

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

## Briefs

### WWII-era bomb to be defused

The Indian Army will defuse a suspected World War II-era unexploded bomb recovered from the bank of the Subarnarekha river in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district on Monday. SP (Rural) Rishav Garg said police had sought the Army's assistance and that the site had been cordoned off, with a close vigil to prevent villagers from approaching the device. Earlier, a bomb detection and disposal squad (BDDS) from Ranchi inspected the site in Baharagora on Thursday and found the device to be from the World War II period, though its origin is yet to be confirmed.

### 3 held with 24 kg heroin, ₹21 lakh cash

Three held with 24.5kg heroin, ₹21 lakh cash Punjab Police on Sunday said it had busted a Pakistan-backed cross-border smuggling module in a joint operation with the Border Security Force (BSF), arresting three suspects and recovering 24.5kg heroin and ₹21 lakh in drug money in Amritsar district. The suspects have been identified as Jagjit Singh, Manpreet Singh and Roshan Singh, all residents of Amritsar district. DGP Gaurav Yadav said teams also seized a multi-copter drone used by Pakistan-based smugglers to deliver the consignment and two vehicles. Preliminary investigations indicate direct links between the suspects and handlers based in Pakistan.

### One killed in ropeway trolley crash

A 28-year-old woman was killed and six others injured after a ropeway trolley crashed while descending from a hilltop temple in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district on Sunday. The accident occurred shortly after 10 am when the cable snapped, causing the trolley to plunge 200 to 300 feet, officials said. The victims were visiting the Khallari Mata temple during the Navratri festival. The injured were taken to a nearby hospital, with four referred to Raipur for further treatment. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief and ordered a detailed probe into the incident.

### Mayawati urges unity ahead of polls

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati held a meeting in Lucknow on Sunday with party members from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh to review organisational work. She stressed the need for unity among the Bahujan community to safeguard its identity and ensure political empowerment, and cautioned workers against pre-election inducements.

### CEC under executive's thumb: Oppn

The notices moved by the opposition MPs in Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar have accused him of "acting under the thumb of the executive", besides blaming him for "mass disenfranchisement" through the SIR exercise, and raising questions on his appointment.

## BACK TO LEH | The climate activist says he used the time in jail for personal reflection

# Wangchuk seeks talks on Ladakh

LEH

Leh-based climate activist Sonam Wangchuk who returned to the region after his release from detention has said he is ready to engage in dialogue on issues linked to Ladakh. Speaking to ANI here, Wangchuk said he felt positive about returning to the mountains after nearly six months.

"I am feeling very good. After 170 days, coming to these mountains and meeting people, I hope that a new sun will rise for the cause for which we are working. We are moving forward with hope. We hope that there will be such an atmosphere from all sides, and I would like to thank the people of the entire country who supported us in this struggle. Looking forward to meeting people," Wangchuk said.

Wangchuk was released from Jodhpur Central Jail after the government revoked



Wangchuk said while there were issues from a justice perspective, he does not want to hold any bitterness and is willing to move forward through discussions

his detention under the National Security Act. He had been in custody since September 26, 2025.

Earlier, reflecting on his detention, Wangchuk said the period allowed him time for personal reflection. He stated that while there were issues from a justice perspective, he does not want to hold any bitterness and is willing to move forward through discussions.

"In my personal life, I would say it was positive. It was an experience that gave me time to reflect on myself. From a justice perspective, many mistakes were made, many

wrongs were done, and these mistakes should never happen to anyone. But the way they were withdrawn, I understand that there is an awareness of those mistakes," he said.

Wangchuk had also described his time in jail as a "huge horror story" and spoke about the difficulties faced by his wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, in seeking legal recourse.

Wangchuk was detained two days after protests in Leh demanding statehood for Ladakh and inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

## US LPG cargo ship from Texas arrives at Mangaluru

MANGALURU

An LPG cargo ship from the US arrived at the New Mangalore Port on Sunday, amid the supply constraints due to the ongoing war in the Middle East.

The vessel "Pyxis Pioneer", which left Port of Nederland in Texas on February 14, brought 16,714 metric tonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for discharge to Aegis Logistics, officials said.

The vessel follows the Russian "Aqua Titan" ship in reaching the port within the span of a day. The development is considered significant as Mangaluru is home to India's largest underground LPG storage facility, which became operational in September 2025. The storage facility, located 225 metres below sea level, has a capacity of 80,000 metric tonnes.

Earlier, a Russian crude oil tanker named "Aqua Titan", originally headed to China, was diverted to India a few days ago. The ship arrived off the Mangaluru coast on Saturday evening carrying 7.7 lakh barrels of crude oil.

## Manipur talks mark good beginning: CM

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday described his first meeting with leaders of the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) as a 'good beginning' towards restoring peace, normalcy, and rebuilding trust between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in the state.

The Chief Minister held a closed-door meeting with a delegation of the Kuki-Zo Council in Guwahati on Saturday, during which a range of issues concerning the state and ongoing government efforts to restore stability in Manipur were discussed.

Referring to the Guwahati talks, Singh said that the engagement -- the first in nearly three years -- marked a significant step forward.

"The dialogue between the KZC and the state government is indeed a good beginning towards restoring peace and normalcy, as well as rebuilding trust among various communities," he told the media, while indicating that such interactions would continue in the future.



Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh inspects Inter-State Bus Terminal at Chingmeirong, in Imphal on Sunday -ANI

## Bid to storm Kuki civil society group chief's home

Churachandpur: A group of people attempted to storm the residence of Kuki Zo Council (KZC) chairman in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Sunday, but the security forces thwarted the move by firing tear gas shells, officials said. The incident occurred a day after Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh held talks with the Kuki Zo Council, a civil society organisation, in Guwahati in a bid to rebuild trust between the two warring sides, Meiteis and Kukis. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. The President's Rule was imposed in the northeastern state in February 2025. A popular government headed by Singh was formed in February this year.

## PDP announces support to LDF in Kerala Assembly polls

Kochi: The People's Democratic Party has decided to support the LDF in the upcoming Kerala Assembly elections.

The decision was officially announced by PDP chairman Abdul Nasar Madani in a statement on Sunday after a state leadership meeting held in Ernakulam. The PDP also accused the Congress of indirectly aiding such forces by acting as "propagators of allegations" put forth by Sangh Parivar groups.

According to the party, the growing tendency to accommodate communalism poses a serious challenge to Kerala's future. Leaders said the decision to back the LDF was taken based on political understandings reached during discussions between the PDP leadership and the Left Front.

## DMK's Stalin offers five seats to CPI(M)

CHENNAI

The ruling DMK has offered five seats to its ally, CPI (M), for the forthcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, the Left party's State Secretary P Shanmugam said on Sunday.

Seat-sharing talks between the DMK and CPI (M), which have been going on for the last 20 days, saw a new development with DMK President M K Stalin personally joining the negotiations.

"The CPI(M) has been asking for double digit allocation. With more parties joining the front, the DMK said providing more seats is difficult." The Chief Minister cited con-

## POLL WATCH TAMIL NADU

straints with the expansion of the Secular Progressive Alliance.

Following the DMK's stand, the CPI(M)'s state committee met twice and decided not to insist on more than 6 seats.

"Since the current alliance has been strengthened with the arrival of new allies, we decided not to push for more than 6 seats. Our executive committee authorised us to secure at least 6 seats we contested in the 2021 Assembly polls," he said.

Under these circumstances, CPI (M) general secretary M A Baby attended the state committee meeting on March 21, where it was decided to press for six seats.

## AIADMK names 2 candidates for Puducherry Assembly polls

PUDUCHERRY

Ahead of the Puducherry Assembly Election 2026, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) announced its two candidates for key constituencies on Sunday.

In an official statement, AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami said that, as per the decision of the party's governing council, the candidates have been elected and nominated to contest the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled to be held on April 9.

The party has fielded A Anbazhagan, a former M.L.A. from Uppalainpet (15) constituency, while A Gandhi, a BSc graduate, will contest from Urulaiyanpet (16).

## Mamata holds meet with party workers

KOLKATA

Weeks ahead of the state Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee started her election campaign by holding a meeting with party workers at her Bhabanipur constituency.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) national secretary Abhishek Banerjee and TMC minister Firhad Hakim were also present at the meeting.

According to sources, Mamata asked party workers to be more cautious as over 50 police officials have been changed by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Notably, TMC's Bhabanipur campaign slogan is "Unnoyong Ghore Ghore, Ghorer Meye Bhabanipur-e" (Development in every home, the daughter of the house is in Bhabanipur).

## POLL WATCH WEST BENGAL

According to party sources, the CM will start campaigning in north Bengal on March 24 and will address at least three public meetings at Alipurduar Parade Ground, Matigara and Maynaguri. On March 25 she will campaign at South 24 parganas.

On the other hand, while campaigning at Nandigram, Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari was "confident" of winning Bhabanipur constituency against Mamata.

"I am thankful to the voters of Nandigram as they had chosen me over Mamata. I am sure that people of Bhabanipur will also vote for me and will defeat Mamata," said Adhikari.

## Cong releases final list of 7 candidates for Assam polls

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday announced its fifth and final list of seven candidates for the Assam Assembly elections.

With this, the party has declared candidates for 101 of the 126 seats in the state Assembly.

"The Central Election Committee (CEC) of Congress has selected the Congress candidates for the ensuing elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly," an official statement from AICC general secretary, Organisation, K C Venugopal said. Among the candidates declared in the final list are Joseph Hasda from the Gossaigaon seat, Birkhang Boro from Dotma-ST, Rajat Kanti Saha from the Bijni and Anchula Gwara Daimary from the Bhergaon seat.

# Online Deliberation on World Peace at Kriyayoga Ashram

### Reflecting on Measures to Prevent War Amidst Global Tensions and Conflicts



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: With the objective of establishing peace amidst global tensions and conflicts, a special online deliberation session is being organized on Saturday and Sunday. Held under the aegis of Kriyayoga, this program features online participation from attendees across both India and abroad. The central theme of this session has been designated as "How to

Prevent War Between Nations." The Founder and President of the Kriyayoga Ashram observes that, given the current international climate, the issue of how to contain global tensions remains a matter of grave concern. Through this program, an endeavor will be made to bring people together on a common platform to seek solutions rooted in peace, cooperation, and spiritual awareness. Conducted via



Zoom, this session is scheduled to commence at 8:30 PM (IST) in India. Participants in Geneva will be able to join at 4:00 PM, while those in Toronto can connect at 11:00 AM.

The program will be conducted in both Hindi and English to ensure that people from diverse nations can participate with ease. The event will be broadcast live from the \*Sarva Dharma Mandir\* (Temple of All Religions)

located at the Jhusi Kriyayoga Ashram—a site revered as a symbol of unity and harmony among various faiths.

The organizers have issued an appeal to the public, urging as many people as possible to join this session and to share it with their acquaintances. They firmly believe that such initiatives can prove instrumental in fostering dialogue and harmony on a global scale.

## BJP plans cabinet reshuffle in UP

LUCKNOW

A major political recalibration is on the cards in Uttar Pradesh, with the BJP preparing a cabinet reshuffle in the government led by Yogi Adityanath as part of its early strategy for the 2027 Assembly elections.

According to party sources, the proposed exercise could see more than a dozen ministers being dropped and around 15 new faces inducted from among MLAs and organisational ranks. The objective is to rework caste and regional representation while addressing feedback on governance and grassroots performance.

The current council of ministers has 54 members, including Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak. It

comprises 21 cabinet ministers, 14 ministers of state with independent charge and 19 ministers of state. With a constitutional ceiling of 60, six positions remain vacant.

The last cabinet expansion was carried out on March 5, 2024, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, when leaders such as Om Prakash Rajbhar, Anil Kumar, Sunil Sharma and Dara Singh Chauhan were inducted.

Recent organisational changes have added urgency to the exercise. Pankaj Chaudhary took charge of the state unit in December 2025, and discussions are underway at multiple levels on aligning governance with the party's electoral roadmap.

Within the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, there are divergent views on the scale of the reshuffle. One section favours a sweeping overhaul, suggesting that up to half of the ministers be replaced and redeployed to focus on election management.



## Water Awareness Rally Organized as Part of a Seven-Day Special Camp



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Chandigarh.** Today, March 22, 2026, within the jurisdiction of the Kotwali Mohamadabad Police Station in this district, a water awareness rally was organized. The rally was conducted on the fifth day of the National Service Scheme's (NSS) seven-day special camp, commencing from the camp site at Shaheed Smarak Government College and proceeding to

Shaheed Park (Tehsil). During this event, male and female volunteers marched in a rally dedicated to the cause of water conservation. The camp was inaugurated by the college Principal, Dr. Arun Kumar. Addressing the students participating in the NSS seven-day special camp, Principal Dr. Arun emphasized the significance of water conservation and inspired them to ensure their active involvement in efforts aimed at preserving

water resources. The seven-day special camp, comprising two units, is being coordinated by Senior Program Officer Dr. Aditya Kumar and Program Officer Dr. Madhavam Singh. Finally, an intellectual session was held on the theme, "Water Conservation: Current Status and Future Direction." During this session, all the NSS students expressed their views and insights regarding various facets of water conservation.

## Pramod Jaiswal Appointed City Vice President for the Fourth Time; Party Workers Accord Him a Grand Welcome



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** On Sunday, a grand welcome was accorded to the newly appointed City Vice President of the BJP, Pramod Jaiswal, at the Pajawa Ramleela Committee Ground. During the event—organized under the leadership of BJP leader Giri Shankar Prabhakar—Jaiswal was honored by being draped

with a traditional stole (\*Angavastra\*), while party workers felicitated him with garlands of flowers. Great enthusiasm was palpable among the party workers following Pramod Jaiswal's appointment as City Vice President for the fourth time. Present on the occasion, the workers congratulated him and extended their best wishes for a successful and illustrious tenure.

Furthermore, they reiterated their collective resolve to further strengthen the party organization. A large number of party office-bearers and workers attended the event, including Giri Shankar Prabhakar, Manoj Mishra, Gopal Malviya, Vishnu Tripathi, and Mohd. Sadman. Uniting as one, everyone conveyed a collective message of taking the party forward.

## Bar Council Election Vote Counting to Begin on March 24

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj |** Preparations for the vote counting following the Uttar Pradesh Bar Council elections have commenced. In an online meeting, the High-Powered Election Committee and the Election Officers unanimously decided to initiate the vote-counting process on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. All necessary preparations for this have been completed. The counting of votes will take place daily from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Subsequently, essential procedural tasks—such as chart verification and sealing—will be carried out until 5:00 PM. A half-hour lunch break has been scheduled during the counting process, from 1:30 PM to 2:00 PM. Election Officer Ramkishore Shukla stated that the vote-counting process would be conducted based on the alphabetical order (A to Z) of the districts. It is worth noting that a total of 333 candidates had filed their nominations for this election in November 2025. Following this, the voting process was conducted across the state in four phases. The election in the Lucknow district was annulled due to initial irregularities; however, a re-election was subsequently conducted successfully between March 11 and March 15. Entry for Candidates and Supporters via Drummond Road Route is informed that the Bar Council Hall will be divided into two sections: one half will accommodate the vote-counting staff, while the other half will be occupied by the candidates and their supporters. In the interest of security and maintaining order, candidates and their supporters will gain entry via the route situated on Drummond Road, whereas entry from the direction of the main building will remain strictly prohibited.

## Patwaris and Kanungos in Haryana to Receive Tablets- Government Approves Procurement

Chandigarh

Ushering in a significant digital reform within revenue administration, the Haryana government has approved the procurement of 4,156 smart tablets for Patwaris and Kanungos across the state. The objective is to modernize field operations, minimize procedural delays, and enhance the overall delivery of revenue services. Dr. Sumita Mishra, Financial Commissioner (Department of Revenue and Disaster Management), stated in information released on Saturday that technology is being extended beyond offices and urban centers to reach the field level, where officials interact directly with citizens. For decades, Patwaris and Kanungos have relied on man-



नायब सैनी, मुख्यमंत्री, हरियाणा

सुमिता मिश्रा, ASC, होम डिपार्टमेंट

ual records, hand-drawn maps, and extensive paperwork—a process that has historically been time-consuming and physically arduous. With the introduction of these tablets, officials will now be able to conduct field surveys, input data, capture GPS-tagged photographs, and upload information directly to central servers in real-time.

Dr. Mishra noted that these tablets will feature high-end specifications, including a large display, advanced processing capabilities, ample storage, and a long battery life designed to support a full day of field work. The inclusion of 5G and LTE connectivity, alongside GPS and imaging capabilities, ensures that these devices can function effectively even in

remote and challenging terrains. All 4,156 tablets will be integrated into a Mobile Device Management (MDM) system, accompanied by a two-year cloud-hosted license. This will enable the government to monitor, update, secure, and manage these devices in real-time, thereby ensuring operational continuity, data accuracy, and accountability.

The utilization of these digital tools is expected to help reduce delays in revenue services, minimize errors, and prevent discrepancies. Farmers, in particular, stand to benefit from faster, more reliable, and doorstep revenue services, thereby eliminating the need for them to make repeated visits to government offices.

## Demand to Make Khaga a District Gains Momentum, Signature Campaign Receives Public Support

Fatehpur

The demand to upgrade Khaga tehsil into a separate district has gained significant momentum, with a public referendum and signature campaign witnessing widespread support across villages and towns. The campaign is being led by the Bundelkhand Rashtra Samiti under the leadership of its National President and environmental activist Praveen Pandey. He stated that the initiative is being carried out through a democratic process, ensuring active participation from the general public. Pandey emphasized that considering Khaga historical significance, geographical importance, and increasing administrative requirements, granti-



ng it district status has become the need of the hour. Referring to the historic Fatehpur Hanging Incident of March 6, 1858, he highlighted that seven freedom fighters, including Thakur Dariyav Singh, were executed by the British at Fatehpur District Jail. He further demanded that in honor of this sacrifice, the proposed district be named "Amar Shaheed Thakur Dariyav Singh Nagar." The campaign has generated considerable

enthusiasm among residents, with a large number of people signing in support of the demand. Volunteers are actively reaching out door-to-door, raising awareness and urging citizens to join the movement. Pandey expressed confidence that the signature campaign would serve as a strong medium to convey public sentiment to the government and hoped that the demand would soon be fulfilled based on growing public support.

## Mathura: 'Farsa Wale Baba' Crushed to Death.

Mathura

Tension gripped the Kotwan area under Kosi Kalan Police Station limits early Saturday morning after Chandrashekhar Singh (45), popularly known as 'Farsa Wale Baba', died after being allegedly crushed by a truck. Soon after the incident, massive protests erupted as thousands gathered on the Delhi-Mathura Highway. Angry supporters placed the body on the road, blocking traffic and staging a protest. The situation escalated into violence with clashes between police and protesters. Several police personnel were injured in stone pelting, while 5-6 police vehicles were vandalized. Police resorted to lathi charge and fired tear gas shells to bring the situation under control. "Deliberately Run Over by Cow Smugglers": Supporters according to Baba associates, they had received information about a truck allegedly

transporting cattle illegally. Baba, along with two companions, chased the vehicle on a motorcycle. Near Bathain Gate in Kosi, they spotted the suspicious truck and tried to stop it. The driver allegedly sped up and after a 7-kilometre chase, Baba attempted to block the truck near Navipur village in Kotwan Area. Supporters claim the driver intentionally accelerated the vehicle. Baba pushed his companions aside to save them but was himself run over and died on the spot. "Fog-Related Road Accident": Police and administration, however, have termed the incident a road accident. DIG Shailesh Kumar Pandey stated that around 4 AM, Baba and his team were checking a container following information about possible cattle smuggling. SSP Shlok Kumar said the container was found carrying goods like soap, Phenyl and Shampoo. Due to dense fog, an oil tanker



coming from behind collided with the container, leading to the fatal incident. The truck driver was also seriously injured and later died during treatment. Police confirmed that no cattle were found in any of the vehicles. Massive protest, highway blocked. As news spread, people from nearby villages gathered in large numbers. Protesters blocked the Delhi-Mathura Highway, demanding strict action and even calling for an encounter of the accused. When police attempted to clear the road and take custody of the body, the crowd turned violent. Stone pelting ensued and

## Political Reactions Intensify

**Lucknow:** The incident has sparked political reactions. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav targeted the government, demanding a fair and transparent investigation. Meanwhile, Shankaracharya Avimukteshwarinand called for immediate arrest of the accused and strict action. Situation Under Control, Action Against Miscreants: DIG Mathura: DIG Shailesh Pandey stated that the situation is now under control. Identification of those involved in violence is underway, and strict action will be taken. He added that a detailed investigation is ongoing from all angles. While peace has been restored, tension and questions still linger in the area.

Police vehicles were damaged. Police used force, including lathi charge and tear gas, to disperse the crowd and restore order after prolonged efforts. Villagers put forward six demands. Villagers refused to hand over the body and instead took it to a gaushala in Ajanokh village (Barsana) for last rites. They placed six key demands before the administration: 1. Martyr status for Baba. 2. Construction of a memorial in his name. 3. Establishment of a police outpost in the area. 4. Licensed

weapons for close associates. 5. Government support for the Gaushala. 6. No action against those involved in the protest. Funeral held after DM assurance. District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh assured that a memorial (samadhi) would be constructed at the cremation site and that the gaushala would receive government support. SSP Shlok Kumar also assured that a police outpost would be established in the area. Following these assurances, the villagers agreed and performed the final rites.

# 'Women of Substance': Honoring Women and Appreciating Their Contributions Across All Fields

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On Sunday, the Rotary Allahabad Midtown chapter organized the "Women of Substance" event at El Chico, located in Civil Lines. The objective of the program was to honor women who have performed remarkable work in various fields and to highlight their significant contributions. Ankita Raj served as the Chief Guest, while Niti Agarwal attended as the Guest of Honor. In their respective addresses, both guests shared detailed insights regarding the role of women in society, as well as the challenges they face and the opportunities available to them. Chief Guest Ankita Raj stated that women play a pivotal role not only in building the family but also in shaping society and the nation. She described the increasing participation of women in fields such as education, science, politics, and business as a positive sign. She also spoke of the inspiration she drew from her own family throughout her life. Meanwhile, Guest of Honor Niti Agarwal described women as the strong foundation of society, noting that they are capable of efficiently managing a multitude of responsibilities. Emphasizing the need to empower daughters and provide them with opportunities, she asserted that social evils and prejudices can be eradicated through awareness and education. During the event, several



women who have made outstanding contributions in various fields were felicitated. Club President CA Vinay Goyal

remarked that every woman is, in her own right, a "Woman of Substance," regardless of the specific role she plays. He

described women's contributions as something far more profound and extensive than mere formal recognition. At the conclusion of

the program, Club Secretary CA Saurabh Agarwal delivered the vote of thanks. The occasion was graced by the presence of numer-

ous club members and dignitaries, all of whom contributed to making the event a resounding success.

## Accused Who Stole Cylinder and Goods from School Arrested; Nabbed Near Canal Bridge

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** The police have arrested a wanted accused in connection with the theft of a gas cylinder and other items from a school's storeroom within the Bahariya police station area. The stolen goods have also been recovered from his possession. Acting under a special campaign launched against criminals on the directives of the Police Commissioner, the Bahariya police apprehended the accused on Sunday near the Bijlipur canal bridge. The arrested individual has been identified as Suraj Dhuriya, a resident of the Bahariya police station area. According to the police, the accused, in collusion with an accomplice, broke the lock of the storeroom at



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Inter College, Jalalpur Sikandara, on March 18 to carry out the theft. Gas cylinders, a computer monitor, and other equipment kept in the storeroom were stolen. A case regarding this incident had been registered at the Bahariya police station.

During the arrest, the police recovered an Acer monitor, a Bharat Gas cylinder, and two

fire extinguishers from the accused. Based on these recoveries, additional sections have also been added to the case. The police stated that legal proceedings are being initiated against the accused, while a search for his absconding accomplice remains underway. The police team involved in this operation included the Station In-charge of Bahariya along with other personnel.

## A Grand Gift for Babhankuiya on 'Jal Arpan Diwas': Pure Drinking Water to Reach Every Household

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Sahson, Prayagraj:** On the occasion of World Water Day, a grand event was organized on Sunday in the village of Babhankuiya—located within the Sahson Development Block—as part of the 'Jal Arpan Diwas' (Water Dedication Day) initiative. During this event, the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' scheme was formally dedicated to the public. Member of Parliament (MP) Praveen Patel served as the Chief Guest for the program. He inaugurated the ceremony by administering a 'Water Pledge' to the attendees. MLA Deepak Singh Patel and ADM (Namami Gange) Sanjeev Kumar Shakya were present as Guests of Honor during the proceedings. At the ceremony, the MP formally dedicated the drinking water project—developed under the Jal Jeevan Mission—and handed it over to the Village Head (Gram Pradhan). Additionally, the guests participated in a tree-plantation drive, thereby conveying a message regarding environmental



conservation. It was highlighted that the team from L&T completed this project in a mere eight months. With the implementation of this scheme, hundreds of families in the village will now have access to pure drinking water directly at their doorsteps, providing them with relief from the arduous task of fetching water from distant sources. Addressing the gathering, MP Praveen Patel stated that the Jal Jeevan Mission

is an ambitious flagship scheme of the Central Government, aimed at providing clean tap water to every household. He noted that this initiative would lead to significant improvements in the health and standard of living of the villagers.

MLA Deepak Singh Patel hailed the project as a major achievement for the region, emphasizing that it would yield direct benefits for the people.

Meanwhile, ADM Sanjeev Kumar Shakya reiterated the administration's unwavering commitment to water conservation and sanitation. On this occasion, Executive Engineer Praveen Kutty provided detailed information regarding the project. The event was attended by officials from the Jal Jeevan Mission, the team from L&T Construction, Village Head Ashok Kumar, and a large number of villagers.

## Accused Arrested for Fraudulent Scheme Involving Fake Firms; Defrauded People Under the Pretext of Investment

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj:** On Sunday, the police arrested an accused individual who was wanted in connection with a case involving the defrauding of people through the creation of fake firms within the Phulpur police station area. The accused had been absconding for a considerable period, and a case had been registered against him under serious sections of the law. This action was taken as part of an ongoing campaign against criminals, conducted under the directives of the Police



Commissioner and other senior officials. Under the supervision of officials from the

Ganganagar Zone, the Phulpur police team apprehended the accused near the overbridge located in Phulpur town. The arrested accused has been identified as Rajesh Singh, a native of the Utraon police station area who was currently residing in the Pratapgarh district.

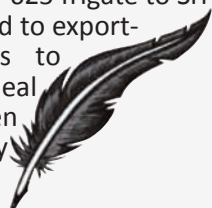
According to the police, the accused, in collusion with his accomplices, had established fake firms and lured people into investing by promising them high rates of interest. The investigation revealed that the accused would issue fake bond papers to investors but would

fail to return their money after a certain period. In this regard, a case was registered at the Phulpur police station in 2017 under serious sections of the law, including charges of fraud, forgery, and criminal breach of trust. Two other accused individuals involved in this case have already been arrested and sent to jail. The police stated that necessary legal action is currently being initiated against the arrested accused. The team responsible for the arrest included Sub-Inspectors and other police personnel from the Phulpur police station.

## Editorial

### India's naval advancements will fuel its Indian Ocean ambitions

As India approaches its 75th Republic Day, the nation has achieved a significant milestone in strengthening its naval capabilities. In an exceptional move reflecting strategic foresight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently commissioned three advanced naval platforms in a single day: a destroyer, a frigate, and a submarine. However, in a fast-changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific, the developments in naval capabilities must be measured in a relative context—capabilities of arch rivals and a swiftly evolving security domain, that is. Now, five points need to be underscored in this context. The commissioning of advanced naval platforms highlights India's aspiration to establish itself as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Over the years, India's maritime security strategy has significantly evolved. The 2015 Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision reflects India's dedication to fostering regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. This vision is supported by initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Island Countries (IOIC), which emphasise coastal connectivity and sustainable development. PM Modi's address at the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue further reinforced India's strategic perspective for the Indo-Pacific. The SAGAR vision has gained traction through frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), aiming to tackle regional security issues and counter China's expanding influence. While China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has grown to become the world's largest by fleet size, it still lacks the operational capabilities and combat experience of the United States. India's navy, although the smallest of its armed forces, has consistently demonstrated efficiency and timely acquisitions. Compared to the Indian Air Force, which faces critical squadron shortages, the navy pragmatically acknowledges domestic limitations in engine development. It relies on foreign collaborations to fill gaps, ensuring progress. However, I'll turn to that later. To establish itself as a net security provider, the Indian Navy must sustain the momentum it has recently achieved in naval defence exports. Although this initiative began in earnest only in 2011, it gained significant traction after 2016. India has transitioned from being a cautious supplier of naval equipment, primarily targeting countries such as Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, to a more prominent player in defence exports. For many years, India's exports to nations such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka were limited to refurbished ex-navy and coast guard vessels. However, this trend has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. Naval ships, as of 2024, account for over 61 per cent of India's total defence exports. This shift highlights India's growing capability to manufacture advanced platforms and its determination to emerge as a dependable supplier of defence equipment to neighbouring countries. This development is a critical component of India's regional and maritime strategy, especially given China's rapid ascent in modernising PLAN and expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean by providing naval assets to smaller nations. China has already established itself as the leading defence exporter to both Pakistan and Bangladesh. It delivered two Ming-class submarines to Bangladesh in 2017, gifted a P625 frigate to Sri Lanka in 2019, and committed to exporting Yuan-class submarines to Thailand. Although the Thai deal encountered difficulties when Germany refused to supply key propulsion components.



## Slowing capital expenditure is good. Don't invest in BSNL, save for shortfall instead

With tax revenue growth slowing in the last few months, the possibility of an upside earlier expected on the revenue front may be receding rapidly. Revenue expenditure is also rising at a rate higher than the budgeted 6 per cent. If the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) has to be met for 2024-25, which the government must in view of the uncertainties and challenges emerging both domestically and globally, the finance ministry may see in the composition of the current year's capex a sliver of hope. The finance ministry should not spend ~0.83 trillion for equity infusion into BSNL. Instead, it should ask the telephone company to raise resources from the market. The ministry should also desist from spending the remaining ~0.6 trillion earmarked for capital allocation to new schemes. Saving about ~1.43 trillion (a little less than half a percent of GDP) will be a cushion against other expenditure slippages and revenue shortfall. Not too many tears would be shed for a squeeze on capex if the hit is primarily on infusing equity into a state-owned enterprise and on new schemes that are yet to be announced. Quite ironically, a slowdown in the government's capex may well turn out to be an opportunity. The Union government's capital expenditure (capex) continues to be a cause for concern. Of course, the extent of its decline has reduced somewhat — from



35 per cent at the end of the first quarter of the current financial year to 15 per cent at the end of six months. But the latest number for the April-November 2024-25 period shows that the Union government's capex was still 12 per cent lower than what it was in the same period of 2023-24. Instead of aiming for the targeted 17 per cent growth to ~11.11 trillion in capex for 2024-25, the government will have to strive hard to at least cross the figure of ~9.48 trillion reached last year. What has led to this decline? A widely held view is that the seven-phase general elections, which began on April 19 and ended on June 1 last year, caused a slowdown in capex. But if that indeed is the reason, the decline in capex in the first quarter should have been reversed in the second quarter of 2024-25. And certainly, the first two months of the third quarter should have raised the trajectory of capex growth to a higher level. There has been some improvement, but a 12 per cent decline in the April-November 2024-25 period is no comfort. Look at the

slightly different trajectory seen in the Union government's revenue expenditure growth during the same period. The Budget for 2024-25 had projected a rise of over 6 per cent to ~37.1 trillion in revenue expenditure. At the end of June 2024, the growth was just about 2 per cent, but it has been rising since then, reaching 4.2 per cent by the end of the first six months of 2024-25 and climbing even higher to 7.8 per cent during April-November 2024-25. So, if revenue expenditure has gained momentum, why has capex failed to follow suit? A close analysis of the government's capex numbers presents an interesting picture. Over 90 per cent of the Centre's total capex during 2024-25 was accounted for by just six sectors — roads, railways, defence, telecom, transfer to states and new schemes. Their share in total capex in 2023-24 was a little less at 87 per cent. But the 12 per cent decline in the first eight months of 2024-25 is primarily the result of a marked slowdown in only two of these six areas — roads and defence, which accounted

for over 40 per cent of the total capex outlay for 2024-25. Capex on the construction of roads and highways fell by 16 per cent, while defence saw a decline of 15 per cent. This is serious and has worrying implications for both infrastructure and defence. The problem of slowing expenditure in these two areas should not have been difficult to fix. Either effective monitoring of spending is lacking, or there are serious problems with project execution, reflecting the poor expenditure-absorbing capacity of these two sectors. This is borne out by a relatively good performance of the Indian Railways, which accounts for over 22 per cent of this year's capex. At ~1.68 trillion, the Indian Railways' capex is just about 1 per cent lower than its spending during April-November 2023. With regard to the transfer of special assistance as loans to states for their capex and additional central assistance for their externally aided projects, the Union government's performance was slightly better. In the April-November 2024-25 period, these transfers rose by about 5 per cent, although much lower than the budgeted increase of 41 per cent.

In contrast, such transfers during the entire 2023-24 had risen sharply by about 24 per cent to ~1.15 trillion. It appears that these transfers will take a hit in the current year and for the first time since this initiative to help states boost

their capex was undertaken a couple of years ago. Significantly, this has not yet adversely impacted the states in a big way. The capex of 25 states (accounting for 95 per cent of the states' and Union territories' total capex budget) has risen by just about 1 per cent in the April-November 2024-25 period, although states like Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal saw their capex fall by varying margins. Eventually, however, this will have an adverse impact on the states' capex programme and its growth-enhancing effect. There are two more sectors that account for another 13 per cent of the Centre's capital expenditure budget. But they bring out an intriguing aspect of why the government's capex has been slowing. They suffer from a peculiar problem, which has nothing to do with either the relevant sectors' expenditure-absorbing capacity or the absence of effective expenditure monitoring. The bulk of the capex under telecommunications was meant for infusing equity into state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, or BSNL. Of the total capex of ~0.84 trillion, the proposed amount for BSNL's equity infusion accounted for as much as ~0.83 trillion. But the total expenditure under this head in the first eight months of 2024-25 is only 6 per cent of what has been budgeted.

### Will Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Really Lead To Peace?

On January 20, 1981, on the day Ronald Reagan took over as the new US president, Iran freed 52 American hostages it had been holding for over a year. That projected Reagan as a strong leader sending a powerful signal to US allies and its foes. His predecessor, Jimmy Carter, did all the negotiations and tried his best to have the hostages released while he was still the president. But Tehran would not let him take the glory. Forty-four years on, Donald Trump is taking the credit for the Gaza ceasefire deal, which will come into effect a day before his inauguration, cementing his reputation as a tough leader. Biden can say that the deal happened under his watch. But there is no doubt that it was Trump whose pressure led to achieve the goal. He declared on his social media platform Truth Social: "This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it signalled to the entire World that my

Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies." Days after he threatened that there better be a Gaza deal by his January 20 inauguration or "all hell would break out", his special envoy to the Middle East, Steven Witkoff, landed in Tel Aviv last Saturday. It was the Sabbath, the day of rest for Jews. But Witkoff insisted on meeting the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, that day. At their meeting, he conveyed Trump's message that the incoming President of the United States wanted to end the Gaza war and demanded that a ceasefire agreement be signed immediately. The format of the three-stage deal announced on Wednesday was proposed by Biden in May last year and was later also endorsed by the UN Security Council. But both Hamas and Israel kept dragging the negotiations over it. In Israel, Netanyahu refused to give any concessions to Hamas and continued with his brute military operation in Gaza.

### Extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme

There may be some rationalisation of duties on capital goods required for solar upstream manufacturing could be seen so that overall that industry can really take off. "We expect continuation and maybe broadening of the PLI support towards the solar module value chain. We already have a few interventions there, which are likely to be extended deeper," Dwivedi said. Similarly, on the battery manufacturing front, the industry expects localization of the value chain given competing countries have already advanced beyond India. In the green hydrogen segment, the industry believes the government may bring in hydrogen purchase for specific sectors like (green) steel. On the EV front, the industry seeks more support towards building public charging infrastructure given the anticipated increase in the EV penetration. "Under the PM E-drive, we already have an allocation of about Rs 1,100 crores for FY26. Given that the final guidelines have not been released until now, I think even the allocation under FY25 may get added and FY26 budget may be increased as the country expects an acceleration in EV adoption in FY26," Dwivedi said. While the government has already launched a rooftop solar scheme and announced viability gap funding for offshore wind projects, industry players expect increased allocations, particularly towards solar and wind, along with higher budgetary capital expenditure in green hydrogen and battery storage infrastructure. Along with this, the sector also expects the government to increase its coverage of households under PM Suryaghar. "Under the Atmannirbhar Bharat scheme, there should be a scheme for the home grown EPCM companies to create indigenous technical capabilities in the country and reduce the foreign exchange outflow. We would also like to see a reduction on GST for

engineering equipment and a reduction in import duties on chemicals in India," said Umesh Sood, CEO Simon India Ltd. Sunil Singhvi, President, Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers Association noted that there is a need for strong policy support to foster growth, drive innovation, and enhance sustainability in the power sector. "One of the main requests is to expand the PLI scheme, which aims to increase domestic production of crucial electrical components necessary for large and essential power projects, such as the advanced High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) systems," he said. Extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for solar energy value chain, increased allocation towards PM Suryaghar Muft Bijlee Yojana, and greater thrust to distribution and transmission infrastructure are likely to be the key features of the upcoming Budget, as far as the energy sector is concerned. Sources said these proposals figured not only in the budget wish lists of the industry, but also in the respective recommendations from the ministries of power and renewable energy to the finance ministry, ahead of the Budget. "Given the success of PM Suryaghar scheme with almost 600,000 installations in just nine months since its launch, one could probably see additional allocation to target more households," said Ashwin Jacob, partner at Deloitte India. "As far as evacuation of power from offshore wind projects is concerned, we would want to see the VGF or budgetary support to continue or get enhanced," he added. "We hope to see a decisive increase in funding to accelerate the green energy transition. Priorities must include scaling renewable energy by addressing grid and transmission challenges, advancing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) for grid stability and reliable power, doubling energy.

### Tulip's resignation in the UK is troublesome for Hasina. Spotlight on daughter Saima

The sins of fathers shall be visited upon the sons—this ominous pronouncement in the Bible has now come true for Tulip Siddiq, a 42-year-old minister in the British government, but with a twist. In her case, it wasn't her father's sins that visited upon her but those allegedly committed by her aunt, the deposed prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wazed. And it cost Siddiq her job. Slapped with a range of corruption charges by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC), which forced an internal gov-

ernment inquiry, Siddiq has strenuously denied any wrongdoing—except that of ignorance about benefiting from dubious transactions. But she has paid the price and resigned as UK treasury minister on Tuesday, though she stressed that an independent review found she had "not breached the ministerial code". If the sins of aunts can impact nieces, then can daughters escape their mothers'? Ever since Siddiq's case hit the headlines, the spotlight has slowly but surely turned to Sheikh Hasina's daughter,

Saima Wazed, also known as Putul, who was elected regional director of the World Health Organisation's Southeast Asia branch amid considerable controversy in February 2024. An editorial in the eminent medical journal The Lancet had earlier questioned if she was fit for the job, as she only held a master's degree in psychology while rival aspirants were doctors with years of public health experience. The ACC has now initiated a probe into how she got the job: on her own merit or her mother's

intervention as prime minister. All eyes are now on Putul and whether she'll be forced to follow in her cousin's footsteps. What does it all mean for 77-year-old Sheikh Hasina, who has been sheltering in New Delhi since fleeing Dhaka on 5 August after a violent student uprising against her 15-year continuous tenure as Bangladesh's prime minister? There is no doubt that the charges being hurled at her, her family, and her friends are coloured by political prejudice from those now in power in Bangladesh.

## IIT Kharagpur-Singapore's A\*STAR IME boost semiconductor future

Delhi : This MoU was launched during SEMICON Southeast Asia 2025, where IIT Kharagpur exhibited India's academic and technological expertise in semiconductors. This agreement shows India and Singapore's commitment to international collaboration to establish a robust, innovative, and skilled semiconductor ecosystem. This alliance's technical partner, IIT Kharagpur, India's top science and technology university, has decades of experience in microelectronics, chip design, nano-fabrication, and innovative materials. "This MoU with A\*STAR IME marks a significant step in IIT Kharagpur's global ambition to drive semiconductor innovation," said Prof. Anandaroop Bhattacharya, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering. This kind of academia-industry-government partnership will help India become a semiconductor hub quickly and establish a strong, self-sufficient, and competitive semiconductor ecosystem. This agree-



ment puts IIT Kharagpur at the forefront of global semiconductor value chain strengthening measures as India expands its semiconductor production and R&D. The MoU allows cooperation in research in advanced CMOS and post-CMOS technologies, heterogeneous integration and packaging, AI hardware accelerators, next-generation memory systems, photonics and quantum devices, chip reliability, thermal management, and failure analysis. Student and researcher exchanges, knowledge-sharing workshops, and co-development of semiconductor talent training modules are all supported by the collaboration.

### Ecom Express loses 150 workers before Delhivery merger

Delhi : Logistics company Ecom Express had considerable labor changes before being acquired by Delhivery. About 150 mid-level and regional operations workers quit voluntarily. These departures correspond with the company's Delhivery merger. Ecom Express CEO Ajay Chitkara and other senior executives are anticipated to leave after regulatory approval. Delhivery will buy 99.4% of Ecom Express for Rs 1,407 crore. Delhivery informed stock exchanges that the acquisition will boost its market value.

## Carmakers promote hybrids to help purchasers switch to electrics

Delhi : For India's 2030 goal of 40% electrification, mass acceptance of electric vehicles will be difficult, requiring carmakers to promote hybrids as a stop gap. Hybrids are cheaper than fully electric vehicles, thus all carmakers, from Maruti Suzuki to Toyota Kirloskar to Mercedes-Benz, prefer them. Hybrids have fossil fuel engines and electric motors. These cars run on either power source. The upshot is that hybrid automobiles get better fuel economy than gasoline or diesel cars.



Senior leaders from numerous industries argue that electrifying hybrids and plug-in hybrids is the best answer before being electric by 2047. This will help buyers adapt to the changing transport ecosystem. CV Raman, executive director (engineering),

Maruti Suzuki, told Moneycontrol, "Price and cost are very important when it comes to electric vehicles. Hybridization is cheaper than electrification. Hybrids compliment EVs and are better than IC engines.

## IndiGo to start direct flights to London, Athens, 8 other overseas cities this fiscal

Delhi: IndiGo will start direct flights to London, Athens and eight other overseas cities in the current financial year as the country's largest airline continues with international expansion and expects to have more than 600 aircraft in its fleet by FY30. There is an

enormous opportunity in Indian aviation where rising demand is supported by infrastructure expansion. There is an unmatched growth leading to doubling of passengers from 2025 to 2030 and that the rising demand is supported by infrastructure expansion,

airline CEO Pieter Elbers said at a briefing in the national capital. While flights to Manchester (UK) and Amsterdam (the Netherlands) from Mumbai will commence in July, the airline will connect eight more overseas destinations. -- London (UK), Athens



## Sebi changes F&O rules to lower trading risks

Delhi : Sebi imposed a number of new rules, including limiting index option open positions, to improve risk monitoring and derivatives trading safety. Sebi stated the guidelines, to be implemented July 1-December 6, will link derivatives market total positions to cash market positions. It fixed net and gross options contract open interest positions at Rs 1,500 crore and Rs 10,000 crore, respectively. It added that derivatives market players' open interest positions will be calculated portfolio-wide. New regulations will also require intra-day market-wide surveillance of single stock derivative positions. In a 21-page announcement, Sebi stated the new rules will improve F&O risk monitoring and transparency, eliminate bogus ban periods in single-stock contracts, and improve index option concentration or manipulation risk oversight. The derivatives market promotes price discovery, market liquidity, and investor risk management, according to Sebi. In the circular, Sebi stipulated that bourses must check market-wide position limit (MWPL) use at least four random times during the trading day. The agency also indicated that participants will have an opportunity to address open interest breaches. Additionally, exchanges could increase surveillance margins, monitor entity-level concentration, and perform extra surveillance checks.

SETS INDEX OPTIONS LIMITS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ceiling for net open interest in options set at ₹1,500cr</li> <li>▶ Ceiling for gross position set at ₹10,000cr</li> <li>▶ Participant's open interest positions to be calculated at level of the portfolio</li> <li>▶ There will be intraday monitoring of market-wide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ positions in single-stock derivative trades</li> <li>▶ SEs, clearing corps to jointly prepare a standard operating procedure (SOP) for various rules</li> <li>▶ To start pre-open sessions for current-month futures contracts in stocks and indices</li> </ul>

## Higher loans, credit cards for street traders

Delhi : After banks joined the new PM SVANidhi plan, street sellers will receive higher-subsidized loans and credit cards with a Rs 30,000 maximum. Street vendors who have repaid Rs 10,000, Rs 20,000, and Rs 50,000 subsidized loans will receive credit cards from banks. The modified idea will shortly be presented to Cabinet for approval, TOI reports. Sources stated rural street vendors who go to cities for work will now receive subsidised loans. The housing and urban affairs ministry did not react to inquiries, but sources indicated the enhanced loan amount will



include Rs 10,000. Sources said the credit card facility will provide street sellers with better credit and more rolling cash for business, with banks setting repayment requirements. FM Nirmala Sitharaman high-

lighted in her Budget speech that the 2020 plan, established during the COVID-19 pandemic, has saved over 68 lakh street sellers from high-interest informal sector loans. "Building on this success,

### ICAI to Evaluate IndusInd's Financial Statements

Delhi : The financial accounts of IndusInd Bank, which were affected by fraud in 2023-24 and 2024-25, will be reviewed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). An examination by the Financial Reporting Review Board (FRRB) of the ICAI will be conducted. In order to determine whether or not a company's financial statements comply with accounting and auditing requirements, among others, FRRB reviews them. Trouble has been brewing for IndusInd Bank for the past two months, beginning with a report on March 10.

## Starlink arrives in India with plans under Rs. 850 per month

Delhi: Starlink is preparing to launch its satellite communication services in India after clearing most regulatory hurdles. A report claims that its plans could cost \$10 (Rs. 850) per month as the debut approach. Consumers may receive unlimited data plans under initial promotional schemes. The Elon Musk-backed business hopes to swiftly build its user base to 10 million to offset high spectrum prices due to volume benefits. The Department of Telecommunication



(DoT) granted Starlink a Letter of Intent to launch satellite communication services in India earlier this month. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) may impose a Rs. 500 per month per urban user price, making satellite internet services more expensive than wired and wireless broadband

connections, according to the. In addition, 4 percent of total adjusted gross revenue (AGR) with a minimum yearly charge of Rs. 3,500 per spectrum block and an 8 percent licensing fee for commercial services in India are required. The government has yet to approve these recommendations.

## CNG Kit for Nissan Magnite Starts at Rs. 6.89 Lakh

Delhi : Dealers can retrofit the Nissan Magnite's CNG kit. The CNG Kit is fully developed and manufactured by Motozen, a third-party company, following company standards. Motozen warranties CNG kit parts. Complete retrofitting costs Rs. 75,000. CNG kits are only available with the new Nissan Magnite 1.0 liter naturally aspirated petrol engine with manual gearbox. For now, turbo variants won't have CNG. CNG kit prices include fire extinguisher, third-party warranty, RC endorsement, and installation. Initial CNG kit installation is available at Nissan-authorised dealerships in Delhi-NCR,



Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, and Karnataka. Phase 2 will expand it to other states nationwide. New Magnites are E20 compliant and CNG-ready, so existing owners cannot retrofit the CNG kit. The dealership will install the CNG kit and a 12-kg single-cylinder for the Magnite. An auto cut-off valve and 7 mm walls will be on the cylinder. The firm

claims that the CNG cylinder would not affect bootspace and that the suspension will handle the extra weight. The SUV can hold two luggage and two small bags. The Nissan CNG kit is government-certified, and Nissan and Motozen will provide a 3-year, 1 lakh kilometer warranty. Official Nissan Magnite CNG fuel efficiency data will be released in weeks. Nissan expects to sell 200,000 Magnites in India by month's end.

## Partnership between Noida Airport and Uber to provide on-site ridesharing

Delhi : In order to provide visitors with transportation options right from the airport, Noida International Airport (NIA) has partnered with the ride-hailing company Uber. According to NIA, as part of the strategic partnership, Uber will run designated areas for driver partners to be picked up, as well as



provide on-site assistance and special parking. According to the airport operator, the partnership will provide several benefits to customers using Uber at Noida International Airport, including the ability to follow their rides in real-time and get projected arrival times through the app, as well as the

opportunity to pay without using cash, which is more convenient. Speaking about the importance of app-based taxi services like Uber, Christoph Schnellmann, CEO of Noida International Airport, stated that it is crucial for travelers to have access to last-mile transit alternatives.

## In FY 25, general insurance premiums total Rs 3.07 lakh crore

Delhi : Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman chaired a PSGIC review meeting. The Minister assessed premium revenues, insurance penetration and density, and incurred claims ratios. From Rs 80,000 crore in 2019 to approximately Rs 1.06 lakh crore in 2025, PSGIC premiums increased. The general insurance market also grew, collecting Rs 3.07 lakh crore in FY 2024-25. While general insurance penetration in India is low at 1% of



GDP (compared to 4.2% globally in 2023), insurance density has progressively increased from \$9 in 2019 to \$25 in 2023. The finance minister stressed that PSGICs must increase penetration and density to preserve financial assets. Officials also provided a five-year health

insurance report demonstrating constant premium growth across Private, SAHI, and PSGICs. PSGICs had 126% incurred claims ratios in FY21, while private insurers had 105%. This ratio dropped to 103% for PSGICs, 89% for private insurers, and 65% for SAHI by FY24.

### Fewer jobs at Tata Motors, smaller hikes for top deck

Delhi: For the first time in five years, automotive manufacturer Tata Motors saw its workforce shrink in a fiscal year, when its employee base fell 3% in FY25 compared with the previous fiscal. Alongside, the fiscal also saw median salary hikes for its senior-most executives at just 3% compared with 15% in

FY24, the company's annual report for FY25 showed. The twin developments happened against the backdrop of falling demand for its cars, trucks and buses in the fiscal. The total employee count of the country's third-largest automaker, excluding employ-ees of its UK-based subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover.

# A masterclass or propaganda?

## INDUSTRY BACKS THE FILM



### Kangana Ranaut praises director, ignores film stars

Actress and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut praised director Aditya Dhar, saying the success of *Dhurandhar* proves filmmakers deserve more recognition than actors. "The best thing about *Dhurandhar*'s success is that Aditya Dhar is now a superstar director. We never give filmmakers enough credit. They are overworked, underpaid and bullied by superstars," she wrote. She added that Dhar's journey could inspire more youngsters to become filmmakers and technicians instead of only aspiring to become actors.



### Rakesh Roshan calls film industry gamechanger

Filmmaker Rakesh Roshan said *Dhurandhar* represents a shift in filmmaking ambition and storytelling scale. "He has started a new era in filmmaking. This should not be considered a threat but a healthy and much-needed revolution in storytelling and entertainment," Roshan wrote. Calling the film beyond expectations, he said such projects challenge filmmakers to rethink their craft and push cinema towards stronger narratives and technical excellence.



### Rajamouli applauds scale, performance, storytelling depth

Director SS Rajamouli praised the sequel's technical ambition and emotional storytelling, saying the film surpasses the original. "It takes guts to make and release a four-hour film. The audience is glued to the seat till the last frame," he wrote. He also called Ranveer Singh's performance "a masterclass in acting" and praised the writing for maintaining emotional tension throughout the narrative.

## Dhurandhar 2 sparks debate despite blockbuster response, earning industry praise for craft while drawing political criticism over its narrative

**A**ditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* has emerged as both a box office success and a talking point beyond cinema. While several filmmakers and actors have praised its scale, performances and storytelling, some politicians and industry voices have questioned its political messaging. The film has now triggered a wider debate on cinema's role.

## Political & industry backlash

### Prakash Raj questions industry appreciation trend

Actor Prakash Raj questioned the widespread appreciation the film has received from South Indian actors. "Signs of obligations are spreading South too... #justasking," he posted, suggesting the praise may be influenced by industry dynamics. In another remark, he said he was "very far from *Dhurandhar*", signalling his discomfort as the film continues to generate both acclaim and criticism across different sections.



### SP MLA Abu Azmi says film has a narrative that divides

Samajwadi Party MLA Abu Azmi criticised the film, alleging it promotes hatred and presents a biased story. "This film is made only to spread hatred. It is a false film. If it is about Pakistan, why show it to people of Hindustan?" he said. He also claimed the film unfairly portrays Muslims negatively and argued that cinema should focus on social harmony rather than controversial narratives.



### AIMIM's Waris Pathan demands responsible filmmaking approach

AIMIM spokesperson Waris Pathan criticised the film's reported themes and said films should focus on constructive storytelling. "When you make a film, it should be for knowledge and entertainment. Some films spread hatred and vitiate the atmosphere," he said. He added that filmmakers should be careful about social impact and avoid content that could create divisions among communities.



## South stars praise performances and vision



Mahesh Babu



Allu Arjun



Jr NTR

Mahesh Babu, Allu Arjun, Jr NTR and Vijay Deverakonda joined the praise for *Dhurandhar 2*, highlighting its performances and scale.



Vijay Deverakonda

Mahesh Babu called it "an explosion executed with perfect precision", while Allu Arjun described it as "patriotism with swag". Jr NTR called Ranveer Singh's work an "absolute masterclass", while Vijay Deverakonda termed Aditya Dhar a "mad genius" for mounting such a film.

## Congress leaders call film propaganda cinema



Tariq Anwar

Congress MP Tariq Anwar called the film a hate-driven narrative, while leader Husain Dalwai termed it propaganda and questioned its approval process.



Gulam Ali Khatana

However, BJP MP Gulam Ali Khatana defended the film's message. "Movies like this show the youth want truth and reality. Every citizen should have love and passion for the nation," he said, supporting the film's patriotic theme.



(Compiled by Aman Jain)

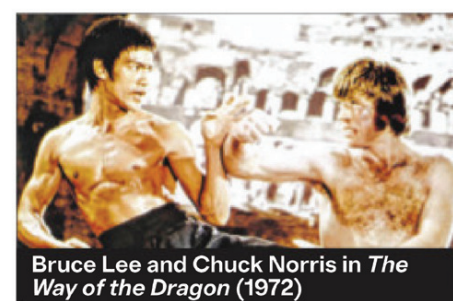
Remembering the action icon through some of his most memorable films and television performances over a career spanning decades

## A glimpse at some of Chuck Norris' roles

**A**ction star and martial arts legend Chuck Norris, known for his tough screen image and disciplined characters, has passed away at the age of 86. From cult martial

### Akshay pays heartfelt tribute

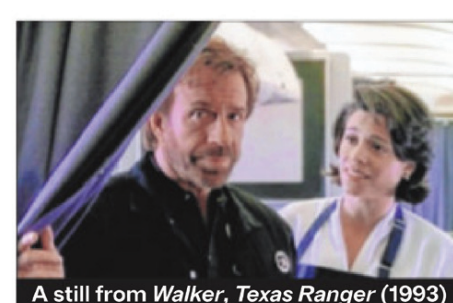
Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar paid tribute to legendary action star Chuck Norris following his death at the age of 86. Akshay recalled how he was inspired by Norris while growing up and praised the actor's "discipline, strength, and effortless command" on screen. He added that this inspiration played an important role in shaping a part of who he is today. Akshay tweeted, "Growing up as a martial artist, watching Chuck Norris in *Way of the Dragon*, *Missing in Action* and many more wasn't just entertainment...it was education." He added, "The discipline, strength, and that effortless command he brought on screen stayed with me. Grateful for the inspiration that shaped a part of me (sic)."



Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris in *The Way of the Dragon* (1972)



A still from *Code of Silence* (1985)



A still from *Walker, Texas Ranger* (1993)



Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris in *The Expendables 2* (2012)

## Imtiaz Ali thanks Mumbai Police



Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali got himself into a fix when he forgot his bag at one of the shops at the Mumbai airport. As he had already come out of the airport, he was unable to go back. However, Mumbai Police came to his rescue and helped retrieve his bag. Expressing his gratitude towards Mumbai Police for helping him get his lost bag, the *Jab We Met* maker took to the Stories section of his official Instagram handle and shared a thank you note saying, "Forgot my bag at a shop inside and came out of the airport and into a fix! couldn't enter back!! But @mumbaipolice was there to help. Mr Nazim Pathan went out of his way for me. Thank you sir, *Jai Hind!* (sic)"

# America is detached from reality, says Iran's foreign minister

Araghchi slams America over 'winning' claims, says 'same script' from Vietnam war; Not seeking conflict with Muslim states: President Pezeshkian

TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Minister **Seyed Abbas Araghchi** said Iran is seeking "not a ceasefire, but a complete, comprehensive and lasting end to the war". In a telephone interview with Kyodo News, Araghchi described the US-Israeli strikes on Iran as "an illegal, unprovoked act of aggression" and called on the international community to take a stand against the attacks, Xinhua reported.

Araghchi added that while

diplomatic efforts are ongoing, the US has yet to demonstrate its readiness for a genuine resolution.

The report also noted that Tehran is ready to facilitate the passage of Japanese vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, a key artery for global energy shipments, and that negotiations with Japan on the issue are ongoing.

Araghchi also issued a sharp warning to the UK on Saturday, stating that Tehran would respond if British involvement in the conflict escalates. On X, Araghchi

wrote, "Vast majority of the British people do not want any part in the Israel-US war of choice on Iran. Ignoring his own people, Keir Starmer is putting British lives in danger by allowing UK bases to be used for aggression against Iran. Iran will exercise its right to self-defence."

Araghchi conveyed similar concerns during a phone call with UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, warning that such cooperation would be viewed as "participation in aggression" against Iran.

The UK government, how-



ever, has pushed back. In the same conversation, Cooper cautioned Iran against targeting "UK bases, territory or interests", underscoring the risk of further escalation.

Araghchi compared the tone of US government statements to the overoptimistic

military briefings given during the Vietnam War, suggesting Washington was repeating a pattern of reassurances that later proved detached from events on the ground. On X, he said American officials had once sought to project confidence even as the Vietnam War turned against them.

"Americans haven't forgotten how, even as hundreds of US soldiers were dying in Vietnam, and the outcome was already clear, General William Westmoreland was flown home to reassure everyone that the war was going

well, that the US was 'winning.'" "The media haven't forgotten either; those briefings full of fantasy from the frontlines became infamous as the 'Five O'Clock Follies,'" Araghchi added.

The phrase refers to the daily 5pm press briefings held in Saigon between the mid-1950s and the 1970s, widely viewed as presenting an overly positive picture of the war and contributing to what became known as a credibility gap between official statements and reality. Araghchi then drew a direct line to the

present. "Fast forward to today: same script, different stage; Hegseth steps up, and the message is still detached from reality," he wrote.

"US government says one thing, reality says another. Right as US authorities claim Iran's air defences are gone, an F-35 gets hit. As they declare Iran's navy finished, USS Gerald Ford turns back, and USS Abraham Lincoln drifts farther away. Different decade, same 'we're winning'."

Meanwhile, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said his country does not seek war

with Muslim states, according to the official news agency IRNA. On the occasion of Eid and Nowruz, Pezeshkian said, "We do not intend to have any difference with Muslim countries. We do not seek conflict and war with Islamic states. They are our brothers."

Meanwhile, Bloomberg reported the Iranian Navy last week guided an Indian LPG tanker through the Strait of Hormuz along a pre-approved route, following diplomatic engagement by New Delhi, according to a senior officer onboard the vessel.

## TO COOL PRICES | Temporary, short-term authorisation is strictly limited to oil already in transit, says Scott Bessent

# US gives 1-month waiver on Iranian oil sanctions

WASHINGTON

The United States has announced the temporary lifting of sanctions on the sale of Iranian oil stranded at sea to cool soaring global crude prices, PTI reported.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the temporary measure would make available 140 million barrels of Iranian oil to global markets.

"This temporary, short-term authorisation is strictly limited to oil that is already in transit and does not allow new purchases or production," Bessent said on X.

The price of Brent crude has witnessed sharp swings from roughly \$70 per barrel before the war began to as high as \$119.50 this week.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury is issuing a narrowly tailored, short-term authorisation permitting the sale of Iranian oil currently



stranded at sea," Bessent said. The US official claimed that at present, sanctioned Iranian oil is being hoarded by China at low prices.

"In essence, we will be using the Iranian barrels against Tehran to keep the price down as we continue Operation Epic Fury," Bessent said. The pause on sanctions on Iranian oil loaded on vessels began on Friday and is set to end on April 19.

**INDIAN REFINERS LOOK TO BUY IRANIAN OIL**  
Indian refiners plan to resume buying Iranian oil while refiners elsewhere in Asia are

examining such a move, traders said on Saturday.

Sources said the refiners would buy Iranian oil and were awaiting government directions and clarity from Washington on details such as payment terms.

Refiners in India, with much smaller crude stockpiles than other major Asian oil importers, rushed to book Russian oil after the US recently lifted curbs temporarily.

**COMPLICATED BUYING**  
Potential complications for buying Iranian oil include uncertainty over how to pay for it, and a large share of it is

aboard ageing shadow fleet ships, traders said.

Also, some former purchasers of Iranian oil were contractually obligated to buy from National Iranian Oil Co, sources said. Since the US reimposed sanctions in late 2018, Iranian oil has been sold by third-party traders, Reuters reported. "It usually takes some time to work through compliance, administration and banking, but people will try to work as soon as possible," a Singapore trader said.

Earlier, major buyers of Iranian oil included China, India, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Greece, Taiwan and Turkey.

Labuan crude from Malaysia, Minas from Indonesia and Bach Ho from Vietnam, grades that rarely attract significant attention in global oil markets, are now trading at premiums of over \$10/barrel above the Dated Brent benchmark, Bloomberg reported.

### WAR SNIPPETS

#### 20 COUNTRIES VOW SUPPORT FOR SAFER STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Over 20 nations announced their readiness to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, condemning Iran's effective closure of the vital waterway. In a joint statement, 22 nations, mostly European but also including the UAE and Bahrain, condemned Iran's actions in the Persian Gulf. "We condemn in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf, attacks on civilian infrastructure including oil and gas installations, and the de facto closure of the strait."

#### PUTIN OFFERED TO DITCH IRAN IF US CUT OFF UKRAINE?

Moscow has denied a media report claiming the Kremlin had offered to stop sharing intelligence with Iran if the US ceased supplying Ukraine with intel about Russia. A Politico report said Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy Kirill Dmitriev had made a proposal about not sharing intel during a meeting with Trump administration envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner in Miami last week. The US, which has shared intelligence with Ukraine since it was invaded by Russia in February 2022, rejected the proposal. Dmitriev, however, labelled the report as "fake".

#### US CURBS ON GLOBAL NETWORK FINANCING

The US imposed sanctions on individuals and entities tied to what it described as a global financial network supporting Hezbollah, according to a US State Dept. "The sanctions are intended to disrupt fundraising and money laundering activities carried out on behalf of Hezbollah's finance team through a range of companies and projects operating across West Asia, Europe and North America, to cut off financial channels that help the Iran-backed group generate revenue and evade existing sanctions," it said.

#### CUBA-BOUND FUEL TANKER DIVERTED

A Russian diesel tanker bound for Cuba changed its destination to Trinidad and Tobago after the US Treasury said the island is barred from receiving Russian fuel. The Sea Horse was carrying 2,00,000 barrels of Russian diesel. On Friday, it updated its declared destination to Trinidad and Tobago.

#### TWO TRY TO ENTER N-SUB BASE, HELD

Two people including Iranian were arrested, after they tried to enter the Faslane nuclear submarine base in Scotland on charges of espionage. A man, 34, and a woman, 31, were detained after they had asked to enter one of Britain's most sensitive military sites late on Thursday.

## IDF strikes IRGC compound in Tehran; explosions heard in Bahrain capital

DUBAI

As the conflict in West Asia entered its 22nd day on Saturday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it carried out wide-scale strikes in Tehran, targeting dozens of sites linked to the Iranian regime, including an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) compound, missile component storage facilities and fuel production units.

#### TEHRAN TARGETS HIT

According to the IDF, dozens of targets were hit, including a central compound of the IRGC, which Israel claimed had been "utilised for the production and development of ballistic missile components", as well as a missile component storage facility, a Defence Ministry compound where a fuel manufacturing site was located, and a missile component production facility.

Several air defence sites in Tehran were also attacked, the IDF added.

#### RETALIATORY ATTACKS UPS ENERGY CONCERNS

Iran has continued retaliatory attacks on Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries, some targeting energy facilities, raising concerns of a global

#### AMONG THE SITES STRUCK

- A central IRGC compound utilised for the production and development of ballistic missile components

- A missile production components storage facility

- A compound belonging to Ministry of Defence responsible for producing missiles fuel

- Ballistic missiles components production site

energy supply shock, AP reported. Explosions were heard in Bahrain's capital, Manama, AFP reported, as regional tensions escalated.

#### CASUALTIES MOUNT ON BOTH SIDES

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, said the US-Israeli attacks have killed over 1,300 people, while the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency estimated the toll could be higher at 1,858. In Israel, at least 15 people have been killed, along with four

## Natanz nuclear facility hit again

● Iran's main enrichment site was also hit in first week; there was no radiation or leak  
● War enters week 4 ● Attacks will intensify next week: Israel ● 20 die in Lebanon

DUBAI

Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was hit in an airstrike on Saturday, an official Iranian news agency reported, adding there was no radiation leakage, as Israel's Defence Minister warned of a surge in attacks on Iran as the war in West Asia entered its fourth week, AP reported.

Israel Katz, the Defence Minister, said that next week, "the intensity of the attacks" by Israel and the US against Iran's ruling theocracy will "increase significantly".

Fragments from an Iranian missile struck an empty kindergarten near Tel Aviv. Israeli army spokesman Nadav Shoshani posted a video on X of the building; no casualties were reported.

Iran's Mizan news agency said there was no leakage after the Natanz strike, about 220 km southeast of Tehran. The facility, Iran's main uranium enrichment site, was hit earlier in the war, with satellite images showing damage. The UN nuclear



watchdog had said "no radiological consequence" were expected from that strike. The International Atomic Energy Agency said on Saturday the bulk of Iran's 970 pounds (440 kg) of enriched uranium is elsewhere, beneath the rubble at its Isfahan facility, with a lesser amount at Natanz. Israel's military said it was "not aware" of a strike.

Meanwhile, Israel launched strikes targeting Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Beirut's southern suburbs, AP reported. Smoke rose, fires broke out and loud explosions were heard after evacuation warnings for seven neighbourhoods.

#### DRONE HITS INTEL HQ IN IRAQ; OFFICER KILLED

Tehran saw heavy overnight airstrikes, residents said. In Iraq, a drone struck the intelligence service headquarters in Baghdad, killing an officer. No group claimed responsibility.

The Defence Ministry said Iran's "lashing out across the region and holding hostage the Strait of Hormuz, are a threat to British interests and British allies".

#### BRITAIN ALLOWS US TO USE ITS BASES

Britain has not joined US-Israeli strikes but has allowed American bombers to use UK

bases, including Diego Garcia, to target Iran's missile sites and secure shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

#### AIRSTRIKES IN LEBANON

Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed over 1,000 people and displaced more than 1 million, the Lebanese government said. At least 20 people were killed and 57 injured in the past 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,021 dead and 2,641 injured since March 2, IANS reported. Over 1,34,616 displaced people are sheltering in 644 centres, as pressure mounts on relief systems, Xinhua reported.

#### SYRIA INFRA TARGETED

Israel said it had carried out airstrikes on government infrastructure in the south of Syria, in response to what it described as attacks on Druze civilians in Suweida province.

The Israeli military said it hit a command centre and weapons stored at army compounds. "The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will not tolerate harm towards the Druze population in Syria and continue to defend them."

## Insta pulls plug on 'MAGA dream girl'

MUMBAI

Instagram has removed an account featuring a viral "MAGA dream girl" after it attracted over a million followers, with experts confirming the persona was created using artificial intelligence.

The account of "Jessica Foster", portrayed as a US Army service member, gained traction within four months before it was taken down late on Thursday for violating policies, a Meta spokesperson said. The account showed Foster posing with an F-22 Raptor fighter jet, walking with President Donald Trump and appearing alongside global leaders. Experts said artificial intelligence generated the images and videos, Washington Post reported.

Authorities found no record of Foster's military service, an Army spokesperson said. The account did not label its content as AI-generated but showed signs of fabrication, mixing pro-Trump messaging with sexualised content. The account initially directed users to OnlyFans, which removed it for violating rules requiring verified human creators, before redirecting to Fanvue.

Sam Gregory, executive director of Witness, said: "Foster is the apotheosis of what MAGA fantasises about... it's obviously AI. There's no provenance to the images." Foster's posts showed staged interactions with Melania Trump, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Vladimir Putin and Lionel Messi. Joan Donovan, an assistant professor at Boston University, warned: "The danger of this is that we're moving towards a society of the unreal."



## Hawaii suffers worst flooding

**Honolulu:** Hawaii suffered its worst flooding in 20+ years as heavy rains fell on soil saturated by downpours from a winter storm a week ago.

Floodwaters smothered vast stretches of Oahu's North Shore, a community world-renowned for its big-wave surfing. Raging waters lifted homes and cars and prompted evacuation orders. Officials cautioned a 120-year-old dam could fail. Meanwhile, a record early heat wave striking the west of the US is a one-in-500-year type event and the result of human-caused climate change, experts say.

## Musk misled investors in Twitter deal: Jury

**San Francisco:** A jury has found Elon Musk liable for misleading investors during his 2022 \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter, but cleared him of claims that he schemed to commit fraud.

The San Francisco civil trial centred on a class-action lawsuit over Musk's May 2022 tweets and podcast remarks. Jurors examined whether his statement that the deal was "temporarily on hold" misled shareholders. After nearly four days of deliberation, the nine-member jury ruled that two tweets misled investors,

but a podcast comment was opinion. It also held that Musk did not deliberately scheme to defraud.

The jury awarded damages of \$3 to \$8 per share per day, which plaintiffs' lawyers said totals roughly \$2.1 billion in stock and \$500 million in options. Musk's legal team said it will appeal, calling the verdict "a bump in the road".

The case focused on Musk's claims that fake and spam accounts exceeded Twitter's disclosed 5%. He had cited this to reconsider the deal before ultimately proceeding.

## US: PIO judge convicted

**Houston:** An Indian-origin county judge has been convicted of money laundering following a jury verdict in a campaign finance case and faces sentencing on June 16.

KP George, Fort Bend County judge, was found guilty of misusing campaign funds for personal expenses. Prosecutors said he transferred \$46,000 to personal accounts for private use, including a home-related payment, while the defence said the transfers were reimbursements.

The jury returned verdict after deliberation.

## Judith Rapoport, who introduced readers to OCD, passes away at 92

**S**amuel Johnson, the 18th-century man of letters, may have suffered from it, counting steps as he walked through the streets of London, compulsively touching every post he passed. Howard Hughes, the germ-averse aviation tycoon, is believed to have had it, too.

Yet for years, few Americans had ever heard of obsessive-compulsive disorder, in which patients find their lives upended by intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviours — washing and counting, looking and hoarding — that they feel

compelled to repeat over and over, again and again.

**Judith Rapoport**, a leading child psychiatrist at the US National Institute of Mental Health, helped bring the condition into public understanding. Her widely read book, *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing*, offered a clear, humane account of OCD and its impact on young patients and their families. Her work helped shift perceptions of the disorder from eccentric habit to serious medical condition, guiding diagnosis and

treatment for decades.

She also advanced research into the biological basis of the disorder, using brain imaging to deepen scientific understanding. Colleagues credited her with combining rigorous science and compassionate care, helping reduce stigma and improving treatment outcomes for patients worldwide. Rapoport died on March 20 at her home in Bethesda, Maryland, aged 92, according to family members. The cause of death was not immediately disclosed.



## 14 die in fire at S Korean unit

**Seoul:** A fire at a car parts factory in South Korea has killed 14 people and injured almost 60 others. Video footage of the blaze at the factory in Daejeon showed people jumping from the first floor of the 3-storey building to escape.

About 170 workers were believed to have been inside the factory when the fire was reported on Friday. It was extinguished until Saturday afternoon. President Lee Jae Myung visited the site and called for better protections for the workers, over 10,000 of whom died at work from 2000 to 2024, as per data.

## Briefs

BRIGHTON

## Ekitike injured in Liverpool's match



Liverpool striker **Hugo Ekitike** lasted less than eight minutes before hobbling off with a left leg injury in the Premier League game against Brighton on Saturday. The France international was hurt in a challenge by Brighton midfielder James Milner in the third minute. After receiving treatment, he tried to run it off but couldn't continue and was replaced by Curtis Jones. Ekitike was selected in France's latest squad ahead of friendlies against Brazil and Colombia in the United States.

GOLD COAST (AUS)

## Diksha, Hitaashee in top 10



Indian golfer **Hitaashee Bakshi** and **Diksha Dagar** are both placed T-6 after the third round of the Australian WPGA Championship with a total score of 9-under par here. Hitaashee carded a round of 4-under 67 to gain two positions, while Diksha put together a round of 6-under 65 on the third day to move up from T-16 to T-6. Hannah Green is looking set to claim her third title in as many events as she won her home event, the Women's Australian Open just last week.

VALSPAR PALM HARBOUR

## Rai, Theegala miss cut at Valspar



**Aaron Rai** and **Sahith Theegala** missed the cut at the Valspar Championship after disappointing second rounds in Palm Harbour, Florida. Rai, who was in the top 10 after an opening round of 68, carded a five-over 77 in the second round to finish at three-over par and exit early. Theegala also failed to progress after a poor start to the tournament. He followed up his opening 77 with an even-par 72 but ended at six-over, falling short of the cut line. Meanwhile, Sungjae Im continued to lead the field after the second round. He carded a two-under 70 to move to nine-under overall.

## Akash Deep ruled out of IPL with back injury

KKR face mounting pace concerns as injuries hit bowling resources

KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have suffered another blow to their pace attack, with India seamer **Akash Deep** ruled out for at least eight weeks due to a stress reaction in his lower back, effectively sidelining him from the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL).

The injury has also placed the right-arm pacer in serious doubt for the one-off Test against Afghanistan scheduled for early June.

"Akash Deep has a stress reaction in his lower back. There has been a recurrence and it might take eight to 12 weeks to heal. He is not going to play the IPL and is very unlikely to be selected for the Afghanistan Test," a BCCI source said.

The 29-year-old Bengal pacer was last seen in action during the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Jammu and Kashmir, where he appeared short of full fitness, bowling 13 overs in the first innings and fewer than seven in the second. He has since been undergoing rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru and did not join KKR's preparatory camp, which began in Kolkata on Wednesday.

"It will take considerable time for healing, followed by workload adaptation and return-to-play protocols. A conservative estimate of recovery is around 10 weeks, but it could take longer," the source added.

Akash Deep's absence adds to KKR's growing list of injured pacers, including India seamer Harshit Rana



Akash Deep has a stress reaction in his lower back. There has been a recurrence and it might take eight to 12 weeks to heal.

BCCI source

and Sri Lanka's Matheesha Pathirana, further weakening the team's fast-bowling options.

With both Akash Deep and Rana unavailable, KKR will rely heavily on domestic bowlers such as Vaibhav Arora, Kartik Tyagi and Umran Malik, who has recently regained fitness.

KKR, who finished eighth in their title defence last season, had already been dealing with Rana's absence due to a ligament strain in his right knee.

Earlier this year, left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman was released following a BCCI directive, prompting the franchise to bring in Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani as his replacement.

## VIEWPOINT | Ex-India spinner cites fading novelty, injuries and personnel gaps KKR bowling lacks fear factor ahead of IPL, says Ashwin

CHENNAI

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has said Kolkata Knight Riders' (KKR) bowling attack no longer carries the same aura of fear, adding that the "novelty factor" around their mystery spinners has faded ahead of the upcoming IPL season.

Analysing KKR's strengths and weaknesses, Ashwin said India spinner **Varun Chakravarty** will shoulder significant responsibility in the absence of the element of surprise that once defined the attack.

"I do not think oppositions will be worried after looking at KKR's bowling attack. The mystery factor, the novelty factor and the fear associated with it have gone. Earlier, batters used to go to the analyst's room, watch the bowler's hand or just look to take a single," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"Varun is at a stage in his career where he has to find answers. It is a natural progression in any cricketer's career. I think the novelty factor is out," he added.

Ashwin also pointed out that seasoned all-rounder Sunil Narine's effectiveness has reduced, particularly due to restrictions on certain variations in his bowling.

"Sunil Narine also cannot bowl the faster ball anymore because of his action. Eden Gardens is a small ground, so it becomes easier for the opposition to say, 'Here is a team that is not going to make me scared, so let us go after them,'" he said.

He stressed that without unpredictability, KKR's bowlers could struggle to con-



tain aggressive batting line-ups, especially on smaller venues.

Ashwin further noted that injuries and personnel changes have weakened the bowling unit since the auction.

"After the auction, I had said that KKR's bowling attack is solid. But now Mustafizur Rahman is not there, Matheesha Pathirana is injured and Harshit Rana has been ruled out," he said.

"KKR have the blessing of Blessing Muzarabani. He has worked hard and I am excited to see him, but with all the injuries plaguing them, somebody has to do the heavy lifting. I cannot see anyone who can do that," he added.

In another setback, KKR have also lost India seamer

Varun is at a stage in his career where he has to find answers. It is a natural progression in any cricketer's career. I think the novelty factor is out

R Ashwin  
former India spinner

Akash Deep for the entire season.

Ashwin also reflected on the absence of Shreyas Iyer, who had led KKR to their third IPL title in 2024 but is no

longer part of the squad.

"Korbo is there, Lorbo is there, but I do not think Jeetbo is there. KKR won the title three times, twice under Gautam Gambhir and once under Shreyas Iyer. With Shreyas Iyer, you had a qualifying opportunity that went to another team," Ashwin said.

"Shreyas Iyer's captaincy history is compelling. KKR's loss ended up being Punjab Kings' gain," he added.

Ashwin also raised a broader issue regarding player availability and workload restrictions in the IPL, suggesting franchises should have financial safeguards.

"There is a question about Cameron Green. Will Cricket Australia allow him to bowl all four overs? That is also a possi-

bility. In this scenario, the board is saying he can play in the IPL but with workload restrictions," Ashwin said.

"IPL teams should have an opportunity where if a player bowls only two overs, then they should deduct 2 crore. If a player is not able to deliver his full quota, teams should have the right to adjust the contract value," he added.

"When you come into the IPL auction, the expectation is that you will bowl four overs and also contribute with the bat. If there are restrictions, the team should be allowed to make deductions," he elaborated. "Imagine if you are Shah Rukh Khan and you have paid Rs 5 crore for a player, but he says he will bowl only one over. How will you feel?" Ashwin said.

## Kohli urges RCB to stay sharp ahead of title defence

Star batter stresses intensity, discipline, urgency as Bengaluru start prep

BENGALURU

Talismanic batter **Virat Kohli** on Saturday urged his Royal Challengers Bengaluru teammates to "switch on" and not waste even a minute during training sessions as they gear up for their IPL title defence.

Addressing the squad during their first practice session at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Kohli underlined the importance of sustaining the intensity that helped them secure the title last year. He reminded the players that the coming season would demand even greater focus and consistency. "We worked really hard over the last two to three seasons to achieve what we did last year, and it's only going to get tougher because other teams are going to come hard at us," Kohli said.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will open their IPL 2026 campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad on March 28 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. With expectations high, Kohli emphasised the need to build



momentum from the very beginning of preparations.

"We do not waste these days. We stay ahead. So, switch on now. Let's not waste even a minute of any session that we are a part of. We must give our 120% for these two-and-a-half months," he added.

The franchise strengthened their squad at the auction by bringing in Venkatesh Iyer, Mangesh Yadav, Jordan Cox, Vicky Ostwal and Satvik Deswal, adding depth across departments. Head coach Andy Flower expressed satisfaction with the squad

assembled, stating that the team had addressed key areas through strategic additions.

"We had an interesting auction and I think we have improved our squad, to be quite frank. We have brought in some great new additions. Integrating them into the RCB way alongside established players led by Virat and Rajat is an exciting part of building this team," Flower said.

Highlighting the significance of being defending champions, Flower said the team would embrace the challenge rather than dwell on

We worked really hard over the last two to three seasons to achieve what we did last year, and it's only going to get tougher because other teams are going to come hard at us

Virat Kohli  
RCB batter

past success.

"There is one difference this year, we have got a star on our shirt. That's a very proud feeling for all RCB fans. But that season is gone. Now we have a new challenge ahead, and it's an exciting one. We are here to win this year's IPL," he added. Wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma spoke about the positive atmosphere within the group as new and existing members came together during the initial sessions.

NEW DELHI

Reigning world champions India will play two Twenty20 Internationals against Ireland on June 26 and June 28, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Saturday. The series will precede India's white-ball tour of England.

Both matches will be held in Belfast, marking India's return to the venue for the first time since 2007.

"Team India (Senior Men) will travel to Ireland for a two-match T20I series in June 2026. Having toured Ireland three times in the past eight years in 2018, 2022 and 2023, this tour will mark India's return to Belfast for the first time since 2007," BCCI secretary **Devajit Saikia** said in a statement.

The announcement comes two days after Ireland's director of high performance, Graham West, confirmed the series while also announcing Paul Stirling's decision to step down as the team's T20I captain.

India are scheduled to host Afghanistan for a one-off Test and a three-match One Day



Team India (Senior Men) will travel to Ireland for a two-match T20I series in June 2026. Having toured Ireland three times in the past eight years in 2018, 2022 and 2023, this tour will mark India's return to Belfast for the first time since 2007

Devajit Saikia, BCCI secretary

International (ODI) series, which will conclude on June 20. The team will then travel to England for five T20Is and three ODIs from July 1 to July 19.

India have toured Ireland three times in the past eight

years, drawing strong crowds at Malahide, located on the outskirts of Dublin.

West said on Thursday that the India series forms an important part of Ireland's preparations for the upcoming season.

## squash

## Olympic inclusion a watershed moment: Ghosal

NEW DELHI

Former India No. 1 **Saurav Ghosal** has termed squash's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics a watershed moment and stressed the need to expand access, improve coaching and strengthen the ecosystem to sustain the sport's growth.

Recently appointed Sports Commissioner of World Premier Squash, Ghosal described the role as a culmination of his journey in the

sport. "I played professional squash and for India for more than 20 years. It has been a blessing. This phase is a coming together of all those experiences and I am excited to hopefully make a contribution at the global level and democratise the sport," he said.

"I have always viewed pressure situations as opportunities. This is an opportunity to do something substantial in the sport," he added. On India's rise in squash,

Ghosal underlined the importance of participation and building a wider base of players.

"Strength lies in numbers. If you have more players playing, the probability is that you will produce champions," he said.

"The upward trajectory is very heartening and this is an attempt to democratise the sport, get more kids, more people and recreational players involved because the entire ecosystem has to be involved," he added.

He also highlighted the role of exposure and opportunity for emerging players.

"There are so many players who have not had the financial backing or the right guidance. This can give them a window to showcase their talent on the world stage," he said. India currently has multiple players in the top 50, including teenager Anahat Singh.

"It is great that we have four boys in the top 50. We also have Anahat in the top 20. Success breeds success

and that will help the overall ecosystem," Ghosal said.

"She has everything going for her: talent, mentality, support. If she continues the way she is, there is no reason she cannot be a mainstay in the top 10," he added.

"I do not want to put undue pressure on her. She is still 18 and needs to enjoy this time," he said.

On squash's Olympic debut at the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, Ghosal said it marks a defining moment for the sport.

