

TOP STORY

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Kohli won't have to up his strike rate, Salt will take a lot of pressure off him, says De Villiers

Pope pens letter to editor while in hospital as Vatican prepares for King Charles' visit

Aamir Khan spotted with girlfriend Gauri Spratt after confirming their relationship

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MARKET	
SENSEX	NIFTY
75301.26	22834.30
1,131.31	325.55
GOLD	SILVER
88,746.00	101,300.00
20.00	764.00

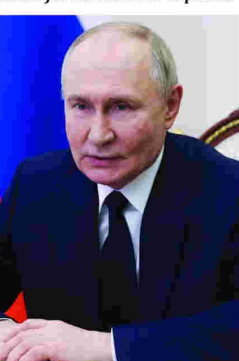
WEATHER	
Sunrise	6:27 AM
Sunset	6:32 PM
Moonrise	11:11 PM
Moonset	9:32 AM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	19°C
Minimum	13°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	19°C
Minimum	13°C

Trump, Putin in talks as U.S seeks Russian approval on Ukraine deal

White House initiates call between Trump and Putin to discuss ceasefire proposal amid ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, however, remains sceptical that Putin is ready for peace as Russian forces continue to pound Ukraine.

Washington President Donald Trump is to hold talks on Tuesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin as he looks to get buy-in on a US ceasefire proposal he hopes can create a pathway to ending Russia's devastating war on Ukraine.



The White House is expressing optimism that peace is within reach even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy remains sceptical that Putin is doing much beyond paying lip service to Trump as Russian forces continue to pound his country.

The engagement is just the latest turn in dramatically shifting US-Russia relations as Trump made quickly ending the conflict a top priority — even at the expense of straining ties with longtime American allies who want Putin to pay a price for the invasion.

Ukraine but added that there are also a "large number of questions" regarding normalising US-Russia relations. The call will take place between 1 pm GMT and 3 pm GMT (9 am ET to 11 am ET), Peskov said.

"It's a bad situation in Russia, and it's a bad situation in Ukraine," Trump told reporters on Monday. "What's

happening in Ukraine is not good, but we're going to see if we can work a peace agreement, a ceasefire and peace. And I think we'll be able to do it."

Trump has said that control of land and power plants will be part of the conversation, which comes on the anniversary of Russia annexing Ukraine's Crimean peninsula 11 years ago. That bold land grab by Russia set the stage for Russia to invade its neighbour in 2022.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio had persuaded

senior Ukrainian officials during talks in Saudi Arabia to agree to the ceasefire framework.

Witkoff and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt suggested that US and Russian officials have discussed the fate of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant — Europe's largest — in southern Ukraine.

Ready to discuss uploading booth-wise voter data: EC

New Delhi The Supreme Court on Tuesday considered the Election Commission of India's stand to deliberate on the demand for uploading polling booth-wise voter turnout data on its website and asked the petitioners to make representations before the poll panel in 10 days.



A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan was hearing two PILs filed by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and NGO Association for Democratic Reforms in 2019, respectively.

The surprise bombardment shattered a ceasefire in place since January and threatened to fully reignite the 17-month-old war. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions.

At least 413 Palestinians killed after Israel strikes Gaza

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip) Israel launched air strikes across the Gaza Strip early Tuesday, killing at least 404 Palestinians, including women and children, according to hospital officials.



The surprise bombardment shattered a ceasefire in place since January and threatened to fully reignite the 17-month-old war. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions.

eastern Gaza, including much of the northern town of Beit Hanoun and other communities further south, and head toward the centre of the territory, indicating that Israel could soon launch renewed ground operations. "Israel will, from now on, act against Hamas with increasing military strength," Netanyahu's office said. The attack during the

HIGHLIGHT

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement.

amounts to a "death sentence" for the remaining hostages. Izzat al-Risheq accused Netanyahu of launching the strikes to try and save his far-right governing coalition and called on mediators to "reveal facts" on who broke the truce. Hamas said at least four senior officials were killed in Tuesday's strikes. There were no reports of any attacks by Hamas several hours after the bombardment, indicating it still hoped to restore the truce. Agency

Sunita, Butch leave for Earth after 9 months in space

Washington Indian-origin NASA astronaut Sunita Williams and her colleague, Butch Wilmore, on Tuesday departed for Earth after being stuck on the International Space Station (ISS) for more than nine months. Williams and Wilmore are scheduled to travel back to Earth alongside Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft. The spacecraft, Elon Musk-led SpaceX's Dragon, will splash down off the coast of the American state of Florida around 3:27 am IST Wednesday. According to a NASA statement, the updated



return target continues to allow the space station crew members time to complete handover duties while providing operational flexibility before less-favourable weather conditions are expected later in the week. Mission managers will continue monitoring weather conditions in the area, as Dragon's undocking relies on several factors, including spacecraft readiness, recovery team readiness, weather, sea states, and other factors. NASA and SpaceX will confirm the specific splashdown location closer to the Crew-9 return, according to the statement. The SpaceX Dragon spacecraft carrying NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, Japan Aerospace

ED conducts raids against George Soros-backed entities

Bengaluru The Enforcement Directorate conducted searches in Bengaluru on Tuesday as part of an alleged foreign exchange violation case against US billionaire George Soros-founded 'private funding agency' OSF and its investment arm EDF, official sources said. Eight premises of some of the beneficiaries of Open Society Foundations (OSF) and Economic Development Fund (EDF), including those linked to some international human rights bodies, and a company named Aspada Investments Pvt. Ltd.



were searched under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), the sources said. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) sources called Aspada Investments as the investment adviser or fund manager of Soros EDF (SEDF) in India and as a "wholly-owned subsidiary" of a Mauritius entity. The SEDF is the "impact investment arm of the Open Society Foundations (OSF)", the sources said. The investigation pertains to alleged foreign direct investment (FDI) being sourced by the two Soros entities and the utilisation of these funds by certain beneficiaries in alleged contravention of FEMA guidelines. Agency

Trump, Putin in talks as U.S seeks Russian approval on Ukraine deal

CONT FROM PAGE-1 has repeatedly expressed alarm about it, fuelling fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe. The plant is a significant asset, producing nearly a quarter of Ukraine's electricity in the year before the war. "I can say we are on the 10th yard line of peace," Leavitt said. "And we've never been closer to a peace deal than we are in this moment. And the president, as you know, is determined to get one done."

But Bradley Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, questioned whether Putin is ready to end the war or will hold out for potential further concessions as Trump grows impatient.

After a disastrous February 28 White House meeting with Zelenskyy, Trump temporarily cut off some military intelligence-sharing and aid to Ukraine. It was restored after the Ukrainians last week signed off on the Trump administration's 30-day ceasefire proposal.

The US has been consistently offering in some form preemptive concessions that have been weakening the American and Ukrainian negotiating position," Bowman said. "I think there's a real danger here that the administration's approach is boiling down to sticks for Ukraine and carrots for Putin."

Zelenskyy in his nightly video address on Monday made clear he remains doubtful that Putin is ready for peace. "Now, almost a week later, it's clear to everyone in the world — even to those who refused to acknowledge the truth for the past three years — that it is Putin who continues to drag out this war," Zelenskyy said.

In his dealings with Zelenskyy and Putin, Trump has frequently focused on who has the leverage. Putin has "the cards" and Zelenskyy does not, Trump has said repeatedly.

Trump, who has long shown admiration for Putin, has also made clear he'd like to see the US-Russia relationship return to a more normal footing.

The president during his recent contentious meeting with Zelenskyy gumbled that "Putin went through a hell of a lot with me," a reference to the federal investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election in which he beat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump on Monday again underscored his view that Ukraine is not in a strong negotiating position. He said Russian forces "surrounded" Ukrainian troops in Russia's Kursk region — amplifying an assertion made by Russian officials that's been disputed by Zelenskyy.

Ukraine's armystunned Russia in August last year by attacking across the border and taking control of an estimated 1,300 square kilometres of land. But Ukraine's forces are now in retreat and it has all but lost a valuable bargaining chip, as momentum builds for a ceasefire with Russia.

Zelenskyy has acknowledged that the Ukrainians are on their back foot while disputing Russian claims that his troops are encircled in Kursk.

Nagpur violence premeditated 'Chhava' reignited people's emotions: Fadnavis

Nagpur: More than 50 persons have been taken into custody and curfew imposed in parts of Nagpur, a day after protests against Aurangzeb's tomb triggered violence in the city, which Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis claimed was premeditated.

Speaking in the legislative assembly on Tuesday, Fadnavis said the Vicky Kausal-starrer film "Chhava", based on the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, reignited people's emotions against the Mughal emperor and brought before them the true history of the Maratha king. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) it won't tolerate any attempts to glorify Aurangzeb and claimed the Nagpur violence was planned.

Five FIRs have been registered in connection with the violence, Nagpur police commissioner



Ravinder Kumar Singal said on Tuesday. Violence erupted in central Nagpur's Chitnis Park in Mahal area on Monday around 7:30 pm, with stones hurled at police amid rumours that the holy book of a community was burnt

during an agitation by a right-wing body for the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj district, officials said.

As many as 34 police personnel were injured in the violence, state BJP

president and Nagpur guardian minister Chandrasekhar Bavankule said after visiting the injured police personnel at a hospital in Nagpur on Tuesday.

The situation now is a little tense, but there is peace in the city with ad-

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) it won't tolerate any attempts to glorify Aurangzeb and claimed the Nagpur violence was planned.

equated police force deployed, Bavankule said. Curfew has been imposed in areas under the jurisdiction of some police stations in Nagpur, police said.

BSF chief Mayavati said, "It is not right to damage or break anyone's grave or mausoleum in Maharashtra because this is spoiling the mutual brotherhood, peace and harmony there."

The government should take strict action against such unruly elements, especially in Nagpur, otherwise the situation can worsen, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh said in a post on X.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "Instigating violence, creating instability in the state, keeping the citizens busy over the past history while getting away with tough questions on the state's financial doom, increased debt burden, growing joblessness and farmer suicides."

Leader of Opposition in the state legislative council, Ambadas Danve, blamed Fadnavis and his government for the violence in Nagpur, which is the CM's hometown.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi criticised Fadnavis and his ministers, stating, "We need to examine the statements made by the CM and ministers in recent weeks."

Maharashtra Deputy CM Eknath Shinde said a planned attack aimed at spreading communal unrest.

BJP MLAs walk out of WB assembly after Speaker disallows discussion on 'Holi violence'

Kolkata: BJP MLAs staged a walkout from the West Bengal assembly on Tuesday, after Speaker Biman Banerjee did not allow an adjournment motion on alleged incidents of violence in different parts of the state during Holi celebrations. Shortly after Chief Whip Shankar Ghosh read out the adjournment motion condemning the incidents in Birbhum and elsewhere in the state, the Speaker said it cannot be allowed to be discussed.

Banerjee said while he allowed Ghosh to read out the first few paras of the motion, certain other references and contents including the word "Hindus" and "Hinduva", were not appropriate for discussion on the floor of the House.

In protest, around 30 MLAs, led by Ghosh and Manoj Oraon, stood on their seats and raised slogans against the state government.

Later, the BJP legislators were joined by suspended Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari outside the assembly gate, who reiterated the demand for an immediate statement by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the alleged incidents of violence during Holi.

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Telangana Assembly passes SC categorization bill

Hyderabad: The Telangana Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed the Telangana Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Bill, 2025 to implement the categorisation of SCs.

Presenting the bill, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said his government constituted a cabinet sub-committee after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of SC categorization last year.

The government had also appointed a one-man judicial commission to make recommendations for the implementation of SC categorization and later accepted its report.

The commission divided 59 SC castes in the state into three groups to ensure equitable distribution of the 15 per cent reservation available for the SCs.

According to Reddy, group 1 comprising 15 socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged SC communities, are given one per

cent reservation. Group 2, including 18 moderately benefited SC communities, are provided nine per cent quota. Group 3 comprising 26 significantly benefited SC communities, are given five per cent reservation.

Referring to the demand for increasing reservation of SCs to 18 per cent from 15 per cent, he said his government would enhance the quota on population basis after the 2026 census is conducted.

Noting that the struggle for SC categorization in the state was 30-year-old, the CM said a resolution was passed in the undivided Andhra Pradesh assembly in support of it in 2004.

Observing that Congress has always been committed to the welfare and empowerment of Dalits, he said Damodarann Sainjivayya was made AIJCC president and also Chief Minister of undivided Andhra in 1960.

Parliament where only PM ministers speak not functioning Parliament: Gogoi

New Delhi: Parliament belongs to the people of India and all parties must be allowed to have their say, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said on Tuesday and added a Parliament where only the prime minister and his ministers spoke was not a functioning Parliament.

The Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha also said that if the opposition parties were allowed to speak on the Maha Kumbh, the Lower House would not have been adjourned.

Gogoi made the remarks after the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day amid noisy protests by opposition members seeking to ask questions on the statement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Maha Kumbh.

"Today, Parliament would not have been adjourned if the opposition parties were allowed to speak on the Kumbh. But the government and the par-



liamentary affairs minister were adamant," he said in a post on X.

"A Parliament where only the prime minister and his ministers speak is not a functioning Parliament. The Parliament belongs to the people of India and all parties must be allowed to have their say," the Congress leader added. Gogoi said it was another day of the opposition being silenced in Parliament, "silenced from speaking about our devotion to Ganga ji".

"Silenced from speaking about the richness of Indian civilisation and culture. Silenced from remembering all those who died in the stampede during the Kumbh. Silenced from speaking about the need to provide jobs to the lakhs of young Indians who went to the Kumbh. And then Prime Minister Modi goes on Lex Fridman's podcast and

gives 'gyaan' on soul of democracy," he said. In another post, Gogoi said that for the past several years, the Congress had been seeking a discussion on the external affairs ministry in Parliament.

"Discussion on the Demand for Grants for External Affairs during the Budget Session is a suitable forum. Guess how many times the Prime Minister Modi government has discussed this ministry. The answer is 0. Why is the government scared of having a discussion on the Ministry of External Affairs?" he asked.

Commenting on a post by the China Daily on X, where a Chinese government spokesperson expressed appreciation for Modi's recent "positive remarks on China-India relations", Gogoi said the prime minister had performed the "biggest U-turn" on China during his podcast with Fridman but "to what end?"

Nagpur violence pre-planned won't tolerate Aurangzeb's glorification: VHP

Nagpur: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Tuesday said it won't tolerate any attempts to glorify Aurangzeb and claimed the violence in Nagpur a day before was pre-planned.

The administration should take stern action against those responsible for clashes and invoke National Security Act (NSA), VHP Vidarbha Prant Sah Mantri Devesh Mishra told reporters here.

He also rubbished claims of a 'chadar' with holy inscriptions being burnt during protests led by VHP and Bajrang Dal in Nagpur, which apparently triggered clashes.

A protest against Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb triggered violence during which several houses and vehicles were vandalised, police said. The demonstrations in Nagpur were among many held across the state on Monday to demand the removal of the Mughal emperor's tomb at Khultabad near Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

"We don't tolerate glorification of Aurang-



zeb," Mishra said. He alleged the agitation was pre-planned. He demanded slapping of stringent NSA on perpetrators and razing of houses of those named in the FIRs by police.

He said the "movements to remove the tomb of Aurangzeb will continue. VHP 'Dharmprasar Pramukh' (Vidarbha Prant) Rajkumar Sharma claimed an appeal was made from a mosque in front of Chitnis Park, leading to the gathering of a mob on Monday.

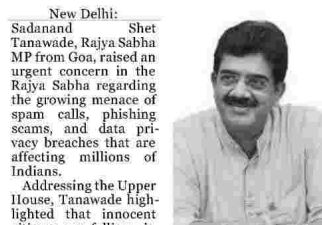
Sadanand Shet Tanawade Raises Concern Over Rising Spam Calls and Phishing Scams in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: Sadanand Shet Tanawade, Rajya Sabha MP from Goa, raised an urgent concern in the Rajya Sabha regarding the growing menace of spam calls, phishing scams, and data privacy breaches that are affecting millions of Indians.

Addressing the Upper House, Tanawade highlighted that innocent citizens are falling victim to fraudulent calls and deceptive messages, resulting in significant financial losses. He pointed out that fraudsters are misusing personal data obtained through illegal means, endangering the financial security of the people.

The MP specifically mentioned that Goa has also seen a surge in such scams, with many residents losing their hard-earned money. Expressing grave concern over the issue, he urged the government to take immediate and strict action against cybercriminals.

Tanawade emphasized the need for stronger laws and

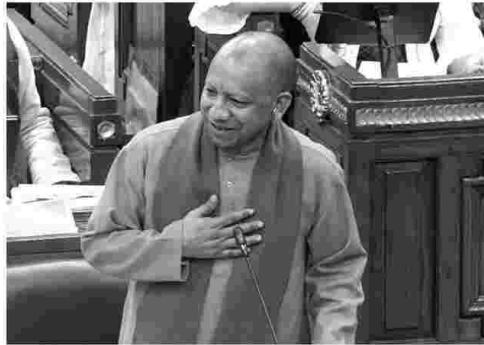


stringent enforcement to curb these fraudulent activities. He also called for enhanced digital security measures to safeguard citizens from cyber fraud and protect their sensitive information.

The rising cases of cyber fraud have become a nationwide concern, with reports of phishing scams and unauthorized access to personal data increasing at an alarming rate. The government is expected to take decisive action in response to these concerns and work towards strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure to prevent such crimes in the future.

UP emerges as a symbol of development under Yogi govt, gains international recognition

Greater Noida Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh is setting new benchmarks in development while earning recognition on the global stage. The state, particularly Western Uttar Pradesh, has witnessed remarkable industrial and economic progress over the past eight years, driven by the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA).



Major projects like the Noida International Airport in Jewar—set to be India's largest—along with the upcoming International Film City and various industrial parks, have positioned Uttar Pradesh as a prime destination for investment. These initiatives are not only attracting investors but also generating significant employment opportunities. Flagship events like the Uttar Pradesh Global Investors Summit (UPGIS-2023) and the Ground Breaking Ceremony (GBC

4.0) have played a crucial role in accelerating this progress.

At the UPGIS-2023, YEIDA secured Rs 1,88,970.18 crore in investments through 165 MoUs, exceeding its target by 236.21%. This investment is expected to create around 4,53,339 jobs. Similarly, at the GBC 4.0, investments worth Rs 45,148.41

crore were implemented on the ground, surpassing the goal by 103.19% and helping generate 1,32,663 job opportunities.

Over the past eight years, YEIDA has developed MSME parks, Toy City, Handicraft Park, Apparel Park, Data Center Park, and Medical Device Park, fostering industry growth through

cluster-based development. In FY 2023-24 and 2024-25, 152 industrial units have been allotted land, paving the way for an investment of Rs 27,521.99 crore and creating 16,405 jobs.

In Sector-28, a Medical Device Park is being developed at a cost of Rs 439.40 crore, with 74 plots already allotted. This project is ex-

pected to attract Rs 3,800 crore in investment and generate 15,000 jobs. These initiatives are making Uttar Pradesh a major hub for global investors, driving the state's economy to new heights.

The Noida International Airport, being developed over 1,334 hectares in Jewar, is based on the PPP model. In the first phase, Zurich Airport International AG is investing Rs 5,730 crore to build an airport with a 12-million-passenger capacity, set to become operational by 2025.

To enhance connectivity, a 72.26 km-long Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) will link Jewar Airport with Ghazabad, Greater Noida, and Yamuna Authority. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for this Rs 20,637 crore project has been submitted to the Government of India.

Additionally, an International Film City is being developed over 1,000 acres in Sector-21. In the first phase, Bayview Projects LLP is con-

structing on 230 acres, aiming to boost employment and commercial activities. These projects will enhance tourism, manufacturing, and exports, contributing to the region's structural growth.

Similarly, a Heritage City is being developed near Shri Banke Bihari Temple, featuring Greenfield connectivity, a riverfront, and a yoga center, as per the Braj Vikas Parishad's recommendations. This project aims to boost tourism and preserve cultural heritage.

To support Jewar Airport's growing logistics demand, a Logistics Park is being developed in Tappal Bajna, with the DPR approved and land acquisition in progress.

Additionally, a 200-acre Fintech Park in Sector-11 and a Toy Park in other areas are being developed to attract investments and create job opportunities. In Sector-10, a 1,000-acre Semi-conductor and EMC Park is planned, with a 200-acre proposal already submitted to the Government of India.

NDMC adopts modular rainwater harvesting technology

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

The NDMC is set to implement the modular pit technology for rainwater harvesting, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable water management.

NDMC vice-chairman Kujed Singh Chahal informed that NDMC has already developed 272 rainwater harvesting (RWH) pits, including 167 conventional pits and 105 modular pits. Additionally, 182 RWH pits have been cleaned, with full maintenance to be completed by May 30, 2025. To further enhance conservation efforts, 95 new RWH pits, each with a 30 KL capacity, have been constructed.

He said NDMC has identified 72 major water logging points, including Purana Qula Road, Golf Link, Lodhi Colony, Africa Avenue, AIIMS Flyover, BKS Marg, Connaught Place, and Vinay Marg, where RWH installations are planned to combat water logging and enhance water conservation.

Chahal attended a meeting with Water Logging Prevention and the 'Jal Sanchay'—Jan Bhagidari Initiative, organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, Keshav Tuesday.

NDMC chairman Heshanv Chandra who also attended the meeting presented a detailed powerPoint presentation outlining key strategies for effective flood management and rainwater conservation in the NDMC area. To optimize water utilization, the NDMC has initiated rainwater harvesting (RWH) projects across its jurisdiction, adopting modular rainwater harvesting (RWH) pits.

These pits require minimal use of bricks and cement, reducing construction costs, and use polypropylene modules wrapped in geo-textile for improved water quality. The load-bearing structures allow dual-use of land for parking or parks, and their high void ratio ensures 95% water storage capacity.

Delhi Cong expresses concern over sanitation worker's death while cleaning manhole

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav has expressed concern over sanitation worker's death while cleaning manhole at Friends Colony, saying that other sanitation workers were hospitalised in serious condition which exposes the irresponsible and reckless manner in which the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) conducts its maintenance work.



Yadav said that both the BJP and AAP governments have failed to implement the Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 or their rehabilitation. He demanded proper compensation for the next of kin

of the dead and the two hospitalised workers.

He said that if these workers entered the manhole to repair a DJB pipeline without permission, then it was a dangerous precedent as anybody could access DJB utilities and create sabotage without any checks and balances, which only exposes DJB's irresponsible and reckless manner of functioning. Yadav said that it was shocking that in the nation-

al capital, poor people are forced to enter manholes and drains/sewers without any protective gear to put their lives in peril, as all these works should have been mechanised long ago.

He said that the Delhi Congress has been demanding for a very long time that it was violation of human rights to do manual cleaning of manholes and sewers without any protection, as over the past 15 years, a total of 94 people have died while cleaning sewers in Delhi with the dead getting no compensation from the government agencies concerned or the contractors engaged for such works.

Additionally, to support the treatment and rehabilitation of mentally and physically handicapped children, the organizations donated a range of suitable toys at the District Early Intervention Center (DIC). These toys were carefully selected to aid in cognitive and motor

Mahila Pragatisheel Association & Bharat Vikas Parishad distribute child-friendly materials at Swami Dayanand Hospital

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

In a heartwarming initiative aimed at enhancing the well-being of children, the Mahila Pragatisheel Association and Bharat Vikas Parishad, Vivek Vihar, organized a special distribution event at Swami Dayanand Hospital.



The organizations provided high-quality, child-friendly cartoon posters in various wards of the Paediatrics and Pediatrics Department to create a comforting and cheerful environment for young patients.

Additionally, to support the treatment and rehabilitation of mentally and physically handicapped children, the organizations donated a range of suitable toys at the District Early Intervention Center (DIC). These toys were carefully selected to aid in cognitive and motor

skill development, ensuring that children with special needs receive holistic care.

The initiative also extended its generosity to newborn babies at the hospital. Clothes and blankets were distributed to ensure their warmth and comfort, reflecting the humanitarian spirit of the organizations involved.

The event was graced by distinguished members of IAS Vivek Vihar MPS, including Mr. Rajesh Goyal, Mr. Yogesh Verma, Mrs. Ritu Bhatia, Mrs. Sunita Anora,

the members of Mahila Pragatisheel Association and Bharat Vikas Parishad emphasized their continued commitment to social welfare and healthcare initiatives. They reiterated their goal of creating a child-friendly and nurturing environment in hospitals, ensuring that young patients receive not just medical care but also emotional and psychological support.

This compassionate initiative stands as a testament to the power of community service and the impact of collective efforts in making a meaningful difference in the lives of children. The event concluded with a renewed pledge by all stakeholders to continue their collaborative efforts in promoting the well-being of underprivileged and special-needs children.

'Hate' tweets: Delhi HC refuses to stay case against Delhi minister Kapil Mishra says 'no need'

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday refused to stay the trial court proceedings against Delhi Law Minister Kapil Mishra for allegedly posting objectionable tweets during the 2020 assembly elections. Justice Ravinder Dedeja issued notice to Delhi Police on the BJP leader's plea challenging a sessions court order that dismissed his petition against the summons of a magisterial court in the case.



On Tuesday, senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for Mishra, said Section 125 of the Act was a non-cognisable offence and the FIR could not be registered without following the procedure under Section 155(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

He said there was no reference to any two communities or groups in the tweets—a prerequisite of Section 125 of the RP Act. The alleged tweets were neither intended to promote enmity between different classes nor any such situation was created during that period, Jethmalani argued.

Mishra's tweets, he said, were posted during the elections to criticise the "anti-social and anti-national" elements who intended to spoil the atmosphere under the guise of anti-Citizenship Amendment Act movement.

He said in the tweets, Mishra was trying to say that if anyone attempted to divide the nation, there were nationalists who would prevent it.

The sessions court dismissed Mishra's revision petition on March 7 and said his statements appeared to be "a brazen attempt to promote enmity on the grounds of religion by way of indirectly referring to a country which unfortunately in common parlance is often used to denote the members of a particular religion".

Its order went on to add, "The word Pakistan is very skillfully weaved by the revisionist in his alleged statements to spew hatred, careless to communal polarisation that may ensue in the election campaign, only to garner votes."

It had rejected as "simply preposterous and outrightly untenable" Mishra's argument that his alleged statement did not refer to any caste, community, religion, race and language but mentioned a country, which was not prohibited under Section 125 of the RP Act.

The sessions court found an "implicit reference" to a particular country aside from an "unmistakable innuendo to persons of a particular religious community" that could be "effortlessly understood even by a layman, let alone by a reasonable man."

Justice Dedeja said, "It is made clear that while considering the question of framing of charges, the trial court will make independent assessment on the basis of the submissions made by the respective sides."

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Cong vows to make DCC units focal point of organisation district chiefs to meet in Delhi

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

The Congress will hold meetings with its district unit presidents from across the country for three days, ahead of its AICC session, to deliberate on how to empower the district units and make them the focal point of the organisation.

The District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents will meet on March 27, 28 and April 3 in three batches at the Indira Gandhi Bhawan here, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh told reporters after party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi met party general secretaries and in-charges of various states.

The party's top brass deliberated on ways to strengthen the organisation and review the preparations for the AICC session set to take place on April 8 and 9 in Ahmedabad.

This will be the fourth AICC session in Gujarat with the 1907 session in Surat, the 1938 session in Haripur and the 1961 session in Bhavnagar.

"The meeting on March 27, 28 and April 3 will focus on how to bring the party's district units at the centre of the organisation. In Belagavi, the 'Nav Satyagraha Sankalp' had stated that 2025 will be the year of strengthening the organisation. In line with that, this meeting of DCCs will be held for three days," Ramesh

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Eight Bawaria gang members sentenced to 10 years in jail for 2016 robbery case

Staff Reporter
Gurugram

A court here on Tuesday sentenced eight members of the Bawaria gang to ten years of rigorous imprisonment in connection with a 2016 robbery case, police said.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Punit Sehgal also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on each convict, they said.

According to police, the gang members attempted a robbery in Nainital village on the night of August 10, 2016. They knocked on the door of a house, and when the owner opened it, they assaulted him.

However, the house owner managed to shut the door, forcing the accused to flee, they said.

An FIR was registered at Manesar police station, and investigations revealed that the same gang had carried out another robbery in Saharvan village on the same night, assaulting a family, a police officer said.

A case was registered with sections related to robbery and the Arms Act, he said.

The accused—Jai Bhagwan, Babbar alias Naban Singh, both residents of Bhagpur district, Raha alias Jitendra, Sunil alias Sagar, and Naresh alias Sandeep, the three residents of Farukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, Lambu alias Tuli from Faridabad, and Munna alias Dharm of Najafgarh, Delhi—were arrested, he added.

Kejriwal declares all-out war against drugs, public movement to begin from April 1

Ludhiana/Chandigarh. **A**am Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressed a huge rally in Ludhiana, focusing on Punjab's progress under AAP's governance. Highlighting the fight against drug abuse, the renovation of the Civil Hospital, and the government's decisive actions against corruption and organized crime, Kejriwal emphasized AAP's dedication to building a prosperous and drug-free Punjab. He announced transformative initiatives like village sports grounds, anti-drone systems to counter cross-border drug smuggling, and a state-wide drug census to provide targeted rehabilitation for addicts.



Arvind Kejriwal addressing a rally in Ludhiana, Punjab, on Wednesday.

Former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal expressed gratitude to all those present at today's rally in Ludhiana. During his address, he paid homage to the late Ludhiana West MLA Gurspreet Gogi, who passed away untimely. "I pray to God for peace to his soul," Kejriwal said solemnly.

The rally marked the inauguration of Ludhiana Civil Hospital's renovation. Highlighting the transformation, Kejriwal stated, "The Civil Hospital has been completely rejuvenated and is now a magnificent facility. Those who visited earlier know the dreadful state Congress BJP, and Akali Dal left it in, along with 30,000 rats over their 30 years of misrule. Today, through the efforts of AAP and Sanjeev Arora Ji, the hospital has become a symbol of progress."

On this occasion, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, AAP Punjab President Aman Arora, Cabinet Ministers, AAP MLAs, leaders and thousands of people were also present. Kejriwal emphasized AAP's ongoing health revolution in Punjab, pointing to the repair of hospitals and the establishment of mohalla clinics. "Every hospital in Punjab will be improved, and a major health revolution is underway," he declared.

Addressing Punjab's critical drug problem, Kejriwal criticized previous governments for their role in spreading narcotics. "Drugs didn't originate in Punjab. We all know which party's ministers distributed drugs to every household for money. They destroyed an entire generation," he remarked. Kejriwal also called out opposition leaders for making false promises. "A former CM swore on the Gukta Sahib to eradicate drugs in four weeks but didn't even step out of his house for five years while the drug trade flourished."

He asserted that AAP's government is taking unprecedented action against drug trafficking. "We've declared a war on drugs. You can see this war unfolding over the past 20 days as the homes of major drug smugglers are being demolished by bulldozers. Huge quantities of drugs worth crores have been seized. For the first time, a government has dared to confront these smugglers head-on," Kejriwal said. Highlighting the threat from Pakistan, Kejriwal revealed, "70% of drugs in Punjab come from Pakistan via drones. To counter this, anti-drone systems are being proposed. Any drone entering Indian territory will be shot down." Additionally, 5,000 new police personnel will be recruited and stationed along the border in collaboration with the BSF. Kejriwal announced a statewide public movement against drugs starting April 1. "When the 3 crore people of Punjab rise, these smugglers will have nowhere to hide," he proclaimed. He urged AAP workers, MLAs, ministers, and even CM Bhagwant Mann to visit villages and spread awareness. "To rehabilitate drug-affected youth, Kejriwal promised treatment facilities and the creation of sports infrastructure across Punjab. "We're building playgrounds and gyms in every village. For ex-

Haryana CM seeks GST exemption on farm implements

Komal Ramola Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has sought from the Centre an exemption in GST on ten agricultural implements used in crop residue management.

He has written a letter in this regard to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

In his letter, Saini highlighted that farmers of Haryana play a crucial role in the nation's food reserves, with the state being a leader in the agricultural sector.

However, in recent

years, stubble burning has become a major issue, adversely impacting the health of the people, an official statement quoted him as saying in the letter.

Given the seriousness of the issue, it is being closely monitored by the Supreme Court and the Air Quality Commission, it said.

The chief minister said that Haryana's farmers are adopting advanced technologies and utilizing the latest agricultural implement for crop residue management.

Over the past few years, both Government of India and the state government have been



Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana Chief Minister, speaking at a podium.

providing subsidies on machinery for crop residue management. In 2024, there was a 39 per cent reduction in stubble burning incidents compared to 2023. To further address this issue, the state government has developed an action plan for 2025, which includes a provision for a subsidy of approximately Rs 200 crore for the purchase of crop residue management machines. The total cost of these machines is expected to be around Rs 500 crore, with an additional burden of about Rs 60 crore on farmers due to GST (12 per cent), he wrote.

Saini has requested Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs to grant GST exemption on agricultural implement used for crop residue management, such as rotavators, zero tillage, disc harrows, cultivators, diesel drills, super seeders, straw balers, hay rakes, slashers, reaper binders, and tractor-mounted spray pumps.

The chief minister emphasized that if the central government grants this exemption, it will encourage farmers to adopt these technologies more widely, helping prevent air pollution caused by crop residue burning.

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POST HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2025

For the convenience of passengers Railways have decided to run several post Holi Festival Special trains from Delhi area stations, the date wise list of the same is as under-

SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 19.03.2025 (WEDNESDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
Spl Train No.	Station From	Dept. Time	Station To	Arr. Time	Stoppages				
09898	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
03414	Delhi Jn.	13:35	Makda Town	17:30	Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Patna Jn., Patna Sahib, Falahe, Khusrapur, Bahadurganj, Barh, Mokama, Hatihaldia, Bahi, Luckeesarai Jn., Kuli Jn., Kajra, Abhaipur, Dhahara, Jamsal Jn., Baripur, Sultanganj, Bhargui, Kahalgau, Sahibganj Jn., Barharwa Jn. & New Farakka Jn. Stations				
09004	Delhi Jn.	13:05	Mumbai Central	13:30	Delhi Cantt., Gurgaon, Rewari Jn., Alwar, Bandikui Jn., Gandhinagar Jaipur, Jaipur Jn., Kishanganj, Ajmer Jn., Beawar, Marwar Jn., Falna, Pinrawara, Abu Road, Palampur Jn., Mahesana Jn., Sabarmati BG, Vadodara Jn., Udhna Jn., Valsad, Vapi & Borivali Stations				
02438	New Delhi	08:30	Patna Jn.	20:10	Ghaziabad, Aligarh, Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar & Ara Stations				
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur & Patna Jn. Stations				
04068	New Delhi	14:00	Bhagalpur	13:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur, Patna Jn., Bahadurganj, Mokama, Hatihaldia Jn., Luckeesarai Jn., Kuli Jn., Abhaipur, Jamsal Jn. & Sultanganj Stations				
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Kaptanganj Jn., Bagaha, Narkataganj Jn., Raesal Jn., Bairaigra, Stamarhi, Jankapur Road, Darbhanga Jn., Sakri Jn., Jhanjhanpur, Ghogadina, Nirmali, Sarayganj, Supaul & Gari Barua Stations				
06306	Anand Vihar (T)	00:20	Chhapra	22:50	Etawah, Kanpur Central, Aishbagh, Badshahnagar, Barabanki Jn., Gonda Jn., Mankapur Jn., Bahin, Basti, Khalilabad, Gorakhpur, Kaptanganj Jn., Padrauna, Tamkuhi Road, Thawe Jn. & Siwan Jn. Stations				
SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 20.03.2025 (THURSDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
04026	Delhi Jn.	23:05	Raxaul Jn.	19:00	Ghaziabad, Hapur, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Gonda Jn., Gorakhpur & Narkataganj Jn. Stations				
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
02438	New Delhi	08:30	Patna Jn.	20:10	Ghaziabad, Aligarh, Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar & Ara Stations				
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur & Patna Jn. Stations				
04028	Anand Vihar (T)	23:55	Jogbani	03:00	Ghaziabad, Moradabad Jn., Bareilly Jn., Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur, Deoria Sadar, Siwan Jn., Chhapra, Sonpur Jn., Hajipur Jn., Hajipur Jn., Patna, Begusarai, Begusarai, Khagaria Jn., Naugachia, Khatir Jn., Purnea Jn., Araria & Forbesganj Jn. Stations				
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Kaptanganj Jn., Bagaha, Narkataganj Jn., Raesal Jn., Bairaigra, Stamarhi, Jankapur Road, Darbhanga Jn., Sakri Jn., Jhanjhanpur, Ghogadina, Nirmali, Sarayganj, Supaul & Gari Barua Stations				
05114	Anand Vihar (T)	16:00	Chhapra	14:00	Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Burwal, Gonda Jn., Basti, Khalilabad, Gorakhpur Jn., Kaptanganj Jn., Padrauna, Tamkuhi Road, Thawe Jn., Digwa Dubauli, Masrahk & Chhapra Kacheri Stations				
04018	Anand Vihar (T)	09:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	06:00	Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur Jn., Gonda Jn., Gorakhpur, Kaptanganj Jn., Narkataganj Jn., Sagauli Jn. & Bapudham Motihari Stations				
SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 21.03.2025 (FRIDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
05058	Delhi Jn.	14:00	Gorakhpur Jn.	06:25	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur Jn., Gonda Jn., Basti, Khalilabad Stations				
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
04146	Delhi Jn.	09:30	Subedarganj	19:40	Aligarh Jn., Tundla Jn., Etawah, Govindpuri & Fatehpur Stations				
04022	New Delhi	14:00	Gorakhpur Jn.	05:00	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Lucknow, Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Stations				
02556	Anand Vihar (T)	23:30	Patna Jn.	18:35	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara & Danapur Stations				
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur Jn., Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Kaptanganj Jn., Bagaha, Narkataganj Jn., Raesal Jn., Bairaigra, Stamarhi, Jankapur Road, Darbhanga Jn., Sakri Jn., Jhanjhanpur, Ghogadina, Nirmali, Sarayganj, Supaul & Gari Barua Stations				
05204	Anand Vihar (T)	09:20	Muzaffarpur Jn.	05:00	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur, Patliputra, Sonpur Jn. & Hajipur Jn. Stations				
03012	Anand Vihar (T)	00:30	Howrah	03:00	Tundla Jn., Etawah Jn., Govindpuri, Fatehpur, Prayagraj Jn., Mirzapur, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son, Anugrah Narayan Road, Gaya, Koderma, Dhanbad, Asansol, Durgapur, Bardhaman & Baidel Jn. Stations				
SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 22.03.2025 (SATURDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
09004	Delhi Jn.	13:05	Mumbai Central	13:30	Delhi Cantt., Gurgaon, Rewari Jn., Alwar, Bandikui Jn., Gandhinagar Jaipur, Jaipur Jn., Kishanganj, Ajmer Jn., Beawar, Marwar Jn., Falna, Pinrawara, Abu Road, Palampur Jn., Mahesana Jn., Sabarmati BG, Vadodara Jn., Udhna Jn., Valsad, Vapi & Borivali Stations				
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur & Patna Jn. Stations				
03010	Anand Vihar (T)	00:30	Howrah Jn.	03:00	Tundla Jn., Etawah Jn., Govindpuri, Fatehpur, Prayagraj Jn., Mirzapur, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son, Anugrah Narayan Road, Gaya Jn., Koderma, Dhanbad Jn., Asansol Jn., Durgapur, Bardhaman & Baidel Stations				
05284	Anand Vihar (T)	07:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	04:50	Moradabad, Shahjahanpur, Hattoli, Lucknow Jn., Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Bagaha, Harinagar, Narkataganj Jn., Bardoli, Chakia, Mithi, Bapudham Motihari, Pipsa, Chakia, Mithi & Motpur Stations				
05306	Anand Vihar (T)	00:20	Chhapra	22:50	Etawah, Kanpur Central, Aishbagh, Badshahnagar, Barabanki Jn., Gonda Jn., Mankapur Jn., Bahin, Basti, Khalilabad, Gorakhpur, Kaptanganj Jn., Padrauna, Tamkuhi Road, Thawe Jn. & Siwan Jn. Stations				
SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 23.03.2025 (SUNDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
03698	Delhi Jn.	08:55	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur & Patna Jn. Stations				
05578	Anand Vihar (T)	05:15	Sahasra Jn.	10:30	Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur Jn., Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Kaptanganj Jn., Bagaha, Narkataganj Jn., Raesal Jn., Bairaigra, Stamarhi, Jankapur Road, Darbhanga Jn., Sakri Jn., Jhanjhanpur, Ghogadina, Nirmali, Sarayganj, Supaul & Gari Barua Stations				
05220	Anand Vihar (T)	06:00	Muzaffarpur Jn.	00:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur, Patliputra, Sonpur Jn. & Hajipur Jn. Stations				
02528	Anand Vihar (T)	17:20	Kamakhya Jn.	03:40	Aligarh Jn., Tundla Jn., Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur, Patliputra, Hajipur Jn., Barauni Jn., Begu Sarsi, Khagaria Jn., Naugachia, Khatir Jn., Barsol Jn., Kishanganj, New Jalpaiguri, New Cooch Behar, Tufanganj, Golaiganj Jn., Gauripur, Bilsipara, Abhayapuri Assam & Goalpara Town Stations				
SPECIAL TRAINS RUNNING ON 24.03.2025 (MONDAY) FROM DELHI AREA TERMINALS									
02394	New Delhi	13:20	Rajendra Nagar	07:45	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara, Danapur & Patna Jn. Stations				
02528	Anand Vihar (T)	23:30	Patna Jn.	18:35	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar, Ara & Danapur Stations				
02398	Anand Vihar (T)	08:20	Gaya Jn.	00:30	Govindpuri, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Bhabua Road, Sasaram, Dehri On Son & Anugrah Narayan Road Stations				
02528	Anand Vihar (T)	05:00	Danapur	20:45	Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Buxar & Ara Stations				

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After meeting with SAD leaders Harjinder Dhani agrees to resume duties as SGPC chief

Hoshiarpur (Punjab). **A** day after the executive committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee rejected his resignation as the president of the apex gurdwara body, Harjinder Singh Dhani on Tuesday agreed to resume his duties as SGPC chief.



Harjinder Singh Dhani, SGPC Chief.

The development comes after Shiromani Akal Dal (SAD) working president Balwinder Singh Bhundar and party's senior leader Sukhbir Singh Badal met Dhani at his residence here and urged him to withdraw his resignation. The executive committee of the SGPC on Monday had rejected the resignation of Dhani and appealed to him to immediately resume his duties as the SGPC president.

"Today, senior leaders, including Sukhbir Badal, Balwinder Singh Bhundar, Janngeva Singh Sekhon, and several SGPC members, were present. I respect their decision, and I will resume my duties in service of the Panth," he said.

Earlier, SAD working president Bhundar, while dubbing Dhani an honest and capable leader, urged him to withdraw his resignation and resume his duties as the SGPC president.

Badal welcomed Dhani's decision and praised his commitment to the party and the Sikh community. "There are very few individuals with a historic background like Dhani Sahib and his family. At a time when the Sikh community is facing serious challenges, unity is essential. Our strength comes from our Gurdwaras and Takhts. The Sikh community must stand united," Badal said.

He further lauded Dhani's leadership, stating that the SGPC functioned effectively under his tenure.

Railway fares in India far less than neighbouring countries: Vaishnav

New Delhi

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Tuesday said the railway fares in India have remained constant since 2020 and are far less than the neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

He also asserted that railway accidents have come down by 90 per cent from the time when RJD supreme Lalu Prasad Yadav was at the ministry's helm.

Vaishnav made the remarks in the Lok Sabha while replying to a debate on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Railways for 2025-26. The Lok Sabha later passed the Demands for Grants.

In his reply, Vaishnav said the national transporter has emerged from difficulties of the Covid pandemic to meet its own expenses.

Amid noisy protests by the opposition over not being allowed to speak on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on the Maha Kumbh, he took numerous steps for crowd control at stations and is running several special trains during festival seasons.

He asserted that with Prime Minister Modi's focus on safety, accidents have come down by 90 per cent from the time when Lalu Prasad was at the ministry's helm.

"During Lalu Prasad's Defence Intelligence Agency DG to visit Australia from March 19-21



time, in a year about 234 accidents and 464 derailments took place, about 700 in a year. During Mamata Banerjee's period, 165 accidents and 230 derailments took the accident tally to 395 in a year and during Mallikarjun Kharge's time, 118 accidents and 263 derailments happened, taking the total number of accidents to 381," he said.

Prime Minister Modi focused on safety and brought in new technology and investment, and now it has come down to 30 accidents and 43 derailments, which is 90 per cent less from the earlier period and 80 per cent less than what it was in 2014-15, Vaishnav said.

He also said that a big roll out of Kavach was being made on 10,000 locomotives and 15,000 km.

Railways has not increased fares since 2020 and they have been constant since then.

"If we compare with neighbouring countries, our fares are very less. For a

travel of 350 km, fare in India is Rs 121, in Pakistan it is Rs 436, in Bangladesh it is Rs 323 and in Sri Lanka it is Rs 413," Vaishnav said.

The minister said the prices in European countries are more than five to 20 times higher than India.

Hailing the Budget for Railways as "historic", Vaishnav said the national transporter faced a lot of difficulty during the Covid pandemic and it had now emerged from that to be in a healthy situation.

The railways is now meeting nearly all its expenditure from its own income, he pointed out.

The minister also elaborated on the steps taken by his ministry for managing crowd, including running of special trains during the holiday period.

"Last year, during the Holi period, we ran 604 special trains, about 13,000 special trains were run during the last summers and 8,000 such trains were run during Diwali and Chhat. During

the Maha Kumbh, as many as 17,330 special trains were run and 1,107 special trains were run during the Holi period this year," he said.

Recalling the tragic stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station last month, Vaishnav said many pre-emptive steps were being taken, including building in holding area in 60 stations, installing CCTV cameras, building war rooms and foot-over bridges, among other measures.

He also said India is among the top three leading countries and 1.6 billion tonne cargo will be carried this year.

Vaishnav said five lakh people have got employment in the railways and recruitment is on for one lakh more people.

He said 34,000 km of railway tracks have been built, which is more than the entire rail network of Germany and 50,000 km of old tracks have been removed due to which there has been a big improvement in safety.

Asserting that India has become a big exporter in railways, Vaishnav said, "We are sending metro coaches to Australia, coaches to the UK, Saudi and France and operation equipment to Mexico, Spain, Germany and Italy."

Soon, Bihar's locomotive and wheels made in Tamil Nadu will run around the world, Vaishnav said.

"There is a lot of focus on railway safety. Many technical changes have been

made. The Indian Railways is constantly being improved by taking many big steps like longer rails, electronic interlocking, fog safety devices," he said.

The minister said 12,000 rail flyovers and rail under-bridges have been built, which has benefited the country a lot.

Vaishnav pointed out that there has been good progress in projects in the North East.

He cited the examples of the project in Sikkim from Sevoke to Rangpo, new works in Assam and broad gauge line coming up to Tripura for the first time at independent India.

"The minister further said historic work has been done in the Kolkata Metro Rail Project.

"I started in 1972 and till 2014, i.e. in 42 years, 28 km of work was done. Whereas in 10 years of Modi government, 38 km of work was done," he said.

Talking about the bullet train project, Vaishnav said, "I would like to tell you about the bullet train that we have to move ahead, we have to take the country forward. Such projects have to be set up for the coming generation."

On the running room where the loco pilots come and rest after completing their duty, he said all 558 running rooms are 100 per cent air conditioned, adding today 1,100 locomotives have toilets for women loco pilots.

Maha Kumbh strengthened India's spirit of unity: PM Modi

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the recent Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj was a defining moment in India's history, much like the revolt of 1857 and the Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi that inspired the nation and paved the way for independence.

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, the prime minister said the Maha Kumbh also strengthened the spirit of unity in the country and gave a befitting response to those who questioned India's collective strength to organise such a large congregation.

Modi said the huge display of unity at the Maha Kumbh was India's strength, particularly at a time the world was in disarray.

"People put aside their egos and gathered in Prayagraj with the feeling of 'we' and not 'I'. The Maha Kumbh demonstrated that there was no distinction between big and small -- it reflected India's immense strength. It reaffirmed that the profound element of unity is deeply ingrained within us," he added.

The Lok Sabha witnessed some protests by opposition members, led by Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, who wanted a discussion on the Maha Kumbh.

A section of the opposition also sought to know under what rule the prime minister was allowed to speak.

Speaker Om Birla cited



Rule 372 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business that allows the prime minister and ministers to make a statement in the House but no questions are permitted after the statement.

Prime Minister Modi said the grand Maha Kumbh witnessed the awakening of national consciousness on a magnificent scale.

"The power of our unity is so great that it can shatter any attempt to divide us. This unwavering spirit of oneness is a blessing for every Indian," he said.

Throughout history, there have been defining moments that have become examples for generations to come, he added.

"Our nation, too, has witnessed such moments that have given it a new direction and awakened its people... Similarly, our freedom struggle was marked by several such turning points -- the revolt of 1857, the martyrdom of Veer Bhagat Singh, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's clarion call of 'Delhi Chalo', and Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi

March," Modi said. "These events inspired the nation and paved the way for independence. I see the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh as another such defining moment, where we can see the reflection of an awakened nation," he added.

Recalling his recent visit to Mauritius, the prime minister said the atmosphere of devotion, faith and celebration was truly remarkable the moment holy water from the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj was offered at the Ganga Talab.

"This moment reaffirmed how our traditions, culture and values are being embraced and celebrated with great intensity," Modi said.

The prime minister said India's cultural values were seamlessly being passed down from generation to generation.

"Look at our modern youth today -- how deeply they connect with the Maha Kumbh and other traditional festivals. The young generation of India is proudly embracing its heritage, faith, and traditions with immense pride and devotion," Modi said.

Nationwide Strike on May 20 Against Privatisation "Labour Codes

New Delhi

Several trade unions on Tuesday called for a nationwide strike on May 20 to press for various demands, including scrapping of labour codes, stopping privatisation and holding regular consultations through Indian Labour Conference.

The National Convention of Workers organised by the platform of Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations and Associations adopted a declaration to carry out a two-month campaign which will be culminated with a nationwide general strike on May 20, a statement said.

The leaders who addressed the convention endorsed the declaration.

Among those who addressed the convention included Ashok Singh from INTUC, Amarjeet Kaur from



AITUC, Harbhajan Singh from HMS, Tapan Sen from CITU, Harish Tyagi from AIUTUC, K Indu Prakash Menon from TUC, Lata Ben from SEWA, Rajiv Dimri from AICTUC, Jawahar Prasad from LPE, and Ashok Ghosh from UTUC.

"May 20th shall be the launching pad towards series of nationwide decisive struggles of workers and peasants in the future," the statement said.

The convention unanimously adopted a declaration

that indicates the NDA government for inflicting the downward spiral of miseries on the working people, for the pro-corporate and anti-worker policies that have resulted in a perfect storm of joblessness, poverty and inequality.

The declaration includes major demands like scrapping of labour codes, stopping privatisation of public sector undertakings and services, minimum monthly wages of Rs 26,000, minimum monthly pension of Rs 9,000 under Employees Pension Scheme and holding the regular sessions of the Indian Labour Conference.

The union leaders also demanded that those not covered under any scheme be given Rs 6,000 per month by creating a special fund with contributions from states and the Centre.

Maternal Mortality Ratio declined by 33 points since 2014-16 to 97 in 2018-20: Nadda

New Delhi

India has achieved the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 target of reducing Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to 100 per lakh live births by 2020 and is aligned towards achieving the SDG target of MMR of 70 by 2030, Union Health Minister J P Nadda told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

Responding to a question, Nadda said that as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) released by the Registrar General of India (RGI), the current Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of the country is 97 per lakh live births.

There has been a significant decline of 33 points in MMR from 130 in 2014-16 to 97 in 2018-20, he said. "India has achieved the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 target of MMR 100 per lakh live births by 2020 and is aligned towards achieving the SDG target of MMR 70 per lakh



live births by 2030," Nadda said.

The MMR in India has declined by 83 per cent compared to the global reduction of 42 per cent. Similarly, the Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) in India has decreased by 75 per cent, exceeding the global decline of 58 per cent, he stated.

The government of India launched Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) initiative in 2019 with an aim to pro-

vide assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare at no cost, and zero tolerance for denial of services for every woman and newborn visiting the public health facility.

Under the SUMAN, public health facilities are categorised into basic, BEMoNC (Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care), and CEMoNC (Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care) centres to provide comprehensive

healthcare services.

The National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certification of all notified health facilities is done to maintain quality standards, Nadda stated.

There is a component of respectful maternity care, including the provision of a birth companion of choice during childbirth and a client feedback system through 'Mera Aspatal' and Grievance Redressal mechanism, he said. The Midwifery training programme aims to create nurse practitioner midwives (NPM) who are trained to achieve International level competence.

Maternal healthcare is strengthened by providing natural birthing, alternative birthing positions and reduced medical interventions thereby ensuring a respectful, compassionate and positive birthing experience, especially at high caseload facilities, he said.

New Delhi

Parliament on Tuesday approved the supplementary demands for grants, which entails Rs 51,463 crore additional spending in the current fiscal and the Manipur Budget for 2025-26 with the Rajya Sabha returning four bills to the Lok Sabha.

Parliament also approved the Rs 1,291 crore demands for excess grants for 2021-22 fiscal and the Rs 1,861 crore supplementary demands for grants for Manipur in 2024-25.

The Lok Sabha had passed the supplementary demands for grants and the Manipur Budget for 2025-26 on March 11.

The Rajya Sabha returned The Appropriation Bill, 2025; The Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2025; The Manipur Appropriation (Vote



matched by savings and receipts.

The net additional spending by the government would be Rs 51,462.86 crore in the current fiscal, as per the second batch of supplementary demands for grants.

The demands for grants include a technical supplementary of Rs 5.54 lakh crore, which goes towards repayment of debt.

EU Delegation Meets RS Deputy Chair, Strengthening India Ties

New Delhi

A parliamentary delegation led by Angelika Niebler, Chairwoman of the European Parliament, called on Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Hariwansh in Parliament House today.

Extending a warm welcome to the delegation, Hariwansh recalled the past experience of meeting the members of the delegation for relations with India and the sub-committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) of the European Parliament during their visit to India in December 2023.

He said that there has been a remarkable parallel between India and the European Union - both being the largest and most vibrant democracies, open market economies and pluralistic societies.

Underscoring strategic partnership between India and the European Union starting since 2004, Hariwansh mentioned that the



relationship between the two has been further strengthened and diversified with closer cooperation in the areas of trade, technology, green energy, sustainable development, connectivity, defence, space, mobility, education and people to people ties.

The present momentum in our strategic partnership is remarkable and there has been strong and regular contact between both sides, he added.

Hariwansh emphasized that regular parliamentary exchanges are symbolic of the partnership between In-

dia and the European Union and these provide an excellent opportunity for the exchange of views and ideas on current bilateral cooperation and help chart out a path towards stronger relations.

He highlighted that trade and technology council between India and the European Union is an important platform for India for anchoring the discussions on issues of strategic and contemporary importance like semiconductors, quantum computing, Artificial Intelligence, Green energy and resilient supply chains.

Lucknow to host health & Water summit with focus on Mahakumbh's Success

Lucknow:

A Public Health and Water Summit will be held in Lucknow on March 19, focusing on the remarkable success of Mahakumbh and the visionary management of the Yogi government. The event will bring together renowned scientists, water experts, environmentalists, and representatives from various government and non-governmental organizations nationwide.

The innovative measures taken for cleanliness, water supply, health services, and devotee convenience at Mahakumbh have gained global attention for the first time. Under the Yogi government's leadership, initiatives such as water resource management, Ganga cleanliness, modern technology integration, and disaster preparedness were effectively executed with support from Namami Ganga and the Rural Water Supply Department.

The summit will explore public health, water resource management, and environmental sustainability, highlighting how modern techniques and coordinated efforts ensured a seamless experience for crores of devotees while maintaining the purity of the Ganga.

During Mahakumbh, the Yogi government took significant steps under the Namami Ganga Mission to ensure clean and uninterrupted water flow in the Ganga. Key initiatives included ghat cleaning, sewage treatment plants, bio-toilets, and an advanced waste management system, making this Mahakumbh the cleanest and most divine in history.

The summit will also see participation from NGOs, social workers, researchers, and policymakers, who will analyze the government's efforts and offer insights for organizing such grand events in the future. Mahakumbh's success has sparked discussions worldwide, and events like this summit are giving global recognition to the Uttar Pradesh government's policies and innovations, setting new benchmarks for future large-scale religious and cultural gatherings.

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UP govt initiates transformation of Lucknow's Butler Palace into cultural hub

The Yogi Adityanath government, with a commitment to preserving Uttar Pradesh's historical heritage, has initiated the transformation of Butler Palace here into a book café and cultural centre. As part of this initiative, the café will host various activities, including exhibitions, workshops, and an art gallery, officials said on Tuesday.

Originally built in 1915 by Raja Mahmudabad in memory of Sir Spencer Harcourt Butler, the then deputy commissioner of Awadh, Butler Palace holds significant historical value. To restore and repurpose it while preserving its original structure, the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) has launched the rejuvenation process. This public-private partnership (PPP) project will be overseen by a special team formed by the LDA.

According to the project timeline, the restoration and development of Butler Palace will be completed by March 2025. The plan includes site clearance, structural repairs, ex-



ternal façade conservation, basic wiring, and operational setup, all under the supervision of experts. Additionally, efforts will be made to ensure public engage-

ment and raise awareness about heritage conservation.

The book café at Butler Palace will not only provide study material but also offer snacks

and beverages for visitors. To further enhance its role as a cultural hub, the palace will host various events, with support from coaching institutes for

The Yogi Adityanath government, with a commitment to preserving Uttar Pradesh's historical heritage, has initiated the transformation of Butler Palace here into a book café and cultural centre.

its operations and promotion.

The renovated Butler Palace will serve as a venue for workshops and classes promoting local art, culture, and heritage. The space will also be available for exhibitions and film screenings, showcasing local artists and historical narratives.

An art gallery will be set up to highlight the history of the palace and the surrounding region. Additionally, a lighting and sound show depicting stories from Lucknow's history and folklore will be organized, offering an immersive experience for visitors.

Beyond serving as a book café, Butler Palace will be a centre for art exhibitions, craft fairs, and displays of local handicrafts.

CM Forgets Budget Announcements: Jairam Thakur

Rajan Panchhi
Mandi:

Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur has strongly criticized the state government, claiming that it has failed on every front. He stated that the latest budget is just as disappointing as the previous two. According to Thakur, the government has significantly reduced capital expenditure, indicating that state-sponsored development projects will remain negligible this year as well.

Jairam Thakur expressed concern over the fact that the announcements made in the last two budgets have not progressed beyond their initial stage. He accused the government of making promises in the assembly and subsequently forgetting them. "This is the first time in the state's history that neither the overall budget size nor the capital expenditure has increased," he remarked, questioning how this budget would fulfill the expectations of the people.

Highlighting significant cuts in crucial sec-



tors, he pointed out that the budget allocation for roads, transport, tourism, and civil aviation has been reduced from Rs 2,700 crore to Rs 1,522 crore—a sharp decline of over 43%. Similarly, the irrigation and flood control budget has been reduced by one-third, while funds for drinking water supply have been cut by 44%. Other major reductions include a 40% cut in agriculture and allied activities, 38% in general economic services, 33% in women and child development, and 51% in other sectors. "How can public welfare schemes be implemented when essential services are seeing such drastic

budget reductions?" he questioned.

Thakur further criticized the government by stating that there is not a single positive aspect in the budget. He described the Sakhu government's three budgets as mere rhetoric, claiming that the promises made have not moved beyond the pages of the budget book. "It is unfortunate that the commitments made in the budget have not even made it to government files, let alone implementation," he said.

The Leader of Opposition concluded by asserting that the budget presented by the Sakhu government has failed to safeguard the interests

Sambhal's Shahi Jama Masjid painting work nears deadline

Sambhal:

The painting work at the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal entered its third day on Tuesday, with the deadline set by the Allahabad High Court expiring on Wednesday.

The whitewashing of the outer wall of the Shahi Jama Masjid began on Sunday morning under the supervision of the ASI in line with a high court order, an advocate of the mosque committee said. The Mughal-era mosque here has been at the centre of a major row after a petition claimed that it was the site of an ancient Hindu temple.

The mosque's president, Zafar Ali, expressed the hope that the work would be completed by the deadline. He hinted that if needed, they would request an extension of one or two days from the court.

Speaking to reporters, Ali stated, "We are hopeful that the work will be completed by tomorrow. However, if there is any delay, we will appeal to the Hon'ble court for additional time."



He attributed the minor delays to the Holi holidays and preparations for Friday prayers.

The ongoing work including painting and decoration is being carried out under the supervision of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Authorities are closely monitoring the progress to ensure compliance with the court's directive.

The Sambhal district

HP govt to bring rationalization policy to fill vacant posts

Shimla:

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced that the state government would introduce a rationalization policy to fill vacant posts in various departments, especially in tribal and remote areas.

During the question hour in the State Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, Sukhu intervening on a question said that the government is working on a rationalization policy based on population and geographical conditions to ensure that no post remains vacant.

Earlier, Horticulture and Tribal Development Minister Jagat Singh Negi replying to the question by BJP MLA Janak Raj said that the shortage of officers and employees in tribal areas is a matter of concern.

He urged the Chief Minister to consider restarting the Tribal Sub-Cadre to address the issue.

Responding to the question by Congress MLA Kuldeep Singh Rathore, Negi said that the government has launched a campaign against the illegal import of apple plants without quarantine and has seized 25 vehicles and destroyed 2.95

lakh plants in 2023-24.

The government is also taking steps to prepare rootstocks for apple plants within the state although it is not enough considering the huge demand, he said.

The Horticulture Department has signed an agreement with an Italian company to prepare 50,000 apple rootstocks in the Bajaura area of Kullu district, he added.

In response to a question by MLA Rakesh Jammal, Negi said that the government is trying to speed up the work of revenue settlement for timely completion of the same.

Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said that the state government is trying to get Rs 925 crore from the central government under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

He said that the department is constantly communicating with the Union Ministry in this regard.

Agnihotri said that 80% of the work on the Sandhol drinking water scheme for the Gumarwin assembly constituency has been completed, and this scheme can be completed by January 2026.

Forty years on 3 gets death for killing 24 Dalits in UP village

Mainpuri (UP):

A special court in UP's Mainpuri district on Tuesday sentenced three persons to death in the 1981 Dehli massacre which saw 24 Dalits, including women and two children, being killed.

On March 12, special judge Indra Singh convicted the trio, namely, Kaptan Singh (60), Rampal (60) and Ram Sevak (70).

Aside from the capital punishment, the court imposed a Rs 50,000 fine on the convicts, government counsel Rohit Shukla said.



On March 12, special judge Indra Singh convicted the trio, namely, Kaptan Singh (60), Rampal (60) and Ram Sevak (70).

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Laik Singh, a local resident, on November 19, 1981, and following a detailed investigation, the dacoits, including gang leaders Santosh and Radhey, were charged.

Shukla said he pleaded for capital punishment in view of the gruesome massacre and the case falling in the rarest of rare category.

He said the judge after considering the evidence and hearing the arguments of the prosecution and the defence at length passed the verdict.

Initially the trial of the case began in the court of special judge dacoity affected (DAA) whereas one was declared an absconder. The FIR was filed by

307 (attempt to murder), and 396 (dacoity with murder), among others offences of the IPC.

Of the total accused, 14 persons died during the pendency of trial whereas one was declared an absconder. The FIR was filed by

hadab where the evidence of the witnesses was recorded.

In December 2024, the trial records were sent back from the Allahabad sessions court to special judge (DAA) Singh to decide the case, Shukla said.

During the trial, of the 17 undertrials, 13 accused including Santosh and Radhey died whereas as one person remained untraced.

In response to the tragedy, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met the affected families whereas Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the leader in the opposition, undertook a pad yatra from Dehli to Sadpur in Firozabad, offering solidarity with the grieving families.

UP Governor distributes pre-school health kits in Kushinagar

Gorakhpur (UP):

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Tuesday distributed pre-school and health kits in the Kushinagar district, officials said here.

The programme was held at the Kushinagar Collectorate premises, aiming to strengthen Anganwadi centres and promote early childhood education. Two-hundred-fifty Anganwadi centres in the district will receive these kits in the days to come.

Inspecting various stalls at the event, Patel emphasised self-reliance and skill development.

"Children must be nurtured from an early age to become mentally, physically and intellectually strong. Just as we prepare the land before sowing seeds, we must prepare children with the right education and

values," she said.

Children from Anganwadi centres showcased cultural performances, including cleanliness-themed songs and plays.

Impressed by their efforts, Patel remarked, "Cleanliness should be ingrained in every child. The message of hygiene they conveyed today must reach every household."

Essay winners of the National Women's Day, Jhansi and Shreya Dwivedi, spoke about the role of women in a developed India.

Patel underscored gender equality and said, "Whether a son or daughter, every child deserves equal education and opportunities. Women's empowerment is key to a developed India."

She also distributed benefits, including resi-

dential lease certificates to Musahar community members. "One district, one product" (ODOP) toolkits and Ayushman Bharat cards.

Stressing the importance of healthcare, she said, "Every girl aged nine to 14 should receive a cancer vaccine. No family should be deprived of essential medical facilities."

Patel instructed officials to ensure proper healthcare for senior citizens, monitor medicines and tighten border surveillance.

She called for strict action against dowry, child marriage and drug abuse, stating, "Social evils must be eradicated for a progressive society."

The event saw the participation of local legislators, district officials and Anganwadi workers.

At least 18 killed in airstrike on market in northern Mali separatist group says

Bamako (Mali): At least 18 people have been killed in an airstrike in northern Mali, a separatist group said. The army said it had mounted an attack targeting armed militants. The Collective for the Defence of the Rights of the Azawad People, which is part of a Tuareg separatist coalition, said Monday the Malian army bombed a market 50 km north of Lereb, in the Timbuktu region. Seven people were also injured in the strike on Sunday, the group said in a statement, denouncing a "barbaric act from another age" and a "flagrant human rights violation."

Mali's army said Monday in a statement on X it carried out air strikes on a "refuge" in the same area cited by the separatist group, killing 11 "terrorists."

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BUSINESS

RBI, Bank of Mauritius Sign Pact for Local Currency Transactions

Mumbai: Reserve Bank and the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) have signed a pact for establishing a framework to promote the use of the Indian Rupee and the Mauritian Rupee (MUR) for cross-border transactions. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and BOM Governor Rama Krishna Sithanen GCSK, the central bank said in a statement on Tuesday. "The MoU documents were exchanged in Port Louis, Mauritius in the presence of the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Mauritius Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on Wednesday, March 12, 2025," it said. The RBI said the MoU aims to promote the use of INR and MUR in bilateral trade. The MoU covers all current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions as agreed upon by both the coun-

Pope pens letter to editor while in hospital as Vatican prepares for King Charles' visit

Rome: Pope Francis said in a letter published Tuesday that his lengthy illness has helped make "more lucid" to him the absurdity of war, as his top deputy shot down any suggestion of resignation and plans progressed for an upcoming meeting with Britain's King Charles III.

Italian daily Corriere della Sera published a letter to the editor from Francis, signed and dated March 14 from Rome's Gemelli hospital where the 88-year-old pontiff has been treated since February 14 for a complex lung infection and double pneumonia.

In it, Francis renewed his call for diplomacy and international organisations to find a "new vitality and credibility." And he said that his own illness had also helped make some things clearer to him, including the "absurdity of war."

"Human fragility has



the power to make us more lucid about what endures and what passes, what brings life and what kills," he wrote. Responding to a letter from the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Luciano Fontana, Francis also urged him and all those in the media to "feel the full importance of words."

"They are never just words: they are facts

that shape human environments. They can connect or divide, serve the truth or use it for other ends," he wrote. "We must disarm words, to disarm minds and disarm the Earth."

The letter was published as Francis registered slight improvements in his treatment and at the Vatican No. 2, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, shot down any sug-

gestion the pope might resign. "Absolutely no," Parolin told journalists on Monday when asked if he and the pope had discussed a resignation. Parolin has visited Francis twice during his hospitalisation, most recently on March 2, and said he found Francis better than during his first February 25 visit. Also Tuesday, Fran-

Italian daily Corriere della Sera published a letter to the editor from Francis, signed and dated March 14 from Rome's Gemelli hospital where the 88-year-old pontiff has been treated since February 14 for a complex lung infection and double pneumonia.

cis received a standing ovation from the Italian Senate, after Premier George Meloni sent her greetings and said "not just this chamber, but all of the Italian people" wish the pope a full recovery "as soon as possible."

Meloni, who was the first outsider to visit the pope after he was hospitalised, said that "even in a trying moment, his strength and guidance have been felt."

North Macedonia appeals for calm as nightclub fire deaths trigger protests

Kocani (North Macedonia): Authorities in North Macedonia are appealing for calm as student groups called for fresh protests on Tuesday following the horrific nightclub fire that killed 59 people and injured more than 150 over the weekend.

The disaster, which occurred early on Sunday at Club Pulse in the eastern town of Kocani after pyrotechnics were used during a concert there, has sparked outrage over alleged corruption and safety violations.

Demonstrations took place Monday in both Kocani and the capital, Skopje, with some turning violent — protesters in Kocani overturned a van and hurled rocks at a municipal building. "We must call once again for reason," Interior Minister Panche Toshkovski said in an interview with private Sitel television late Monday. "We must allow the prosecuting authorities to do their

job so that in the end we can finally normalise the state."

Investigations have so far revealed that the club was operating at least double its 250-person capacity without proper licensing. Official say there were numerous safety violations — no emergency exits, insufficient fire equipment, the use of flammable cladding and no sprinkler system. Many victims were trampled as panicked concertgoers rushed toward a single exit.

Neighbouring Serbia and Bulgaria, which immediately offered assistance following the tragedy, are observing a day of national mourning Tuesday in solidarity with North Macedonia.

Medical specialists from the Czech Republic, Serbia, and Israel have arrived to support treatment efforts for the injured. Health Ministry official said. And the European Union is helping transport burn victims to nearby countries.

Hungary's parliament passes law banning Pride events in new assault on LGBTQ+ rights

Budapest: Hungarian lawmakers on Tuesday passed a law banning Pride events and allowing authorities to use facial recognition software to identify attendees, continuing a crackdown by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's right-wing populist party on the country's LGBTQ+ community.

The measure passed in a 130-27 vote. The law, supported by Orbán's Fidesz party and their minority coalition partner the Christian Democrats, was pushed



through parliament in an accelerated procedure after being submitted only a day ear-

lier. It amends Hungary's law on assembly to make it an offense to

hold or attend events that violate Hungary's contentious "child protection" legislation, which prohibits the "depiction or promotion" of homosexuality to minors under 18.

Attending a prohibited event will carry fines up to 200,000 Hungarian forints (USD 546), which the state must forward to "child protection," according to the text of the law. Authorities may use facial recognition tools to identify individuals

attending a prohibited event.

As the vote was held in Hungary's parliament in Budapest, opposition lawmakers ignited smoke bombs in the chamber, filling it with thick plumes of colourful smoke.

In a statement on Monday after lawmakers first submitted the bill, Budapest Pride organisers said the aim of the law was to "scapegoat" the LGBTQ+ community in order to silence voices

critical of Orbán's government.

"This is not child protection, this is fascism," organisers wrote. "The government is trying to restrict peaceful protests with a critical voice by targeting a minority. Therefore, as a movement, we will fight for the freedom of all Hungarians to demonstrate!"

The new legislation is the latest step against LGBTQ+ people taken by Orbán, whose government has

passed other laws that rights groups and other European politicians have decried as repressive against sexual minorities.

In 2022, the European Union's executive commission filed a case with the EU's highest court against Hungary's 2021 child protection law. The European Commission argued that the law "discriminates against people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity."

Sensex Surges 1,472 Points, Investors Wealth Up Rs 8.67 Lakh Crores

New Delhi: Investors' wealth surged by Rs 8.67 lakh crore in two days of the market rally where the BSE benchmark index Sensex jumped 1,472 points amid a firm trend in global equities. On Tuesday, the 30-share BSE benchmark gauge jumped 1,131.31 points or 1.53 per cent to settle at 75,301.26. During the day, it soared 1,215.81 points or 1.63 per cent to 75,385.76.

In two days, the benchmark has surged 1,472.35 points or 1.99 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms climbed Rs 8,67,540.05 crore to Rs 3,99,85,972.98 crore (USD 4.61 trillion) in two days. On Tuesday alone, investors' wealth jumped Rs 7 lakh crore following a stellar rally in the markets.

"Benchmark indices extended gains for the



second consecutive day on Tuesday, in a broad-based recovery on positive global cues ahead of key central bank meetings across the globe. Broader mid and small-

caps also posted sharp gains for the day. All sectors also posted gains for the day," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemmon Markets Desk, said. Positive global cues

with global markets extending gains for the second day on rising hopes for a ceasefire deal between Russia and Ukraine along with China stimulus measures

helped markets to rally sharply, Aluri noted.

"Bargain hunting at lower levels coupled with domestic optimism over strengthening case for more policy easing from RBI helped the sentiment. With most of the domestic worries largely in the price now, global factors ranging from trade war, Russia-Ukraine peace deal coupled with the US Fed rate outlook are key variables to watch in the near term," he added.

From the Sensex pack, Zomato jumped over 7 per cent. ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, Titag, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the other big gainers from the pack.

However, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra and Reliance Industries were the laggards.

Adani Green Energy Projects in Sri Lanka Withdrawn

Colombo: Five fundamental rights petitions filed against the Adani Green Energy projects in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka have been withdrawn by the petitioners.

The withdrawal comes after the Attorney General filed a motion following Adani Green Energy's notification to the Board of Investment about its decision to cancel its wind energy projects.

Last month, the Indian conglomerate announced its withdrawal from further engagement in the renewable wind energy project in Mannar and Pooneryn.

Fundamental rights petitions were filed in 2024 after the previous cabinet approved the project in May last year. The petitions pointed to the project's environmental hazards and the lack of transparency.

The Adani Group left the project after the new Sri Lankan government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake decided late in December to review the project and renegotiate the power purchase agreement.

The previous government-negotiated price of eight cents was considered too high, with the government aiming to bring it below six cents.

The National People's Power (NPP) government, in the run-up to the September presidential election, had vowed to annul the project. In December, the new cabinet opted to renegotiate the purchasing price.

New India Bank Depositors Seek RBI Help Amidst Financial Crisis

Thane: An organisation representing depositors of the New India Co-Operative Bank, hit by alleged embezzlement of Rs 122 crore, have submitted a petition to the Reserve Bank of India, seeking immediate measures to revive the bank for ending their financial hardships. In the petition, the organisation said it suspects that "deeper financial irregularities like undisclosed non-performing assets (NPAs) or additional frauds could be contributing to the crisis". On February 15, the Economic Offences



Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai police arrested Hitesh Melhta, General Manager and Head of

Accounts of the New India Cooperative Bank, for allegedly misappropriating Rs 122 crore

from the bank.

Two days prior to that, the RBI had imposed several restrictions on the bank, including on the withdrawal of funds by depositors, citing supervisory concerns emanating from the developments in the bank, and to protect the interest of its depositors. A day later, it superseded the cooperative bank's board for a year and appointed an administrator to manage its affairs.

The investigation into the alleged discrepancies began when internal audits revealed significant cash shortages in the safes of the Prab-

havevi and Goregaon branches in Mumbai.

In a formal memorandum of demands submitted to RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, the New India Co-Operative Bank Depositors' Foundation comprising affected individuals and cooperative societies sought immediate remedial measures to alleviate their financial hardships and revive the bank.

Foundation president T N Raghunatha said, "The petition highlights the plight of depositors who are unable to access their savings, which has impacted the daily lives, includ-

ing medical expenses and education of family members. The depositors are suffering due to fraudulent activities perpetrated by the bank's management, rather than any mismanagement on their own part."

One of the primary grievances raised by the foundation is the inadequacy of the '215 lakh deposit insurance coverage, which is insufficient for many depositors with significantly higher savings. There have also been reports of bank officials pressuring customers to accept this payout without providing clar-

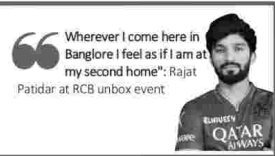
ity on the fate of their remaining deposits.

The petition argues that a fraud amounting to Rs 122 crore should not have been severe enough to destabilise a bank with a deposit base of Rs 2,436 crore as of March 2024.

The forum suspects that deeper financial irregularities, such as undisclosed non-performing assets (NPAs) or additional frauds, may be contributing to the crisis.

The depositors' foundation has demanded transparency from the RBI seeking details on the audit findings of the NICB's accounts.

Cricket



Kohli won't have to up his strike rate, Salt will take a lot of pressure off him: De Villiers

New Delhi
South African batting great AB de Villiers believes Virat Kohli should focus on playing smart cricket and continue controlling the game this season as RCB possess immense firepower with Phil Salt expected to ease the pressure on the Indian superstar.

Despite being one of RCB's most consistent performers, Kohli's strike rate was a topic of discussion past two seasons.

However, with the Bengaluru franchise acquiring the English duo of Salt and Liam Livingstone, along with Australian Tim David and West Indian Romario Shephard — all fearless strikers of the ball — de Villiers feels Kohli can play with more freedom.

"Virat seems to be enjoying his cricket. I don't think he's going to have to up his strike rate batting with Phil Salt," de Villiers said on JoStar Press Room on Tuesday.

"Salt is one of the most attacking players we've ever seen. I think he's going to take a lot of pressure off Virat. Virat needs to continue what he's been doing for so many years...control the game, play smart cricket. He's got the best instinct of any player out there. He



knows when to up the ante a bit and when to lower it." The South African, who played for RCB for 11 seasons, said Kohli needs to ensure there are no batting collapses.

"Virat needs to be the captain of the batting department in this tournament and really just keep things together, play smart cricket to make sure they don't find those collapses in the batting order." The former Proteas skipper feels that Kohli has been subjected to "unnecessary criticism over the last few seasons".

"There's no doubt some of the



outside noise has maybe influenced him a bit. He's only human, he's definitely got those doubts in his head.

"But the one thing about Virat is that he's always had the ability to, when it matters most, when he crosses that line for his team, block everything out and it's business time." With Faf du Plessis' departure, RCB enters the season with a new captain in Rajat Patidar.

De Villiers opined that Patidar's biggest challenge would be dealing with self-doubt while stepping into the shoes of past captains like du Plessis and Kohli.

"His biggest challenge will be insecurely, stepping into the big boots of the past captains like Faf and Virat... having Virat around and constantly almost doubting yourself."

"He needs to stay true to who he is and not try to captain like Virat or like Faf. And use the experience of Virat, use the experience of Andy Flower and some of the other players." RCB will be on the road consistently throughout the season, frequently alternating between home and away fixtures.

"Their scheduling is going to be a big obstacle. The team is balanced and that bodes well for them, especially with their scheduling, where they hop around to different venues all the time right throughout the tournament. They've got the trickiest schedule of them all." Despite this challenge, de Villiers believes RCB has a strong and balanced squad.

"They're only lacking an X-factor spinner, right? Krunal Pandya is a wonderful spinner? We've seen him over the years perform very consistently and he can chip in with the bat as well. They have some other options as well."

"But I mean, look at that batting lineup. It is pure power. There's a mix between power and also control."

Ish Sodhi joins elite group becomes 10th highest wicket taker



Dunedin

New Zealand secured a five-wicket win over Pakistan in the second T20I of the five-match series at Dunedin on Tuesday. Post this match Ish Sodhi joined the elite group of the highest wicket-takers list for New Zealand across all formats. Sodhi took two wickets in the match making his total 264 wickets in his career, he surpassed former Kiwi fast bowler Ewen John Chatfield who has 263 wickets to his name, as per ESPNcricinfo.

Sodhi is now the tenth-highest wicket-taker for New Zealand, in a career of 12 years Sodhi has played 196 and has picked up 264 wickets, with best figures of 6/39, he also has two fifters to his name. He has an average of 30.71 and an economy of 5.37. Indian-origin legspinner Ish Sodhi moved to Auckland with his parents, and Sodhi made his international debut back in 2013 against Bangladesh in the test.

He has been associated with the New Zealand team for 12 years but has been in and out of the team, Sodhi has been the only constant in the T-20 side where he is the second-highest wicket-taker for NZ behind Tim Southee. Sodhi has 142 wickets in T-20 with an average of 22.94 and an economy of 7.97.

New Zealand Women Squad: Suzie Bates(c), Georgia Plimmer, Emma McLeod, Brooke Halliday, Izzy Sharp, Maddy Green, Jess Kerr, Flora Devonshire, Polly Inglis(w), Eden Carson, Bree Illing, Fran Jonas, Rosemary Mair.

After the powerplay, Sri Lanka fought back and took three wickets in three overs taking NZW down to 60 for no loss to 75 for three. Chamari Athapaththu took the important wicket of Bates, NZW was 101/3 in 14.1 over when rain interrupted the game again which eventually washed out the game.

and Shaheen Afridi (22* in 14 balls, with two fours and a six) contributed some useful runs down the order, bringing Pakistan to 135/9 in 15 overs during the rain-curtailed match. Ben Sears was the pick of the bowlers for NZ he picked with two wickets giving away just 23 runs in his three overs.

During the run-chase of 136 runs, Seifert and Finn started by unleashing carnage, with Allen striking Mohammed Ali for three sixes in the second over and Seifert belting Shaheen Shah Afridi for four sixes in the next over. Both the opener played well but after Seifert and Finn NZ lost wickets quickly until Mitchell Hay scored a vital 21 runs and took NZ to a win with 11 balls and five wickets in hand. Haris Rauf (3/20) was the top bowler for Pakistan.

Seifert was given the 'Player of the Tournament' award for his knock.

Seifert, Allen guide NZ to five-wicket win over Pakistan in 2nd T20I



Dunedin

Fine knocks by openers Tim Seifert and Finn Allen and solid bowling spells from pacers helped New Zealand secure a five-wicket win over Pakistan in the second T20I of the five-match series at Dunedin on Tuesday.

With this win, NZ is 2-0 up in the five-match series, with three games left.

NZ won the toss and opted to bowl. Ben Sears (2/23) and Jacob Duffy (2/20) removed openers Mohammed Harris (11) and Hasan Nawaz (0) early, reducing Pakistan to 19/2 in 3.1 overs.

Skipper Salman Agha and Irfan Khan took Pakistan to 36/2 in six overs, but Irfan (11) and Khusdid Shah (2) fell in quick succession to Ish Sodhi, reducing Pakistan to 52/4 in seven overs.

Agha finally fell to Sears for a valiant 46 in 28 balls, with four boundaries and three sixes, leaving Pakistan with half its side gone for 76 runs in 9.2 overs.

Shadab Khan (26 in 14 balls, with two fours and two sixes) and Shaheen Afridi (22* in 14 balls, with two fours and a six) contributed some useful runs down the order, bringing Pakistan to 135/9 in 15 overs during the rain-curtailed match.

During the run-chase of 136 runs, Seifert and Finn started off by unleashing carnage, with Allen striking Mohammed Ali for three sixes in the second over and Seifert belting Shaheen Shah Afridi for four sixes in the next over.

NZ reached the 50-run mark in four overs. Ali put an end to the 66-run stand, removing Seifert for 45 in 32 balls, with three fours and five sixes. NZ was 66/1 in 4.4 overs.

Allen developed a brief partnership with Mark Chapman, but his explosive knock was ended by Jahandad Khan, who trapped him lbw for 38 in just 16 balls, with a four and five sixes. NZ was 87/2 in 6.5 overs.

Kiwis lost Chapman (1) and James Neesham (5) quickly and sunk to 97/4 in 8.3 overs. Daryl Mitchell (17 in 14 balls) and Mitchell Hay (21 in 16 balls, with two fours and a six) formed a partnership that took NZ to a win with 11 balls and five wickets in hand.

New Zealand-W vs Sri Lanka-W series decider washed out due to rain

New Delhi

After losing the ODI series 2-0 Sri Lanka-W (SLW) came back strongly in the T-20I against New Zealand-W, (NZW) levelling the series 1-1 after the second match. The third and decisive match was played on Tuesday, March 18 which went in vain after rain washed away the match due to rain the toss was also delayed, as per ESPNcricinfo.

Sri Lanka won the toss and decided to bowl first, New Zealand started very well scoring 42 runs in the powerplay without losing any wickets. Suzie Bates was the aggressor in this partnership. The match was reduced to 15 overs a side thanks to the second delay. Sri Lanka's bowlers made the most of the break, picking up wickets on return.

After the powerplay, Sri Lanka fought back and took three wickets in three overs taking NZW down to 60 for no loss to 75 for three. Chamari Athapaththu took the important wicket of Bates, NZW was 101/3 in 14.1 over when rain interrupted the game again which eventually washed out the game.

Georgia Plimmer was the highest run scorer of the match with 46 (37 runs



followed by Suzie Bates with 31 (28) runs. For SLW Chamari Athapaththu was the pick of the bowler picking up one wicket and giving away just 19 runs in her three overs. Chamari Athapaththu was named player as player of the series for her brilliant performance with both bat and bowl.

Sri Lanka Women Squad: Chamari Athapaththu(c), Vishmi Gunaratne, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Kavisha Dilhari, Manudi Nanayakkara, Nilakshi de Silva, Anushka Sanjeevani(w).

Leicestershire signs Pakistan test captain Shan Masood for all format



New Delhi

Leicestershire has secured Pakistan Test captain Shan Masood for an all-format agreement for the summer of 2025. The 35-year-old, who led a Test series victory over England last year, will add both experience and batting skill to Grace Road, as per ESPNcricinfo.

He is expected to start his time with the team in May, after the end of the Pakistan Super League, and is anticipated to make his Leicestershire debut on May 31, facing off against his old country, Derbyshire.

Shan Masood earlier should to play for Yorkshire, as captain since 2023 last season he scored 1240 runs at an average of 53 in 15 matches.

Shan Masood expressed his excitement for playing Leicestershire in all three formats, he expressed the admiration he had for Leicestershire.

"I am excited to have the chance to play all three formats for Leicestershire. I have always admired the club and have had great conversations with a lot

of the team during the last three seasons," Masood said in a statement released on Tuesday as quoted by ESPNcricinfo.

He also said that he loves playing in Uptonsteel County Ground, he admired the support of fans who gather at the ground and said Leicestershire has been a very good team in all formats they have produced many young players over the year.

"I love playing at Uptonsteel County Ground. The fans get behind the team in strong numbers and the games I have been a part of have always been a great spectacle. The club has been very competitive in all formats and produced some fantastic young players over the last few years. It is an exciting time to join the Foxes," he added.

Shan Masood has played 70 matches for Pakistan across all formats, he has scored 2938 runs with six centuries and fifteen fifties. He has an average of something a batter would want his average is only 29.08 with a strike rate of 57.64.

BCCI likely to ease rules on families travelling with players on tours: Sources

New Delhi

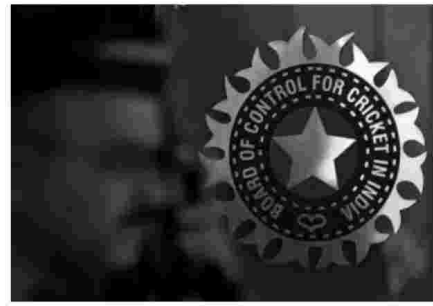
The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is reportedly considering a more flexible approach to its policy regarding players' families accompanying them on international tours. According to BCCI sources, players who wish to have their families with them for an extended period during overseas assignments will now be able to apply for special permission from the board.

This potential relaxation of rules comes after Indian cricket stalwart Virat Kohli speaking at the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit highlighted the emotional toll of being away from family during demanding tours.

Speaking about the importance of a support system, Kohli remarked that no player would like to "sit alone and sulk" after a poor showing during a tour," reported ESPNcricinfo.

His comments shed light on the mental challenges athletes face when travelling for long durations without their families. Virat said as quoted by ESPNcricinfo, "It is very difficult to explain to people how grounding it is to just come back to your family every time you have something intense, which happens on the outside."

"I do not think people have an understanding of what value it brings to a large extent. And I feel quite disappointed about that because it is like people who have no control



over what is going on are kind of brought into conversations and put out at the forefront that, 'oh, maybe they need to be kept away,' he added.

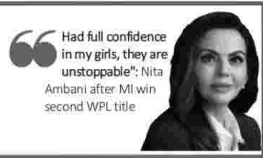
The Indian stalwart said that he would not like to miss any opportunity to spend time with family.

"Like, there could be different situations happening in your life all the time. And that allows you to be absolutely normal. Not in a vague sense, but in a very real way that you finish your commitment, your responsibility, and then you come back to your house, you are with family, and there's absolutely normalcy in your house and normal family life goes on. So, for me, that is absolutely a day of immense pleasure. And I would not miss any opportunities to go out and spend

time with my family whenever I can," he concluded.

The current BCCI policy allows limited family presence during tours, with restrictions often varying based on the series, venue, and scheduling demands. However, as conversations around mental well-being in sports gain prominence, the board appears to be reassessing its stance. While there is no official confirmation yet, sources suggest that under the new framework, players will have to submit requests to the BCCI.

With the international cricket calendar packed with fixtures, including the upcoming ICC events and bilateral series, this potential shift in policy could provide much-needed balance for players navigating the intense demands of the sport.



All eyes on Chhetri as India face Maldives in Asian Cup qualifier dress rehearsal

Shillong
The returning Sunil Chhetri will be the cynosure of all eyes as India face Maldives in an international friendly here on Wednesday, the match serving as a dress rehearsal for the all-important AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Bangladesh at the same venue in less than a week's time.

The 40-year-old Chhetri came out of his international retirement earlier this month to help the team successfully navigate the qualifiers for the continent's top football tournament, starting with the March 25 clash.

The preparatory match for Manolo Marquez's side marks a historic moment as the Blue Tigers will play in the football-crazy hill town for the first time.

It will also be India's all-time top scorer Chhetri's first match since announcing his return to international football.

In the pre-match press conference on Tuesday, Marquez said, "It is the first time we are playing here, but I have worked with a lot of coaches and players from here. I know it's a very nice place."

"I remember when I watched the Durand Cup in Shillong last year, I said, 'Wow, the ground, crowd, atmosphere, everything is nice.' I'm not joking, I said it'd be great if one day, the national team could play here." Defender Mehtab Singh concurred with the Spaniard.

Mehtab said, "We feel great to be in Shillong. It's the first time our national team will be playing here. The northeast is known for its football fan following. Football is the biggest sport here. Taking football to diverse regions



is a great thing for Indian football." For Marquez, his first competitive match since becoming India's head coach in July 2024 is a week away, and the friendly presents a great opportunity to fine-tune his team before the crucial fixture.

The Indian team, though, remains winless under Marquez with the side ending the year with a 1-1 stalemate against Malaysia in November in Hyderabad.

"It's a friendly game to prepare for the Asian Cup qualifier. Obviously, we want to win. We knew that the target during the previous FIFA windows was to arrive in the best possible condition for the first competitive match against Bangladesh next Tuesday."

"I don't think we will play with the same team against Bangladesh that will play tomorrow. Obviously, you

can't change all 11. Some will repent on Tuesday. I'm confident in all my players. It has to be a good game and a good preparation for Bangladesh." Marquez also confirmed Chhetri's involvement in the friendly match that will mark his 152nd cap for India.

"For sure, Sunil will play some minutes. I don't know whether as a starter or from the bench. We can use six substitutions, so 17 players can play, and I think Sunil will be one of them."

"He is the Indian player with the most goals this season. It doesn't matter if a player is 20, 40, or my grandfather at 87. If they are in better shape, they will be here. The national team is not about developing players."

"Developed players have to arrive here. The main team needs to win games. And if we need to win games, we need to call players who are in better

shape," said Marquez.
Chhetri had earlier hung his boots in June 2024 after a glorious international career after making his India debut in 2005.

But he showed he remains a force to reckon with, in the 2024-25 ISL, which has turned out to be Chhetri's most prolific season.

He has scored 12 goals from 24 matches to be the second highest scorer overall and highest among Indians.

Mehtab, who has helped the Blue Tigers' back line keep six clean sheets in 10 matches for India so far, said, "We have been practicing very well for both games — our primary focus is the friendly against Maldives and then the qualifier against Bangladesh. We're taking things step by step." Ranked 162 in the world, 36 places below India, Maldives are also using the friendly match to prepare for their Asian Cup qualifier against Philippines next Tuesday.

Maldives head coach Ali Suzain said, "Thank you for the hospitality here. We're playing Philippines on the 25th, so it's a preparation match for us. But it's an important one since India and Maldives are two strong sides in this region. I hope it will be a good fight."

"Although we haven't played much at the international level these days, I have been with these players for a long time. I know them very well and I know their strengths and weaknesses and how to work on them."

"The players also have confidence in me. Maldives is a football country. Every island has football pitches. We will give our best for the people of Maldives."

Indian runner Archana Jadhav gets four-year ban for failed dope test



New Delhi
India's long-distance runner Archana Jadhav was on Tuesday banned for four years owing to a failed dope test in January, the findings of which she did not contest despite repeated reminders, prompting World Athletics to deem her actions as acceptance of guilt.

According to World Athletics' Athletes Integrity Unit (AIU), Jadhav's sample, which was collected at the Pune Half-Marathon in December last year, contained prohibited substance Oxandrolone. This synthetic anabolic steroid promotes protein production and muscle building in the body.

The ban came into effect from January 7. Jadhav has been under provisional suspension for the duration. On February 25, she had replied to the violation charge in an e-mail to the AIU stating "I am extremely sorry sir... I welcome your decision." The AIU said its understanding of this communication was that Jadhav did not require a hearing and was "content" to get a decision from the body.

The AIU said Jadhav was nonetheless informed that she had committed the Anti-Doping Rule Violations, and was reminded of the same by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on February 28. The AIU, however, did not get any response from Jadhav.

The AIU said Jadhav has also not demonstrated that the Anti-Doping Rule Violations were "not intentional".

"...the Athlete is deemed to have committed the Anti-Doping Rule Violations..." the AIU stated.

As a result, "a period of ineligibility of four years" commences on January 7.

In addition, her results on and since December 15, 2024 stand disqualified.

She will have to forfeit all awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money for the period.

"The AIU said Jadhav did not exercise her right to a 'B' sample test despite expressing a desire to do so in early communication."

She responded well past the stipulated date of January 17 to state that she was hospitalised owing to illness.

This was after she was told about the procedure and the cost involved in getting a test. The AIU said it had provided an extended deadline to the athlete.

"...on 22 January 2025, the AIU wrote to the Athlete and provided her with an extended deadline by which to make the full payment of the costs of the B Sample analysis to World Athletics..." Jadhav was required to confirm her availability by no later than January 24.

The AIU said Jadhav once again failed to respond or make the full payment.

She had last competed in the Delhi half marathon in October 2024 in the elite Indian women's race, finishing fourth with a time of 1:20:21 behind winner Lili Das, Kavita Yadav and Priya Lamba.

Jadhav has a personal best of 35:44:26 in 10,000m, and 1:20:21 in the half marathon. In the 3,000m, she has a personal best of 10:28:82.

Jadhav had also submitted reports from Agilus Diagnostics containing the results of several (negative) drug tests performed on a urine sample.

Mumbai City FC's rocky road to playoffs: Season of ups, downs

New Delhi
The road to the playoffs was anything but smooth for the reigning ISL Cup winners. Expected to dominate, Mumbai City FC instead endured an inconsistent campaign, finishing with nine wins, nine draws, and six defeats, according to the official website of the Indian Super League (ISL).
Injuries to key players disrupted their rhythm, preventing them from building any momentum throughout the league phase. Yet, their resilience and experience—hallmarks of their recent success—helped them navigate the challenges. In the final Matchweek, they delivered a dominant performance against Bengaluru FC to secure a spot in the ISL Playoffs for the third consecutive season.

Now, in Knockout 1, the Islanders will once again face Bengaluru FC, where they have a chance to put their best foot forward and fight to retain their title.

Petr Kratky's side began the season inconsistently, struggling to establish early momentum. Their campaign opened with a rematch of last season's ISL Cup final against Mohun Bagan Super Giant, where they once again staged a comeback—this time from two goals down to snatch a point.

However, the Islanders faltered in the very next match going down in a five-goal thriller to Jamshedpur FC. Mumbai City FC managed just two wins in their first eight games, reflecting a team struggling to rediscover their championship mentality. With four draws and multiple missed chances, they struggled to convert performances into victories, leaving them stuck in mid-table and unable to assert their dominance. Mid-season was riddled with injuries for the Islanders, yet it was arguably their best spell of the campaign. This period saw them secure their only back-to-back victories of the season, offering a temporary boost.

Between Matchweek 10 and Matchweek 17, they won four of eight matches and picked up two draws, showing signs of resurgence. However, their inability to sustain momentum remained a concern, as two more heavy home defeats—against NorthEast United FC and Jamshedpur FC, once again halted their progress.

As the season reached its decisive phase, the team sat in sixth place. A dominant win over Mohammedan SC in Matchweek 18 propelled them to fifth, just one point behind third-placed Bengaluru FC.

"Immensely proud of our athletes who have brought glory to the nation": PM Modi

New Delhi
Special Olympics Bharat, on Monday, organised a welcome ceremony for the Indian athletes who returned from Turin, Italy after a historic 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games campaign. PM Narendra Modi posted pictures with players he met, expressing immense joy and pride in their achievements.

"The Indian contingent, comprising 30 athletes and 10 support staff members, returned home with an inspiring collection of 33 medals, including 8 gold, 18 silver, and 7 bronze medals, won across six sporting disciplines: alpine skiing, snowboarding, floorball, snowshoes, short track speed skating and cross country skiing."

"I am immensely proud of our athletes who have brought glory to the na-



tion at the Special Olympics World Winter Games held in Turin, Italy! Our incredible contingent has brought home 33 medals. Met the contingent in

Parliament and congratulated them for their accomplishments." PM Narendra Modi posted on X.

Union Minister of Labour and Employment; Youth Affairs and Sports Dr Mansukh Mandaviya retweeted PM Narendra Modi's tweet on his X handle and reargued all the athletes with their Best Friend (PM Modi). "Athletes with their Param-Mitral" Dr Mansukh Mandaviya on X.

The ceremony, held at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, was attended by the Minister of State, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Raksha Khadse and President of Special Olympics Bharat, Mallika Nadda. The dignitaries were accompanied on the stage by Special Olympics Bharat athlete Bharti, who won two gold medals in the tournament.

Breaking barriers in Indian Golf: Kapil Dev-Grant Thornton Invitational returns in 2025 with a mixed format

New Delhi
The Kapil Dev - Grant Thornton Invitational returns for its third edition, introducing a groundbreaking mixed format that's set to transform the Indian golf landscape. This prestigious tournament, co-presented by cricket legend Kapil Dev and premium consulting firm Grant Thornton Bharat, has established itself as a key fixture on the Indian golf calendar, driving growth and inclusivity in the sport. Proudly hailed as India's best golf course 2024 by the World Golf Awards, the tournament is set to tee off at Prestige Golfshire in Bengaluru from April 23 to 26, 2025. This pioneering event is India's first professional golf tournament to be co-sanctioned by the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) and the Women's Golf Association of India (WGAI). It features India's top male and female professionals competing together, vying for the same prize purse of INR 2 crores.

Vishesh C. Chandio, CEO, Grant Thornton Bharat, said, "The Kapil Dev - Grant Thornton Invitational 2025 is more than just a golf tournament—it's a defining event for Indian sport and business. As the first professional golf event in India to be co-sanctioned by both the PGTI and the WGAI, it brings men and women professionals together on the same stage, competing for the same prize purse, and paired with amateur celebrities from cricket, business, government, arts and fashion. Our vision is to build an ecosystem that fosters a more inclusive and accessible India. By breaking barriers and setting a new precedent for inclusivity in sports,



we are not just growing golf—we are re-shaping the future of Indian sports into one that is diverse, accessible, and truly equal."

The tournament combines the Professional Championship with a thrilling Pro-Am component, bringing together professionals and amateurs in a dynamic and engaging way. Kicking start with a practice round on April 23, followed by a three-day, 54-hole championship from April 24 to 26, where 60 men and 12 women professionals will compete for the same prize purse. The event will also feature three Pro-Am rounds in a rotational format, with 48 professionals teeing off in the morning, while the remaining 24 pair up with 72 amateurs in the afternoon session. Each Pro-Am team will comprise one professional and three amateurs, with scores combining the pro's stroke play and the amateurs' scramble format. Prize money will be awarded to the top

three professionals in the Pro-Am standings, making this tournament a thrilling blend of high-stakes competition and camaraderie.

PGTI President and Indian Cricket Legend Kapil Dev said, "With the third edition of the Kapil Dev - Grant Thornton Invitational, we're poised to raise the bar even higher, making this year's event the most

unforgettable yet. I extend my gratitude to Grant Thornton Bharat for their unwavering support in promoting golf in India and I also thank the venue Prestige Golfshire Bengaluru. Golf holds immense importance in India, fostering inclusivity, diversity, and excellence. Through this tournament, we aim to inspire a broader audience, create a large community of enthusiasts, and most importantly, nurture the next generation of golfers, making the sport more accessible and inclusive for all. I'm grateful to all our partners for their com-

mitment to shaping a vibrant and inclusive sporting culture in India. Let's make this edition another milestone in golf's exciting journey in our country."

Mr. Amandeep Jhli, CEO, PGTI, said, "After the extremely successful first two editions, the eagerly awaited Kapil Dev - Grant Thornton Invitational makes a welcome return to the PGTI. We thank our President Mr.

Kapil Dev and Mr. Vishesh Chandio, CEO, Grant Thornton Bharat, for their joint initiative in getting the event back on the PGTI calendar. We also thank Grant Thornton Bharat, Prestige Golfshire Club and all other event partners for partnering with PGTI in making the event possible. The participation of the leading Indian lady professionals, a result of our partnership with the Women's Golf Association of India (WGAI), adds a new dimension and more excitement to the event and stresses on the theme of inclusivity in sport. This year's tournament with its new format, new venue and the presence of top Indian lady professionals, is thus set to offer a unique and memorable experience to the professionals and golf fans alike."

Supported by Proud Partner Inceptuz and Championship Sponsors Callaway, Harley Davidson and Ballantines, Kapil Dev - Grant Thornton Invitational has transcended its role as a golf tournament, emerging as a catalyst for inclusivity, collaboration, and transformation. As #GTBharat continues to shape #VibrantBharat, this pioneering event showcases the profound impact of sports on society.

S8UL to represent India at Esports World Cup 2025 among 40 top global teams

New Delhi
In a landmark development, S8UL has been selected as a Club Partner by the Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF) for the upcoming EWC season, 2025, making history as the first and only Indian team to earn this honour.

Handpicked as one of just 40 best esports organizations worldwide, S8UL stands alongside the biggest names in global esports—a testament to the team's dominance, fan power, and sheer impact in gaming and esports. With this, S8UL continues to elevate Indian esports on the global stage, as per a press release from S8UL.

A dominant force in Battlegrounds Mobile India (BGMI) and Pokemon UNITE, S8UL has now expanded into VALORANT and Call of Duty: Mobile (CODM). The organisation has also set its sights on Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Europe, growing its presence in international esports markets. Already established as a top esports org in India, its selection into the EWCF Club Partner Program further anchors S8UL's position as a key player in the global esports space.

Blending esports dominance with mainstream entertainment, S8UL is home to over 25 of the country's leading gaming creators, as it continues to play a key role in shaping India's gaming culture.

Sadia Khateeb shares her working experience with John Abraham in 'The Diplomat'



Mumbai actor Sadia Khateeb shared her working experience with John Abraham in Shivam Nair's directorial film 'The Diplomat'.

She spoke about her experience of sharing screen-space with

She spoke about her experience of sharing screenspace with John, saying, "It was a beautiful experience. He is a fantastic actor, but more he is a fantastic human being. I have always admired and adored him. It was nice working with him."

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as JP Singh, a skilled diplomat navigating a high-stakes mission. The film is an intense political thriller that highlights the power of negotiation and intellect over violence and war. On how it was to work in the film, she added, "It was an inspiring journey. I started reading about it after giving the auditions....as an actor, it was challenging for me but at the same place. It was a big opportunity for me, and I was very happy to get it in the early stage of my career. When I got the project, I didn't think much about the challenges but was full of gratitude for getting such a chance because, as an actor, you want to play such challenging and meaty roles and do something different and creative."

what drew him to the film, describing it as an "emotional, on-the-edge psychological thriller" rather than just another patriotic story. He said, "I didn't do the film just because it's patriotic; I did it because it's an emotional, on-the-edge psychological thriller." Comparing it with the film Argo, the actor added, "It's like a film called Argo, and if you watch that film, it's a true story about the US Embassy in Iran and how they had to get people out. You won't move when you watch that film; you'll just be glued to your seat. That feeling is what I got from The Diplomat."

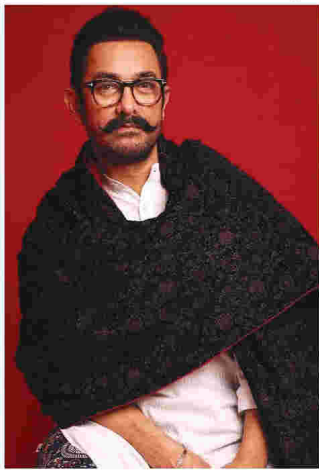


Aamir Khan spotted with girlfriend Gauri Spratt after confirming their relationship

ri and quickly escorted her to the car.

Aamir was previously married to Reena Dutta, and later Kiran Rao. From his first marriage with Reena, Aamir has two children, Junaid and Ira. The actor and his second wife, director Kiran Rao, married in 2005 and separated in 2021. They continue to co-parent their son, Azad. During the press event that was conducted on his birthday, Aamir also opened up about his upcoming projects, revealing how passionate he is to adapt the epic Mahabharat into a film.

"We are just starting with the writing process. We are putting together a team...so let's see how that goes," he said. In the coming months, Aamir will be seen headlining Sitaare Zameen Par. The film is expected to feature Genelia in a pivotal role.



Rishi Kapoor was "a little dissatisfied" with his career, recalls Rakesh Roshan

Mumbai the late Rishi Kapoor shared a deep bond with filmmaker and actor Rakesh Roshan. The two first met on the sets of 'Kheh Kheh Mein' (1975), a musical thriller that also starred Rishi's wife, actress Neetu Kapoor. Over the years, their friendship grew stronger, and they collaborated on multiple films, including 'Jhoota Kahin Ka' (1979) and 'Aap Ke Deewane' (1980).

Rakesh Roshan spoke about his memories with Kapoor, who was fondly called Chintu by the film fraternity.

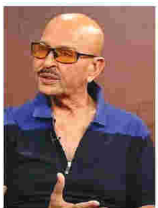
"The 'Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai' director recalled how passionate the actor was and how he did some amazing work before his death. However, there was a time when Kapoor felt "a little dissatisfied" because he found himself doing similar roles, which

made him feel stuck. "He did amazing work before he left us. All his last films were amazing. He took on different kinds of roles, and he was so happy. You will not believe... he used to call me and say, 'Aaj maine yeh picture sign ki hai... Usme main ganja bhi ho raha hoon, buddha ho raha hoon, 80 saal ka. Roz mujhe makeup karna padta hai 4 ghante, 5 ghante,'" he said. "In the middle, yes, he got a little bored. He would say, 'Yaar, wahi same cheez, wahi role, wahi kar raha hoon.' He was a little dissatisfied with his career," Roshan added.

Rishi Kapoor's final film was Sharmaji Namkeen (2022), which was captured posthumously. Since he could not complete filming, Paresh Rawal stepped in to finish his portions. The actor passed away on April 30, 2020, at the age of 67, after battling leukemia.

Mumbai Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan has been the talk of the town ever since he confirmed his relationship with Gauri Spratt on his 60th birthday.

And, now, on Tuesday, Aamir and Gauri were spotted together for the first time in public, grabbing eyeballs. Mumbai-based shutterbugs quickly managed to capture the lovebirds in the town as they were getting into a car.



"Wanted a newcomer..": Rakesh Roshan

Mumbai actor and director Rakesh Roshan introduced his son Hrithik Roshan with the 2000 romantic film 'Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai', which went on to become a massive hit and a landmark in Hrithik's career.

The ace filmmaker, however, shared that he would have made the film with any newcomer had it not been his son. He shared that there was no pressure on him to introduce his son; rather, he was willing to make a romantic film.

Roshan said that making 'Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai' was a challenge for him as he had done 'Khudgarz', 'Khoon Bhari Maang', followed by 'Kishan Kanhaiya', 'King Uncle', 'Karan Arjun' and 'Koyla' but never any romantic film.



National Theatre Festival leaves Delhiites overwhelmed to soul-stirring plays

New Delhi Theatre lovers in Delhi were captivated and were truly delighted by two outstanding plays BARFF by veteran actor director Saurabh Shukla and EK MULAQAT MANTO SE by Ashwath Bhatt, known for his work with Theatre and movies at the two-day NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL 2025 DELHI by AD PIX at Shri Ram Center for Performing Arts (SRCPA) over the weekend.

While BARFF is produced by Ashwin Gidvani, with a powerful performance by Saurabh Shukla, Sunil Palwal, Aanchal Chauhan, kept audience on the edge for its thrills and suspense. "EK MULAQAT MANTO SE", with Maneesha Varma as Creative Producer, and a brilliant acting by Ashwath Bhatt, was a soul stirring emotional saga during Indo-Pakistan partition.

The National Theatre Festival 2025, Delhi was a deep dive into themes of truth, belief, and the socio-political upheaval of our times, reflected through the lens of theatre. Managed by Team Abhra Dasgupta, an active theatre person at Kolkata for last 23 years, Abhra believes



"We are thrilled to see a great response in Delhi. In the theatre, distance is no barrier-our stories, emotions and voices unite us beyond all borders and we hope to present our masterpieces in future too."

Both the days were graced with the presence of theatre enthusiasts. This two-day theatre extravaganza brought joy and immense satisfaction to its audiences, successfully uniting people through the power of performance. AD Pix did an exceptional job curating this event, offering two remarkable performances by legendary thespians of the country.

The festival kicked off on its inauguration day in the glorious presence of veteran

theatre personality Prasanna Ji, with a world-class production by AGP, Barff. Written, directed, and performed by National Award-winning actor Shri Saurabh Shukla, this play captured the audience's attention from the very start. Alongside him, renowned actors Sunil Palwal and Aanchal Chauhan brought their characters to life with remarkable performances, making the first day a massive success.

On the second day, the audience was treated to another exceptional performance. The talented actor, playwright, and NSD faculty member Shri Ashwath Bhatt captivated the audience as he embodied the character of Shahadat Hussain Manto. His portrayal of the legendary

writer was nothing short of mesmerizing, leaving a lasting impact on the spectators. Produced by Collective Madness, this performance showcased the depth and versatility of theatre.

Through this two-day celebration of theatre, AD Pix reinforced the message that theatre is a powerful tool capable of transcending barriers and fostering harmony. The concept of "Bengal Meets Delhi," which was widely promoted through advertisements, hoardings, and banners, resonated deeply with the audience. It was evident that this festival was not just a display of talent but also a cultural bridge between two regions.

In 2025 alone AD Pix has already successfully organ-

Colin Farrell in talks to star in 'Sgt. Rock' for DC Studios

Washington actor Colin Farrell, who rose to prominence as a classic DC villain in 'The Penguin', is in talks to return to the DC universe in 'Sgt. Rock', a World War II action film directed by Luca Guadagnino for DC Studios.

The move comes after Daniel Craig, who had been circling the feature project, announced his departure and is now considering a role in Greta Gerwig and Netflix's take on Narnia, as per The Hollywood Reporter.

In February, DC Studios executives James Gunn and Peter Safran stated that Craig had never received an offer. They stated that the production would begin this summer "only if we find the perfect actor."

Created by Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert, 'Sgt. Rock' is a World War II

soldier who first appeared in comics in 1959. His comic was one of DC's longest-running books. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bruce Willis previously circled the role during Hollywood's multi-decade history of trying to bring the character to the big screen, as per the outlet.

The script is from screenwriter Justin Kuritzes, who penned Guadagnino's Challengers and Queer.

Farrell portrayed Penguin as a ruthless crime lord in The Batman, Matt Reeves' gritty saga take on the Caped Crusader. He then returned to the character in The Penguin, an HBO spin-off that won widespread acclaim and awards. Farrell earned a SAG Award, Golden Globe Award, Critics Choice Award, and Saturn Award, among other huzzas, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

ized some national-level theatre festivals, in various cities and they are committed to continuing this tradition in the future. The event owes much of its success to the dedicated team of young thespians from Bengal. Led by Abhra Dasgupta, the renowned set and light designer, the team also included Swagata Chatterjee (theatre practitioner), Nilanjana Ganguly (actor), and Manmita Dutta (actor), who ensured that the festival ran smoothly and efficiently.

The National Theatre Festival in Delhi 2025 has undeniably left an indelible mark on the hearts of its audience, building a solid foundation for future theatre events in the city. AD Pix Production commitment to bringing world-class theatre to Delhi is commendable, and we look forward to more such spectacular celebrations of the art form in the years to come.

BARFF is an intense exploration of truth and belief that promises to keep audiences on the edge of their seats. Saurabh Shukla shares, "My goal is to engage the audience deeply through masterful storytelling and a powerful portrayal of the protagonist."