



Afghanistan shift focus to Australia after England victory, says coach Jonathan Trott

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MARKET	
SENSEX	74612.43
NIFTY	22545.05
	10.31
	-2.50
GOLD	93,380.00
SILVER	85,109.00
	-1,261.00
	-765.00

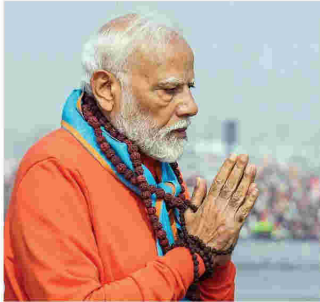
WEATHER	
Sunrise	6:48 AM
Sunset	6:20 PM
Moonrise	6:59 AM
Moonset	6:48 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	16°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	25°C
Minimum	16°C

Modi calls Maha Kumbh 'Maha Yagya of unity', hails UP govt

The prime minister said more devotees than anyone could imagine took the holy dip in Sangam, asserting that India is now forging ahead with a new energy and this points to a turn of era which will write India's new future.

New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday likened the massive Maha Kumbh congregation to the newly awakened consciousness of a nation breathing freely after breaking the shackles of a mindset steeped in centuries-old slavery. "The Maha Kumbh has concluded. The 'mahayajna' of unity has concluded," PM Modi wrote in a blog, a day after the 45-day religious exercise concluded, and said the country has to now march together with a similar spirit of self-confidence and unity to fulfil the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'.

The prime minister said more devotees than anyone could imagine took the holy dip in Sangam, asserting that India is now forging ahead with a new energy and this points to a turn of era which will write India's new future. He offered apology to "Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna, Mother Saraswati" as well as the people, who he said are a form of God to him, for



any shortcoming in the services rendered.

PM Modi noted that making arrangement for an event unfolding at such an enormous scale was not an easy task. Pilgrims almost double the US population participated in the Maha Kumbh, he added.

The administration had made its estimate based on the experience of previous Kumbhs, he said, noting that the real numbers turned out to be more than imagined. At least 30 devotees died on January 29 dur-

ing a stampede at the Maha Kumbh, which drew devotees in huge numbers from across the country and abroad. The Uttar Pradesh government has said over 66 crore people visited the sacred site in Prayagraj since the Maha Kumbh began on January 13.

In his blog, Modi praised Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, saying as an MP from UP, he can proudly say that the government, administration and the people collectively un-

der Adityanath's leadership made this "Maha Kumbh of unity" successful.

He said, "If scholars of spirituality analyse the enthusiastic participation of crores of Indians, they will find that India, proud of its heritage, is now surging ahead with a new-found energy. I believe this is the dawn of a new era, which will script the future of a new India."

"Everyone, be it sanitation staff, police personnel, boatmen, drivers and cooks, made it a success by working relentlessly with a sense of devotion and service," he said, praising the residents of Prayagraj as well.

He asserted that what has never happened in the past few decades happened this time.

"It has laid the foundation for many coming centuries," he added.

Modi said the holding of Maha Kumbh has become a study subject for management professionals, and planning and policy experts as there is no other example of such

CONTD ON PAGE-2

Indian student critical after accident in US, MEA pushes for urgent visa



New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs has taken up with the United States a request for an urgent visa by the family of an Indian student who is battling for life following a road accident in California, sources said.

Neelam Shinde from Maharashtra's Satara was critically injured in the accident on February 14 and has been in a coma at a hospital since then.

Shinde reportedly suffered severe injuries to her head, hand and chest.

Her family has sought an urgent visa to travel to the US to be by her side.

The MEA has taken up the matter with the US. The US side is looking into the formalities for early grant of visa for the applicant's family, the sources cited above said. Agency

Hindi is the mask, Sanskrit the hidden face, Stalin tells DMK



Chennai

Upping the ante against alleged Hindi imposition by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Thursday once again said the state will not allow the "imposition" of the language and vowed to protect Tamil and its culture. "Will oppose Hindi imposition. Hindi is the mask, Sanskrit is the hidden face," he said in a letter to party men.

The ruling DMK has been alleging Hindi imposition by the Centre through the 3-language formula as part of the National Education Policy (NEP), a charged denied by the Union government.

In the letter, Stalin claimed many north Indian languages spoken in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh such as Myhilli, Brajbhasha, Bundelkhandi

and Awadhi "have been destroyed by the hegemonic Hindi."

"More than 25 north Indian native languages have been destroyed by the invasion of hegemonic Hindi-Sanskrit languages. The century-old Dravidian movement safeguarded Tamil and its culture because of the awareness it created and the various agitations," the ruling DMK chief said.

Tamil Nadu is opposing NEP because the Centre is trying to impose Hindi and Sanskrit through the education policy, he added.

Countering the BJP's contention that the third language according to the NEP could be even a foreign one, Stalin claimed that according to the 3-language policy schedule, "only Sanskrit is being promoted in many states." Agency

Amit Shah must clarify remarks on delimitation: Siddaramaiah

Bengaluru Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claim that southern states will not be disadvantaged in the delimitation process is not "trustworthy" and that his statement appears to be aimed at creating confusion among the southern states. The Chief Minister's remarks came a day after Shah assured the southern states that they would not lose a 'single Parliamentary seat' due to delimitation.

Going by the Home Minister's vague remarks, it seems that either he lacks proper information or there is a deliberate intent to disadvantage the south-



ern states, including Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh," he said in a statement.

Siddaramaiah said that if the central government genuinely wishes to ensure fairness for the southern states, the Home Minister must clarify whether delimitation will be based on the latest population ratio or the current number of

HIGHLIGHT

Karnataka Chief Minister says the Union Home Minister must clarify whether delimitation would be based on the latest population ratio or on the current number of Lok Sabha seats.

"It is evident that if delimitation is carried out based on the latest population ratio, it will be a severe injustice to the southern states. To prevent such unfairness, previous delimitation exercises were conducted using the 1971 census as the basis, following constitutional amendments," he stated. CONTD ON PAGE-2

Bus rape: 13 police teams to nab accused, Rs 1L reward

Mumbai/Pune Police on Thursday announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh for information about the history-sheeter who allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman inside a bus at Pune's Swargate bus station and deployed drones as part of their manhunt, officials said.

Amid the frantic police efforts to make a breakthrough, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut drew parallels between the crime and the 2012 Delhi gang rape and targeted Pune guardian minister Ajit Pawar over law and order. Maharashtra Deputy



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the government would try to ensure capital punishment for the culprit, even as Shiv Sena MLA Nileshe Rane pitched for re-starting the "encounter squad".

The accused Dattatray Ramdas Gade (37), is named in half a dozen

cases of theft, robbery and chain-snatching in Pune and Ahilyanagar district. He has been out on bail since 2019 in one of the offences.

As Gade, a resident of Gunat village in Pune, remained at large for over two days, officials said 13 police teams have been formed to nab

him. "A reward of Rs 1 lakh will be given to the person providing information about his whereabouts," Pune police commissioner Amitesh Kumar told PTI.

Another police official said the information could be shared at 020-24442769 or 9881670659, assuring that the informer's identity would be kept secret. Pune City and Pune Rural Police also launched a search operation in Gunat village, including in sugarcane fields, with drones and dog squads, officials said. More than 100 cops reached the village, they said. Agency

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Modi calls Maha Kumbh 'Maha Yagya of unity', hails UP govt

CONT FROM PAGE 1

"When the consciousness of a nation awakens, when it breaks all the shackles of hundreds of years of slavery to breathe with a new consciousness, then such a sight presents itself that we witnessed in the Maha Kumbh of unity in Prayagraj after January 13," he said.

Modi said the tradition of Maha Kumbh has been reinvigorating India's national consciousness for thousands of years, suggesting new ways to the country and society.

"This time the Maha Kumbh of this kind came after 144 years and has given the message of a new chapter in India's development journey. The message is of 'Viksit Bharat'," he said.

People from every region, including abroad, caste and ideology were one in the Maha Kumbh, he said, calling upon people to come together in a similar way for building a 'Viksit Bharat'.

The faith of 140 crore countrymen had connected to this festival together at one time, Modi said, adding that the number of devotees has definitely made a record as people almost double the US population in numbers took the holy dip.

The prime minister said it was a very pleasant experience for him to see young devotees attending the holy congregation in large numbers.

Amit Shah must clarify remarks on delimitation: Siddaramaiah

CONT FROM PAGE 1

According to him, over the past 50 years, southern states have effectively controlled population growth while progressing significantly in terms of development.

Meanwhile, northern states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh have failed to regulate population growth and continue to lag in development.

"As a result, if delimitation is based on the latest census, southern states, including Karnataka, may see a reduction or stagnation in their number of Lok Sabha seats, while northern states will gain more seats. In either scenario, the southern states will bear the loss. Is the Home Minister unaware of this?" he asked.

Citing several studies conducted on the impact of delimitation, the CM said that according to these studies, if delimitation is based solely on the latest census (2021 or 2031), the number of Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka is likely to decrease from 28 to 26.

Similarly, Andhra Pradesh's seats would drop from 42 to 34, Kerala's from 20 to 12, and Tamil Nadu's from 39 to 31.

"The number of Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh would increase from 80 to 91, Bihar's from 40 to 50, and Madhya Pradesh's from 20 to 33. If this is not injustice, what is?" Siddaramaiah wondered.

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9818-799941

Rs 400 crore fisheries 'scam': SC quashes case against ex-Gujarat minister

New Delhi:

The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed the criminal proceedings initiated against former Gujarat minister Dileep Sanghani in an alleged Rs 400-crore fisheries scam in 2008.

A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran underlined the absence of the ingredients of the alleged offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

"We accept the contention raised by the appellant that there is not even an iota of material available from the investigation report, the pre-charge statements recorded from the complainant or the police officers or even the statements of persons questioned by the investigation team, as available in the report, to attract the ingredients of the provisions under the Prevention of Corruption Act," the bench said.

The verdict went on to add, "The discharge application of the appellant ought to have been allowed by the special court especially since there is not even an allegation of demand and acceptance of bribe, by the second accused/appellant." Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the former minister, denied



any such allegation of demand or acceptance of the bribe against his client in lieu of issuing grants, made either in the investigation report or in the statements of the persons interrogated by the investigating team.

The top court's verdict came on an appeal filed Sanghani against an order of the Gujarat High Court on July 26, 2024.

The High Court upheld the March 2 2021 order of a special anti-corruption bureau (ACB) court rejecting their discharge applications in the case.

The alleged scam

granted the contracts of fisheries as he was then designated as the cabinet minister.

Maradia moved HC after the state government did not grant sanctions to prosecute Solanki.

However, then Gujarat Governor Dr Kamla Beniwal on July 30, 2012, overruled the state cabinet and sanctioned the prosecution of Solanki under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Maradia then filed an application in the ACB court demanding action against Solanki and Sanghani under the PC Act.

After the case was registered against Solanki and Sanghani, the ACB court in Gandhinagar had asked the anti-graft agency in May 2013 to probe the allegations and submit a report.

The ACB submitted its report before the court in 2015, indicating irregularities in awarding the contracts of fisheries, according to court papers.

A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran underlined the absence of the ingredients of the alleged offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

dates back to 2008, when Parshottam Solanki was the minister of state for fisheries and Sanghani was the state cabinet minister for agriculture in Gujarat.

It was alleged that in order to obtain illegal gratification, fishing contracts in the reservoirs of the state were allotted without following the policy of the government, mandating tender proceedings.

A Palanpur-based businessman, Ishaq Maradia, moved the high court alleging that Solanki flouted rules by allotting fishing contracts without following the tendering process.

Solanki previously claimed that Sanghani

granted the contracts of fisheries as he was then designated as the cabinet minister.

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Rajnath releases 1st edition of Mod's bi-annual Hindi magazine 'Sashakt Bharat'

New Delhi:

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released the first edition of the Ministry of Defence's bi-annual Hindi magazine 'Sashakt Bharat' at South Block, New Delhi on February 27, 2025.

The magazine comprises poems on the valour, patriotism, and sacrifices of the Armed Forces personnel as well as articles on the policies of the Government written by the Ministry irrespective of their ranks, showcasing diversity and unity in India.

The Defence Minister appreciated the efforts of the MoD wing of the Department of Official Language towards promoting Hindi.

He stressed the need to adopt and increase the use of Hindi, describing the language as the thread that binds the social and cultural fabric of India.

The objective of 'Sashakt Bharat' magazine is to highlight the creative talent of MoD employees and encourage them to carry out their day-to-day activities in Hindi.

SC refuses to interfere in MP HC order on Union Carbide plant waste disposal

New Delhi:

The Supreme Court on Thursday clarified that it will not intervene in the matter concerning the disposal of waste at the Union Carbide Plant as the Madhya Pradesh High Court is already monitoring it.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih noted that the MP High Court has taken a cautious view of the lethargic manner in which the state government has been handling waste disposal.

"The High Court is monitoring the matter. In that view, we do not find any reason to interfere in the said impugned order," the Court said in its order.

The top court further clarified that any grievances in the matter can very well be raised before the MP High Court.

Earlier, in December last year, the MP High Court ordered swift disposal of the

toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal by shifting it to Pithampur in the state's Dhar district.

Today, the Supreme Court also observed that the High Court had formed a Task Force Committee consisting of expert organizations such as the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Today, considering that expert bodies of high repute are dealing with the issue, the Court refused to interfere in the matter.

Additional Advocate General Nachiketa Joshi and Advocate Sarad Kumar Singhania appeared for the State of MP.

Advocate Sarvan Rita's Khare represented the petitioner, Chinmay Mishra.

"Rhythm of Marble" A Solo Show by Amit Singh

New Delhi:

"Your work is carved out of agony as a statue is carved out of marble" a famous quote said by Louise Bogan

'Rhythm of Marble' A grand solo exhibition of marble sculptures by Sculptor Amit Singh is scheduled from Sunday, February 23rd to March 05, 2025 from 11 am to 8 pm at the Sculpture Court, Triveni Kala Sangam, Tansen Marg Mandi House New Delhi. Due to the pandemic the artist will be showcasing his work after 5 years of a gap.

The formal inauguration happened on Monday 24th Feb. 2025 from 11 am to 8 pm at the Sculpture Court, Triveni Kala Sangam, Tansen Marg Mandi House New Delhi. In a very short span of time Amit has proved himself an artist of combined art work on stone from ancient Indian tradition to modern Indian style.

The range of art work of Amit Singh moves



It is known fact to all that famous young & talented Sculptor Amit Singh, from Udaipur, is an established name in the field of Marble Stone Art. In a very short span of time Amit has proved himself an artist of combined art work on stone from ancient Indian tradition to modern Indian style.

The range of art work of Amit Singh moves

from Nature to Spiritual to various shades of human thoughts & imaginations. All type of carving done on Marble stone is the medium which reflects the visionary concept of the artist along with the different color tone and texture. Working primarily with marble, Amit's carvings reflect his visionary concepts, enhanced by a nuanced play of color tones

and textures. Truly, a remarkable & wonderful body of work. Amit is a Master of Fine Arts from College of Art, New Delhi. He has done many Solo & Group shows. With National and International awards to his credit the Sculptor Amit Singh's work on marble are showcased in many places in India and abroad.

"Nanaji's behaviour, hard work, values will remain ideal principles for politicians": Shah

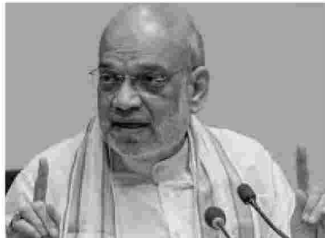
Chitrakoot:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that Bharat Ratna 'Rashtra Rishi' Nanaji Deshmukh's behaviour and values will remain ideal principles for politicians for generations to come.

Addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh's Chitrakoot on the 15th death anniversary program of Bharat Ratna 'Rashtra Rishi' Nanaji Deshmukh, Shah said that the Jan Sangh leader's life will impact the lives of many for generations.

"Nanaji established many such principles in politics through his behaviour, his hard work, and his values, which I believe will remain ideal principles for politicians for generations to come," Shah stated.

Praising Nanaji for his contributions in the social and political arena, Shah said, "We are here to pay homage to Nanaji. Some people's lives



are such that they don't just have an impact for a few years but for generations (yugas). They work for the transformation of the yuga. Nanaji was one of them."

He also reflected on Jan Sangh leader's early life. "Nanaji was born in Maharashtra and was a Swayamsevak. He made Uttar Pradesh his Kar-yakshetra. He became the General Secretary of the Jan Sangh, became a leader, and played a significant role in spreading

the relationship between Nanaji Deshmukh and Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya.

He also said that the NDA government at the Centre has provided all basic amenities to the 60 crore people in the country.

"In these ten years, Narendra Modi's government has provided homes, toilets, drinking water, cooking gas, 5 kg of grains, electricity at home, and 5 lakh rupees insurance to 60 crore poor people," he said.

He then attacked Congress, alleging that they framed policies inspired by Western ideologies. "When India got independence, policies were being framed. Those who respected India were astonished because India's foreign policy, economic policy, and education policy were not based on India's cultural roots. All policies were framed after taking inspiration from Western

Bajaj Brings Warmth to Maha Kumbh Pilgrims with 24x7 Seva Kendra



New Delhi:

At the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, where millions embarked on a sacred journey of faith, Bajaj stood as a pillar of support with its 24x7 Seva Kendra. From the auspicious day of Mauni Amavasya, Bajaj provided weary pilgrims with free hot water bags—offering much-needed warmth and comfort amidst the relentless cold. With over 1,00,000 devotees served, this humble seva reinforced Bajaj's commitment to being a dependable companion in every journey.

At the heart of this initiative was the Bajaj Pentacle Digi Heater, ensuring an uninterrupted supply

of hot water. Built to endure and perform in real-world conditions, this durable geyser embodies Bajaj's promise of reliability.

Bajaj has been a trusted name in Indian homes for generations, crafting appliances that make everyday life easier. Whether it's a reliable water heater, a powerful mixer grinder, or an efficient fan, Bajaj's range of durable products is designed to meet the needs of every Indian household.

With Bajaj, you don't just buy an appliance—you invest in a brand that stands by you, ensuring comfort, convenience, and performance every day.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Amit Kumar S/O Shrikishan Singh, R/O Flat No.302 BLDG-1, Second Floor, Gahlan Avenue, Block-B, Pochampur, Sector-23, Phase-2, South Delhi-110077 declare that my name has been wrongly mentioned as Amit Chauhan in my son Anshu Chauhan's school records and about 15 years. My correct name is Amit Kumar for all purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public in large is hereby informed that My client Mrs. Smt. W/o Late Sh. Mahabir R/o V-37 Old Nangal Delhi Cantt -110010 and all their family members and relatives have severed their relation with her youngest son namely Sh. MANISH VERMA because he is out of control of my client and misbehaving with my client. Now my client and family members have no relations with MANISH VERMA. If any person dealing with him in any manner shall be going so at his own risk and consequences. My client and her family members shall not be responsible in any manner whatsoever for any act and deeds done by his son namely MANISH VERMA.

Akshay Kumar Advocate
Off. WZ 1195 Basement
Nangla Ghat, Akshay Road
New Delhi-110046

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public at large is informed that my client Smt. Prem Devi Wife of Late Shri. Parmanand Singh aged about 73 years resident of RZ-10, Vijay Park, Najafgarh, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043, UID No.- 6688-1292-3821, do hereby Revoked that my client's General Power of Attorney, SPA, Affidavit, Possession Letter, Receipt and Will all dated 02/08/2012 in respect of Property consisting of Second Floor & Third Floor on Built-up Plot bearing No. 10 (without roof rights), land area measuring 75 sq. yds. Out of Khata No. 158-2, situated at the revenue estate of Village Najafgarh, Delhi Estate, Delhi, abadi known as Vijay Park, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043 (consisting One Shop and Eastern Side Gallery 3 feet 6 inch and Common Parking area on Ground Floor & Common Floor 1 & 2) 57.5 sq.yds., thereby appointed My son namely Shri. Jai Prakash son of Late Shri. Parmanand Singh resident of RZ-10, Vijay Park, Najafgarh, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043 as my Attorney-in-Fact. This revocation deed of General Power of Attorney, SPA, Affidavit, Possession Letter, Receipt and Will shall be conclusively for all purpose, from the date of execution i.e. 13th day of February 2024 at Delhi as his son is no more under the control of my client. If anybody has done, is doing or will deal with his abovesaid son and has written in connection with the abovesaid revoked documents, he has done the same or is doing the same or will do the same at his/her own risk and consequences. I shall not be responsible for any act of him and his family member and moreover (3) shall have any sort of liability for the same.

MAHAIPAL YADAV & ASSOCIATES
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Villagers protest over poor road conditions

Noida
The villagers protested on Thursday against poor road construction in Jundpur village of Greater Noida. Activists of the Corruption Free India Organisation also participated in this protest. The PWD is reconstructing the road from Kanarsa to Jundpur. The state general secretary of the organisation, Master Dinesh Nagar, said that substandard material is being used in this construction. The newly built road has started crumbling in a single day. This road has been constructed after many years.

According to Dinesh Nagar, the officials and the contractor have together committed corruption. The villagers will complain to the district magistrate and the chief minister in this matter.

Among others Dheeraj Nagar, Kamal Nagar, Adesh Pehelwan, Nawab Singh, Sanjay Nagar, Pawan BDC, Nitin, Hritik Nagar, Sushil and Matol took part in the demonstration.

Mohan Singh Bisht elected deputy speaker of Delhi Assembly

New Delhi
Six-time BJP MLA Mohan Singh Bisht was on Thursday elected as the deputy speaker of Delhi Assembly after Chief Minister Rekha Gupta proposed his name.

The motion moved by Chief Minister Gupta was seconded by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa, while Gajender Singh Yadav backed the second motion proposed by Anil Kumar Sharma.

Veteran BJP leader Bisht (67) won the recent assembly polls from Mustafabad, defeating AAP's Adeel Ahmad Khan by over 17,000 votes. Before Mustafabad, Bisht represented the Karawal Nagar seat from 1998 to 2015. He won the seat again in 2020.

The maiden session of the eighth Delhi Assembly is presently underway after the BJP's decisive victory in the February 5 elections, ending the AAP's over-a-decade-long rule. The BJP secured 48 out of 70 seats, while the AAP was reduced to 22. The Congress drew a blank.

BJP MLA slams AAP over liquor policy scam

New Delhi
BJP MLA Ravindra Singh Negi on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the alleged irregularities in the liquor policy, citing the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

Addressing the issue in the Delhi Assembly, he said that the report's findings on the alleged Rs 2,000 crore scam would be thoroughly discussed.

"The CAG report presented on the liquor policy scam will be discussed in detail in the House today... The scam of around 2000 crores in the liquor policy will be discussed today," Negi said. Responding to the suspension of opposition MLAs, Negi criticized AAP for its stance, accusing them of disregarding constitutional principles.

"Your (opposition) are roaming around with the picture of Baba Sahab Ambedkar, but you should follow the Constitution as told by him... They (AAP) feel that they are still in power, but they should remember that they are out of power now," he said.

AAP stages 'dharna', writes letter to Prez after suspended MLAs barred from Assembly premises

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs were suspended from the Assembly over disruptions in the House proceedings during Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena's address on Tuesday.

New Delhi
After being denied entry to the Delhi Assembly premises on Thursday, Leader of Opposition Atishi and other AAP MLAs staged a "dharna" outside and the LoP also sent a letter to President Droupadi Murmu.

In her letter to the president, the former chief minister said the BJP is "crossing all limits of dictatorship" after coming to power in Delhi.

"The BJP government in Delhi has removed the pictures of Constitution maker Baba Sahab Ambedkar ji and Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh ji from various offices of the Delhi government. This is not only an insult to the brave sons of the country but also an insult to the Dalit, backward and deprived society," the letter said.

When the AAP opposed this move and tried to raise the issue in the Assembly, Speaker Vijendra Gupta unilaterally expelled 21 party MLAs from the meetings of the House for three days on February 25, it added.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs were suspended from the Assembly



over disruptions in the House proceedings during Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena's address on Tuesday. The AAP said it was protesting the alleged removal of B R Ambedkar's portrait from the chief minister's office.

The AAP leaders staged the "dharna" outside the gate of the Assembly premises on Thursday.

With "dharti" beats in the background, they held placards with photos of Ambedkar and raised slogans against the ruling party, such as "BJP sun he, Jai Bhim, Jai Bhim" and "BJP ki tanashahi nahi chalegi

(the BJP's dictatorship will not work)".

AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar told PTI, "We raised slogans of Jai Bhim (in the Assembly) and for that, we were suspended for three days. Today, we were not allowed to enter the House. This is wrong. How can they stop the voice of the opposition? How can they bar the entire opposition from participating (in the House proceedings)?"

Another AAP MLA, Sanjeev Jha, said, "The speaker's order is strange. We were the ones who supported his appointment and this, he has expelled us. We are trying to reach out to

the speaker, but he is not answering our calls. This BJP government hates Dr B R Ambedkar's ideology." In her letter to the president, Atishi said, "Today, on February 27, when the MLAs of Aam Aadmi Party were going to Delhi Assembly, we were stopped outside the premises of the Assembly by heavy barricading by Delhi Police. Preventing elected representatives from reaching the Vidhan Sabha premises. This has never happened in the history of the Delhi Legislative Assembly." Twenty-one of the 22 AAP MLAs, including Atishi, were suspended from the House on

Tuesday. The suspension of the MLAs came on a day when the Delhi government tabled a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the liquor policy in the House, further intensifying the face-off between the AAP and the BJP.

As soon as the LG began his address on Thursday, the AAP legislators started raising slogans against the alleged removal of the portraits of Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh from the chief minister's office.

Minister Parvesh Verma moved a motion for the family honour, public image & interest. And therefore, any person dealing with him & his wife will do as at his/her own risk to cost and consequences & my clients would not be responsible for him & his wife in any manner what so ever henceforth.

Following their suspension, the AAP MLAs staged a demonstration within the Assembly complex, holding up portraits of Ambedkar.

Atishi accused the BJP of trying to erase Ambedkar's legacy.

"The BJP has shown its true colours by removing Babasaheb Ambedkar's portrait. Does it believe Prime Minister Narendra Modi can replace Babasaheb?" she asked.

Two notorious snatchers involved in bank fraud cases arrested in Shahdara District

Ravi Dalmiya
New Delhi
Delhi Police have arrested two notorious snatchers involved in bank fraud cases in Shahdara District.

A special police team was formed to address a rise in snatching incidents, led by SI Bhumeswar Yadav and supported by other officers.

On February 21, 2025, a lady Army officer was snatched while inside a bank in Dilshad Garden, prompting the police to investigate. They examined CCTV footage, which showed the suspects arriving by three-seater rickshaw. The driver pro-

vided valuable information, leading the police to track the suspects back to Gokalpuri Metro Station.

Using technical surveillance and call data records, the police identified the suspects as Mohd. Pravej Irani and Altaf Ali Jaffrey from Maharashtra.

They were arrested on February 25, 2025, and ₹21,500 in stolen cash was recovered. The suspects admitted they tricked bank customers by giving them fake or torn currency while stealing from them. Both have prior offenses related to cheating.

IAS Madhu Rani Teotia appointed as Secretary to Chief Minister, Delhi

Additionally, two IAS officers, Sandeep Kumar Singh and Ravi Jha, both from the 2011 batch, have been named as Special Secretaries to the Chief Minister.

Abhishek Bhatnagar
New Delhi
Madhu Rani Teotia, an IAS officer from the 2008 batch, has been appointed as Secretary to the Chief Minister of Delhi, Rekha Gupta.

Additionally, two IAS officers, Sandeep Kumar Singh and Ravi Jha, both from the 2011 batch, have been named as Special Secretaries to the Chief Minister.

This appointment is part of a reshuffle involving five IAS officers from the AGMUT cadre, ordered by the



Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Azimul Haque, from the 2007 batch, has been appointed as CEO of the Delhi Waqf Board, while Sachin Rana, from the 2014 batch, is now the Addi-

tional Chief Electoral Officer and also has responsibilities at the Delhi Jal Board. Teotia previously held various roles in health and urban affairs.

Madhu Rani Teotia (IAS) served as Additional CEO Joint Secretary in Health & Family Welfare at the National Health Authority in New Delhi. She was Director in Housing and Urban Affairs from 2022 to 2025. Prior to that, she was Deputy Secretary in Housing and Urban Affairs in New Delhi during 2021-22.

AAP MLAs trying to distract from their corruption by focusing on portraits of great leaders: Sachdeva

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

Delhi BJP President Mr. Vijendra Sachdeva criticized the AAP MLAs for their recent protests outside the assembly, suggesting that the citizens of Delhi find it amusing.

He noted that those who once targeted BJP MLAs are now trying to distract from their corruption by focusing on portraits of great leaders.

Mr. Sachdeva highlighted that those who had earlier expelled BJP MLA Mr. Om Prakash Sharma are now upset over their own



short suspension from the assembly. He mentioned that the assembly and the

Secretariat see many visitors and media, who witness the respectful display of portraits of national leaders.

He pointed out that the recent CAG report on the liquor scam has alarmed AAP leaders, particularly Ms. Atishi Marlena, who is using the issue of the Ambedkar portrait to divert attention. Mr. Sachdeva claimed the public knows Ms. Marlena is linked to the liquor scam and sees her fear of the report.

Some other BJP MLAs who were in the opposition in previous assembly also raised the matter, alleging "stepmotherly" treatment by the AAP government.

Laxmi Nagar MLA Abhay Verma said BJP MLAs even approached the high court on the matter. Despite a court order and recommendation by the chief secretary,

3 people, including a woman arrested in Noida for running a honey trap gang

Amar Saini
Noida

Noida Police has arrested three people, including a woman, for running a honey trap gang. The police have recovered 40 thousand rupees from the accused.

The gang trapped a man in Sadpur village, falsely accusing him of rape and demanding 2.5 lakh rupees. Fearing for his safety, he paid 40 thousand rupees before reporting the incident to the police.

The three arrested are Badal Dehla alias Kati Singh (38), Prince (22), and Zehra (19), with cash recovered from each of them.

"The gang operated in Delhi-NCR, with Zehra posing as a tenant in landlords' homes and accusing them of rape. Badal Dehla, already facing 11 previous charges, used Zehra to deceive people," DCP, Shakti Mohan Awasthi said.

A case has been registered against all three, and the investigation is ongoing.

Students clash at Delhi's SAU over non-veg food at Maha Shivratri

New Delhi

A clash allegedly broke out between two groups of students at the South Asian University (SAU) here over non-vegetarian food being served in the mess on Maha Shivratri on Wednesday.

The warring groups - Students' Federation of India (SFI) and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyaarthi Parishad (ABVP) - accused each other of instigating violence.

The SAU administration has yet to issue any statement on the alleged incident. However, the Delhi Police said the situation at the university was peaceful



and no formal complaint has been received by it. It also said that an internal inquiry is being conducted by the varsity.

Non-installation of CCTVs by AAP in BJP MLAs' constituencies will be probed: Parvesh Verma

New Delhi

Delhi PWD minister Parvesh Verma on Thursday said that a probe will be conducted into why CCTV cameras were not installed in eight constituencies represented by BJP MLAs during the previous AAP government.

Speaking in the Delhi Assembly, Verma said CCTV cameras will be installed on priority in the eight constituencies. BJP had eight seats and the AAP had 62 seats in the last assembly.

Raising the issue in the House, BJP's Vishwas Nagar MLA OP Sharma said not

even one CCTV camera was installed in his constituency during previous AAP government. He demanded a Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) probe in the matter.

Some other BJP MLAs who were in the opposition in previous assembly also raised the matter, alleging "stepmotherly" treatment by the AAP government.

Laxmi Nagar MLA Abhay Verma said BJP MLAs even approached the high court on the matter. Despite a court order and recommendation by the chief secretary,

nothing happened, he said. Speaker of the Assembly Vijendra Gupta said that 2,000 CCTV cameras each were to be installed in all 70 constituencies but the eight constituencies represented by the BJP were not covered by the previous government.

The AAP government purchased 1.40 lakh cameras to be installed in all constituencies, according to the speaker. Replying to the MLAs, PWD minister Verma said, "The matter will be investigated and officers will be punished if found guilty," he said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified to the public at large that my clients Sh. Yusuf Khan S/o Sh. Yasin Khan and Smt. Jamila W/o Sh. Yusuf Khan both R/O RZ-81/350, Gali No.-12, Jagdamba Vihar, West Sagur Pur, Sagarpur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110046, has disowned, debarred and disinherited their son Javed Khan S/o Yusuf Khan and his wife Rukar W/o Sh. Javed Khan both R/O RZ-81/350, First Floor, Gali No.-12, Jagdamba Vihar, West Sagur Pur, Sagarpur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110046 from claiming/obtaining any right, title & beneficial interest in any of their moveable & immovable properties in any manner & their have severed all their relationships from the afore said person & his wife, as they have already given their rightful & lawful share. Moreover, they are doing acts, things & deeds detrimental to their family honour, public image & interest. And therefore, any person dealing with him & his wife will do as at his/her own risk to cost and consequences & my clients would not be responsible for him & his wife in any manner what so ever henceforth.

Yusuf Khan
Advocate,
Ch. No. 35, Tehsil Building,
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients SH. VINAY KUMAR S/O LATE SH. CHANDER SEN and his wife namely SMT. BANGHA W/O. VINAY KUMAR R/O M-31, MANGOLPURI, DELHI-110083, have severed all their relations and debarred their son namely SH. ANKUSH KUMAR KHODEY S/O VINAY KUMAR and his wife namely SWATI W/O SH. ANKUSH KUMAR KHODEY R/O M-31, MANGOLPURI, DELHI-110083 from all their movable and immovable properties due to their misconduct/ misdeeds. My clients shall not be responsible for their acts in future.

KUNTAJ CHAUHAN
ADVOCATE
DELHI HIGH COURT
Ch. No.1118, LAWYERS CHAMBER BLOCK, ROHINI COURTS, DELHI-110085

EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. LR/19/2024-25, dated 21.02.2025. E-tender (open tender) is invited online by the Sr. Chief Exec. CAG Workshop, Eastern Railway, Lihua, Howrah-71204 from tenders having technical capabilities for the following work: Name of the work : LR/19 - Provisioning of High Mast Tower by Improvement in illumination at Lihua yard. Approx. cost of work: Rs. 20,78,208.28. Earnest Money: Rs. 40,600. E-tender closing date with time : 17.03.2025 at 14:00 hrs. Website where complete details of tender is available : www.tenders.gov.in (MISC-3502024-25)

Tender Notices are also available at Website: www.indianrailways.gov.in / www.tsp.gov.in

Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easterrailwayheadquarter

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

SR/EE-TRD-IZN-2024-25-T19 Date 25-02-2025

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/ TRD, North Eastern Railway, Izatnagar (for and behalf of President of India, invites sealed "OPEN" E-tender for the following work:-

SI.No.40, Name of work: OHE related work for New Goods Rule Handling Siding at Barbusa Yard in Izatnagar Division. Tender Reference No. SR/EE-TRD-IZN-2024-25-T19. Approx. Cost (in Rs.): ₹ 41,00,071.75. Earnest Money/Bid Security (in Rs.): ₹ 84,200. Cost of Tender documents (in Rs.): ₹ 000. E-Tender closing date and time: 20.03.2025, 11:00 Hrs. Completion period: 06 Months.

E-Tender Online will be submitted up to 11:00 Hrs. on date 20-03-2025.

For full details and submission of bid kindly visit the Official website of Indian Railways i.e. www.tsp.gov.in

Sr. Dist. Electrical Engineer/TRD CTRD/Vijaypur-2501 Izatnagar

RUPEEK CAPITAL PRIVATE LIMITED
45/B, Shubham Complex, 1st A Main, JP Nagar 3rd Phase, Bengaluru - 560078

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

The borrowers and the public in general are hereby notified that the gold pledged with respect to the below mentioned loans will be auctioned on account of non-payment of dues. The details of the loans are as follows through an online portal <https://gold.saml.in> in case a auction is not materialized for any reason on the date mentioned above, with respect any or all items of the pledged ornaments, Bidders shall be conducting a-auction/ private Sale of the items on any subsequent date(s) without further notice.

List of Loans (LOS ID)

12008960, 12010475, 12010176, 12010797, 12010708, 12010565, 12009293

For more information please contact - 1800 419 8000

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Delhi HC extends stay on trial proceedings in National Herald case

The Delhi High Court on Thursday extended the stay on the trial court proceedings in the National Herald case involving Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others.

Justice Vikas Mahajan posted the hearing on a plea by former BJP MP Subramanian Swamy on July 28 in the matter.

The parties are expected to file their written submissions on the plea which seeks to lead certain evidence in the trial court.

Swamy and senior counsel R S Chema, representing the Gandhis, sought time to file the written submissions.



Swamy said there should not be any stay on the investigation in the case but Chema, along with advocate Taramum Chema, argued that the case arises from a private complaint and there was no probe as such anyway.

The BJP leader has accused the Gandhis and others of conspiring to cheat

and misappropriate funds by paying only Rs 50 lakh, through which Young Indian Pvt Ltd (YI) obtained the right to recover Rs 90.25 crore that Associate Jour-

nals Ltd, owner of National Herald, owed to the Congress.

All the accused — the Gandhis, AICC treasurer Motilal Vora, AICC general secretary Oscar Fernandes (since deceased), Saman Dubey, Sam Pitroda and YI — have denied the allegations.

Swamy moved the high court against a trial court order of February 11, 2021 declining his plea to lead evidence to prosecute the Gandhis and the other accused in the case.

He sought summoning of certain witnesses, including the secretary general (registry officer) of the Supreme Court, a deputy land and development officer, and a deputy commis-

sioner of Income Tax, aside from directing them to prove certain documents.

The high court on February 22, 2021 issued notice to the Gandhis, AICC general secretary Oscar Fernandes (since deceased), Saman Dubey, Sam Pitroda and YI and sought their response on Swamy's plea and stayed the proceedings in the case till further orders.

Delhi court acquits army officer in rape case



New Delhi

A Delhi court has acquitted an army officer accused of allegedly raping a woman on the pretext of marriage and said such a promise couldn't be held as "inducement for sex" over an indefinite period of time.

Additional sessions Judge Gajender Singh Nagar conducted the trial against the alleged offences of misappropriation of property, criminal breach of trust and cheating, read with criminal conspiracy of the Indian Penal Code.

Swamy said there should not be any stay on the investigation in the case but Chema, along with advocate Taramum Chema, argued that the case arises from a private complaint and there was no probe as such anyway.

The BJP leader has accused the Gandhis and others of conspiring to cheat and misappropriate funds by paying only Rs 50 lakh, through which Young Indian Pvt Ltd (YI) obtained the right to recover Rs 90.25 crore that Associate Jour-

nal order from the Army indicated to the court that the man was sanctioned leaves between February 14 and 15.

"When the accused's leave was sanctioned from February 14, then he must have taken some time to reach Delhi. In such circumstances, it is not possible that the accused was in Delhi on February 13 as claimed by the prosecutrix," it said.

The court found it "strange" that the woman did not confide in her family but instead accompanied the man to a hill station.

"It is very strange that despite being raped on February 13, the prosecutrix agreed to visit Manali alone with the accused and stayed with him in the same room where she was raped by the accused again and also got pregnant due to the same, but she did not inform her family about the same forthwith," the order said.

The allegations of pregnancy and abortion were not proved by any scientific or medical evidence, it added.

The statement about the woman's second pregnancy, after the accused refused to marry her in 2015, was also found to be inconsistent.

GDA takes action against an illegal colony in Atauur



Ghaziabad

The Ghaziabad Development Authority took action on February 27, 2025, against an illegal colony in Atauur, covering about 5 to 6 bighas.

This operation, led by GDA Incharge Enforcement Zone-1, involved demolishing the boundary wall, road,

electric pole, and site office linked to the illegal construction by Deepak and Joginder Chaudhary.

Key officials, including the Executive Engineer and local police, were present during the demolition. People were urged not to buy or sell plots in this unauthorized colony.

Bhagva Trishul Yatra 2025: Revival of India's Ancient Temples and Awakening of Youth Power

New Delhi

With the objective of reviving Sanatan culture and connecting the younger generation to India's rich heritage, the International Mandir Prabandhak Parishad (IMPC) and Bhagva App are set to launch the "Bhagva Trishul Yatra." This journey is not just about preserving religious sites but also about engaging youth in Sanatan traditions, Indian history, and temple modernization. The yatra will commence from Prayagraj on March 1, 2025, and will culminate with a grand Mahasmmelan in Delhi on March 29, 2025.

During this press conference, Rajesh Yadav, Executive President, IMPC, gave the slogan of Smart City ka Smart Mandir. This will be the motto of Bhagva Trishul Yatra and will benefit all the Hindutva Flag Bearers.



Not just the installation of Trishulas, but we will also initiate Facilitation at the temples

The Bhagva Trishul Yatra is an innovative initiative aimed at integrating youth with Indian culture, temple management, and spiritual leadership. Through this initiative, IMPC has planned to implement digital advancements in temples, introduce online darshan services, and encour-

age young minds to contribute to religious tourism and the preservation of ancient heritage. During this journey, 120 sacred Trishuls will be consecrated at selected Shiva temples across different states. The event will include a grand Trishul procession with large trucks carrying the sacred symbol, accompanied by a convoy of 50 to 100 vehicles.

During this press conference, Rajesh Yadav, Execu-

tive President, IMPC, gave the slogan of Smart City ka Smart Mandir. This will be the motto of Bhagva Trishul Yatra and will benefit all the Hindutva Flag Bearers.

"Our goal is to revive ancient Shiva temples and transform them into centers of divine energy. This initiative will establish temples not only as religious sites but also as cultural and spiritual powerhouses."

Deep Sihag Sesai, National General Secretary of IMPC, added, "Our goal is to revive ancient Shiva temples and transform them into centers of divine energy. This initiative will establish temples not only as religious sites but also as cultural and spiritual powerhouses."

Boney Kapoor takes possession of Int'l Film City's Land; CM Yogi may lay foundation stone in March

The film city will span 1,000 acres, starting with a first phase that covers 230 acres, and has an estimated cost of Rs 1,510 crore. It will include modern facilities such as a 3D studio, retail mall, VFX sound studio, editing and animation studios, and a film institute, with hotels and commercial spaces planned for the second phase.

Staff Reporter New Delhi

An important step has been taken for the construction of the International Film City in Noida, as film producer Boney Kapoor and the Bhutani Group took possession of the land on February 27.

Along with Kapoor, family members, Bhutani Group officials, and various film stars were present during the site visit. Construction is expected to begin in March, with a final start date still to be confirmed.

The film city will span 1,000 acres, starting with a first phase that covers 230 acres, and has an estimated cost of Rs 1,510 crore. It will include modern facilities such as a 3D studio, retail mall, VFX sound studio, editing and animation studios,



and a film institute, with hotels and commercial spaces planned for the second phase. One notable feature will be the world's largest "Om," which will cover one crore square feet and will be visible from space. The project aims to put Uttar Pradesh in the spotlight globally, along with

the establishment of the Noida International Airport.

Dr. Arunvir Singh, CEO of the Yamuna Authority, has been working on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision for the International Film City. The city will be developed by Boney Kapoor's Bayview Projects and the Bhutani Group, who signed

a Memorandum of Understanding with the Yamuna Authority after winning a tender. The film city is expected to be ready in three years, enabling film, serial, and web series shooting in Uttar Pradesh, which will benefit local artists.

The film city will feature advanced studios, outdoor sets, and a unique shooting village with specialized facilities. It will also include VFX studios for post-production and cutting-edge technology for video editing, as well as a theme-based amusement park highlighting Indian Sanatan culture. The 230 acres will be divided into seven zones, with a signature tower housing an observation deck, amphitheater, and film museum.

Zone-1 will serve as an administrative and creative hub, spanning ten acres, and include the signature tower with various amenities like an eco-cinema center, commercial spaces, and sound studios. Zone-2 will cover 60 acres near the administrative block, housing production houses, studios, and a film academy.

The site will be well-connected to major expressways, facilitating access for tourists and film producers. Two interchanges are planned to connect the Film City to the Yamuna Expressway, with construction set to begin soon after a contractor is selected. These interchanges will ensure quick entry and exit, helping to support the project's goals of boosting regional development and job opportunities.

Delhi Police wins final match of the 1st All India Police Cricket T-20 Tournament

New Delhi

Delhi Police won the final match of the 1st All India Police Cricket T-20 Tournament 2024-25, beating Uttar Pradesh Police by 8 wickets. The match took place at Arun Jaitley Stadium, where Delhi Police decided to field first after winning the toss.

Uttar Pradesh scored 164 runs, setting a target of 165 runs. Delhi Police successfully chased the target in just 15.5 overs, losing only 2 wickets. Captain Si Manish was named Man of the Match for scoring 82 runs.

The Delhi Police bowlers showed strong performance, backed by disciplined bowling and sharp fielding. Key contributions from players like Manish, Sunil Sehavg, and Arun Kataria were crucial in securing the victory. The winners' trophy was presented by Chief Guest Sh. Tapan Kumar Deka, along with other senior police officials, who praised both teams for their dedication and



Uttar Pradesh scored 164 runs, setting a target of 165 runs. Delhi Police successfully chased the target in just 15.5 overs, losing only 2 wickets. Captain Si Manish was named Man of the Match for scoring 82 runs.

The tournament aimed to promote teamwork and fitness among police personnel and featured top police teams from around the country. After several matches, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh made it to the final, demonstrating exceptional cricket skills.

The event successfully showcased the sporting talent within police forces and strengthened the spirit of friendly competition.

BJP fails to table remaining 13 CAG reports in assembly: Delhi Cong

Staff Reporter New Delhi

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav here on Thursday accused the BJP of colluding with the AAP to prevent the tabling of the remaining 13 CAG reports in the assembly to hide the truth from the public.

He said that after tabling the CAG report on the liquor scam on February 25, which exposed the Rs 2002 crore corruption by the AAP government in the implementation of the liquor policy, the new BJP government seems to have chickened out as it failed to table the

rest of the 13 pending CAG reports in the assembly today which includes scams related Delhi Jal Board, DTC, Mohalla Clinics, construction of class rooms in government schools, electricity and other issues.

Yadav said that it was clear from the BJP government's reluctance to hold a detailed discussion on the CAG report on the liquor scam that BJP was also beneficiary of the liquor cartel's munificence, which only exposes BJP's collusion with the AAP in not tabling the remaining 13 CAG reports in the assembly.

Delhi HC asks probe agencies to exercise caution over blanket freezing of bank accounts

New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has asked probe agencies to exercise care and caution over blanket freezing of bank accounts.

The matter before Justice Manoj Jain related to one such action of the agencies on the petitioner company's account, having a withdrawal balance of more than Rs 93 crore, but witnessing an innocuous entry of Rs 200.

Such blanket measures, if taken recourse to, without offering any reason, can certainly play havoc with the fi-

nanical concerns of such account holders," it said.

The court's February 20 order said, "It is, therefore, high time that the investigating/law enforcement agencies, in the context of freezing bank accounts, act with requisite care, caution and yes, compassion as well." Instead of freezing the bank account, the court said, authorities should explore the possibility of marking a lien on the disputed amount to mitigate the undue hardship caused to account holders and ensure the disputed

amount was secured.

Taking note of multiple such cases, the court asked the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to address the issue and come out with a uniform policy.

The Ministry of Home Affairs was directed to consider consultation with stakeholders, including respective states and union territories, to chalk-out a uniform policy, standard operating procedures and guidelines to ensure that such matters were handled with due consideration and com-

passion.

"The issue raised in the present petition has been a matter of recurring concern as many such petitions are flooding the courts," the court said.

The case at hand did not suggest to the court that the petitioner, represented by advocate Prastam Singh, was a suspect or accused of any cyber-crime.

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List of Loans (LOS ID)
12009488

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50: Authorised officer Rupeek Capital Pvt. Ltd.

Haryana Congress expels five leaders for six years

Chandigarh

The Haryana unit of Congress has expelled five leaders including a former MLA for six years for indulging in "anti-party activities" with immediate effect.

The leaders were expelled after reports found party leaders indulging in anti-party activities recently.

Former MLA Rambir Singh is also among the expelled leaders. The other four leaders are Vijay Kaushik, Rahul Chaudhary, Pojia Rani and Rupesh Malik.

An order issued by the Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee read, "Consequent upon the receipt of reports through various means of communications pertaining to party leaders/workers having indulged in anti-party activities in the recent past during ongoing process of MC Elections (2025), the following persons are hereby expelled from the party for 6 years with immediate effect".

Earlier on February 20, the Congress in Haryana had expelled seven party leaders from across the state for indulging in "anti-party activities" in the upcoming 2025 municipal corporation elections.

The seven leaders were suspended for six years in consultation with the state in-charge BK Hariprasad.

Village in Bandipora hit by snow avalanche, no casualties reported

Bandipora

A snow avalanche occurred in the Khandyal village of Gurez valley in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday afternoon. This affected many residential houses in the region. According to the officials, one house was damaged by the avalanche, but there was no immediate report of injuries or casualties.

The officials further stated that teams of revenue officials have been sent to assess the damages and have advised the residents to remain alert until the snowfall in the region continues.

A press release said the Gurez Valley has received 4 to 5 feet of fresh snowfall, while the Tulail region has received six inches.

Other than the avalanche in the valley, the other regions of Jammu and Kashmir are experiencing constant rains and snowfalls. There has been constant rain in the Udhampur district over the past two days and as per the India Meteorological Department, the same situation is expected to continue until February 28.

Punjab approves New Excise Policy for FY26

■ Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, who also holds the Excise and Taxation portfolio, stated that against the target of Rs 10,145 crore set for the Excise Policy 2024-25, the state government has already collected Rs 10,200 crore.

TSN/Chandigarh

The Punjab Cabinet has approved the Excise Policy for 2025-26, aiming to generate Rs 11,020 crore in excise revenue, an increase of Rs 874.05 crore (8.61 per cent) over the previous financial year's target.

Additionally, the government has proposed setting up excise police stations across the state. Meanwhile, the Congress and BJP have criticised the move.

The decision was taken during a Council of Ministers meeting held today at the official residence of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, who also holds the Excise and Taxation portfolio, stated that against the target of Rs 10,145 crore set for the Excise Policy 2024-25, the state government has already collected Rs 10,200 crore.

"Excise collection is witnessing a steady surge in the state during the current regime, as for the first time, the collection has crossed the Rs 10,000 crore mark. It is worth mentioning that the excise revenue in the last year of the SAD-BJP alliance was Rs 4,405 crore, while in the last year of the Congress regime it was merely Rs 6,254 crore," he said.

Cheema explained that the new policy ensures a balance in the existing retail trade while encouraging broader participation. The fresh allotment of L-2/L-14A



vends for 2025-26 will be conducted via e-tender, with the group size set at Rs 40 crore.

To mobilise additional revenue and ensure adequate availability of country liquor, the Punjab Medium Liquor (PML) quota for 2025-26 has been increased by 3 per cent to 8,524 crore proof litres. However, there will be no increase in country liquor prices.

"In order to provide relief to the defence forces, the licence fee for their wholesale permits has been reduced by 50 per cent, from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh," Cheema said.

To promote tourism, the possession limit for farm stay licence holders has been increased from 12 quarts of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) to 36 quarts,

along with an increase in the allowed quantity of beer, wine, gin, vodka, brandy, ready-to-drink (RTD) products, and other liquor items.

To enhance customer experience, the policy mandates that each retail licensee in Municipal Corporation Areas must set up a model shop. Meanwhile, the fee for standalone beer shops has been slashed from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 25,000 per shop.

The state has also permitted the establishment of new bottling plants to attract fresh investment. The Cow Welfare Fee has been increased by 50 per cent, from Rs 1 per proof litre to Rs 1.5 per proof litre, raising expected revenue collection from Rs 16 crore to Rs 24 crore.

"To strengthen enforcement, we have proposed setting up excise police stations in the coming financial year. Additionally, to promote ease of doing business, brands with no increase in Ex-Distillery Price (EDP) will receive automatic approval through the e-Aabkari portal," Cheema added.

In another major decision, the Cabinet approved amendments to the Punjab Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Rules, 2025, making it mandatory for doctors to specify the date and cause of death in medical certificates.

The Cabinet also approved the formation of the "Punjab Tirth Yatra Samiti" to facilitate pilgrimage for residents of Punjab through air, rail, road, or any other means

under the Mukh Mantri Tirth Yatra Scheme. Additionally, Punjab Information and Communication Technology Corporation Ltd. (PICTCO) has been designated as the sole provider of digital signatures for all government departments and organisations. The Cabinet has also given the green light to adopt the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Act, 2024, enacted by Parliament.

UK launches Visa fraud awareness campaign



Chandigarh

The UK Government launched the Visa Fraud Ton Bacho' campaign on 27 February to help protect Indian citizens from the physical, financial, and emotional risks of visa fraud and irregular migration.

The campaign includes a new dedicated WhatsApp support line (+91 70652 51380) in English and Punjabi, helping to identify common visa scam tactics and providing access to official guidance for those seeking legal routes to travel to the UK.

The campaign was launched at the Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Jalandhar in the presence of LPU Chancellor and Member of Parliament from Rajya Sabha, Dr Ashok Kumar Mittal.

Alongside the WhatsApp line, the campaign will highlight the warning signs of visa scams. People will be advised to look out for the common spurious claims such as the promise of jobs in the UK, no requirement for English-language tests (IELTS), and exorbitant fees.

Visa fraud leads to unacceptable and unnecessary levels of debt and puts people at risk of physical harm and exploitation. A person found committing visa fraud can receive a 10-year ban on travel to the UK.

UK Under the Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement, the UK and India have a shared commitment to tackling irregular migration. The campaign represents a further element of joint efforts to step up the fight against irregular migration and visa fraud.

Christina Scott, British Deputy High Commissioner to India, said: "The opportunity to visit, study, and work in the UK has never been greater and Indian nationals continue to receive the largest share of UK visit and work visas. However, young peoples' dreams are being exploited, and too many are becoming victims of visa fraud. That's why we are launching the Visa Fraud Ton Bacho campaign. The campaign seeks to raise awareness of the risks and help people to check the facts on safe and legal routes to the UK."

Caroline Rowett, British Deputy High Commissioner Chandigarh, said: "Punjab is known for its hardworking and ambitious people who have made significant contributions both in the UK and globally. We want to ensure that these dreams are fulfilled safely and legally. We urge people to spread the 'Visa Fraud Ton Bacho' message and help protect individuals from falling victim to fraudulent agents."

International Shivratri Mohotsav begins with grandeur in Mandi

Rajan Panchhi Mandi

The International Shivratri Mahotsav, officially inaugurated by Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Thursday began with great enthusiasm at the Paddal Ground in Mandi.

The fair showcases a blend of religious rituals, cultural performances, and traditional festivities, drawing visitors and devotees from far and wide.

Before joining the traditional 'Shahi Jaleb' Shobha Yatra amidst light showers, the Chief Minister offered prayers at the historic Shri Raj Madhav Rai temple, the principal deity of the region. The grand procession, which started from the temple and concluded at Paddal Ground, saw thousands of devotees dressed in traditional attire, with their local deities and dancing along the route. Over 200 deities from across the region graced the vibrant event, enhancing its spiritual grandeur.

As part of the age-old traditions, the Chief



Minister also took part in the Pargi ceremony and performed puja at Shri Raj Madhav Rai temple. Following this, he inaugurated the exhibition at Paddal Ground, organized by various government departments, and corporations, and evinced keen interest in the exhibits. On the occasion, he also released a souvenir and a coffee table book of the International Shivratri Fair, published by the Mela Committee.

Extending his best wishes for the international Shivratri Mahotsav, the Chief

Minister said that after a long dry spell, the region was finally receiving rainfall. He attributed this to Lord Shiva answering the prayers of farmers. He announced an allocation of Rs. 100 crore for the completion of the Mandi Shiv Dham project and assured its completion within two years. He expressed confidence that the grand Shiv Dham would attract visitors from far and wide. Additionally, he announced a five percent increase in offerings (nazrana) to the deities.

Haryana CM meets PM Modi; briefs him about state's infra development

Komal Ramola Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday paid a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Sh Narendra Modi in New Delhi. During the meeting, the Chief Minister briefed the Prime Minister on Haryana's infrastructure development and upcoming projects, as well as provided an update on the progress of central government schemes being implemented in the state.

During the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended the comprehensive development work being carried out in Haryana under the leadership of Sh Nayab Singh Saini. He said that the current Haryana Government is making successful efforts to integrate all sections of society, particularly the poor and backward classes, into the mainstream by consistently implementing welfare schemes for their benefit.

The Chief Minister also congratulated Prime Minister on the historic victory in the



Delhi Assembly elections, acknowledging that under his leadership, Delhi residents will now benefit from all public welfare schemes of the Central government. He said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the country has been reaching new heights in terms of development

The Chief Minister said that with the continued guidance of Prime Minister, efforts will be made to further enhance Haryana's development with the support of the Central Government. He said that air, rail, and road infrastructure in Haryana are being strengthened, ensuring that both investors and local residents benefit from modern infrastructure. This, he believes, will help Haryana rapidly emerge as the nation's largest investment hub.

He further said that the double-engine government comprising both the Center and Haryana driving the state's development at three times the speed and Haryana will remain a leader in terms of development. Representing the state's 2.8 crore citizens, the Chief Minister reassured the Prime Minister that Haryana would play a key role in realizing the vision of India becoming a developed nation by 2047, with Haryana achieving the same level of development alongside the country.

Triple engine govt will work three times faster: Nayab Singh Saini

Komal Ramola Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the intention and agenda of the government are clear due to which development work is being done at a fast pace in the state. The present government has taken many important decisions in its 100-day term and has made efforts to make the lives of people better.



The Chief Minister was addressing a programme organized in Kaithal on Thursday.

He said the state government has fulfilled 18 promises of the Sankalp Patra in its 100-day ten-

ure while 10 promises will be fulfilled soon. He said after the formation of the triple engine gov-

ernment, work will be done three times faster.

He said as soon as the government was formed for the third time in the state, free dialysis facility was provided to kidney patients in all medical colleges and PGLs. Ownership rights were given to tenant farmer families. Along with this, giving relief to the people living in houses built on panchayat land for over 20 years, an Act

was passed in the Assembly and they were given ownership rights.

He said 15 lakh women are being given gas cylinders for Rs 500 whereas it has been two and a half years since the Congress came to power in Himachal Pradesh, but it has not fulfilled its promise of giving gas cylinders to women for Rs 500 and Rs 1500 per month to them.

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Health problems that arise from consuming processed, fast foods



By Dr Satyavan Saurabh

India's food culture is changing as a result of globalization, urbanization and changing lifestyles, which are causing major socio-economic and cultural changes. The younger generation in India is increasingly consuming fast food, which is leading to a number of health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disorders. Fast food often contains large amounts of calories, sugar, sodium, and bad fats, which can lead to poor eating habits and nutritional deficiencies. It can also result in a sedentary lifestyle, which will increase risks to one's health. This trend has the potential to put pressure on healthcare systems over time and affect the general quality of life of generations. Because it promotes obesity, poor nutrition, and unhealthy eating patterns, fast food consumption can hurt children's health and eating habits. Fast food, which is high in calories, sugar, and bad fats, increases the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease and leads to weight gain. Frequent consumption of fast food makes children prefer processed foods over healthy foods, which reduces their chances of eating a balanced diet and choosing nutritious food. Nowadays, many young people prefer fast food because it is convenient, tasty and quick to prepare. They continue to



eat it even though they are aware of its negative health effects. In a busy lifestyle, it is convenient to eat fast food as quickly as possible. They follow the crowd because their friends may also like it. Fast food restaurants also add flavors and aromas, making it incredibly tasty and almost addictive. Even after knowing about its unhealthy elements, such as excess fat and sugar, people find it difficult to resist the craving for fast food. Fast food companies use deceptive advertising to make their products appear cool and fun, which is another factor. Celebrities and memorable slogans are used to attract attention, especially from young people. Despite their intelligence and education, people sometimes prefer to eat fast food rather than considering the possible harmful effects on their health. They act as if they know it is not the best option, but

they still choose it because it is so simple and attractive. Therefore, many people still find themselves attracted to fast food, even though they know its disadvantages. Eating habits are changing as people are choosing convenience food over home-cooked meals. According to the National Family Health Survey, young people in urban areas are eating more processed foods. Traditional cereals like millet are being replaced by refined cereals and packaged foods. To promote the consumption of millets, the government has launched the International Year of Millets in 2023. The growing number of processed, high-fat, high-sugar Western diets is replacing traditional balanced diets. The rapid growth of McDonald's, KFC, and Domino's has changed urban eating habits in India. Due to the homogenization of food culture

dors are all affected by global food chains. Due to the 2017 food licensing regulations, small, traditional restaurants had to close. Farm-to-table programs and organic farming counter-movements are beginning to take shape. Indian food products are encouraged to be certified organic by the Organic India initiative. Local food affordability is affected by global food trends that increase dependence on imports. Increased import costs for wheat and palm oil have an impact on domestic food security. While maintaining its foundations, India's diverse culinary culture must change. Traditional food diversity and cultural identity can be enhanced rather than diminished by modernization through the implementation of sustainable food policies, support for native crops, and balanced diet awareness. Importantly, eating fast food occasionally is unlikely to have a major impact on your general health. On the other hand, eating fast food regularly can eventually lead to a number of health problems. The goal is to limit to protect your health.

(Dr. Satyavan Saurabh, Poet, freelance journalist and columnist)

Fast food is made to be consumed quickly and taste delicious and is overcooked, highly processed, and high in fiber. The human body is made of unprocessed, highly fibrous, and minimally cooked foods, so they are completely unsuitable. Sugar spikes from fast food lead to insulin resistance, weight gain, fat synthesis, and diabetes.

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.

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

Solution, Sudoku

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

THE WISDOM TREE BY SUVEEN KUMAR

LIFE IS A SERVICE

What you wanted to become tells what you think you would serve the best, and what you have become tells how you have served the best. Life is a service. This starts from you and ends to people. Life is doing a favour that you do to yourself and to others. Either you become a king or subject, service is the only option you have. No matter how you serve, what you serve, who you serve, but the service is the ultimate act you do. It is every important to develop a sense of service in us if we want to remain in our senses, it is every important to develop a sense of service in us if we want to be served. Life is a service, and a service is life. Be careful what you serve because every service deserves some wages that you can't deny. If you serve sin you will get your wages as sin, if you serve virtue you will get your wages as virtue. Sin is too poor to buy virtue and virtue is too pure to touch sin. Sense of service brings humility to accept, responsibility to take and ability to perform. Serve everyday by every way possible, serve everyone with exception of none, serve everything with exception of nothing. The purpose of a service is to accelerate or decelerate someone's act. The true pleasure in life is serving, sometimes serving yourself and sometimes serving others. Some people like to serve others more than they themselves whereas some people like to serve themselves more than others and there is absolutely no harm unless you are serving yourself at the cost of others. Moral: The best form of service is engaging each other in service each other for the supreme God.



Farming clusters to Industrial clusters Growth story beckons

India thrived primarily on agriculture for centuries. Western world usually call India as Agrarian economy. Share of GDP of Agriculture declined from about 50% during Independence to about 18% in 2024 which provides a livelihood for about 42.3% of India's population. Hence it is still the most important sector. Agriculture in the twenty-first century is reinventing itself as a new global business reshaped by globalization, standardization, high-value production, massive growth in demand (both for the food and the biofuel industries), retail and packaging innovations, and a ramp up in efficiency. Faced with constant productivity and market pressures, the "new agriculture" needs new tools to enhance its competitiveness and innovation capacity. One of these tools is the promotion of clusters. The shift in agriculture within developing countries from traditional cereal grain production to high-value agricultural products (HVPs) is a remarkable evolution that promises both challenges and opportunities. This transformation is driven by the need to meet the stringent quality and safety standards demanded by export markets and supermarkets. India has been known to bring out agricultural products to the large population. The concept of Agro-Based Clusters (ABCs) plays a pivotal role in this evolution, forming the foundation for geo-

graphic concentration of agricultural production and processing activities. The 2024-25 Union Budget of India allocated 1.52 trillion rupees to the agriculture and allied sectors. This is a significant increase from the previous year's budget. 10,000 need-based bio-input resource centres to be established during the period to ensure better productivity. Large scale clusters for vegetable production will be developed closer to major consumption centres. There are Agro-based clusters, integrated farming clusters, Vegetable clusters and Organic village clusters. The farming clusters include Grapes in Maharashtra, Mango in Andhra Pradesh, Pomegranate in Sholapur, Onion in Maharashtra, Turmeric in Kerala and Dairy in certain regions in Punjab and Gujarat. However, the success of these clusters is contingent upon their ability to transition from simple Farming Clusters (FCs) to Industrial Clusters (ICs) capable of significant value addition. Clusters can help in collaboration among different manufacturers within the cluster to share knowledge and resources, establishing common facilities like testing centres to ensure product quality standards and facilitating access to market information and technology updates through industry associations. This concept leads us

to increased productivity, enhanced product quality, market competitiveness, ability to produce innovative and efficient implements to cater to evolving farmer needs. In turn it leads to Economic growth with Creation of new jobs and increased revenue generation within the agricultural machinery sector. Implementation strategies are based on Government initiatives through providing financial assistance, training programs, and technology transfer support to agricultural implement clusters. There is also more awareness to be given in terms of partnerships between manufacturers, research institutions, and skill development organizations and Capacity building programs. As per the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), India is the 2nd largest producer of fruits and vegetables globally, behind China. It has an 11.4% share in global fruit production and 12% share in global vegetable production. India has had little success in the export of these products. One of the major factors limiting the growth of its agro-export industries, particularly given the reduction of many trade barriers, is the inability of its small holder dominated production systems to meet the food safety requirements of export markets. By the 1970s the association was seeking technical advice from scientists. A good example of the improvements this research produced

is the introduction of gibberellic acid to the cultivation process. Because the acid was not available locally, the association facilitated its importation by getting the import duty reduced and supplying the chemical to members at cost. The central government acted to encourage the development of infrastructure and established the National Horticulture Board (NIHB) and the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). In 1991, Mahagrapes was formed. It represents a public-private partnership (PPP), being owned and governed by its members (grape cooperatives) but with considerable public support in its set-up. To support the initiative, the state marketing board paid the salaries of the governing body for the first three years and provided for consultancy services, while the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and the state government provided loans. Thus the cluster concept came into picture. The integration of research, consultancy and associational activities with the support of the agencies, government and grape growers led to the success of this cluster. Mahindra Shubhlabh Services Ltd, the agribusiness arm of the large Mahindra Group conglomerate, has recently become involved in the cluster. Agricultural implements are tools and

machines used to perform farming tasks. They include tractors, plows, harrows, seed drills, and silos. An "agricultural implements cluster" refers to a geographical area where a concentration of businesses related to the production, distribution, and servicing of agricultural equipment and machinery are located close together, allowing for collaboration, shared resources, and economies of scale within the sector; essentially, a community of companies focused on agricultural equipment development and supply within a specific region. The Karnal-based units created a cluster to meet the major requirement of the country for various types of power driven and bullock driven agri-implements, including harrow disc, tiller tye, seed drilling machine, zero tillage leveler, agri-springs and laser guided scraper buckets. State of art training facilities like Common Facility Centre with Mini Tool Room, Metallurgy, Chemical Testing & CAD CAM Facilities were put up. The cluster identified more than 40 countries for exports. One of the difficulties, the entrepreneurs felt was that the repercussions of this year's monsoon would be felt in the next kharif crop as the demand in the drought-affected areas would be affected. Major units which are into exports are slow down in the world economy as their business have been hit by

The shift in agriculture within developing countries from traditional cereal grain production to high-value agricultural products (HVPs) is a remarkable evolution that promises both challenges and opportunities.

TOP STORY

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AI can assist but cannot replace human judgment, says former CJI Chandrachud

■ The legal framework must adapt to emerging digital realities ensuring governance that is fair, flexible and future ready, he asserted.

Mumbai
Even though virtual courts improve accessibility, it has raised concerns about fair trial and there must be a balance between innovation and judicial integrity, former Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said here on Thursday.

The legal framework must adapt to emerging digital realities ensuring governance that is fair, flexible and future ready, he asserted.



Asserting that artificial intelligence (AI) was transforming case management, making legal processes faster and more efficient, the former CJI said, "But recent incidents like an attorney facing sanction for using AI generated fake case citations proves that while machines can assist, they cannot replace human judgment." Speaking at a conference organised by Welinkar Institute of Management, he said, "Virtual courts have im-

proved accessibility but also raise concern about fair trial and data security. As we embrace these advances we must balance innovation with judicial integrity. Efficiency means nothing without fairness, accountability and trust." The former chief justice stated that affirmative action policies are crucial in promoting diversity and addressing historical injustices.

"Marginalised groups such as Scheduled Castes and

Scheduled Tribes, women, minorities face structural barriers that limit access to education, employment and leadership roles. For true progress we must recognise that equity requires ensuring that everyone has support and access needed to compete on a level playing field," he said.

"The digital revolution has redefined our existence, but has sown 'new seeds to threaten us collectively', he

said, adding "our own creation threatens our future". Chandrachud also labelled cyber fraud as a well organised industry with "best tools of technology" as well as "lethal combination of human trafficking, torture and exploitation".

"Quantum computing possesses previously unheard of cyber dangers because it has the ability to crack existing encryption techniques. This technology has the potential to redefine digital privacy, jeopardise critical government data and upend international financial institutions without guardrails," he said.

"Without a proactive and ethical legal framework we run the prospect of a technological arms race, in which a small number of countries and businesses control global power," Chandrachud said, adding that rise of digital currency and blockchain technology has added new complexity to legal landscape.

rapidly changing and reshaping industry and education.

Innovation and technology must be balanced by frameworks of governance which stays ahead of the curve, he asserted.

"A well structured legal framework is the backbone of a thriving economy and innovation. We risk becoming the modern version of Draco (first legislator of Athens in ancient Greece who replaced the system of oral law and blood feud with the Draconian constitution) unless we create an equitable legal framework," Chandrachud stated.

"The challenge is clear. We need a smart legal framework that protects users without killing innovations. This requires enacting clear regulation for AI accountability and strengthening cyber security laws to combat digital fraud," Chandrachud opined.

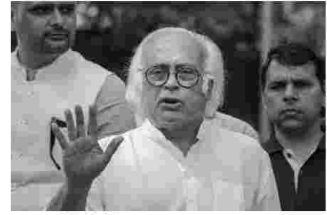
He said technological advancement and shifting societal aspiration are today

Education and industry must work together from the drawing board to ensure students are equipped with real world skills before they enter the workforce, the former CJI said.

The global footprint of our age is in a state of economic, financial and political flux, he said. The surge of the global economy is tempered with nations turn inwards, confront the climate crisis and witness regional conflicts on an unprecedented scale, whether it is Palestine, Ukraine or the Congo, the former CJI said.

"As a global community, we survive on hope amidst cynicism, on peace amidst zones of conflict, faith in survival of our planets amidst concerns for climate change and continually spur our efforts to bring the benefit of technology amidst dangers to cyber security," he added.

Congress Slams Govt Over Household Indebtedness Crisis



New Delhi
Flagging the issue of household indebtedness, the Congress on Thursday said the root cause of such a "deep-seated" malaise was the stagnation in real wages and claimed the government had failed to acknowledge the "crisis".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited the recently-released Indus Valley Annual Report 2025, an examination of India's economic landscape and start-up ecosystem by VC firm Blume Ventures, to attack the government.

The report offers a granular look into the Indian economy, he said and asserted that its most worrying implications were for India's household finances.

Ramesh said India's recovery from COVID-19 was based on consumption growth that was driven by loans.

Consumer loans in the post-Covid years were about 18 per cent of the Private Final Consumption Expenditure, he said.

In this time, personal loans replaced industry loans as the biggest segment of non-food borrowing, Ramesh said.

"This was a reflection of the slowing private investment levels. Much of this indebtedness was due to the rise in small ticket personal loans from non-banking financial companies -- they comprise 82 per cent of the new personal loans originated in 2024," he said citing the report.

Credit growth has now created a household indebtedness crisis instead of continuing to fuel consumption, Ramesh said.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited the recently-released Indus Valley Annual Report 2025, an examination of India's economic landscape and start-up ecosystem by VC firm Blume Ventures, to attack the government.

Household debt to GDP has hit an all-time high of nearly 43 per cent, he claimed.

"As a flipside to the household indebtedness, households are saving less -- especially financially. Household share of savings dropped from 84 per cent in FY 2000 to 61 per cent in FY 2023, reflecting an increase in uninvested corporate profits," he said.

Without adequate savings to finance investments, combined with sluggish foreign direct investment, India is undergoing a massive slowdown in private investment, Ramesh said.

"The root cause of this deep-seated malaise is the stagnation in real wages, both in the salaried sector and in the informal rural sector. Without increasing labour productivity and higher wages, any growth in consumption will have to be based on unsustainable credit booms," the Congress leader said.

Ten years after this crisis first surfaced, and five years after COVID-19 hit, the government continues to fail to acknowledge this crisis, Ramesh alleged.

Govt working for fair compensation for media houses: Ashwini Vaishnaw

New Delhi
Recommending the importance of Storyboard8 - DNPA Conclave 2025, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Railways, Information and Broadcasting, Electronics and Information Technology said that a conference of this stature could help provide clear policy directions, and offer policy recommendations to the government.

Noting that the media industry is undergoing a major transition today, he also shared how the government is working for fair compensation for media houses.

Inaugurating the conclave, Union Minister shared that the conference enables discussions around the transition of traditional media to new media.

Held on February 27, in New Delhi, this year's Storyboard8 DNPA Conclave was themed around Media Transformations in the AI Age, and served as a pivotal gathering for policymakers, media leaders, and tech experts to examine the ongoing impact of AI. In his keynote speech, the Minister outlined the vision for fostering a digital news ecosystem that is both credible and efficient.

Kharge Slams PM Modi's 'Viksit Bharat' Vision

New Delhi
Hundred crore Indians do not have any extra income to spend, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed on Thursday and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's version of Viksit Bharat emptied ordinary Indians' pockets and filled the coffers of select billionaires.

India is starting at a global tariff war and trade barriers and the Union budget announcements have turned out to be a "damp squib", he further said.

"Narendra Modi ji, 100 crore Indians do not have any extra income to spend... 60 per cent of our GDP is dependent on consumption. But it is only the top 10 per cent in India who drive economic growth and consumption and 90 per cent cannot afford to buy basic daily needs," the Rajya Sabha opposition leader said in a post on X.

"The middle 50 per cent of India's tax-paying popula-

tion has seen little to no wage growth in the past decade. Rural wages are witnessing negative growth. Wealth concentration is widening, and your policies have failed to distribute income amongst all," he added.

The Congress president claimed that stagnant wages, persistent inflation and plunging consumption during the past 10 years had resulted in household savings falling to a 50-year low, income inequality climbing to a 100-year high and household debt reaching an all-time high.

"We are staring at a global tariff war and trade barriers. Unemployment has become unbearable for our youth. Budget announcements turned out to be damp squib!" Kharge said.

"Your version of 'Viksit Bharat' empties the pockets of ordinary Indians and fills the coffers of select billionaires!" he added.

Goyal Slams Stubble Burning Blame: Delhi Pollution Not Farmers' Fault

Mumbai
Blaming farmers in Punjab for pollution 500 kms away in Delhi is "ridiculous", Union Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

Goyal, who handles the commerce and industry portfolio, asked everybody to "apply their mind" before coming to such conclusions.

"...for Delhi, don't believe anybody who tells you it's the farmers of Punjab who cause the pollution in Delhi," Goyal said.

"Just apply your mind... I wonder how pollution travels 500 kms through the high rises of Gurgaon and finds a pathway to come to my home in New Delhi," Goyal said speaking at an event organised by IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry here.

It is "ridiculous" to place the blame on the farmers, Goyal said, making it clear that he is not supporting



the burning either.

Stubble burning by farmers after summer harvest to prepare their fields for winter crop often gets blamed for high levels of pollution in the national capital.

Air quality in Delhi remains poor or worse for many days in a year, and concerns are also being raised over the health hazards posed by the high levels of pollution.

According to Goyal, construction activity and vehicle emissions are the main causes of pollution in cities, and the minister implored everybody to switch to precast construction and electric mobility.

He said both the alternatives represent cost advantages of a business case for a switch.

In the case of mobility, it makes a business case to switch to the electric op-

tion from the conventional internal combustion engine, and asked India Inc to ensure that vehicles carrying goods in and out of their units be run by electric mobility.

"Rather than blame somebody else, can we also think of our role? Can we think of electric mobility, personal use, our company use," Goyal told the audience comprising industry leaders.

In the case of construction, he said the world is switching to precast, which is faster, more efficient and less polluting.

The minister, who is a member of parliament from Mumbai North constituency, questioned if one can find dust floating around in the air or decaying footpaths in cities like Dubai or Singapore like we find in India, and exhorted all to take measures on the same.

Railway Minister thanks Rail Karmayogi for their hard work in Prayagraj Mahakumbh

■ Record 17000+ trains operated during Mahakumbh 2025

Staff Reporter
New Delhi
Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on February 27, 2025 visited Prayagraj to check on the preparations for Mahakumbh 2025, an important religious festival.

He looked at the operations of railway stations under North Central Railway, North Eastern Railway, and Northern Railway to ensure they could handle the expected large number of pilgrims.

During his visit, he thanked railway workers for their efforts and noted the smooth teamwork among different departments, highlighting Indian Railways' commitment to providing safe and comfortable travel for the pilgrims.

He also appreciated support from leaders like the Prime Minister, Home Minister, and various Chief Ministers in managing the large crowd.

Vaishnaw acknowledged the hard work of railway staff involved in the event, meeting with different teams including front-line workers, security personnel, engineers, and medical staff, thanking them for their contributions.

Indian Railways exceeded



its original plan by running 17,152 trains, significantly more than the planned 13,000, catering to about 66 crore expected pilgrims, with a 24 crore passengers handled at key railway stations in Prayagraj.

To support the influx of pilgrims, Indian Railways improved infrastructure at nine important railway stations in Prayagraj. They added entry points, platforms, and foot over-bridges to help manage crowds. They implemented 1,186

CCTV cameras, including some with facial recognition, and utilized drones to enhance safety and crowd control. Additionally, they created 22 permanent holding areas and provided multi-lingual announcements for passenger assistance. Ticketing facilities were upgraded with more counters and a QR-based system for convenience.

Passenger safety and convenience were prioritized through a strong medical and emergency

response setup. Central help desks, medical facilities, ambulances, and other essential services were organized with local authorities. A focus on limiting parcel traffic improved passenger movement, and an app-based system aided efficient staff management. Continuous monitoring of railway operations ensured smooth execution, including quick completion of track work connecting Varanasi and Prayagraj.

Om Birla exhorts youth to commit themselves to achieve goal of Aatmnirbhar Bharat

New Delhi
Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday urged the youth to commit themselves to the goal of Aatmnirbhar Bharat by creating employment opportunities. Stressing that the New India has a lot of potential with immense opportunities in various fields, he exhorted the youth to be trailblazers in research and innovation to achieve the resolve of a developed India by 2047.

Birla made these observations while speaking at the 26th Convocation of Bharati Vidyapeeth, Pune where he was the Chief Guest. Noting that Indian youth are already leading the world with their knowledge, capabilities and wisdom, he mentioned that even the developed countries' prosperity is an outcome of the contributions of the Indian youth in those countries.

Stating that the New India is marching on the path of prosperity with new opportunities, Birla opined that the youth of India, instead of looking towards the developed countries for their future, should focus on directing their talent and energy to make India a devel-



oped country by 2047.

Mentioning that the Indian youth have the power to provide solutions to global challenges, he observed that India, powered by the knowledge, wisdom, capabilities of the youth, will lead the world in providing emerging solutions to the global challenges.

He exhorted the youth to dream big, work hard and become active partners in country's prosperity. Education would be deemed to be successful when its benefits would improve the lives of the poor, the marginalized and the last person in the society, he added.

Referring to India's journey during the last 75 years, Birla noted that India's suc-

cessful journey as a democracy is an inspiration for the world. The World is looking towards India for promoting democratic spirit in other countries, he observed.

Mentioning about the glorious history of Maharashtra, Birla said that Maharashtra is the land of many struggles and social and spiritual revolution. Referring to Veer Shiwaji, Jyoti Bhaule, Savitribai Phule, he noted that these personalities had played an important role in shaping the history of India and they will continue to be our inspiration for the years to come.

On this occasion, Birla gave away certificates and prizes to the successful students of Bharati Vidyapeeth.

Over 11.69 lakh devotees offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath on Mahashivaratri



Varanasi:

Varanasi witnessed a massive influx of devotees on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivaratri, with over 11.69 lakh worshippers paying their respects at the sacred Kashi Vishwanath temple. Following the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the local administration ensured comprehensive security arrangements, smooth crowd management, and essential facilities for the devotees. Under the supervision of the Kashi Vishwanath temple administration, systematic arrangements were made to facilitate a seamless darshan experience. From the early hours of the morning, long queues of devotees gathered at the temple premises, eager to perform the sacred rituals.

Devotees offered their prayers and conducted the traditional 'Jalabhishek' with great devotion. The spiritual fervor transformed Varanasi into a sea of faith, with a continuous stream of visitors thronging the holy city. The influx of devotees remained uninterrupted throughout Mahashivaratri. By morning itself, lakhs had already completed their darshan, and as the day progressed, the numbers only swelled further.

Adding to the grandeur of the celebrations, the Yogi government arranged a special aerial flower shower over Kashi on Wednesday, honoring the deep religious sentiments of devotees. Helicopters showered flowers over Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham and the Ganga ghats, filling the air with a divine ambience. The spectacular floral tribute elevated the spiritual enthusiasm of the devotees, making this Mahashivaratri a truly memorable event in the city of Lord Shiva.

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Adityanath calls Maha Kumbh 'truly global event', credits PM Modi for its success

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the successful organisation of Maha Kumbh 2025, calling it "a truly global event".

Addressing journalists at the media centre here, a day after the conclusion of the Maha Kumbh, Adityanath said, "Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj truly became a global event, and the credit goes to the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His vision has helped us successfully execute this grand event, and you (the media) have played a crucial role in conveying its significance to the country and the world. I thank you for that."

He also highlighted Modi's concept of integrating faith and economy, stating that spiritual tourism holds immense potential, with Uttar Pradesh emerging as the most suitable state to harness it.

"In 2024 alone, 64 crore pilgrims and tourists visited various religious sites across Uttar Pradesh, including Ayodhya, Varanasi, Mathura, Prayagraj, Chitrakoot,



Adityanath said that the Maha Kumbh led to the development of five major spiritual tourism corridors in Uttar Pradesh.

Vindhyachal, Gorakhpur and Naimisharanya," the chief minister said.

Over the past 45 days, more than 66 crore pilgrims and tourists visited Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh, creating new records in religious tourism, he added.

Adityanath also said that the Maha Kumbh led to the development of five major spiritual tourism corridors in Uttar Pradesh.

The first corridor connects Varanasi and Mirzapur to Ayodhya and Gorakhpur via Prayagraj. The second links Prayagraj to Lucknow and Chitrakoot.

The third runs from Prayagraj to Lucknow and Naimisharanya. The fourth connects Prayagraj to Agra via the Bundelkhand Expressway, extending to Mathura Vrindavan and Suktheerth.

In the past 45 days, millions of devotees travelled through these five corridors, including not only locals but also pilgrims from across the country and the world, Adityanath said.

Representatives from more than 100 countries participated in the Maha Kumbh, including ambassadors and high commissioners from 74

nations, he said.

Additionally, ministers and presidents from 12 countries attended the event, along with numerous other international devotees, the chief minister said.

The central and state governments, under the 'double-engine' governance model (BJP in Centre and Uttar Pradesh), spent approximately Rs 7,500 crore on both permanent and temporary infrastructure for the Maha Kumbh, the chief minister said.

"These included the construction of over 200 roads, 14 flyovers,

multiple underpasses, and 12 corridors in Prayagraj for the first time. These developments have significantly enhanced the city's appeal to tourists," he said.

"To ensure seamless arrangements for the devotees, nearly one lakh personnel from the state and central governments were deployed. Among them, the highest number was from the Uttar Pradesh Police, along with personnel from the PAC, Fire Services, Water Police, Home Guards, ATS, and STF commandos," Adityanath said.

The entire Mela area was monitored using facial recognition technology and AI-integrated surveillance. Around 30,000 CCTV cameras provided real-time updates on the number of people entering the Maha Kumbh, the chief minister said.

"These included the construction of over 200 roads, 14 flyovers,

Uttarakhand emerges as key economic hub, setting new benchmarks for industrial growth

Dehradun: Uttarakhand is emerging as a rapidly growing economic hub playing a vital role in India's rise as one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

With thriving industries in automobiles, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, IT, tourism, and education, Uttarakhand is setting new growth benchmarks.

The state's economic output has surged to Rs. 2.87 lakh crore, while its per capita income stands at Rs 2.61 lakh—strong indicators of its remarkable progress and investment potential.

Uttarakhand has implemented investor-friendly and transparent policies, making it a prime investment destination. Its proximity to Delhi-NCR further enhances its appeal.

Over the past two decades, the state has witnessed steady industrial growth, significantly expanding employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector. With over 10,000 acres of industrial land available, Uttarakhand continues to attract major investments.

The state has secured a prominent position in

the automobile industry. Haridwar is home to Hero Motors, the world's largest two-wheeler manufacturing plant, a testament to Uttarakhand's industrial achievements.

Additionally, the state contributes over 10% to India's total auto parts production.

The pharmaceutical sector is also flourishing, with Uttarakhand accounting for 22 per cent of the country's generic drug production. With more than 370 manufacturing and supporting units, the state's fertile land and favourable climate make it an ideal hub for the industry.

Jitendra Kumar, Vice President of EAR India, said, "The policies introduced by the government, along with subsidies and incentives, have attracted numerous pharmaceutical industries to Uttarakhand. Today, I can proudly say that the state is a leader in both the production and export of medicines."

The agricultural sector in Uttarakhand is also experiencing consistent growth. The state has four major agro-climatic zones that support the cultivation of a variety of crops.

Uttarakhand leads the way in inclusive and skill-based education

Dehradun: Uttarakhand is making remarkable strides in the education sector, introducing innovative initiatives to ensure learning reaches every section of society.

State and central government schemes are not only modernizing education but also emphasizing skill development among students. These efforts are empowering underprivileged communities, especially girls and deprived children, paving the way for a brighter future.

One such initiative is the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Residential Girls' Hostel, established by the Uttarakhand government.

This hostel is nothing short of a blessing for underprivileged children, providing them with an opportunity to join the mainstream—especially those who have been deprived of education or lack parental support.

Here, children receive free education, food, uniforms, and books, along with a strong focus on their mental and



emotional well-being. Suhani, a student at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Residential Girls' Hostel in Baniyaula, said, "I have never lacked anything in this hostel—whether it is food, clothing, or any other facility. Everything is provided here."

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has ensured that needy children receive better hostel facilities along with education. He stated, "It is our commitment to ensure that all hostels in the state receive the best facilities and that children are given opportunities to progress."

This initiative is

breathing new life into dreams that were once abandoned due to financial struggles.

Currently, 19 such hostels are operational in the state, shaping the future of over 1,000 children.

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Scheme, introduced by the central government, has been effectively implemented in Uttarakhand.

This scheme provides free and quality education to girls aged 11 to 18. The state has 39 such schools, where girls receive education along with hostel facilities, food, and other essential amenities.

From mega gathering, now it's packing time at Maha Kumbh Mela

Mahakumbh Nagar

A worker dismantles a 45-day-old camp, the sound of two metallic sheets hitting each other on the ground pierces the silence pervading the mela landscape that till a day ago, was teeming with millions of pilgrims.

While over 66 crore people took the holy dip at the Triveni Sangam during the Maha Kumbh, for a large number of people who camped at the site for over six weeks for this spiritual journey, it was akin to a "temporary home". "Sab ujad raha hai" (everything is getting uprooted) is a constant refrain one can hear as people talk about the current landscape in various tent city areas.

Prayagraj resident Saloni Niranjan, who stayed at a Swiss cottage at Sector 6, spending virtually all nights here, was emotionally moved as she watched labourers dismantle the camp where she observed 'Kalpawas' in keeping with multi-generation



Kumbh tradition of her family.

"One gets attached to the camp, the mela place that was filled with a sea of people till yesterday wears a desolate look. From humans everywhere to just a few dotting the landscape. It feels unusual and sometimes eerie, this dramatic change," she told PTT.

Her husband Niranjan Lal, a lawyer, and their family 'panda' Shambhuhath Sharma also watched the once-vibrant camp being dismantled, sharing her sentiments.

"You move your eyes and see how the place has changed overnight, literally. The tent city,

temple replica, health camps all getting over as people return to their homes. These lands, in a few months, will host farmers who will grow vegetables here," Sharma said.

In the late afternoon, work to dismantle a replica of the iconic Tirupati temple of Andhra Pradesh also began.

Some visitors tried to catch a glimpse of the temple replica or capture a few photos on the phone as workers slowly dismantled the replica.

Gautam Das, a craftsman who worked on preparing the replica made of fibre and other material, said it was transported in pieces

from Hyderabad and assembled at the mela site.

"The replica of the famous south Indian temple is a striking one with 12 columns in its 'mandapam', a 'garb griha', and an ornamental dome on top bearing a golden hue.

An ornamental post ('dhwaja stambham'), and ornate gateway or 'gopuram' are part of the replica.

'Netra Kumbh', a mega eye camp that began a week before the Kumbh Mela started, is attending to a large group of patients before closing the doors late evening on Wednesday, extending a day beyond its designated closure day.

Akhilesh Yadav Slams 100% FDI in Insurance

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday slammed the Centre for allowing 100 per cent FDI in the insurance sector and said the move put the entire industry at risk.

In a post in Hindi on X addressed to Indian policyholders, Yadav questioned if handing over complete control of a sensitive and crisis-driven industry such as the insurance sector to foreign entities was in the best interest of the nation.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in her 2025-26 budget speech that the permissible limit for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector would be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

The move is expected to pave the way for the entry of global



insurance giants and substantial foreign investment.

Yadav pointed out that diplomatic relations between countries could fluctuate and, if any disruptions occurred, ensuring accountability of foreign insurers would be a challenge.

"Who will insure against this uncertainty?" he asked. Yadav warned that while the new provision offered full se-

curity to foreign insurance companies, the interests of Indian policyholders remained uncertain.

"Even if these foreign companies reinvest the collected premium within the country, a critical question remains: will they reinvest at least half of their profits in India or take all of it abroad?" he asked.

Urging transparency, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in her 2025-26 budget speech that the permissible limit for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector would be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

said the government must ensure that the terms and conditions, often written in fine print, were made clear to the public.

"Rushing such policies is not advisable," he added. The Kanjwadi MP further alleged that the BJP-led central government might exploit these companies for political funding and later allow them to hike insurance premiums, burdening the common people.

If the BJP truly cares about citizens, it should first remove the tax on insurance premiums imposed during its tenure, he added.

"The government's primary responsibility is to strengthen healthcare infrastructure and reduce citizens' medical expenses, not to tax essential services such as health and life insurance," Yadav said, adding that the public should not have to bear the cost of the government's failure to perform its duty.

Accusing the BJP of treating citizens as "customers", the Samajwadi Party chief said, "Its mindset is purely commercial, focused on profit rather than public welfare."

Yadav reaffirmed his party's commitment to protecting the interests of Indian policyholders.

CM Dhami provides appointment letters to 126 newly selected Gram Panchayat Development Officers

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Thursday provided appointment letters to 126 newly appointed Gram Panchayat Development Officers ensuring the overall development of the Panchayati Raj Department at the Mukhya Sewak Sadan located at the Chief Minister's residence.

In the last three and a half years, more than 20 thousand youth have been given jobs in government services in the state.

The Chief Minister

congratulated all the candidates and said that this day has brought a new chapter in your life. He expressed hope that the newly selected candidates will work towards ensuring the overall development of villages by becoming an integral part of the most important unit of democracy, the Gram Panchayat.

"Development of villages is necessary for the overall development of the state. The role of a Gram Panchayat Development Officer is very important in the development of villages," CM Dhami said. The Chief Minister said that the country's strictest anti-copying law has been implemented in the state. "Strict provisions of punishment and fine have been made in this law. When a hardworking and honest person attains a position on the basis of his dedication and hard work, he understands the pain and problems of the common people and does his work honestly," he said.

US attempts to sow discord between China, Russia 'doomed to fail': Chinese official

Karachi: As Washington and Moscow advance talks to improve bilateral relations, China on Thursday said any US "attempts" to sow discord between China and Russia will be futile, Chinese state media reported.

In response to media inquiries over US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's concerns about China-Russia relations in an interview, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian said the relationship between Moscow and Beijing is not influenced by any third party.

The development strategies and foreign policies of China and Russia are long-term, and no matter how the international situation changes, China-Russia relations will continue to progress, the spokesman said. The US attempt to sow discord between China and Russia is completely futile, he added.

Rubio, in an interview with Breitbart News, said closer ties between China and Russia could pose a problem for the US.

US President Donald Trump's recent advance of negotiations with Russia has been seen by some analysts as an attempt to split Moscow from Beijing.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin declared a "no limits" partnership days before the 2022 Ukraine war.

BUSINESS

Auxilo registers 98% y-o-y Growth in Overseas Education Loans in Delhi-NCR

New Delhi: Auxilo Finserve, the leading education finance NBFC, has registered a 98% year-on-year growth from Delhi NCR in the last 3 years. The company is also focussing on increasing its team strength in Delhi NCR to meet the growing demand and facilitate faster processing of loans.

Speaking on the launch of the new branch, Shweta Guru, CBO - Overseas Loans, Auxilo informs "As planned, Auxilo will launch multiple touch-points and also strengthening the team size in the coming quarters to further boost our efficiency and reach. We have also invested in a specialized support team to offer personalised support to students throughout their education journey, and in advanced technologies for faster processing of loans."

The company has opened 2 new touch-points to cater to the increasing demands from Jaipur and Chandigarh. "In the last few years, we have witnessed an ex-

Trump administration says it's cutting 90 of USAID foreign aid contracts

Washington: The Trump administration said it is eliminating more than 90 per cent of the US Agency for International Development's foreign aid contracts and USD 60 billion in overall US assistance around the world, putting numbers on its plans to eliminate the majority of US development and humanitarian help abroad.

The cuts detailed by the administration would leave few surviving USAID projects for advocates to try to save in what are ongoing court battles with the administration.

The Trump administration outlined its plans in both an internal memo obtained by The Associated Press and filings in one of those federal lawsuits Wednesday.

The Supreme Court intervened in that case late Wednesday and temporarily blocked a court order requiring



The administration to release billions of dollars in foreign aid by mid-night.

Wednesday's disclosures also give an idea of the scale of the administration's retreat from US aid and development assistance overseas, and from decades of US policy that foreign aid helps US interests by stabilis-

ing other countries and economies and building alliances.

The memo said officials were "clearing significant waste stemming from decades of institutional drift." More changes are planned in how USAID and the State Department deliver foreign assistance, it said, "to use

taxpayer dollars wisely to advance American interests."

President Donald Trump and ally Elon Musk have hit foreign aid harder and faster than almost any other target in their push to cut the size of the federal government. Both men say USAID projects advance a liberal agenda

The cuts detailed by the administration would leave few surviving USAID projects for advocates to try to save in what are ongoing court battles with the administration.

and are a waste of money.

Trump on January 20 ordered what he said would be a 90-day programme-by-programme review of which foreign assistance programmes deserved to continue, and cut off all foreign assistance funds almost overnight.

The funding freeze has stopped thousands of US-funded programmes abroad, and the administration and Musk's Department of Government Efficiency teams have pulled the majority of USAID staff off the job through forced leave and firings.

Taiwan condemns China for conducting shooting drills off its coast

Taipei: Taiwan on Thursday condemned China's military exercises after Beijing designated an area to conduct shooting drills off the self-governed island's southwest coast.

China considers the island a renegade province to be taken by force if necessary and in recent years has increased military activity around Taiwan's waters and airspace.

"China is the biggest troublemaker for regional peace and stability, and the sole and greatest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the Indo-Pacific region," Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in its statement.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said in a 24-hour period it detected 45 aircraft, 14 navy vessels and one ship from the Chinese military operating around Taiwan, of which 34 had crossed into its waters and airspace.

Taiwan said that it "responded accordingly" without elaborating.

This comes after Taiwan said four Chinese coast guard boats entered into its waters near Kinmen islands earlier this week, and that Taiwan dispatched its own boats to drive them away.

Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, reported that senior Chinese official Wang Huijing during an annual meeting about Taiwan had called for China to take the initiative in cross-strait relations and push toward the "reunification of the motherland."

Taiwan this week also said it caught a Chinese-owned vessel severing an undersea cable and detained the ship. Beijing has accused Taiwan of exaggerating the situation before facts have been clarified in an attempt at "political manipulation."

Israel says IDF won't withdraw from Gaza's Philadelphi corridor

Khan Younis: Israel will not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for by the ceasefire, an official said Thursday.

Israel's refusal could spark a crisis with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment for the fragile truce.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said Israeli forces needed to remain in the so-called Philadelphi corridor,



on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent weapons smuggling.

The official spoke hours after Hamas re-

leased the remains of their hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first

phase, which ends this weekend. Talks over the second and more difficult stage have yet to begin.

Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days.

Much could hinge on a visit by US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, who is expected in the region in the com-

ing days. There was no immediate comment from Hamas or Egypt.

But in a statement earlier on Thursday, the militant group said the only way for Israel to secure the release of dozens of hostages was still held in Gaza was through negotiations and adhering to the ceasefire agreement.

Remains of four hostages are identified. The remains released Thursday were con-

firmed to be those of Ohad Yahalomi, Itzhak Elgarat, Shlomo Mantzur and Tsachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives.

Mantzur, 85, was killed in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war, and his body was taken into the territory. The other three were abducted alive and the circumstances surrounding

their deaths were not known.

"Our hearts ache upon receiving the bitter news," Israeli President Isaac Herzog said. "In this painful moment, there is some solace in knowing that they will be laid to rest in dignity in Israel."

French President Emmanuel Macron said he shared the "immense grief" of the family and loved ones of Yahalomi, who had French citizenship.

Sonowal Launches Consortium to Boost India's Port Footprint

Mumbai: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Monday launched a consortium consisting of India Ports Global, Sagar Mala Development Company and India Port Rail and Ropeway Corporation to expand their maritime footprint and strengthen supply chains, among others.

In addition to this, Sonowal, who is the Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, also rolled out a slew of other initiatives including "One Nation-One Port Process (ONOP)" to standardise and streamline operations across India's major ports, the Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPPI) Sagar Ankanan for FY 2023-24 and MATRI (Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory Interface) APP during a post-



Budget industry stakeholders meeting here.

Along with this, he also launched the National Centre of Excellence in Green Port and Shipping (NCoEGPS) website.

"India's Blue Economy is not just about ships and ports -- it's about jobs, trade, sustainability, and economic growth. There is immense potential, and we are committed to en-

suring that you have the right policies, the right financing, and the right environment to thrive," the minister said.

He said, "We are not just aiming to be a top 10 shipbuilding nation by 2030, we are aiming to create an ecosystem that is world-class, efficient, and future-ready." By developing robust port infrastructure, the Bharat Global Ports Consortium initiative

will streamline logistics, strengthen supply chains, and support the 'Make in India' initiative by boosting exports, Sonowal said.

Bringing together the three different entities - IPGL, which is into ports operation, (operations), SDCL (finance), and IPRCL (infrastructure development) the consortium will drive port expansion, operations, and financing to posi-

India Domestic Air Traffic Up 11% in January

New Delhi: Domestic air traffic grew 11.28 per cent to 1.46 crore in January compared to the year-ago period, according to official data.

India also saw its market share climb to 65.2 per cent while that of Air India Group declined to 25.7 per cent last month.

Akasa Air and SpiceJet saw their respective market share increased to 4.7 per cent and 3.2 per cent.

"Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January 2025 were 146.11 lakh as against 131.30 lakh during the corresponding period of the previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 11.28 per cent and monthly growth of 11.28 per cent," DGCA said on Thursday.

Last month, the overall cancellation rate of scheduled domestic airlines stood at 1.62 per cent, with the highest cancellation rate for Fly Big at 17.74 per cent followed by Fly91 (5.09 per cent) and Alliance Air (4.35 per cent).

The data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) showed that IndiGo recorded the highest On Time Performance (OTP) at 75.5 per cent while that of Akasa Air stood at 71.5 per cent in January.

Air India Group's OTP was at 69.8 per cent, Alliance Air at 57.6 per cent and SpiceJet at 54.1 per cent.

The OTP computed for six metro airports -- Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

In January, flight cancellations impacted 41,119 passengers and airlines cancelled out Rs 46.46 lakh towards compensation and facilities.

Sebi Sets Rules for Specialized Investment Funds (SIFs)

New Delhi: Markets watchdog, Sebi on Thursday came out with a regulatory framework for Specialized Investment Funds (SIFs) requiring a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh across all strategies.

The new framework will be applicable from April 1, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its circular.

The SIF has been introduced to bridge the gap between mutual funds and PMS in terms of portfolio diversification. Under the framework, investors are required to invest at least Rs 10 lakh



across all SIF strategies. This rule does not apply to accredited investors. Investors can use SIP, SWP, and STP, but total investments must re-

maining amount. Investors cannot invest more than 20 per cent (AAA-rated), 16 per cent (AA-rated), or 12 per cent (A-rated and below) in one company's debt securities.

Further, they cannot invest more than 25 per cent of net asset value (NAV) in any single sector.

With regards to eligibility, Sebi said that registered mutual fund can establish an SIF if it meets the eligibility criteria through one of the two routes.

The Route 1 requires the mutual fund to have been in operation for at

least three years with an average Asset Under Management (AUM) of at least Rs 10,000 crore over the last three years.

Additionally, there should be no action taken or initiated against the sponsor or AMC in the last three years.

The alternate route requires the AMC to appoint a Chief Investment Officer (CIO) for the SIF, who has at least 10 years of fund management experience and has managed an average AUM of at least Rs 5,000 crore.

It must also appoint an additional Fund Manager with at least three years of fund manage-

ment experience and an average AUM of at least Rs 500 crore.

Similar to Route 1, no action should have been initiated or taken against the sponsor or AMC in the last three years.

The AMC is allowed to share operational resources between the mutual fund and SIF.

Additionally, a registered mutual fund must apply for Sebi's prior approval before establishing an SIF.

Sebi said that SIFs can take up to 25 per cent exposure in derivatives for purposes other than hedging. Further, offset-

ting of derivative positions on the same security is allowed in certain cases.

Funds can have different subscription (buy-in) and redemption (withdrawal) frequencies. Redemptions may require a notice period of a maximum of 15 working days.

Closed-ended and interval funds must be listed on stock exchanges.

Funds with non-daily redemption will be considered "Interval Investment Strategies". Funds will follow a single-tier benchmark like Nifty 50, BSE 100 for equity and debt indices for debt funds.

Cricket

Pakistan's Champions Trophy campaign ends on winless note



“Poor death bowling and lack of support for Root cost England, says Jos Buttler”

Rawalpindi
Pakistan's campaign in the Champions Trophy ended on a winless note after their match against Bangladesh was called off without a ball being bowled due to incessant rain here on Thursday.

The match was effectively a dead-rubber, with both teams already out of contention after failing to secure a win in their two previous matches. Pakistan, hosting an ICC tournament for the first time in 29 years, had hoped for a strong finish but ended their disastrous campaign without a victory.

Persistent downpour left the ground soaked, with covers in place and puddles forming around the field. With weather not improving, match officials called off the game nearly two hours after the scheduled start time. The gloomy weather prevented even the toss from taking place.

As a result, the two teams shared one point each, though both Pakistan and Bangladesh finished the tournament winless.

This is the second match in Rawalpindi to be called off without a ball being bowled, following the washout between South Africa and Australia earlier this week.

The rain-induced abandonment left the home fans frustrated, as they hoped for play at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.



Pakistan have faced criticism for poor showing in the tournament, having suffered defeats to New Zealand (by 60 runs) and India (by six wickets). "We wanted to do well and perform well in front of our nation. The expectations are very high. We didn't perform well and it is disappointing for us," Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan said.

Reflecting on the road ahead, Rizwan said: "You can learn from your mistakes. We have made mistakes in the last few games. Hopefully, we can learn from these."

"We are next going to New Zealand and, hopefully, we can perform there and the mistakes that we did against New Zealand here in Pakistan, we can learn from that. And we will do better in New Zealand."

"We put a lot of pressure on ourselves playing against India"

Pakistan's assistant coach, Azhar Mahmood, who hails from the city, attributed his team's poor show in the tournament to injuries to key players, and the fact that the team took too much pressure against India.

"We haven't played well in this tournament. We have played good cricket in this format, but in the tournament it has not gone well because of injuries. Against India, we put a lot of pressure on ourselves," he said.

"We know where we need to improve. It is all about adapting and taking responsibility. The results have also been a surprise for us," he added.

The former Test all-rounder said that the people need to keep faith in the players.

"We have to stick with the talent we identify for it to come good over the months," said Mahmood.

Pakistan had lost two top players—Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub—to injuries, affecting their campaign.

"The guy who has been performing from the last few months in Australia, South Africa, Zimbabwe... the team was combined and then suddenly when someone is injured, the team will be disturbed," added Rizwan.

"As a captain, you can look forward to that as well. One side you can say that

the team is disturbed, but this is no excuse. Yes, Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub were injured, but we will learn from this," the captain added.

"We are all very disappointed. We are all here for the nation. Pakistan is our priority and the expectation from us is very high. We are upset and we are accepting that we didn't do well. Hopefully, we will do more hard work and come back," added Rizwan.

Much to reflect for Bangladesh

Bangladesh, who also ended their tournament winless, will return home with much to reflect on after losing to India by six wickets and New Zealand by five wickets.

"I am very disappointed. We really wanted to play this match, but can't do anything about the weather. The way we held the game for long periods was very inspiring for us in the two matches," Bangladesh captain, Najmul Hossain Shanto said.

"We hope we can learn from our mistakes. We will make a proper plan and execute the plan." Talking about their bowling unit, Shanto said: "We have always struggled with our fast bowling unit, but in the last few years a lot of fast bowlers are coming through."

"Some of the fast bowlers back home are doing very well. The likes of Taskin, Rana coming in. Fizz is there. We have a very good bowling attack."

Pietersen joins Delhi Capitals as mentor



New Delhi

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen was on Thursday appointed mentor of Delhi Capitals ahead of the upcoming IPL season.

The 44-year-old this time returns to the side he captained in 2014.

This marks Pietersen's first coaching assignment in the IPL, where he featured in as a player from 2009 to 2016.

"I'm so excited to come home to Delhi! I have the fondest memories of my time with Delhi. I love the city, I love the fans and I'll do everything I can to support the franchise in our quest for the title in 2025," wrote Pietersen on X.

A veteran of 200 T20s with 5,695 runs, Pietersen appeared in 36 IPL matches scoring 1,001 runs across his stints with Delhi Capitals, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Sunrisers Hyderabad, and the Pune franchise.

At DC he will join Hemang Badani, who was named head coach in October last year, assistant coach Matthew Mott, bowling coach Munaf Patel and director of cricket Venugopal Rao.

DC have never won the IPL title, they reached the final in 2020 where they lost Mumbai Indians.

They finished sixth in the previous edition, following which they let go of their skipper Rishabh Pant. They retained Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Tristan Stubbs and Abhishek Porel.

At the auction last year, DC went in with the biggest purse and added KL Rahul, Harry Brook, Faf du Plessis and Mitchell Starc to their roster.

They have made major changes to their coaching staff ahead of the new season.

They brought in former India player Badani as head coach in place of legendary Australian cricketer Ricky Ponting, while also replacing Australia's James Hopes with ex-India pacer and member of the 2011 World Cup-winning squad, Munaf, as their bowling coach.

Delhi Capitals will open their IPL campaign against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Visakhapatnam on March 24.

Afghanistan shift focus to Australia after England victory, says coach Jonathan Trott

Lahore
After registering a win over England at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Wednesday, Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott said that his team's focus will now shift to their next game against Australia on Friday at the same venue.

Afghanistan have a chance to qualify for the semi-final stage in back-to-back ICC Men's limited-overs tournaments.

Having shocked the world in last year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Trott's side are now just one win away from reaching the final four yet again.

"It is why he ensured that celebrations following their win against England were only short-lived.

"I'm going to make sure when they wake up tomorrow, they enjoy tonight, (but) wake up tomorrow ready for Australia. As soon as they wake up tomorrow, the focus is on Australia," he told the media after their nail-biting victory over the English as quoted by ICC.

"It is why he ensured that celebrations following their win against England were only short-lived. "Australia aren't going to take us lightly. So, we've got to be prepared. In the past, perhaps people would have seen the fixture and thought it was a little bit easier than playing a historic Test nation. But in this format, in these conditions, I don't see that," the former England player continued.

"Since I've been coach we've played against Australia three times and we've



been in the game each of those games. So, we should take a lot of confidence from that. And I think certainly what happened in the World Cup, T20 World Cup, and I say this to the players as well, that Afghanistan's never going to be taken lightly ever again. I see every game that we play is going to be competitive and every game we go into I expect to win, he added.

Trott has overseen Afghanistan's rise to cricketing prominence first-hand, crediting the team's increasing resilience and ability to compete with the world's top teams.

"There's a resilience to them. I think if you add to some cricketing experience and cricketing talent awareness with regards to batting in particular, with it's not always down to one person. We saw Ibrahim, the way that he's done today, we've seen Gurbaz do it in the past... we have Gulbadin at eight at the moment, who can come in and change games. So that self-belief is important and it starts within, but it's also quite infectious and it spreads within the squad," he said.

Aditya Sarwate leads Kerala's reply against Vidarbha in Ranji Trophy final

Nagpur
Aditya Sarwate's unbeaten 66 anchored Kerala's reply as the visitors reached 131/3 at stumps on the second day of the Ranji Trophy final, after restricting hosts Vidarbha to 379 in the first innings on Thursday.

Doughty Kerala fought all day long to keep the game interestingly poised as they trailed by another 248 runs in the first innings, riding on local star Sarwate's fine knock after their bowlers did not allow Vidarbha to post a huge total in the first innings.

Vidarbha had set sights on a total around 450 after reaching 254/4 on the opening day, but Kerala fought back incredibly well to keep the hosts under 400 which featured a career-best 153 from Danish Malewar and Karun Nair's 86.

Kerala, who had ended the opening day's play with the vital dismissal of Karun Nair (86), remained persistent throughout the first session on the second day as their seamers MD Nidheesh (3/61), Eden Apple Tom (3/102) and NM Basil (2/60) produced a unified show.

Basil snuck one through the gap between Malewar's bat and pads for the first breakthrough, ending the No 4 batter's charge at 153 off 285 balls with 15 fours and three sixes.

But perhaps the biggest breakthroughs of the day came for Kerala when Eden had Vidarbha's red-hot form batter Yash Radhok caught in the slips for a mere three.

Without much pace on the delivery, Eden got the ball to straighten up



enough to catch the shoulder of the bat which landed in the hands of the fielder at the first slip.

Vidarbha skipper Akshay Wadkar's (23) resistance did not last long when his charge against Eden's delivery outside off, took an edge and keeper Mohammed Azharuddin did the rest.

To their credit, Vidarbha's tail consisting Akshay Karmaveer (12), Harsh Dubey (12 not out) and Nachiket Bhute (32) did well to drag them as far as 379.

It was imperative for Vidarbha to strike with the new ball and Darshan Nalkande (2/22) provided two early wickets, cleaning up both the Kerala opens Akshay Chandran (14) and Rohan Kunnummal (10) to reduce Kerala to a precarious 14/2.

But Sarwate, who was once a vital cog in Vidarbha's line-up and was a member of their two-time title winning campaigns in 2017-18 and 2018-19, stood against his former side to lead a strong reply for Kerala.

The 35-year-old Sarwate, who had

switched from Vidarbha to Kerala after the last Ranji Trophy season, battled hard to reach 66 not out from 120 balls with 10 fours and remained stoic even as there were challenges along the way.

Sarwate also had luck on his side when Vidarbha did not opt for a caught-behind appeal from skipper Wadkar in the 25th over. The replays showed the ball had brushed Sarwate's gloves.

The left-handed Sarwate put on 93 for the third wicket with Ahmed Imran (37 off 83 balls, 3x4s), who too had a reprieve early on when he was batting on nine. Bhute's delivery, angling across the left-handed Imran surprised the batter with some bounce as it took the edge and flew towards the first slip. But substitute fielder Atharva Taidle, at second slip, went for the catch and spilled it.

If Vidarbha were to rue their mistakes, they did not fail in breaking the partnership when Yash Thakur (1/45) dismissed Imran late in the day.

Having seen the batter misthreat a pull shot, Thakur got another substitute fielder Anam Mokhadde at midwicket and lured Imran to play it again. The batter obliged, with another misthreat, which resulted in the third success of the innings for Vidarbha.

Brief scores: Vidarbha 379 in 123.1 overs (Danish Malewar 153, Karun Nair 86; MD Nidheesh 3/61, Eden Apple Tom 3/102, NM Basil 2/60) lead Kerala 131/3 in 39 overs (Aditya Sarwate 66*, Ahmed Imran 37; Darshan Nalkande 2/22) by 248 runs.

Afghanistan, Australia, and South Africa in fierce battle for semi-final spot

Lahore
Afghanistan's win over England at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Wednesday has put the Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side in contention for the semi-final spot, from Group B along with Australia and South Africa.

While India and New Zealand have been confirmed as semi-finalists from Group A, the hunt for a final-four spot in Group B is set to go right down to the wire.

In a must-win contest for both teams, Afghanistan edged out England by eight runs in Lahore. The result means Jos Buttler and co are now officially out of contention for a semi-final spot.

However, for Afghanistan, a ticket to the final four hasn't been punched yet. They will join Australia and South Africa, who split points after a washout on Tuesday, in a final push for the knockouts.

We take a look at how each of the three teams can confirm a place in the semis:

Afghanistan: Despite a win against England, Afghanistan sit third in Group B, lagging behind Australia and South Africa



by a point. The Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side are at a crossroads with Australia as the two teams prepare for a virtual quarter-final on Friday in Lahore. A win for Afghanistan will be enough to seal a spot in the semi-finals.

Australia: While a win will also confirm Australia's qualification for the semi-finals, having a point in hand over Afghanistan means Steve Smith and co will go through even if the game doesn't take place owing to a washout, as

was the case for their fixture against South Africa.

South Africa: A win against England in their final group-stage fixture will be enough to see the Proteas through.

South Africa can also progress if they lose against England and Australia defeat Afghanistan. However, if England win their final game and Afghanistan beat Australia, then the Proteas will be in a tight NRR contest with the Aussies, depending on their final results.

Gujarat Giants win toss, opt to bowl against Royal Challengers Bengaluru

Bengaluru
Gujarat Giants captain Ashleigh Gardner won the toss and opted to bowl against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on Thursday in the Women's Premier League (WPL) at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Gujarat Giants captain Ashleigh Gardner said, "We are going to bowl first. Chasing seems to be easier throughout the competition. Hopefully we'll be able to take early wickets. We spoke about the powerplay. The bowlers have done a reasonable job. Take it easy, it's about talking to individuals. Results kind of take care of themselves. One change, Hema comes in."

Captain of RCB, Smriti Mandhana said, "We would have loved to chase as well. We've been really close in the last two games while defending. It's very hard to lose close games. As a captain, you'd want to lose close games than one-sided. Fans are always our strength. Prema comes back in."

If RCB wins this game, they will have six points and will equal table toppers Mumbai Indians, and Delhi Capitals, who are placed second.

Gujarat Giants' form have not been up to the mark, they are at the bottom



with only one win, and have lost three games. They need to up their sleeves.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Playing XI): Smriti Mandhana (c), Danielle Wyatt-Hodge, Ellyse Perry, Richa Ghosh (w), Raghvi Bist, Kanika Ahuja, Georgia Wareham, Sneha Rana, Kim Garth, Prema Rawat, Renuka Singh Thakur

Gujarat Giants (Playing XI): Beth Mooney (w), Harleen Deol, Phoebe Litchfield, Dayalan Hemalatha, Ashleigh Gardner (c), Keshavie Gautam, Deandra Dottin, Meghna Singh, Tanuja Kanwar, Priya Mishra, Bharti Fulmal.



Sports Minister launches special capacity building course to develop more home-grown coaches

■ The course has been designed and developed for athletes who are currently employed and serving in various central government or autonomous departments, organisations under central government or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

New Delhi

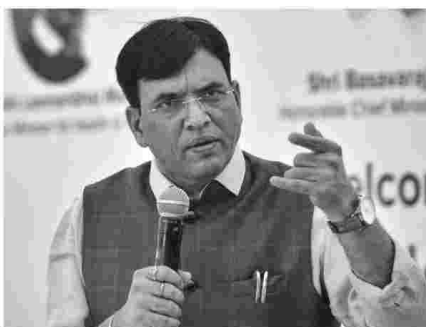
Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday launched a special capacity building course in collaboration with Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports, Patiala for current and former elite sports persons in an effort to help India produce more home-grown coaches and officials.

The course has been designed and developed for athletes who are currently employed and serving in various central government or autonomous departments, organisations under central government or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

The eligibility criteria for this course are participation or medal winner in Olympics, World Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games.

The medal winners of Youth Olympics, Junior World Championship, World University Games, senior National Championship and National Games can enroll for the course.

The educational qualification required is minimum graduation or



equivalent degree from any recognised university in India.

The course consists of four certification levels — foundation, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced certificate.

"We are suffering from a crisis of coaches, referees and trainers, so to bridge that I am starting a special capacity building course and give them a six week course. If they pass this course, some will become coaches,

some will become referees, and they can be utilized in different sport-related work with reporters.

"The government is already paying them salary. I will send some abroad for further training. We are facing a crisis of good coaches. Coach is a guide as well as judge for an athlete. Coach has important role to play in an athlete's career." The course offers flexible learning options, allowing candidates to complete each level within two years while working.

The course will be made available in two modes — hybrid (2 weeks online and 4 weeks offline) and fully offline.

It follows a credit-based system, whereby each certification level carries 10 cumulative credits, totalling 40 credits, which are equivalent to a diploma course.

The course has been designed focussing on areas like modern coaching, sports science, yoga and leadership, and will equip the candidates to integrate with the sports ecosystem and enhance their profes-

sional skills. The minister also said his ministry is in the process of making an annual calendar for approximately 15 games.

"I will make a calendar for the entire year, like Khelo India Summer Games, Khelo India Winter Games, Khelo India Snow Games, Khelo India Beach Games, Khelo India Northeast Games, Khelo India Tribal Games etc. These Games will be held in one location, for e.g. last year Beach Games were held in Diti and this time also it will be held there," Mandaviya said.

The minister also informed that his ministry will organise a brainstorming session in Hyderabad next month in order to strategise for 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"Keeping in mind 2028 Olympics and to strategise for it, we will organise three-day Chintan Baithak (brainstorming session) in Hyderabad from March 7 to 9. The meeting will be attended by sports ministers and sports secretaries of states, IOA members, experts," Mandaviya said.

PFF Cong approves constitutional amendments, clears path for FIFA suspension lift

Islamabad

The Pakistan Football Federation took a step towards returning to international soccer by unanimously approving constitutional amendments proposed by FIFA on Thursday.

FIFA hit Pakistan on Feb. 6 with a third international suspension in less than eight years after the federation rejected electoral reforms.

The PFF decided to approve those amendments by a 23-0 vote at an extraordinary congress in Lahore, where the attendees included officials from FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation.

"The congress members endorsed the FIFA proposed amendments in the best interest of Pakistan football, paving the way for the national team's participation in the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers following the expected lifting of FIFA's suspension," the PFF said in a statement.

Pakistan remained hopeful the suspension will be lifted in time to play Syria on March 25 in its first qualifier for the 2027 Asian Cup. For that to happen, the AFC told the PFF the ban must be lifted by Tuesday.

Liverpool clinching title at home to Arsenal the most enticing scenario



England

Liverpool's march towards the Premier League title could culminate with a win over closest rivals Arsenal at Anfield on May 10 in the most tantalising of the possible scenarios.

Arne Slot's men climbed 13 points clear at the top with their 2-0 victory over Newcastle United on Wednesday, and statisticians Opta have made Liverpool champions-elect with a 98.7% chance of winning the league, with Arsenal at 1.3%.

No team have been so far ahead at this stage of the season and not won the title going back to the beginning of English top-flight football in 1888-89.

Slot, however, does not dare get ahead of himself, saying after Wednesday's win: "It is still a long way to go, 10 games. In March we only play one Premier League game, so we are not focused on the long term."

If Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta sees the writing on the wall, he is not saying so, telling reporters before Wednesday's scoreless draw with Nottingham Forest that he would concede the title "over my dead body."

Liverpool could have locked up the title sooner but, as Slot mentioned, because of the international break plus two Champions League last-16 games against Paris St Germain and the League Cup final versus Newcastle, they have only one league game in March.

Seven more wins would seal a second Premier League title for Slot's team and their 20th in top-flight football overall. Six of their final 10 games are in their home cauldron of Anfield.

Other potential scenarios have Liverpool clinching the title on April 5 versus Fulham, but that would require them winning their next three matches and Arsenal, who have a game in hand, losing their next four.

Liverpool could also claim the crown at home to Tottenham Hotspur on April 26 or on May 3 at Chelsea.

They became the first team in Premier League history to clinch the title with seven games to go in 2019-20.

Shaurya Bhattacharya fires 61 to move five shots clear at the top on day three

Naya Raipur

Delhi golfer Shaurya Bhattacharya fired a superb eight-under 61, which moved him five shots clear at the top on day three of the Rs one crore Chhatrisgarh Open here on Thursday.

Bhattacharya (64-61-61), winner on the PGTI in his rookie season last year, has a total of 21-under 186 over three days and moved one spot from his overnight tied-second position.

Sri Lankan N Thangaraja (66-62-62) shot a 62 that propelled him 13 spots to tied-second place at 16-under 291.

Khalin Joshi (64-60-67), the halfway leader, returned a third round of 67 to stay in contention as he shared the second place with Thangaraja.

Sixteen-year-old rookie S. Manoj (65) of Bengaluru, playing only his third professional event, was tied fourth at 15-under 192 along with Fardabab-based Abhinav Lohan (64) and Bengaluru's M Dharmu (66) at the Fairway Golf & Lake Resort.

Bhattacharya, 22, the 2024 PGTI Emerging Player of the Year, had a quiet front-nine where he sank three birdies in exchange for a bogey.

However, the Delhi golfer hit his stride on the back-nine where he collected six birdies.

Bhattacharya, the overwhelming favourite to win the title, said, "I hit my approaches really well today and that's exactly what you need on this course. I didn't have a great start to the season so I'm looking forward to finishing



well here. I'm carrying the confidence from my victory last year.

"I will look to continue what I did in the first three rounds. I just want to keep the momentum going and execute my gameplan," Bhattacharya added.

Thangaraja mixed nine birdies with two bogeys on a day he landed most of his shots within seven feet of the pin. The Sri Lankan, who won his last title in 2023, will be among the contenders on the final day.

Khalin, a winner of six titles including one on the international stage, kept himself in the fray with a 67 that featured five birdies and three bogeys.

Among the prominent names, Udayan Mane (64) was tied seventh at 14-under 193 while Um Prakash Chouhan (65) was tied 24th at 10-under 197.

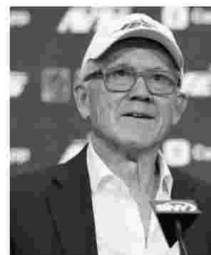
Jets owner Woody Johnson receives 'F' grade on report card from players

New York

The New York Jets are reeling from a disastrous 2024 season, finishing with a dismal 5-12 record. However, the setbacks did not end there, as the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) released its annual team report cards, revealing a harsh reality for the franchise. Ranked 29th out of 32 NFL teams, the Jets' decline from 21st place last year highlights deep-seated issues within the organization, particularly under the ownership of Woody Johnson, who was handed an unprecedented 'F' grade.

The NFLPA's report card, compiled from surveys of 1,695 players across all 32 teams, graded 11 key categories, including team culture, player treatment, and facility investment. The findings were especially damning for Woody Johnson, who finished last in willingness to invest in facilities, fostering a positive team culture, and building a competitive roster. In fact, Johnson was the only NFL owner to receive an 'F' grade, reflecting a significant decline from the B-minus he received just a year earlier.

The report revealed that rather than addressing player concerns, management allegedly made conditions worse. It stated, "Rather than addressing concerns, players believed that management responded to feedback by making conditions worse." This sen-



timent was amplified by specific complaints regarding the team's food program. After receiving low grades for their food program last year, the Jets reportedly cut the food budget and did not retain their respected dietitian, who moved to the Kansas City Chiefs and helped improve their nutrition program.

The Jets' toxic workplace culture was further underscored by NFLPA chief strategy officer J.C. Tretter, who highlighted the pervasive atmosphere of fear within the organization. "They talked about the culture — it's a problem, top down," Tretter said. "They said, 'It's a culture of fear here.' And I think that stood out in those grades."

On the field, the Jets' woes contin-

ued as they recorded a disappointing 5-12 season, marking their 14th consecutive year without a playoff appearance — the longest active postseason drought among the top four American professional sports leagues. The high-profile acquisition of veteran quarterback Aaron Rodgers turned out to be a monumental failure. The two-year experiment with Rodgers ended with his departure this offseason, leaving the franchise without a clear direction moving forward.

Reports of dysfunction extended beyond player dissatisfaction, with rumors swirling that Johnson's teenage son, Brick, was involved in team decisions, further complicating an already chaotic leadership structure. The fallout from these revelations raises serious questions about the future of the franchise under Johnson's ownership.

The NFLPA's report card serves as a wake-up call for the New York Jets. To reverse their fortunes, significant changes are needed from the top down. Johnson's resistance to investing in essential facilities, coupled with his failure to cultivate a positive workplace culture, has severely impacted the team's performance and reputation. As the Jets enter another offseason filled with uncertainty, fans can only hope that the harsh criticisms in the report will push Johnson to make meaningful changes.

2 in 5 Children in India do not have a healthy BMI: Sportz Village Health Survey

New Delhi

Sportz Village's 13th Annual Health Survey (AHS) has revealed alarming gaps in the fitness and well-being of school-going children across India.

Conducted annually since 2010, the survey aims to analyze and evaluate the health and fitness levels of children in schools across India.

The 13th edition of the survey, powered by EduSports, assessed 1,16,650 children aged 7 to 17 years across 85 locations, highlighting the urgent need for structured physical education programs in schools.

The EAST REGION has emerged with the second-best performance showcasing an overall fitness in a total of 56.40% of children, showing notable strengths in Upper body strength (54%), Lower body strength (46%), and Flexibility (77%).

The survey highlights that a higher percentage of children from the NORTH REGION have shown extremely poor performance, recording the lowest percentages in three out of seven fitness parameters. The region performed the weakest in Lower body strength (35%), Abdominal strength (81%), and Anaerobic capacity (58%), underscoring significant areas for improvement in these key fitness indicators.

The performance of children from

The EAST REGION has emerged with the second-best performance showcasing an overall fitness in a total of 56.40% of children, showing notable strengths in Upper body strength (54%), Lower body strength (46%), and Flexibility (77%).

the SOUTH REGION has been a mixed bag. A higher percentage of children have performed well in the parameters of BMI (60.12%), Aerobic capacity (31%), Anaerobic capacity (62%), and Abdominal strength (87%), while showing areas of improvement in Upper body strength and Flexibility.

WEST REGION has performed the best when compared to all other regions with higher percentage of children performing exceptionally well in the parameters of Upper body strength (58%) Lower body strength (60%), Anaerobic capacity (81%), Abdominal strength (93%), Aerobic

capacity (52%) & Flexibility (81%).

Saumil Majumdar, Co-Founder, CEO & Managing Director, Sportz Village, emphasized the importance of balancing academics and sports, stating: "Children naturally love to play, yet sports often take a backseat to academics. The 13th AHS findings highlight the urgent need to strike a balance between the two. School leaders must prioritize investments in physical education and sports curricula—not just for the long-term health and well-being of children, but to foster a strong sporting culture that can propel India toward excellence on the global stage."

Parmandir Gill, Co-Founder & Head of Foundation, Sportz Village, highlighted the need for policy support and CSR-based initiatives, adding: "The improved fitness levels among government school children is encouraging, with far-reaching benefits. Sports not only enhance academic performance but also strengthen social-emotional skills, foster inclusion, and promote gender equity. To build on this progress, it is essential to implement strong policies and allocate resources that ensure access to high-quality sports programs, supported by corporates, CSR initiatives, philanthropists, and the government."

Hamilton fastest for Ferrari on second morning of F1 testing

Bahrain

Seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton was fastest for Ferrari on the second morning of pre-season Formula One testing in Bahrain on Thursday.

The Briton, who left Mercedes at the end of last season, put in a best lap of one minute 29.379 seconds and did 45 laps in a session interrupted by light drizzle at the desert Sakhir circuit.

He was watched by Ferrari chairman John Elkann, who paid a flying visit to a team who were runners-up last season and will start the new campaign with real hopes of going one better and winning a championship for the first time since 2008.

George Russell, now the lead driver at Mercedes since Hamilton's departure, did 71 laps and was 0.390 slower with Carlos Sainz, the Spaniard Hamilton replaced at Ferrari, third for Williams.

Pierre Gasly put Renault-owned Alpine fourth on the timesheets with Fernando Alonso fifth for Aston Martin and Yuki Tsunoda sixth for Racing Bulls.

Oscar Piastri was seventh for champions McLaren after making contact with the dawdling Sauber of Nico Hulkenberg in a rare testing collision.

With lap time still not the main fo-



cus, McLaren were sounding satisfied with their car's performance.

"We have good innovation on the car. We have not stood still in the winter and I am excited to see it all work. So far so good but it's obviously early days," team boss Zak Brown told Sky Sports television.

"We have tried to enhance what we had but there is some stuff on there I don't think has been fully noticed yet, which I think will happen in due course."

Red Bull's Liam Lawson, Hulkenberg and Haas's Esteban Ocon, who was focusing on long runs and did 69 laps, completed the morning lineup with each team running one car only.

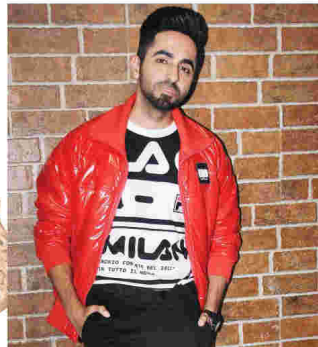
Sainz and Lawson were doing a full day while the rest were due to hand over at the lunchtime break to teammates for the second four-hour session. The season starts in Australia on March 16.

Ayushmann Khurrana, Bhumi Pednekar celebrate a decade of 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha'



Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana took to social media to celebrate the 10th anniversary of his film "Dum Laga Ke



Ayushmann wrote, "A decade later, I write back to the one who dared to dream. #10YearsOfDLKH."

Bhumi also took to her Instagram stories to mark the 10 years since her debut film. Sharing a video from the film, the actress wrote, "#10yearsDumLagaKeHaisha 10 years ago, I watched Dum Laga Ke Haisha for the 1st time. Full of nerves, an emotional mess cause, I could not believe I was in a film. I was there watching my childhood dream come alive.

She continued, "And 10 years later, I watched it all over again in a theatre with people I love and those that love the film and my heart was in so full. That little girl that dreamt of being a leading lady in Hindi films with no way of knowing how had done it." Written and directed by Sharat Katariya, "Dum Laga Ke Haisha" starred Ayushmann Khurrana as Prem Prakash Tiwari, a man who dreams of marrying a beautiful bride but ends up marrying Sandhya (Bhumi Pednekar), a girl chosen by his parents.

Haisha."

Reflecting on the journey, he posted a video from the film and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to kickstart his career in such a special way. In his post, he mentioned that he could not have asked for a better way to enter films. The 'Bala' actor also shared his regret over missing the screening.

Tagging his co-star Bhumi Pednekar, who played the role of Sandhya in the movie, Ayushmann wrote, "Take me back to DLKH days. Thank you for Prem's transformation. Sandhya will always be the shining star! @bhumpednekar Missed the screening. Sigh. I couldn't have asked for a better way to enter the films. My dearest @ayushmannk Thank you for being the best co actor/friend. You are so special as Prem. Could not have done it without you."

Khurrana also reposted the YRF video celebrating the milestone. The post was captioned, "They fought, they fell, and they found love in the most unexpected way 10 years later, the magic still remains! #10YearsOfDumLagaKeHaisha." The actor also posted a heartfelt letter he wrote to himself, emphasizing the importance of slowing down and truly appreciating the present moment. For the caption,

Rashmika praises Salman Khan's star power in 'Sikandar' teaser

Mumbai

The highly anticipated teaser for Sikandar, starring Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna, is finally out.

In the intriguing teaser, Rashmika highlights Khan's immense popularity, which even extends to his enemies. The promo opens with Salman delivering a power-packed dialogue: "Dadi ne naam Sikandar rakha tha, Dada ne Sanjay aur Praja ne Rajasabab." Sharing the teaser on social media, the makers wrote, "Sikandar aa raha hai, this Eid! Here's presenting the film teaser of Sikandar! #SajidNadiadwala's #Sikandar Directed by @a.r.murugadoss."

The 1-minute, 21-second

teaser begins with a powerful introduction to Salman Khan's character. It then transitions into high-energy action sequences, showcasing Khan in his signature larger-than-life style. With his trademark swagger, he takes on multiple enemies, effortlessly delivering a flurry of punches and kicks.

Packed with sharp one-liners like "Kayde mein raho, fayde mein rabho" and "Insaaf nahii, hisab karna aaya hum," the teaser also introduces Rashmika Mandanna as Salman's love interest.

Last year, the makers released the first teaser of Sikandar. In the 1-minute 41-second clip, Khan's character enters a room filled with weapons. Realizing he has walked into a trap, he

calmly says, "Suna hain ki bohut saare log mere pecheh padhe hain. Bas, meri mudne ki der hain. (I've heard a lot of people are after me. Just wait for me to turn around)."

Directed by AR Murugadoss, Sikandar also stars Kajal Aggarwal, Satyaraj, and Prateik Patil Babbar in pivotal roles. While details about the plot remain under wraps, it is expected that Salman Khan will be seen sporting a fresh and striking look for the project. The film is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala under his banner, Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment.

The action thriller is slated to hit theatres on Eid 2025. Sikandar marks Rashmika Mandanna's first collaboration with Salman Khan.

Akshay Kumar Addresses 'Mahakal Chalo' Controversy Amid Debut in Telugu Cinema

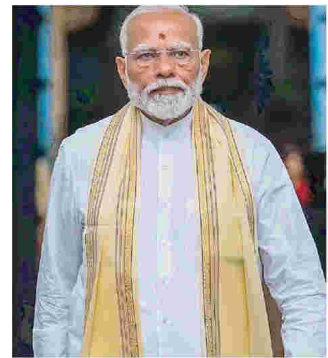
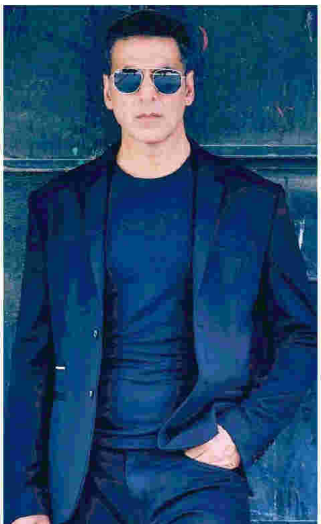
Mumbai

Bollywood star Akshay Kumar has addressed the controversy regarding his recently released devotional song 'Mahakal Chalo'. The song, launched ahead of Mahashivratri in collaboration with Palash Sen, faced objections from a priest association over certain visuals.

Speaking at a press conference for his upcoming movie, 'Kannappa', Akshay said, "Since childhood, my parents taught me that God is like our parents. If

you hug your parents, there's nothing wrong in it. If my strength and devotion are misunderstood, it's not my mistake."

The actor is set to portray Lord Shiva in the Telugu film directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, marking Akshay's debut in Telugu cinema. Producer Vishnu Manchu expressed gratitude for Akshay's involvement, revealing that the actor initially declined the offer twice due to unfamiliar outreach. The film also stars notables like Mohan Babu and Mohanlal.



PM Modi to Grace 25th Jahan-e-Khusrau Sufi Festival

New Delhi

Prim Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the grand Sufi music festival, Jahan-e-Khusrau 2025, set to occur on Friday, February 28, at New Delhi's Sunder Nursery. This year's event is significant as it marks the 25th anniversary of the celebrated festival.

Known for advocating India's diverse art and culture, PM Modi will join other participants at this international festival dedicated to Sufi music, poetry, and dance, as con-

firmed by a press release. The event is renowned for assembling artists from around the globe to honor the legacy of prominent Sufi poet Amir Khusrau.

The festival is organized by the Rumi Foundation and was initiated by notable filmmaker and artist Muzaffar Ali in 2001. Running from February 28 to March 2, the festivities also include the TEH Bazaar (TEH - The Exploration of the Handmade), showcasing unique crafts and films on handlooms and handicrafts from across India.



Harmonizing Work-Life Balance: Neerja Birla's Perspective



Mumbai

Neerja Birla, a noted philanthropist, challenges the feasibility of the '8-8-8' rule, calling it utopian and nearly impossible in practice. As the spouse of billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla, she advocates for a realistic approach towards work-life harmony.

Her comments surface amid lively discussions sparked by various C-suite executives urging prolonged work hours, with some advocating for a focus on productivity over sheer hours.

Govinda, Sunita divorce rumours swirl amid conflicting reports

Mumbai

Are actor Govinda and his wife of 38 years Sunita Ahuja headed for divorce? His lawyer says yes, his manager admits to "just a difference of opinion", the star himself doesn't want to comment and Sunita has been giving multiple interviews indicating that all may not be well.

As is often the case with film stars and their personal lives, there have been lots of rumours, some gossip but little clarity.

Lalit Bindal, lawyer and a close family friend of the Hero No 1 star, said Ahuja has indeed filed for divorce. "...there are some misunderstandings. I can confirm that she filed for divorce. I have the notice with me. But it will be settled soon," Bindal said.



Asked to comment on the divorce reports, Govinda's manager Shashi Sinha said the matter has been blown out of proportion.

"Govinda ji doesn't want to comment on the rumours. He is busy working on his two home production films. He is upset with the way things have come out. It's disheartening," Sinha said.

There is no friction, just a difference of opinion between the couple, he added.

"It is regarding the work he is doing under his home production banner. Sunita ji wants him to wisely make choices," Sinha said.

Bindal also addressed the rumours that the couple have been living separately for many years.

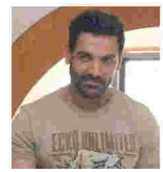
John Abraham says football film '1911' put on hold for now

Mumbai

Actor-producer John Abraham has confirmed that '1911', a film based on Mohun Bagan's historic IFA Shield victory in 1911, is temporarily on hold. The film, backed by JA Entertainment, was set to chronicle legendary footballer Sibdas Bhaduri, with Abraham in the lead role.

Initially planned to be directed by Shojoit Sreer and later handed over to Nikhil Advani, the project has been shelved for now. "Unfortunately, that film's not happening because we've been through a lot of processes, and the idea sounds good. But we've seen a lot of films on football... But do we want to make it? Yes, in the future. We've parked that for now,"

Abraham said. Meanwhile, the actor addressed reports about playing former Mumbai Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria in a biopic backed by filmmaker Rohit Shetty. "The Rakesh Maria biopic is in the discussion stage. I haven't signed a single film. I'm waiting for the release of The Diplomat, and then I've got an exciting film, Tehran. I haven't signed anything but hopefully, the day I sign it I'll let everybody know," he said.



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