of the fragile ceasefire deal.

The two hostages — Tal Shoham, 40, and Avera Mengistu, 39 — were put into Red Cross ambulances after being brought out onto a stage by masked and armed Hamas fighters in front of a crowd in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Soon after, the Israeli military confirmed that the two had been brought into Israel.

The latest hostage release, along with the freeing of hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, is going ahead after tensions mounted over a grisly and heart-wrenching dispute triggered this week when Hamas initially handed over the wrong body for Shiri Bibas, an Israeli mother of two young boys



abducted by militants. The remains that Hamas transferred with her sons' bodies on Thursday were later determined to be those of an unidentified Palestinian woman. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed revenge for "a cruel and malicious violation," while Hamas suggested it had been a mistake.

On Friday night, the small militant group believed to have been holding Bibas and her sons — the Palestinian Mujahedeen Brigades — said it handed over a second body. On Saturday morning, Bibas' family said Israeli forensic authorities had confirmed the remains were hers.

"For 16 months we sought certainty and now that it's here, it brings no comfort, though we hope it marks the beginning of closure," the family said. The dispute over the body's identity raised new doubt about the ceasefire deal, which has paused

over 15 months of war but is nearing the end of its first phase. Negotiations over a second phase, in which Hamas would release dozens more hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal, are likely to be even more difficult.

The six hostages being freed Saturday are the last living ones to be released under the ceasefire's first phase. Mengistu, an Ethiopian-Israeli, had been held

The latest hostage release, along with the freeing of hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, is going ahead after tensions mounted over a grisly and heart-wrenching dispute triggered this week when Hamas initially handed over the wrong body for Shiri Bibas, an Israeli mother of two young boys abducted by militants.

in Gaza since entering on his own in 2014. Watching the handover on Israeli media, Mengistu's family broke out into a Hebrew song, "Here is the Light" as they saw him for the first time in more than a decade.

Shoham, from the northern Israeli village of Ma'ale Tzviya, was visiting his wife's family in Kibbutz Be'eri when Hamas militants stormed

Kash Patel takes oath as FBI director on Bhagwat Gita

Washington
Kash Patel took oath as the ninth director of the FBI on the Bhagwat Gita and spoke about how a first-generation Indian kid is living the American dream, reflecting on his heritage.

The US Senate voted 51 to 49 to confirm Patel on Thursday. Patel's family members and girlfriend were present during the oath ceremony on Friday. The oath ceremony was administered by US Attorney General Pam Bondi in the Indian Treaty Room in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB) on the White House campus.

She asked Patel to place his hand on the Gita and raise his right hand to take the oath.

"I am living the American dream. Anyone who thinks the American dream is dead, just look right here. You're talking to a first-generation

Indian kid who's about to lead the law enforcement community, the greatest nation on God's green earth. That can't happen anywhere else," Patel, 44, said.

New York-born Patel — often called Little India — has roots in Gujarat. However, his parents are from East Africa — his mother is from Tanzania and his father is from Uganda. They came to the US from Canada in 1970.

The family moved to Queens in New York — often called Little India — in the late 70s. Patel was born and grew up there. Patel's parents are retired now and spend their time in both the US and Gujarat.

During his swearing-in ceremony, Patel expressed gratitude to President Donald Trump, his family and the senators who voted for his confirmation, saying they'd put an "enormous level of faith" in him.

Trump-Putin summit preparations underway, Russia says

Washington
Preparations are underway for a face-to-face meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia's deputy foreign minister said Saturday, marking a clear departure from Western efforts to isolate Moscow over its war in Ukraine.

Speaking to Russian state media, Sergei Ryabkov said a possible Putin-Trump summit could involve broad talks on

global issues, not just the war in Ukraine.

"The question is about starting to move toward normalizing relations between our countries, finding ways to resolve the most acute and potentially very, very dangerous situations, of which there are many, Ukraine among them," he said.

But he said efforts to pave the way for further talks among senior officials. Russian and U.S. representatives meeting in



intensive preparatory work." Ryabkov added that U.S. and Russian envoys could meet within the

Saudi Arabia on Tuesday agreed to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, an extraordinary about-face in U.S. foreign policy under Trump. Senior U.S. officials have suggested Ukraine will have to give up its goals of joining NATO and retaining the 20% of its territory seized by Russia.

After the meeting, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told The Associ-

ated Press the two sides agreed broadly to pursue three goals: to restore staffing at their respective embassies; to create a high-level team to support Ukraine peace talks; and to explore closer relations and economic cooperation.

He stressed, however, that the talks, which were attended by his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, and other senior Russian and U.S. officials, marked the

beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done. Lavrov, for his part, hailed the meeting as "very useful."

No Ukrainian officials were present at the Saudi meeting, which came as their beleaguered country is slowly but steadily losing ground against more numerous Russian troops, nearly three years after Moscow launched an all-out invasion of its smaller neighbor.

BUSINESS

India Aims to Double Electronics Exports to \$25 Billion in 5 Years

New Delhi
Electrical and electronics manufacturers look to more than double the sector's exports to USD 25 billion in the next five years, an industry official said on Saturday.

"We are committed to enhancing market access across the globe for our members. Our export total is about 12 billion USD dollars and we are committed to make it 25 billion USD dollars in the next 5 years," Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA) President Sunil Singhvi said on Saturday.

Addressing a session at Elecrama 2025 in Greater Noida, Singhvi said IEEMA's vision is to make India a global hub for electronics and electrical manufacturing.

With a shift in the global supply chain, the world is looking towards India as a trusted partner in the energy solution, he said.

However to increase exports, it is important that "we actively participate in international stand-

ard bodies, advocating policy, that is standard exports, financing, new business model and competitiveness," he said. IEEMA is working with all stakeholders to strengthen quality standards and testing infrastructure in the country because lot of QCOs (quality control orders) are coming and there is a need for enhancement of testing infrastructure.

Singhvi also urged the industry members to invest in innovation, skilling, adoption of new-age technologies as it will make made-in-India products match international parameters. The Indian energy sector provides immense opportunities for investments as India moves ahead with its growth journey, he noted.

Established in 1948, IEEMA is the association of manufacturers of electrical, industrial electronics and allied equipment with over 1000 members. Elecrama is an annual industry event organised by IEEMA.

PM Modi's 3-Day India Tour: Investors' Summits, Farmer Aid

New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a three-day visit to Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Assam from Sunday to attend several development initiatives, including the global investors summit in Bhopal and the release of 19th instalment of cash assistance to farmers in Bhopal.

In Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, Modi will lay the foundation stone of Bageshwar Dham Medical and Science Research Institute in Chhatarpur and inaugurate the investors summit on Monday, a statement said. He will release the 19th instalment of 'PM KISAN' scheme at an event in Bhopal on Monday and also inaugurate various development projects in Bihar before travelling to Assam.

He will attend the 'Jhumoir Binandini' on Monday evening and inaugurate the investment and infrastructure sum-

In Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, Modi will lay the foundation stone of Bageshwar Dham Medical and Science Research Institute in Chhatarpur and inaugurate the investors summit on Monday, a statement said.

mit the next day. Modi will inaugurate Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit in Guwahati on Tuesday.

The PMO said the two-day Global Investors Summit (GIS) in Bhopal will serve as an important platform to establish Madhya Pradesh as a global investment hub and will include departmental summits, specialised sessions on pharma and medical devices, transport and logistics, industry, skill development, tourism and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises



(MSMEs) among others. It will also include international sessions focusing on the Global South countries, Latin America and the Caribbean besides special sessions for key partner countries.

It said three major industrial exhibitions will be held during the summit — the auto show, the textile and fashion expo and one on 'One

Referring to the PM KISAN scheme, it added that over 9.7 crore farmers across the country will receive direct financial benefits amounting to more than Rs 21,500 crore.

Noting that Modi has focused on ensuring that farmers get better remuneration for their produce, it said he had launched the Central Sector Scheme for Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO), which help farmers collectively market and produce their agricultural products.

The programme in Bihar will mark the milestone of the formation of the 10,000th FPO in the country.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Breeds in Motihari and a milk product plant in Barauni that aims to create an organised market for three lakh milk producers. The Jhumoir Binand-

EPS-95 Pensioners Demands: Labour Minister Promises Action

New Delhi
Pensioners' body EPS-95 Agitation Committee on Saturday said that Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has assured swift action on its demands.

Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has taken a positive stance on the long-pending demands of 78 lakh EPS-95 pensioners across the country, a statement by the pensioners body said.

According to the statement, these demands include an increase in the minimum pension, provision of free medical facilities for pensioners and their spouses, and rectification of errors in applications for higher pension benefits.

The minister assured the delegation of a swift resolution to these issues, it said.

Commander Ashok Raut, National President of the EPS-95 National Agitation Committee (NAC), which has been advocating for pensioners' rights for several years, revealed that recent discussions with

both the Labour Minister and the Finance Minister provided assurances of an imminent increase in the minimum pension. However, the absence of any such announcement in the Union Budget 2025-26 has led to widespread disappointment among pensioners.

In light of this, a crucial meeting between the Labour Minister and a delegation from the NAC was held on Friday. During the discussions, Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing pensioners' concerns.

Govt Scheme to Prevent Distress Sale of Farmers' Produce

New Delhi
Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday said the government is working out measures to ensure that farmers do not have to sell their produce, especially fruits and vegetables, at throwaway prices.

Speaking after inaugurating the 'Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela' 2025 — being held in the national capital from February 22-24 — he emphasised the need to take new seeds varieties and farm technologies from labs to agriculture filed at the earliest.

Chouhan said the government is holding discussions with farmers directly as well as through their organisations to understand the problems and then making schemes to address the issues.

"Jahaan tak leekhein dekh rahe hain, hum yojana bana rahe hain (wherever we are seeing problems, we are making schemes to address those)," the minister said, listing out steps taken by the government in the last few years to protect the interest of farmers.

Chouhan said the gov-

ernment has removed exports restrictions on rice and onions while raising import duties on edible oils. He said the Centre has taken steps to help tomato farmers in view of price crash and will take measures for red chilli farmers of Andhra Pradesh as well.

"I want to assure our farming community, we will take all important decisions that are required for the welfare of farmers. Do not worry," he said, while asserting that the government is committed to this.

"There are some issues which are under consid-



eration. Prices are low at farm gate level and consumers are paying high rates. Who takes the profit in middle? Profit margins should reduce.

The difference between the farm gate price and consumer price for fruits and vegetables should come down," he said. The minister added,

"We are working out (a way) to ensure that farmers do not have to sell their produce at throwaway prices."

Lauding efforts of scientists at Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for its efforts in making India self-sufficient in foodgrains production, Chouhan said there is a need to take new seed varieties and technology to the field quickly so that farmers can benefit.

"Availability of good varieties of seeds is important. Farmers require it. ICAR is developing them... We need

to ensure these seeds reach farmers quickly," he said.

The minister also asked the ICAR to handle 'Modern Agriculture Chaupal' programme where scientists will tell farmers about recent technological breakthroughs, besides solving their problems. The programme will be telecast across India.

Chouhan said he does not sit in Krishi Bhawan in Delhi and rather go to fields to understand farmers' problems. He asked officers in his ministry and ICAR scientists to do the same.



Nina Dobrev to join Russell Crowe in 'Bear Country'

Washington — Nina Dobrev, who played Elena Gilbert and Katherine Pierce in the supernatural drama series *The Vampire Diaries*, has joined Russell Crowe and Kartikeya Vengara in *'Bear Country'*, the action thriller helmed by Derrick Borte. The film shooting is currently taking place in the Australian state of Queensland. An adaptation of the novel *Strip* by Thomas Perry, *Bear Country* stars Crowe as the ageing yet formidable club owner, Manco Kapak, who a masked gunman has robbed. Now, his aspirations of selling his club and riding off into the sunset alongside his girlfriend appear more distant than ever. Cartel bosses are breathing down his neck, and a young

upstart has been posing as the new guy in town, eager to purchase the club, reported Deadline.

Dobrev portrays a quirky bank teller who gets involved in crimes inspired by her Bonnie-and-Clyde-like fantasies.

Borte adapted the screenplay with Daniel Forte. The producers are Mark Fasano (Marlowe) of Nickel City Pictures; Jeffrey Greenstein (The Hitman's Bodyguard) of A Higher Standard; Deborah Glover (Sleeping Dogs) of G2 Dispatch; and Mark Bower and Bruno Mistic of Life & Soul Pictures, as per the outlet.

Dobrev appeared in several films, including the 2012 coming-of-age drama *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the comedies *Let's Be Cops* and *The Final Girls* (2014), and the 2017 science-fiction drama *Flatliners*.



It is heartbreaking, gruesome: Bhumi Pednekar on Justice Hema Committee report

Mumbai — As a woman, I feel scared, said actor Bhumi Pednekar, re-

nekar said the findings of the report, which was released in August last year, perhaps the first instance for any film industry in India, were heartbreaking and gruesome.

"It is one part of the Indian fraternity where proper

college and when she doesn't come home till 11 pm, I get nervous. There's deep conditioning of power. There's a problem when front page news is only about violence done to women. This is not one off thing, this is a regular occurrence," she

"It is one part of the Indian fraternity where proper legal process was followed, there were heartbreaking gruesome details that came out. As a woman in India today, I'm scared. This is again not just about fraternity," Pednekar said.

acting to the Hema Committee report that exposed the harassment and sexual exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry.

Speaking at the ABP Network's Ideas of India 2025, Ped-

added. In the aftermath of an assault case on an actress involving actor Dileep in 2017, the Kerala government appointed a panel to study issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality.

The panel's 233-page report exposed the power dynamics within the Malay-

alam film industry, revealing the multiple layers of exploitation faced by women artists.

On a query about the casting couch in the Hindi film industry, the 35-year-old actor — who earlier worked as an assistant casting director at Yash Raj Films — said though she has not personally faced it, she acknowledged the widespread nature of such incidents within the industry.

"Before I became an actor, I was casting in an institution that was clean and organised. My casting director Abhimanyu Ray would never cast a girl without me being present in the room. Now that's the ecosystem in which I grew up.

"I was 17 when I started as a casting director in Yash Raj Films. I've no first-hand experience of it. But does that mean it doesn't happen? No, it does because we've had many women who have dared to come out and speak about it. I would never negate a girl's experience," she said.

Arjun Kapoor-starrer 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi' earns Rs 1.75 crore on opening day

New Delhi — *Mere Husband Ki Biwi*, a romantic comedy starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh and Bhumi Pednekar, has collected Rs 1.75 crore on its first day at the domestic box office, the makers said on Saturday.

Directed by Mudassar Aziz, the film is produced by Vashu Bhagnani, Jacky Bhagnani, and Deepshikha Deshmukh. It released in theatres on Friday.

Production banner Pooja Entertainment posted the opening day collection of the movie on its X handle. The company shared a poster which mentioned the day one collection of the film as Rs 1.75 crore. "Cinemas echoed with

laughter, hearts filled with love. Grateful beyond words for all the

Production banner Pooja Entertainment posted the opening day collection of the movie on its X handle. The company shared a poster which mentioned the day one collection of the film as Rs 1.75 crore.

pyaar! Watch the entertainer of the season #MereHusbandKiBiwi in theatres near you," read the caption.

Also starring comedian Harsh Gujral, the film is

about a man navigating a complex love triangle when his ex-wife returns

to his life just as he begins falling for someone new.



'Miami Blues' director George Armitage passes away

Los Angeles — Veteran filmmaker George Armitage, best known for creating projects like *'Grosse Pointe Blank'* and *'Miami Blues'*, has passed away. He was 83.

The news of George Armitage's demise was confirmed by his son Brent. As per Brent, his father breathed his last on Saturday in Playa del Rey, Variety reported.

Armitage started out in the 20th Century Fox mailroom before becoming associate producer on the long-running series *'Peyton Place'* in the 1960s. He met Roger Corman on the Fox lot and moved into feature films, writing the Corman-produced 1970 comedy *'Gas! - Or - It Became Necessary to Destroy the World in Order to Save It.'*

He continued making films for Corman and his brother Gene Corman, moving into directing with *'Private Duty Nurses.'* The 1972 Buxploitation film *'Hit Man'*, which he directed and co-wrote, starred Pam Grier and Bernie Casey. Next up was *'Vigilante Force'* with Kris Kristofferson and Jan-Michael Vincent, and the TV movie *'Hot Rod.'*

Armitage's next film as director, the 1990 comedic thriller *'Miami Blues'*, was based on a Charles Willford novel.

Nicole Kidman emphasizes the importance of supporting female directors



Washington — Academy Award-winning actress Nicole Kidman has surpassed her goal of working with a female director every 18 months, collaborating with 19 female filmmakers on various projects since 2017.

According to Deadline, in a recent interview, Kidman emphasized the importance of supporting female directors, particularly those making their debut.

"It can be changed, but it can only be changed by actually being in the films of women," she said.

Kidman noted that first-time female directors often face undue pressure to "be perfect" in their debut outings.

Kidman's commitment to

Kidman's commitment to working with female directors began in 2017, when she publicly declared at the Cannes Film Festival that she would work with a woman director every 18 months.

working with female directors began in 2017, when she publicly declared at the Cannes Film Festival that she would work with a woman director every 18 months.

However, she later revealed that she had silently amended her goal to work with a female director every six months to a year.

"Realizing it is just you've got to roll up your sleeves and do it," Kidman said. "And that requires not being precious and just going, 'OK, let's go, let's go, let's go.' And being consistent and determined to do it," she added.

Kidman's recent collaborations with female directors include working with Halina Reijn on the erotic thriller *'Babygirl.'*

'Babygirl' is a 2024 American erotic thriller written, directed, and produced by Halina Reijn. The film features Nicole Kidman as a successful CEO who risks both her career and family after starting an affair with a younger intern, played by Harris Dickinson. The cast also includes Sophie Wilde and Antonio Banderas.

Honey Singh drops his new song 'Maniac'

Mumbai — Singer Yo Yo Honey Singh has been on a roll. After delivering back-to-back hit songs, the 'hitmaker' 'Millionaire' hitmaker dropped his new track *'Maniac'* from his album *'Glory.'*

The song's video features Esha Gupta. It also has Bhojpur verse sung by Ragini Vishwakarma.

Meanwhile, Honey Singh is all set to enthral the audience in Mumbai with his concert on Saturday night. The tour will travel across to major cities in India, including Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Kolkata.



available on Netflix.

The documentary offers a rare glimpse into the life of Honey Singh. The docu-film sheds light on the man behind the headlines, from his meteoric rise in the music industry to the challenges and controversies he faced along the way.

Recently, Honey Singh became a household name in India with hits like *'Brown Rang'*, *'Angrezi Beat'*, and *'Dope Shope.'*

