

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Sunday, 15 March, 2026

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

## Briefs

### JAMMU SIT to probe assassination bid on Farooq

Jammu and Kashmir Police have constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the recent assassination attempt on National Conference president Farooq Abdullah here, officials said on Saturday. Jammu Zone Inspector General of Police (IGP) Bhim Sen Tuti ordered the setting up of the SIT under the supervision of a deputy inspector general of police Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, considering the "seriousness and sensitivity" of the case. On Wednesday night, Abdullah, the former chief minister, had a miraculous escape when a gunman opened fire on him after coming from behind while he was leaving a marriage function at the Royal Park banquet hall in the Greater Kailash area.

### PATNA NDA holds meet ahead RS polls

NDA leaders met MLAs in Patna on Saturday ahead of the March 16 Rajya Sabha polls and trained newly elected legislators on voting procedures. Police's Economic Offences Unit has been put on alert to prevent possible horse-trading. While the NDA is set to win four seats comfortably, a contest is expected with the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan for the fifth seat.

### CHANDIGARH Police bust ISI-backed module

Punjab Police on Saturday said it busted an ISI-backed terror and cross-border arms smuggling module with the arrest of two men in Amritsar. Police recovered an AK-47 rifle, two magazines, 36 cartridges and three Glock pistols. Officials said the weapons consignment was sent by foreign handlers through the Pakistan route for terrorist activities in Punjab.

### JAIPUR Fake sports quota racket busted

Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group arrested 20 people, including 19 candidates who secured jobs in the Grade III Teacher Recruitment 2022 using fake sports quota certificates. The accused allegedly used forged Taekwondo certificates. Raids were conducted across 14 districts and one location in Haryana. Police said middlemen supplied fake certificates in exchange for money.

## MISUSE OF LAW | Kejriwal said activist's detention without evidence exposes misuse of NSA, mirrors Delhi liquor case

# Oppn slams Centre over Wangchuk's detention

NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Saturday slammed the Centre over the detention of Ladakh-based climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, questioning why he was held for nearly six months under the National Security Act (NSA) before the government revoked the order. While welcoming his release, they alleged the episode reflected misuse of stringent laws and raised concerns over the circumstances of his arrest.

Several leaders said the episode highlighted concerns over the use of stringent laws and the circumstances under which Wangchuk was detained.

They questioned the rationale behind invoking national security provisions against a climate activist and engineer who had been campaigning on issues related to Ladakh's rights and environmental protection.

Some opposition voices alleged that the prolonged detention without clear evidence reflected a broader pattern of targeting critics and dissenting voices.

Leaders from Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir also welcomed the decision but urged authorities to release other individuals detained during

## Voices on Sonam Wangchuk's release



**Arvind Kejriwal (AAP National Convenor):** Sonam Wangchuk's six-month detention without evidence exposed the Modi government's "dictatorship".

**Akhilesh Yadav (Samajwadi Party president):** Sonam Wangchuk should never have been jailed and accused the BJP of betraying Ladakh's people.

**Omar Abdullah (Jammu and Kashmir Chief**

**Minister):** Urged the release of youngsters detained in Kashmir protests as a goodwill gesture after Wangchuk's release.

**Ashok Gehlot (Congress leader):** Questioned the Centre on why Wangchuk was jailed for nearly 170 days if no evidence was found.

**Vinai Kumar Saxena (Ladakh Lieutenant Governor):** Welcomed the Centre's decision and

said Wangchuk's release was a step towards peace and stability in Ladakh.

**Sajjad Hussain Kargili (Kargil Democratic Alliance leader):** Called Wangchuk's release good news during Ramadan and urged the government to drop cases against other detainees.

**Mohamad Hanifa (Ladakh MP):** Welcomed Wangchuk's release but demanded freedom for other detainees and acceptance of Ladakh's statehood demand.

**Mehbooba Mufti (PDP chief):** Said the NSA should not have been used against Wangchuk and called his long detention wrong.

**Tsring Lagrok (APEX Body co-chairman):** Called Wangchuk's release a victory for the entire Ladakh and said allegations against him were baseless.

protests in the region and to address long-standing demands related to Ladakh's statehood and constitutional safeguards.

They stressed that the issues

raised by the protesters should be resolved through dialogue and engagement rather than through arrests or prolonged detention.

Wangchuk was detained on

September 26, 2025, under the NSA following protests in Leh over demands for statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

## Detention reflects simmering tension

SRINAGAR

The detention of Wangchuk had triggered discontent in the region when he was amid widespread protests for application of rule 6 or the restoration of the statehood to the region following its declaration of union territory on August 5, 2019 with the revocation of article 370. 35 A of Jammu and Kashmir, of which Ladakh was part.

Interestingly, the Leh division of the Ladakh with large population of Buddhists rejoiced the revocation of special status of J&K and separation of the Ladakh from former state and forming it as union territory without assembly, under direct central rule. It was same Sonam

Wangchuk who, along with his followers organized celebrations in the region, who were accusing the J&K political class of being biased against Ladakh. However, Muslim population of Kargil protested against the revocation of the Article 370.

Wangchuk was detained on September 26 last year under the NSA for allegedly playing a role in instigating the violent protest in Ladakh on September 24, when he sat on hunger strike, which led to four deaths in police firing.

The home ministry on Saturday in its order said that the government has been actively engaging with various stakeholders and community leaders in Ladakh with a view to addressing the aspirations and concerns of the people of the region and revoked the PSA against Wangchuk.

## PM unveils connectivity projects worth ₹18,680 cr in West Bengal

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled connectivity projects valued at Rs 18,680 crore in West Bengal on Saturday, and said a new chapter of India's development was being written from the state.

The PM asserted that these projects will give new momentum to West Bengal and eastern India, boosting business and enterprise.

"A new chapter is being written for West Bengal and eastern India's development from Kolkata.... Lives of lakhs of people will be eased; they will get new opportunities," Modi said after inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for the projects at a programme here.



PM Narendra Modi waves to the gathering during a rally in Kolkata on Saturday

He said these projects will further strengthen eastern India's logistics system.

"These new projects related to roads, rail and ports are opening new vistas for Bengal's modern future," he said.

The PM said that these pro-

jects will benefit everyone, including farmers, traders, entrepreneurs and students. "New opportunities will be created in the tourism sector also," he said, adding that local enterprise and services will get a boost from the projects.

## Iran-US war: What it could cost India

NEW DELHI

What will be the real cost of the Iran-US conflict on the Indian economy? The war in one of India's key export regions which accounts for a sixth of its exports and about USD 50 billion in remittances has already started creating black holes in Indian balance sheets.

"Gas-burning factories across Gujarat, Maharashtra and several other states have fallen idle. The entire secondary steel sector has been hit," said Pankaj Chadha, chairman of EEPIC India. "First, there is not enough gas available to smelt iron into steel. Second, the scrap that we used to import for melting down is no longer arriving.

Then the export orders are in jeopardy. Containers are lying empty all over the place." The shipping squeeze, where sending containers through the Straits of Hormuz has become impossible, not to speak of the crude and gas shortage and its inflationary impact is liable to hit the Indian economy for billions of dollars in just the week gone by.

"It's all up in the air; we really do not know how much it will cost us, a mere bystander in the war," said Prof Biswajit Dhar, former WTO Chair at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT).

Industry experts believe the ongoing conflict in the Gulf region could cost India between USD 2-3 billion in electronics exports alone. Up to USD 4 billion in monthly shipments are at risk due to rising freight costs and logistics delays.

## BJP to go solo in 2027 Punjab polls: Shah

CHANDIGARH

Announcing that the BJP will contest the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections alone, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the party would enact an anti-conversion law within a

month of forming the government and wipe out the drug trade in two years. Launching the party's poll campaign while addressing a "badlav rally" in Moga district, Shah said a double-engine government would rescue Punjab from drugs and debt.

He said that while the BJP

had earlier been a junior partner of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the party was now beginning its campaign to form its own government in the state.

"You have tried the Congress, Akalis and AAP; now give the BJP a chance," he said. Targeting the ruling Aam

Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress, Shah said Sikh Gurus made supreme sacrifices against forced conversions, but these parties treated the issue as a vote bank. He said the BJP would enact an anti-conversion law within a month of coming to power.

## Rahul targets govt over MSP

**New Delhi:** Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that the BJP government was "sacrificing" Indian agriculture for their "own self-interest" as he accused them of evading his questions on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the interim trade

agreement with the US. "In the Lok Sabha, I asked the government a direct question: Why has the promise of a statutory MSP—calculated at C2+50%—made to farmers in 2021, not yet been implemented? Evading a direct response, the government merely reiterated its existing

MSP policy," Rahul Gandhi said. "The government also admitted that it exerted pressure on states to discontinue MSP bonuses—a move it sought to justify, without any logical basis, in the name of "national priorities," he added. **-Agencies**

## money special

# Govt eases public shareholding norms to facilitate mega IPOs

NEW DELHI

The government has amended rules governing minimum public shareholding for large companies by introducing a tiered structure that allows large firms to offer a smaller portion of shares to the public during IPO, and do staged increases to the 25% level.

The amendment links minimum public offers to a company's post-issue capital at the IPO price. Companies with post-issue capital above Rs 1,000 crore but up to Rs 4,000 crore must offer shares worth at least Rs 400 crore to the public. Companies with



post-issue capital above Rs 4,000 crore but up to Rs 50,000 crore will be required to offer at least 10% of their shares at listing and must raise public shareholding to 25 per cent within three years, in a manner laid out by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

For companies with post-issue capital between 50,000 crore to Rs 1 lakh crore, a minimum public offer equiva-

alent to Rs 1,000 crore in value and at least 8% of each class of shares; those with capital between Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 5 lakh crore must offer shares worth at least Rs 6,250 crore and maintain a minimum public shareholding of 2.75% at listing.

Companies with post-issue capital above Rs 5 lakh crore have to offer shares worth at least Rs 15,000 crore and a minimum public shareholding of 1% at the time of listing, the statement noted. Under the revised framework, companies with post-issue capital of up to Rs 1,600 crore will be required to offer at least 25% of each class of equity to the public similar to the current norm.

## Oil windfall gives Russia \$150 million a day boost

MUMBAI

The Iran war has come as a shot in the arm for Russia's ailing oil industry. As the US-Israel-Iran conflict continues into its second week with no sign of an end, Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz has practically disrupted a significant share of the world's oil flows.

The turmoil has created an opportunity for Russia, which has been severely sanctioned since it began its war against Ukraine in 2022. Moscow is now finding new demand for its crude as countries scramble for alternative supplies, Business Standard reported.

As a result of higher prices and stronger demand for Russian crude, Moscow's revenues have risen significantly. According to industry esti-

mates, Russia is earning up to \$150 million a day in additional budget revenues from oil sales during the crisis, according to a report by the Financial Times. In the first 12 days of the conflict alone, Russia is estimated to have earned \$1.3 billion—\$1.9 billion in extra tax revenue from oil exports.

This improvement is tied to rising prices for Russia's Urals crude, which analysts cited by the Financial Times expect could average \$70–\$80 a barrel, compared with about \$52 a barrel in the previous two months.

The higher price of crude oil has had a direct fiscal effect on Russia's finances. The Financial Times cited analysts as saying that every \$10 rise in the average monthly oil price adds about \$2.8 billion to Russian exporters' revenues, of which roughly \$1.63 billion flows to the government through taxes.

## Akasa Air to levy fuel surcharge from today

NEW DELHI

Akasa Air will levy fuel surcharges ranging from Rs 199 to Rs 1,300 on domestic and international flight tickets from March 15 due to the spike in jet fuel prices amid the West Asia conflict.

Air India, Air India Express and IndiGo have started levying similar charges on domestic and international flight tickets.

In a statement on Saturday, Akasa Air said it would levy fuel surcharge for each flight and the quantum would vary based on the duration of the flight. "Akasa Air will introduce a fuel surcharge ranging from INR 199 to INR 1300 on our domestic and international routes, for all bookings that are made with effect from 00:01 hrs on March 15, 2026," it said.

## Remaining patient best strategy for investors, says Sebi Chief

Sebi chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Saturday urged investors, especially retail ones, to remain patient, terming it the "best strategy" in uncertain times. In remarks made amid the Middle East conflict-induced selling pressures in the markets, Pandey said past episodes of turbulence in markets like the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic or the Russia-Ukraine conflict have shown that things stabilise eventually.

## JSW Steel to develop coking coal mine in Mozambique

JSW Steel will develop Minas de Revuboa coking coal mine in Mozambique in phases, a company statement said. Located in the Moatize coal basin of the Tete Province, Minas de Revuboa has 850 million tonne (MT) of reserves, and the potential to yield 250 MT of usable coking coal. JSW Steel said it will develop the mine in phases, with the first phase expected to be developed over the next 2.5 years to produce 2.4 million tonne per annum (MTPA) prime hard coking coal.

## Despite global challenges, India's growth outlook resilient: HSBC MF

India's economic growth remains resilient despite global macro-economic challenges, supported by favourable interest rate and liquidity conditions, according to a report by HSBC Mutual Fund.

## Grand Organization of the National Lok Adalat

### Record Disposal of a Total of 228,442 Cases at the National Lok Adalat

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj** | In accordance with the directives of the Uttar Pradesh State Legal Services Authority, Lucknow, a National Lok Adalat was organized on Saturday under the aegis of the District Legal Services Authority, Prayagraj. Held at the District Court, Prayagraj, and across all Tehsils, the event was inaugurated at 10:00 AM by the Honorable District Judge and Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority, Prayagraj—Mr. Satya Prakash Tripathi—by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Presiding Officer of the Commercial Court, Prayagraj, Mr. Sudama Prasad, was present on this occasion. A total of 228,442 cases were disposed of during the National Lok Adalat. District Judge of Prayagraj, Mr. Satya Prakash Tripathi, personally disposed of 04 civil cases. In the criminal category, a total of 12,149 cases were resolved during the National Lok Adalat. The Family Court disposed of a total of 79 cases based on mutual reconciliation and settlement. The Honorable District Judge of Prayagraj facilitated settlements for 08 couples, enabling them to reunite and live together based on mutual reconciliation; the couples exchanged garlands and offered sweets to one another. Principal Judge of the Family Court, Mr. Ravindra Kumar II, disposed of 34 cases. The Presiding Officer of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (North), Mr. Parvendra Kumar Sharma, disposed of 265 cases. The Presiding Officer of the Motor Accident Claims



Tribunal (South), Mr. Nikunj Mittal, disposed of 108 cases. The Presiding Officer for Land Acquisition matters, Mr. Krishna Swaroop Dhar Dwivedi, disposed of a total of 08 cases. Mr. Ravikant II, Additional District Judge (EC Act), disposed of 651 electricity-related cases. Chief Judicial Magistrate Ms. Trisha Mishra disposed of 6,242 cases; Railway Magistrate Mr. Vinay Kumar Jaiswal disposed of 2,140 cases; and Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-II, Mr. Arun Kumar Yadav, disposed of 1,008 cases. A total of 108,707

cases were disposed of by the Revenue Courts. Diksha, the Presiding Officer of the Virtual Court, disposed of 8,325 challan cases. Additionally, 1,782 bank pre-litigation cases were resolved. Under the guidance of Ravikant-II, Nodal Officer/ADJ (Additional District Judge) for the Lok Adalat, the event was successfully organized through coordination with all relevant departments. This information was provided by Shashi Kumar, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, Prayagraj.

## Body Dumped in Canal After Murder; Incident Sparks Sensation in the Area



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Sultanpur.** A case has come to light involving the murder of a young man, whose body was subsequently dumped into a canal near Avsanpur village within the Shivgarh police station limits. News of the discovery of the body on Saturday morning sent shockwaves through the region, drawing a large crowd of villagers to the scene. Upon receiving the information, the police arrived at the spot and retrieved the body from the canal. Injury marks were found on the deceased's head and other

parts of his body, leading to strong suspicions that he was murdered. The deceased has been identified as Samar Bahadur, son of the late Lalita Prasad Musahar. Circle Officer Hritik Kapoor, who arrived at the scene, inspected the crime site. The police have taken custody of the body, sent it for a post-mortem examination, and initiated a thorough investigation into the matter. Chandra Bhan Verma stated that the body has been taken into custody and sent for a post-mortem, and that an investigation into the case is currently underway.

## 25 Crore Received from the Centre to Protect Farmers Crops

Efforts by the state government to protect farmers crops from wild animals have started yielding results. Following discussions between Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the central government has resumed financial assistance for the fencing scheme.



In this regard, the Union Ministry of Agriculture has approved financial aid of ₹25 crore for Uttarakhanda. Farmers in Uttarakhanda have been facing significant crop damage due to wild animals. To address this issue, the state government launched the fencing (Gher-Baad) scheme. Until three years ago, financial assistance for this initiative was provided by the Union Ministry of Agriculture under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). However, the central support was later discontinued. Considering the difficulties faced by farmers, assistance for fencing was then provided through the District Plan on the instructions of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami. The Chief Minister had been consistently making efforts to restore central assistance for this scheme. On Friday, the fifth day of the Budget Session of the Uttarakhanda Assembly, Agriculture Minister Ganesh Joshi informed the House that the Union Ministry of Agriculture has approved ₹25 crore for the fencing scheme. He said that the issue was raised before Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during a recent event held in Gauchar. Following this, the ministry approved the financial assistance and the department has received the official communication regarding it. Fencing on 2841 Hectares in Three Years. The state government also informed the Assembly that in the past three years, fencing has been carried out on 2,841 hectares of land under the District Plan. As a result, 44,429 farmers have benefited from the initiative. Agriculture Minister Ganesh Joshi stated in the House that Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami showed sensitivity toward farmers concerns. In the current budget, ₹10 crore has also been allocated for the fencing scheme.

## Over 4335 Crore transferred to 2.15 Crore farmers of State under the Scheme

Lucknow

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the 22nd installment of 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme' from Guwahati during his two-day visit to Assam. Under this installment, funds were transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to the bank accounts of 9.32 crore farmers across the country. More than 2.15 crore farmers from Uttar Pradesh also received significant relief, with 4,335.11 crore transferred directly to their accounts. It is noteworthy that 'double-engine government' led by Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been



consistently working to increase farmers' income and dignity. As a result, farmers in Uttar Pradesh have received more than 99,000 crore so far under the 'PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme'. Under the scheme, Uttar Pradesh remains the state with the highest number of beneficiaries in the country. Before the release of the 22nd installment, farmers in the state had already received

94,668.58 crore through 21 installments. With the addition of 4,335.11 crore in the latest installment, total assistance has increased to 99,003.69 crore. Nearly 23% of total beneficiaries in the country are from Uttar Pradesh, highlighting State significant participation in the scheme. Under the 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme', an eligible farmer family

receives 6,000 Per year as financial assistance. This amount is transferred in three equal installments of 2,000 each directly into farmers bank accounts through DBT. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the scheme on 24 February 2019 from Gorakhpur. Since then, it has become a crucial financial support for crores of farmers across the country. With continuous efforts by Modi-Yogi government, benefits of scheme are reaching an increasing number of farmers, strengthening both their income and Dignity. BoxCM Yogi expresses gratitude to Prime Minister Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed gratitude to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for releasing the 22nd installment of 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme'. In a Post on his official X handle, CM stated that Prime Minister commitment to farmer welfare has once again brought confidence and support into the lives of crores of farmers. Under this installment, more than 18,640 crore has been transferred directly to the bank accounts of over 9.32 crore farmers, including more than 2.15 crore farmers from Uttar Pradesh. He added that this initiative is an important step toward making farmers lives easier and strengthening Agriculture

## Fed UP with Gas Cylinder Shortage, SP Leader Reverts to Wood-Fired Stove.

Varanasi

Faced with rising prices and a severe shortage of domestic gas cylinders, Samajwadi Party (SP) workers in Varanasi are now being forced to use wooden stoves. Vishnu Sharma "Vishwakarma," the Metropolitan President of the Vishwakarma Samaj and a descendant of the Vishwakarma lineage, has started using a traditional sawdust stove for cooking at home due to the ongoing



chaos and scarcity of LPG cylinders. SP leader Vishnu Sharma stated that homemakers are deeply distressed. Gas agency operators are neither answering phone calls nor accepting new bookings, making it difficult to prepare even two basic meals a

day. He further remarked, "Under the 'Double Engine' Lotus government, people were once forced to stand in lines for Demonetization. Now, consumers have been pushed into long queues just to secure an LPG Cylinder."

## Vigilance at the Border, Yet Sex Toys Smuggled from Nepal

Babraich

There is strict surveillance at the Rupaidiha sector of the India-Nepal border with the SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) Patrolling the Indian side and the APF (Armed Police Force) Patrolling the Nepali side. Despite this, smugglers continue to traffic Chinese goods from Nepal into India. This illicit activity came to light following a seizure made by the Police in the neighboring Nepali district of Banke. On Thursday, the Banke Police recovered sex toys worth over three lakh rupees. Similarly, approximately three months ago, the Lakhimpur Police seized a consignment of sex toys valued at three crore rupees, these, too, had been smuggled from Nepal into Indian territory. Deepak Patali, DSP and Police Spokesperson for the neighboring Nepali district of Banke, stated that Ward No.1 of Janaki Rural Municipality in Banke district—specifically the village of Shivpuri—lies adjacent to the Indian border. The Saingano Police Station is situated in this vicinity. SSI Mohan Bahadur Bam (In-charge of Saingano Police Station), SI Niranjan Oli, Constable Lokendra Singh Thakuri and several other Personnel were Patrolling the border area

when they observed four individuals carrying boxes and heading toward the Indian frontier. The Personnel ordered them to halt, however, out of fear, the individuals abandoned the boxes and fled into Indian territory. The Police team retrieved the boxes and brought them to the station. Upon opening and inspecting them, they discovered that the contents were Chinese-made sex toys. The recovered goods have been sent to the District Police Headquarters in Nepalganj. **Smuggling of Foreign Goods from Nepal into Indian Territory** Foreign commodities—including raisins, walnuts, cosmetic items, electronic hookahs and various associated flavors—are being smuggled unimpeded from the Nepali side into Indian territory under the cover of night. These goods are entering India through villages situated along the western Nepal border near Rupaidiha, such as Pachpakri, Ranjitbojha, Pokhara, Shivpur Moharniya and Bakshigaon. Similarly, large-scale smuggling continues via the footpaths winding through the Abdullahganj forest and the villages situated to the east of Rupaidiha—right along the Nepal border—including Nibiya, Manwariya,

Laharpurwa, Sitapurwa and Munshipurwa. Indian security forces maintain Border Outposts (BOP) throughout all these areas. It is claimed that Personnel from these Indian security forces are deployed on duty around the clock. Furthermore, in addition to the security forces, Sub-Inspectors (SIs) and constables from the Rupaidiha police also conduct Patrols in these regions. The deployment details of these Personnel are duly recorded in official registers. Yet, to date, not a single recovery has been credited to the record of either the Indian security forces or the Police. It is true, however, that in an effort to pat themselves on the back, both these security agencies occasionally recover "smack" (heroin) based on intelligence provided by informants, subsequently issuing Press releases to laud their own efforts. The Rupaidiha Police station currently has a deployment of over a dozen Sub-Inspectors and more than 60 constables. A well-organized syndicate operating across the India-Nepal border is actively engaged in inflicting economic damage upon India, the fact that all these agencies remain silent in the face of this situation is a matter that warrants serious Reflection.

Delhi

The Government of India has established several bilateral and multilateral mechanisms with major destination countries—including GCC nations—to safeguard the interests of Indian workers abroad and address their grievances. To facilitate the safe and legal mobility of Indian workers, the central government has also signed "Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements" with several countries. This information was shared by Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh in the Rajya Sabha on March 12 while responding to a Question. The Question regarding the safety of Indian workers overseas was raised by Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Mohammad Nadimul Haque. In his response, the Minister of State Presented several figures indicating that Indian missions abroad and the Ministry of External Affairs have maintained a strong



record in resolving complaints related to issues such as wage theft, contract substitution and passport confiscation faced by Indian migrant workers, despite various legal Challenges. Kirti Vardhan Singh informed the House that in 2025, a total of 640 complaints of this nature were received from Cambodia, all of which were resolved in a timely manner. Similarly, in 2024, all 454

complaints received from the country were also addressed. Several other countries recorded a 100% resolution rate last year, including Maldives (855 complaints resolved), Uzbekistan (540), Sri Lanka (172), Kyrgyzstan (105), Singapore (53), Tunisia (48), Seychelles (46), Jordan (43), Serbia (34), Russia (15) and Others. The Minister also Presented data from countries where a large number

of Indian workers reside and often face issues due to lack of adequate information or Skills. In Malaysia, 2519 out of 2532 complaints were resolved, in Bahrain, 310 out of 345, in Oman, 2241 out of 2345; in Saudi Arabia, 2325 out of 2877 and in the UAE, 3697 out of 4138 complaints were settled in a timely Manner. The Minister added that if any disputes remain unresolved, established Procedures are in Place to address them and Indian missions continue to make every Possible effort to ensure the welfare of Indian citizens Abroad. He further stated that to facilitate the safe and legal mobility of Indian workers, Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements have been signed with countries such as Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom. Additionally, Labour Mobility Agreements have been signed with Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Portugal and Taiwan.

# DM Inspects Control Room and Centers Ahead of Police Recruitment Exam



**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

Prayagraj. To ensure the safe and malpractice-free conduct of the written examination for the Direct Recruitment-2025 of Sub-Inspectors (Civil Police) and equivalent posts in the Uttar Pradesh Police, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma inspected the control room established at

the Police Lines, as well as several examination centers, on Saturday. Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar and DCP (City) Manish Kumar Shandilya were also present during the inspection. The District Magistrate conducted surprise inspections of various examination centers—including Ishwar Saran Inter

College (Salori) and Jagat Taran Girls Inter College—to take stock of the arrangements in place. He issued directives to Sector Magistrates, Static Magistrates, Center Superintendents, and Assistant Center Superintendents, instructing them to conduct the examination with complete responsi-

bility and transparency, and to ensure 100% compliance with all guidelines issued by the Police Recruitment Board. He further instructed the Sector Magistrates to continuously inspect the centers within their respective sectors throughout the examination period, and to deposit all confidential examination material—under police cus-

tody and within a double-lock facility—via the designated route immediately after the examination concludes. Additionally, he inspected the CCTV control rooms established at the examination centers to assess the status of the surveillance being conducted through the cameras. It was reported that this examination is being con-

ducted in two shifts on March 14 and 15. The first shift is scheduled from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and the second shift from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. A total of 43 examination centers have been established across the Prayagraj district, where a total of 53,760 candidates are registered to appear across the four shifts.

## Sub-Inspector Recruitment Examination Held in Two Shifts Amidst Tight Security

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur** | With the objective of ensuring that the examination for the posts of Sub-Inspector (Civil Police) and equivalent ranks—organized by the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board, Lucknow—was conducted in a fair, cheat-free, transparent, and peaceful manner, District Magistrate Avinash Kumar and Superintendent of Police Dr. Iraj Raja jointly conducted on-site inspections of Adarsh Inter College (Mahuabag), Government Girls' Inter College (Mahuabag), and Government Polytechnic College (Ghazipur). During the inspection, after reviewing the control room established to monitor the installed CCTV cameras, they proceeded to the examination halls to verify the admit



cards and Aadhaar cards of the examinees. During the examination, they issued strict directives to the school principals, center administrators, and the appointed Sector, Zonal, and Static Magistrates, emphasizing that no form of negligence would be tolerated. They directed that duties and responsibilities be discharged with absolute strictness and 100% diligence. They warned that

appropriate action would be initiated against the concerned individuals should any negligence be detected at any examination center. On the first day, the examination was successfully concluded across a total of 11 centers within the district, held over two shifts. In the first shift, out of 4,080 candidates, 1,119 were absent; similarly, in the second shift, out of 4,080 candidates, 1,091 were absent.

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Ghazipur:** The local administration has stepped up monitoring of LPG cylinder and fuel supplies in Mohammadabad and surrounding rural areas to ensure that residents do not face shortages. A review meeting was held on Saturday at the tehsil auditorium under the chairmanship of Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Dr. Harshita Tiwari, with gas agency operators and petrol pump owners in attendance. During the meeting, the SDM reviewed the current stock position, supply chain arrangements and consumer service mechanisms from the representatives of LPG agencies and fuel stations. She directed the operators to maintain uninterrupted supply and ensure that customers receive LPG cylinders and fuel without inconvenience. Dr. Tiwari instructed gas agency operators to guarantee timely delivery of LPG cylinders, stressing that ensuring regular supply to consumers is their responsibility. She also



issued a stern warning against black marketing, hoarding or any form of irregularity, stating that strict action would be taken against those found violating rules. Petrol pump operators were directed to keep the administration regularly informed about their fuel stock and ensure that petrol and diesel supply in the region remains smooth and unin-

terrupted. Highlighting the administration's priority towards public convenience, the SDM said that any disruption in the availability of essential commodities would not be tolerated. She also directed that any supply-related issue in the area must be reported to the administration immediately so that timely action can be

taken. The meeting was attended by Circle Officer Sudhakar Pandey, Naib Tehsildar Vipin Kumar, officials from concerned departments, local residents and operators of LPG agencies and petrol pumps. Participants assured the administration that they would follow the guidelines and continue to provide essential services to consumers without disruption.

## Conclusion of 'Nari Leads Swachhata' Campaign; Women Sanitation Workers Honored

**Akhand Bharat Sandesh**

**Prayagraj:** The "Nari Leads Swachhata Program" (Women Lead Sanitation Program), organized by the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) from March 8 to March 14, concluded on Saturday. On this occasion, a safety camp and an honors ceremony for women sanitation workers were organized at the auditorium of the Municipal Corporation headquarters. The program was conducted under the leadership of Deepshikha Pandey, the Nodal



Officer for the Swachh Bharat Mission and Assistant Municipal Commissioner. During the first session of the program, a free health check-up camp was set up for the women sanitation workers. Led by Manoj Kumar Srivastava, President of the

Municipal Corporation Employees Association, and Tushar from Pathohome, the camp saw approximately 200 female employees undergo health screenings. During this session, they were also sensitized regarding personal hygiene

and health safety. In the second session, the Sanitation Brand Ambassador and Mahamandaleshwar of the Sanatani Kinnar Akhada, Kaushalya Nand Giri, honored women sanitation workers—selected from various wards for their exemplary work—for their outstanding performance. She stated that the role of women sanitation workers is crucial in keeping the city clean and healthy, and that society must respect and acknowledge their contribution. Program Coordinator and IEC Head, Krishna Kumar Maurya,

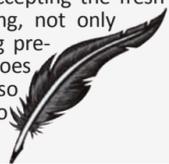
informed that numerous public awareness activities were organized across the city from March 8 to March 14 as part of the "Nari Leads Swachhata" campaign. During this period, more than 3,500 women were engaged with the campaign, and over 25 awareness sessions were conducted. Under the ambit of the campaign, a comprehensive public awareness drive was carried out, featuring free medical camps, the distribution of sanitary pads, the participation of the 'Swachh Sarathi Club,' the operation of RRR (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Centers, and the active

involvement of female students from the National Service Scheme (NSS) and NCC cadets. Present on this occasion were Rohit Chandel, Rajat Jatav, and Prati Singh from 'Srishti Waste Management Service' (Indore)—an agency collaborating with the Municipal Corporation—along with a large number of women sanitation workers and female staff associated with door-to-door waste collection agencies. At the conclusion of the program, Ashok Patel expressed his gratitude to all the guests and participants.

## Editorial

**It's curious even scientists discard spirit of science in daily life, become unscientific: Nehru**

In the course of less than four months, we have put up, declared open, or are going to declare open, three national laboratories. I suppose before this year is out, some more national laboratories will also be started. This is a great venture testifying to the faith which our scientists and, I hope, our Government have in science. I suppose the putting up of fine and attractive buildings does some service to science; nevertheless, buildings do not make science as Dr. Raman has often reminded us. It is human beings who make science, not bricks and mortar. Properly equipped buildings, however, help the human being to work efficiently. It is, therefore, desirable to have these fine laboratories for trained persons to work in and for persons to be trained for future work. You, Sir, referred to the spirit of science. I wonder what exactly that spirit is and to what extent we agree or differ in our ideas of it. Is science, as is often supposed, a handmaiden to industry? It certainly wants to help industry, though not merely for the sake of helping industry but also because it wants to create work for the nation, so that people may have better living conditions and greater opportunities for growth. That I suppose will be agreed to but there is something more to it. What ultimately does science represent? You, Sir, just referred to scientists declaring war on nature. May I put it in a different way? We seek the co-operation of nature, we seek to uncover the secrets of nature, to understand them and to utilise them for the benefit of humanity. The active principle of science is discovery. Now, what is, if I may ask, the active principle of a social framework or society? Usually, it stands for conservatism, remaining where we are, not changing and carrying on, though, of course, with some improvement and further additions. Nevertheless, it is a principle of continuity rather than of change. So, we come up against a certain inherent conflict in society between the co-existing principles of continuity and of conservatism and the scientific principle of discovery which brings about change and challenges that continuity. So the scientific worker, although he is praised and patted on the back, is nevertheless, not wholly approved of, because he comes and upsets the status quo of things. Normally speaking, science seldom really has the facilities that it deserves except when some misfortune comes to a country in the shape of war. Then everything has to be set aside and science has its way, even though it is for an evil purpose. It is interesting to see this conflict between the normal conservatism of a static society and the normal revolutionary tendency of the scientist's discovery which often changes the basis of that society. It changes living conditions and the conditions that govern human life and human survival. I take it that most people who talk glibly of science, including our great industrialists, think of science merely as a kind of handmaiden to make their work easier. And so it is. Of course, it does make their work easier. It adds to the wealth of the nation and better conditions. All this science does. But surely science is something more than that. The history of science shows that it does not simply better the old. It sometimes upsets the old. It does not merely add new truths to the old ones but sometimes the new truth it discovers disintegrates some part of the old truths and thereby upsets the way of men's thinking and the way of their lives. Science, therefore, does not merely repeat the old in better ways or add to the old but creates something that is new to the world and to human consciousness. If we pursue this line of thought, what exactly does the spirit of science mean? It means many things. It means not only accepting the fresh truth that science may bring, not only improving the old but being prepared to upset the old if it goes against that spirit. It also means not being tied down to something that is old.



## Europe's factories to African startups—how India can act as a bridge between economies

Not long ago I heard a global CEO joke that India's payment apps impress the world, yet our biggest export deals still settle in dollars. The comment stayed with me because it captured the paradox of modern India: a country with the tools and talent to bridge East and West, but not choosing to think bigger. Today's global landscape is splintering. Rising tensions between the United States and China have prompted supply-chain realignments from Vietnam to Mexico. Political blocs, tariff walls, and digital standards

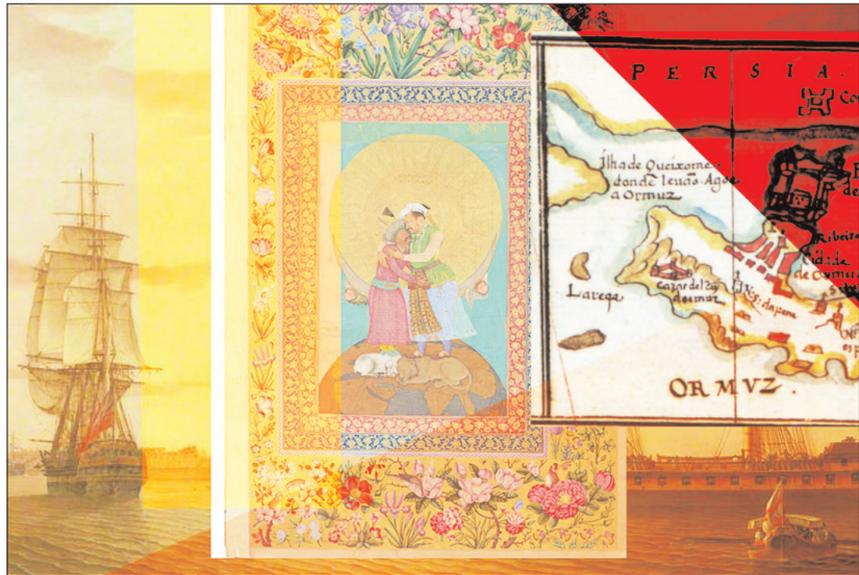
are being remade in real time. In this environment, many countries must choose sides. India, by contrast, can carve a third path: a true bridge economy that unites disparate markets through aligned infrastructure, finance, and digital networks. The first piece of this bridge is production. India's Production Linked Incentive-driven factories are churning out smartphones, solar panels, and auto components on a scale unseen a decade ago. Exporters in Pune now ship precision parts as easily to Stuttgart in Germany

as they do to Lagos in Nigeria. Our manufacturing base overlaps the needs of advanced economies (where quality matters) and the rising purchasing power of the emerging economies. That dual fit is rare, and it underpins India's unique value proposition. Digital rails reinforce this bridge. UPI's transaction volumes surpassed global giants like Visa, turning wallets into gateways. Early UPI trials in the UAE and Singapore show how a rupee-linked digital corridor can settle micropayments instantly, without inter-

mediary banks. If India extends these rails to East Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf, small businesses from Nairobi to Jakarta could transact with Indian partners as effortlessly as they do with local vendors. Digital payment networks are the plumbing of the 21st-century bridge. With our digital rails in place, the next step is ensuring those goods move as smoothly across ports and borders. Yet infrastructure alone is not enough. Logistics bottlenecks still cast a shadow on our ambition.

## Indians ruled the Gulf through Hormuz

Though an uneasy ceasefire between Israel and Iran continues, just two days ago, on 24 June, the Iranian parliament threatened the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. But this was not the first time that Hormuz, situated at the narrowest point of the Persian Gulf, has turned into a flashpoint between Iran and the West. Since at least 1300 CE, Hormuz has been the hinge of Eurasian trade, where thousands of Indians, Arabs, Iranians, Mongols, and Turks made their fortunes. Goods poured through Hormuz, to and from the Mediterranean, West and Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and China. But in the 16th century, the Portuguese adventurer Alfonso da Albuquerque took control of the port. The shockwave rippled through the Western Indian Ocean; the decades after saw the end of Hormuz's prominence, the development of Iran's first maritime policy, and the immigration of tens of thousands of Indian traders and investors into the Gulf and Iran. This is the story of how Hormuz shaped the history of India and the world. Just as the Gulf's geography offered opportunities throughout time, it also created challenges. Its character was utterly unique, nothing like our world of monolithic nation-states. Sam Dalrymple, historian and author of *Shattered Lands: The Five Partitions of India*, described Gulf towns to me as "trading islands/oasis towns wedged between the sand sea and the salt sea. They make less sense as states and more as oases filled with traders." Their population was never



consistent: it waxed and waned with the trading seasons, which in turn depended on the monsoon. Outside these ports, weather conditions were extreme: storms, unseasonal winds, scorching heat and humidity. The Gulf's northern edge, shielded from the Iranian Plateau by a mountain range, allowed little room for coastal states to grow. In the south, the vast Arabian desert was home to small tribes that occasionally preyed on sea traffic. Hormuz rose to prominence because it was able to offer safe ground for international trade, without the risk of piracy. This wasn't what one would expect from looking at it. Barely a few kilometres across, sweltering Hormuz was encrusted in salt, with only one freshwater source. Its rulers solved this problem by importing water on barges from the shore. Markets were kept open all night to avoid the daytime

heat. In *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities*, historian Willem Floor further explains that the rulers of Hormuz imposed an embargo on timber, oars, coir, iron and steel, which prevented their rivals from building ships. They then took control of nearby ports, establishing a chokehold on the Gulf. Though Hormuz's rulers were Muslim, the island made no segregations on ethnic or religious lines. The second-largest ethnic group on the island were Indians, who conducted a roaring trade in horses in the 13th century CE. In 'India's Sea Trade with Iran in Medieval Times', historian Shireen Moosvi discusses the Somanatha-Veraval inscription, recording the construction of a mosque in Somnath in 1264 by the Hormuz merchant Nuruddin Firoz. The Sanskrit portion of the inscription describes the

mosque as a dharmasthanam, and mentions the direct involvement of Gujarat's ruling Chalukya king and his officials in the grant. If this Hormuz merchant had such influence, writes Moosvi, "Hormuz merchants must surely have formed an elite group of some importance... in the Chaulukya kingdom of Gujarat." For the next century, Hormuz continued to flourish. According to Moosvi, Hormuz's networks extended as far as Uzbekistan and Turkey. Goods shipped from Hormuz reached, in relays, all the way to China. The Chinese admiral Zheng He brought his vast armada there multiple times in the 15th century, where he exchanged ceramics and silks for the luxuries of Western Eurasia. Strategic resources such as horses were shipped to India from Hormuz; in return, India provided necessities such as rice

to the Gulf ports, as well as cloth, metals, woods, and spices. In his edited volume *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, MN Pearson notes that exchanges overwhelmingly favoured India. Vast quantities of silver and salt were required to balance the trade. In the early 1500s, the Portuguese erupted into the Indian Ocean. From their galleons—artillery platforms designed for deep-sea and coastal voyaging—they attempted to take control of trade gateways in the Indian Ocean, including Hormuz. They stationed a permanent garrison on the island in 1515, but immediately ran into problems. At the same time, the Mughal Empire of the Indian subcontinent consolidated its reach into Afghanistan. Conquering Kandahar, the Mughals stabilised overland routes from India to Central Asia, further weakening the appeal of Hormuz. According to Floor, the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Iraq, attempted to get rid of the Portuguese in 1552 but failed. It would be an Iranian power which finally expelled them and restored some normalcy to the Gulf trade.

But Hormuz would never again be independent. Up to this point, riven by internal strife, the Safavid dynasty of Iran had paid little attention to events in Hormuz—though they were technically its overlords. However, Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), a contemporary of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, eventually consolidated power. He was

## Delhi's new fuel policy is forcing people to buy new cars. It won't reduce pollution

There is an old saying in English—"missing the woods for the trees". It means getting so focused on the minor details that you overlook the bigger picture. And honestly, this is what I feel about the new 'fuel policy.' Starting 1 July, all end-of-life vehicles (EOL) in the national capital will be denied fuel and can also face deregistration, impounding or scrapping. Reportedly, many Delhi residents have been lining up at car showrooms, panic-buying new vehicles. A very close friend's mother called me up and asked, "Beta, should we buy a new car?" Let me tell you a bit about aunty—she's a retired government service officer and lives comfortably with her husband on a decent pension in one of those societies in Greater Noida. Other than the twice-a-week run to the shops and the occasional drive to meet friends in Delhi, their 11-year-old Hyundai i10 barely gets used. Yet because of the new fuel policy announced by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta—where

older vehicles will not be allowed to refuel, first in Delhi and later across the entire National Capital Region (NCR)—she is genuinely wondering what to do. Now, let me make it clear that money is not a problem in this case. This retired couple can easily afford a new car. It is just that they don't see the need for one. And they shouldn't have to. You can think of thousands of cases like this of retired folks with perfectly functional and perfectly maintained vehicles that will now have to be junked because of this new policy. This is a waste of resources. If it is pollution reduction that we are chasing, the policy doesn't consider the massive carbon cost of building a new car from the ground up. I've read a few arguments in favour of shared mobility: the governments like Karnataka are trying to ban it altogether. And honestly, with how expensive and unreliable cabs have become, I've decided I'd rather just drive to the airport and pay the usurious parking fee myself.

## UDF must look beyond Muslim votes to win 2026 polls

There is a new 'captain' in Kerala. After the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) wrested the Nilambur seat from the Left Democratic Front, the state media lavished praise on Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan for helming a crucial electoral win. On 23 June, the day of the Nilambur bypoll verdict, Satheesan watched the proceedings from the District Congress Committee (DCC) office in Ernakulam. As soon as the UDF ensured its victory, Congress leaders vied among themselves to shower praises on the LoP, led by MP Hibi Eden. It was a mark of appreciation for Satheesan, who didn't bow down to former Nilambur MLA PV Anvar's diktats and ensured a win despite the latter re-entering the fray. It was PV Anvar's resignation that facilitated the by-election in the first place, even if he sought to extract his pound of flesh for extending his support to the UDF. Leaders within the Congress—such as Ramesh Chennithala and ally Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)—advocated Anvar's accommodation, with the by-poll becoming a bellwether ahead of the 2026 assembly election. Nevertheless,

Satheesan stood his ground and took ownership of the decision to keep Anvar out. It was a marked departure from the consensual ways that have defined the Congress in recent times. The consensual approach was necessitated on account of the party's weakening organisational apparatus, leaving it at the mercy of various stakeholders and its supporters frustrated. The UDF's morale-boosting win and the credit to Satheesan prompted former LoP Ramesh Chennithala to come out publicly, stating how nobody hailed him as 'captain' when he led the UDF to bypoll victories in the past. Power struggles in the Congress aside, the UDF seems to be taking the wrong lessons from the bypoll by extrapolating it to 2026. On the contrary, the ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) is leveraging even the loss to build its narrative for the upcoming assembly election. The Left's route to a solitary seat in successive Lok Sabha elections in 2019 and 2024 was marked by a shift in its Hindu vote base to the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The Left has traditionally been the 'Hindu party'

in Kerala, whereas the UDF has been anchored by minority communities. Unlike the 2019 elections—held in the wake of the BJP-fuelled Sabarimala agitation—the 2024 loss made the switching of Hindu voters a perpetual phenomenon. If the CPI-M initially concentrated on carving out sections of UDF's minority votes to counter the loss of its Hindu base, the 2024 loss demonstrated the urgency to hold on to its Ezhava vote bank. This prompted the Left to double down on its strategy of portraying the UDF as a front backed by communal elements.

such as Jamaat-Islami. CPI-M deployed the same tactic in last year's Palakkad and Wayanad bypolls—alleging that the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) and Jamaat were responsible for UDF's victory. After the setback in Nilambur, CPI-M state secretary MV Govindan resorted to the same game plan, almost like a reflex action. The potency of this strategy has swelled on account of the polarisation between the Muslim and Christian communities in Kerala lately. The CPI-M, perhaps, believes that it can attract additional Christian votes.

## Over 1,000 crypto heists have netted hackers \$12.7 billion.

Delhi: Data indicated that cyber thieves have stolen over \$1.71 billion this year, bringing total losses to \$12.7 billion spanning more than 1,000 heists. Cryptocurrencies' great value and anonymity attract criminals, driving the value of criminal crypto transactions to alarming highs, according to CryptoPresales.com. Comparitech data shows that hackers stole over \$1 billion in five of the past 10 years, including 2024, demonstrating the continued battle for law enforcement and regulators to manage these crimes. Crypto heists increased 15 times in the past decade, from 12 in 2014 to 176 this year. The disparity is even greater than the 283 crypto heists reported in 2023, the most ever. A decade of crypto heists is disturbing, even though the annual number has fallen. Research has found 1,008 crypto heists since 2014, costing the sector over \$12.7 bil-



lion. Data shows that almost 75% of these losses occurred in the last four years, with 2022 and 2023 leading the way. Exploits, hacks, and flash loan attacks account for approximately 65% of crypto heists, according to statistics. "So far, there have been 395 exploits, 271 hacks targeting systems or networks, and 220 flash loan attacks, which exploit smart contract bugs or manipulate crypto prices," the research stated. Despite fears about North Korea-linked hackers stealing bitcoin, South Korea and the US are researching ways to protect against them. Bitcoin's price rose to \$100,000.

### Honda and Nissan merge to form auto powerhouse

Delhi: Honda, Nissan, and Mitsubishi Motors plan to unite, producing the world's third-largest carmaker by sales. The merger addresses industrial difficulties caused by increased electrification and developing technology. Smaller alliance member Mitsubishi Motors joined discussions on a strategic cooperation after signing an MOU. Mitsubishi plans to decide on its integration role by January 2025. The

Delhi: The powerful GST Council may have to delay a decision on the middle class-focused issue of waiving goods and services tax (GST) on term insurance and lowering health insurance rates from 18% to 5% due to opposition from numerous states. However, it may raise the second-hand vehicle charge from 12% to 18%, rejecting demands to cut it to 5% for electric vehicles. Due to concerns from states like West Bengal, Kerala, and Karnataka, insurance has not received the backing expected while there is no consensus on



adjusting pricing. Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Chaudhary led a GoM to modify prices. The Centre will need to work hard on Saturday to convince states to agree to Chaudhary's GoM's insurance tax adjustments. States worry that lower rates may reduce revenue, especially since the compensating cess was removed to compensate for gaps. The Centre and states collected Rs 16,400 crore from GST on life and health insurance in 2023-24, down somewhat from the year before. Revenue loss could reach Rs 2,500 crore yearly. Since the anti-profiteering clause has been removed, it is unclear how the GST Council can ensure that consumers benefit from lower taxes.

## Adani Defence & Aerospace buys Air Works for Rs 400 crore

Delhi: Adani Defence & Aerospace said that it had reached a formal agreement to acquire Air Works, India's largest private-sector MRO provider, for Rs 400 crore. Adani Defence Systems & Technologies Ltd (ADSTL) has signed a

share purchase agreement to acquire 85.8 per cent shareholding in Air Works India (Engineering) Private Ltd, a press release said. Air Works maintains narrow-body, turboprop, and rotary aircraft in Hosur, Mumbai, and Kochi

with regulatory permits from over 20 countries. The statement stated Air Works, a civil aviation industry leader, has deep defence MRO capabilities, executing projects for major Indian Navy and Air Force aircraft.

## Over 1.6 crore Jio subscribers leave in four months

Delhi: At Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd., India's largest telecom operator, approximately 1.65 crore subscribers have dropped in the past four months. Reliance Jio lost 37.6 lakh mobile users in October, 79 lakh in September, 40 lakh in August, and 7.58 lakh in July. Airtel, India's second-largest telecom carrier, gained roughly 24 lakh members in October after losing 14.3 lakh in September, according to TRAI data. In August and July 2024, Airtel lost 24 lakh and 16 lakh users. In October, Vodafone Idea lost 19 lakh mobile subscribers, up from 15.5 lakh in September.

## Redeveloping railway stations opens Rs 30,000 cr in business opportunities

Delhi: EPC companies are expecting Rs 30,000 crore in business from contracts to redevelop/revamp railway stations in the next two years. The Railways have sanctioned 1,318 station redevelopment/revamps, which Icria Ratings estimates will provide Rs 30,000 crore in commercial potential for EPC firms over the next two years. The government previously planned most station renovation projects as public-private partnerships, accounting for 12% of the national asset monetisation pipeline target. However, due to pricing restrictions, real estate development market risks, and a lack of PPP experience in railways, the government reallocated station redevelopment work to the EPC mode in December 2022 and increased the budgetary allocation by more than seven times from Rs 2,159 crore in FY23 to Rs 15,511 crore in FY25. Railway station rehabilitation offers EPC businesses Rs 30,000 crore in business potential due to intense competition in traditional segments like roads and buildings, according to Vinay Kumar G of the agency. In the past two years, station redevelopment project awards have seen modest competition, with maximum discounts of up to 18% and a median discount of up to 4%, similar to other railway EPC projects with a median discount of up to 5%.

## The GST panel postpones calling for reduced insurance costs

Delhi: The GST Council voted to exempt gene therapy used to cure cancer from taxes and postponed a proposal for lower rates while lowering the tariff on fortified rice kernels used in PDS to 5%. The council determined that 18% GST would be applied to the margin of suppliers for all used cars, including electric vehicles. Even though there won't be any tax transactions involving private citizens, businesses or used car sellers would be subject to the fee. According to Sitharaman, states desired a greater fee, but the Center had suggested a 5% tax on EVs. The GST Council issued a number of clarifications, one of which was that ready-to-eat popcorn would be subject to a 12% tax, similar to the namkeen tax, if it were pre-packaged with salt



### "The 'penal costs' that banks and NBFCs impose and collect from borrowers for failure to comply with loan terms do not need the payment of GST"

and spices. Caramelized sugar will be subject to an 18% tax. In a similar vein, the council stated that as voucher transactions were neither a delivery of commodities nor services, they

would not be subject to taxes. It also made it clear that small enterprises that pay rent to unregistered landlords and are covered by the reverse charge system will not be required.

### NCLAT accepts Sapphire Media's Big 92.7 FM purchase

Delhi: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) affirmed Sapphire Media's resolution plan to acquire Big 92.7 FM, owned by Reliance Broadcast Network Limited, dismissing Radio Mirchi, Orange FM, and others' petitions.

NCLAT Bench Chair Justice Ashok Bhushan and Technical Member Barun Mitra said, "After considering the submissions, we find no grounds to interfere with the NCLT's order dated May 6, 2024, and consequently, the appeals are dismissed."

## Canon targets chip companies opening India operations

Delhi: Japanese image and optical products giant Canon India President and CEO Toshiaki Nomura feels its semiconductor lithography equipment for chip production has a bright promise in India and is in negotiations with firms putting up facilities here. Canon did not identify names but said there is huge potential since several chip manufacturers are considering India for semiconductor manufacturing. Many chipmakers are considering India as a new manufacturing location.



Nomura informed us that they are discussing our product and service with all chip manufacturers. He said this is a "good opportunity for us" for the Tokyo-based business to contribute its technology, goods, and services to this Indian market area. "We install equipment to make chips using our technology and goods.

We help chipmakers create strong India facilities. Once the chip manufacturer builds the facility in India, we will install our equipment and contribute to the Indian semiconductor industry with our good product and service," Nomura stated. Negotiations are underway.

## Indian gold demand is dampened by price fluctuations

Delhi: This week, unpredictable pricing in India delayed gold purchases, while rising rates in China may balance seasonal demand. A Chennai jeweller claimed buyers are waiting for gold prices to fall after two weeks of volatility. After climbing to Rs 79,120 last week, Indian 10 grams prices dipped to Rs 75,459 (\$887.28) this week. Indian dealers offered a discount of up to \$8 an ounce over official domestic pricing, including 6% import and 3% sales levies, down from \$9 last week. "This week, jewellers awaited the Fed's interest rate cut. "The rupee's record low surprised them," said a Mumbai-based private bullion importing bank trader. India's gold imports are expected to drop sharply in December



as gold prices rise and families choose lighter, lower-carat jewelry. Swiss gold exports surged in November due to increased supplies to India and China and Hong Kong compared to October. According to an independent analyst, high gold prices also lowered demand in other Asian countries, notably top customer China, which gave \$5 per ounce reductions to the international price. A trader said gold was sold at a \$2.00 premium in Hong Kong.

### Honda proposes CAFE compliant EVs and hybrids

Delhi: A top Honda Cars India executive said the next stage-3 of the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) regulations will tighten pollution standards, therefore the company will sell hybrid and electric cars in the future years. It wants to launch three new electric vehicles by 2026-27 to align its India portfolio with its global electrification aspirations. "We are currently

## Indian steel imports from China reached record high

Delhi: Provisional government statistics revealed that India's completed steel imports from China reached an all-time high in the first eight months of the fiscal year to March 2025, raising fears among domestic mills over cheap Chinese supplies. With India, the world's second-largest crude steel producer, a net importer, finished steel imports reached an eight-year high. Data revealed India shipped 6.5 million metric tons of completed steel, up 26.6% year-over-year. Data indicated China shipped 1.96 million metric tons of steel to India in April-November, rising 22.8% year-over-year. Beijing exported mostly stainless steel, hot-rolled coil, plates, electrical sheets, galvanized plain or corrugated sheets, pipes, bars,



### "New Delhi is investigating whether to levy a 25% safeguard duty to control unbridled steel imports. India began importing steel in the financial year ending March 2024"

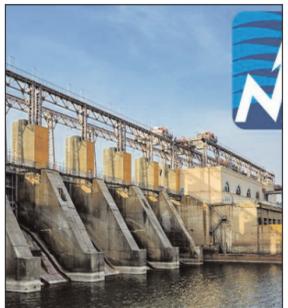
and rods. The report showed that Japanese finished steel imports more than doubled to 1.4 million metric tons in April-November, a six-year high. India imported 79% of finished steel from China, Japan, and South Korea. After hot-rolled coils, bars and rods were the most imported non-flat steel products.

New Delhi is investigating whether

to levy a 25% safeguard duty to control unbridled steel imports. India began importing steel in the financial year ending March 2024, and imports have gradually climbed. New Delhi joins a growing list of countries considering import restrictions as cheap Chinese steel has forced India's smaller factories to reduce operations and jobs.

## NHPC invests 25,500 cr in Bihar 1,000 MW solar project

Delhi: NHPC Ltd.'s chairman and managing director Raj Kumar Chaudhary announced that the country's largest hydropower company will invest Rs 5,500 crore in a 1,000-megawatt solar power project in Bihar. At the Bihar Business Connect 2024 investor forum, the business and state government signed an investment MoU. "We have proposed to invest Rs 5,500 crore in setting up a 1,000 MW solar power project," stated. The project might be launched in 1.5-2 years after land purchase. Land is essential for solar projects. He urged the state government to help acquire land so we could finish the project on schedule. The company's website says it has roughly 7 gigawatts of active hydropower projects and 9.3 under construction. Chaudhary said NHPC plans to build a modest solar plant to create green hydrogen. "The green hydrogen produced will be used to power passenger buses," stated. When burned, green hydrogen creates no carbon and just water, making it the cleanest energy source. He stated NHPC will fund the green hydrogen bus. The state government will administer it as part of the government's sustainable energy plan.



# 'Aditya Dhar offered me role in Dhurandhar 2'

Anil Kapoor reveals he declined a *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* cameo due to prior commitments, calling the missed opportunity his loss

**B**ollywood actor Anil Kapoor said he was offered a cameo in Aditya Dhar's upcoming release *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* and admits turning it down is nothing but his loss. *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* is a sequel to the 2025 release from Dhar, which went on to cross over Rs 1000 crore at the box office. It featured Ranveer Singh in the lead role alongside R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun and Rakesh Bedi.

Kapoor, who attended the India Today Conclave held in New Delhi on Friday, said he had already given his shooting dates to another filmmaker when Dhar approached him. "Yes, Aditya came to me for *Dhurandhar 2*. He wanted me to do a small cameo in the film. But the reason I am what I am today is because of my professionalism and my commitment," he said.

"That's very important—only talent cannot make you what you are. At that time, I had already committed those dates to another filmmaker. I told Aditya, 'I would have loved to do this cameo, but I'm already committed.' He is releasing the film now, and it's a fantastic film. It's my loss, but it's okay," he added.

The actor said he would like to collaborate with the filmmaker. "At least I know in the back of my mind that it can happen to him as well — there could be another filmmaker who has just de-

livered a big blockbuster and offers me something when I'm already committed to Aditya. If I then go and do that film and cancel his dates, that would be completely unprofessional. So yes, he did offer me the role, and hopefully we will work together in the future," he said.



Director Aditya Dhar

Anil Kapoor

Photo: Instagram\_@sharvari



# Is Sharvari Wagh dating Vedang?

Reports suggest Sharvari and Vedang grew close during *Main Vaapas Aaunga* shoot; actors yet to confirm relationship amid dating rumours

**A**ctress Sharvari, who was earlier rumoured to be dating actor Sunny Kaushal, brother of Vicky Kaushal, has recently sparked breakup rumours. However, the two never confirmed or denied their relationship and were often spotted together in public. Amid this, a new report

claims that Sharvari has reportedly found love in her co-star Vedang Raina, who is also said to be single after his reported split with Khushi Kapoor, sister of Janhvi Kapoor.

According to Filmfare, Sharvari and Vedang met while shooting for their upcoming film *Main Vaapas Aaunga*, and love reportedly blossomed between them, with the two said to be serious about each other. "They seem very happy in each other's company," the report stated. As of now, there is no official confirmation about their relationship. Sharvari, who is 28 years old, was born in Mumbai on June 14, 1997, while Vedang is 25 and was born on June 2, 2000, in New Delhi. The couple shares a three-year age gap, with the actress being older.



Photo: Instagram\_@vedangraina

# Underworld pressured Khans in 90s: Farah



Photo: Instagram\_@farahkhan

**C**horeographer and filmmaker Farah Khan has shared interesting details about Bollywood while interacting with Ranveer Allahbadia during a podcast. She spoke about how in the 90s there was pressure from the underworld on the film industry, and also recalled that during the *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* premiere, Karan Johar received a threat.

While talking about the films in the 80s, Farah said, "We used to look down upon Hindi films. When we were in college, we used to only watch Hollywood films. *Tabhi woh pura ganda era chal raha tha*. The worst era of Hindi films was the 80s."

When she was asked about the dark side of the underworld in Bollywood, she said, "That was in the 90s. I remember I was on a set, I had just

started my career, maybe '93 or '94, and Mukesh Duggal (producer) was shot." When Ranveer asked her if the three Khans were pressurised by the underworld, Farah said, "Yes." When further questioned about Shah Rukh Khan receiving a call, she said, "That I don't know. But, I know that during *Duplicate* or *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* premiere, Karan had got a underworld threat, and it was very scary. Everyone was discussing whether the premiere should be cancelled or we should go ahead with it."

When Farah Khan was asked if, during that time, there was a sense of fear on the sets, she said, "No. I remember during *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, because the threat had come and everyone was discussing, security was beefed up, and I think we went ahead with the premiere. Karan Johar was very stressed, and imagine it is your first movie, but all you're thinking about is this."

Filmmaker Farah Khan reveals Bollywood's dark phase when top stars faced underworld pressure; Karan Johar also received threats during premiere



Salman Khan

Aamir Khan

Shah Rukh Khan

Karan Johar

Photos: Instagram

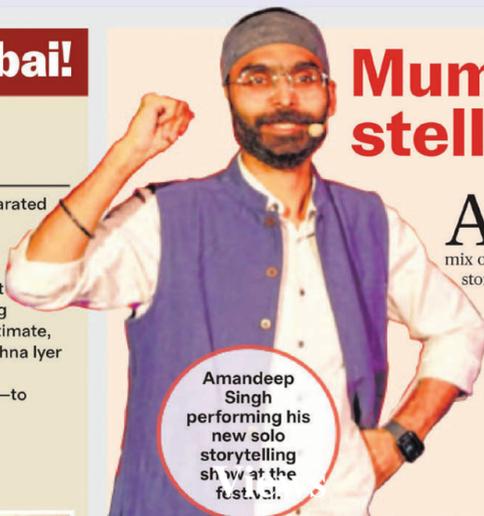
## What's Up Mumbai!

**Letters - A tale of love that spans distance**

**H**ave you ever loved someone you separated from? Have you ever loved someone you could never be with? *Letters* unfolds through two parallel narratives — one carried by unsent words from a love that once was, and the other by a chance meeting that feels promising, playful, and familiar. Intimate, relatable, and deeply human, *Letters* by Krishna Iyer is a reminder that sometimes, the hardest conversations are the ones we keep writing—to ourselves.

**WHEN:** March 21, 6 pm

**WHERE:** Indifferent, Bandra



Amandeep Singh performing his new solo storytelling show at the fest.

## Mumbai Fringe hosts stellar performances

**A**nother vibrant night of the Mumbai Fringe Festival brought together an exciting mix of stand-up comedy, theatre and storytelling, as talented performers

took the stage to celebrate the spirit of independent art and live performance in the city.



Taranjit Kaur and Dilnaz Irani performing their award-winning theatrical production *The Chai Queens*.



Stand-up comedian Rohan Joshi performing at the Mumbai Fringe Festival.

## What's new to watch in theatres and OTT? Here's the list for you!



Get ready for an exciting weekend of entertainment! From big-screen blockbusters to binge-worthy OTT series and movies, there's something for everyone. Here's what you can watch this Sunday across theatres and streaming platforms:

### OTT Releases

**NETFLIX**  
 ■ One Piece S2  
 ■ Virgin River S7  
 ■ Made In Korea (Tamil)

**ZEE5**  
 ■ Pookie (Tamil)

**AMAZON MX PLAYER**  
 ■ Sankalp

**AMAZON PRIME**  
 ■ Aspirants S3

### Theatrical Releases

■ Iron Lung  
 ■ Reminders of Him  
 ■ Kissa Court Kachahari Ka  
 ■ Ramyaa  
 ■ Ishkaboner Bibi (Bengali)  
 ■ Anthony (Tamil)  
 ■ Police Family (Tamil)



## Briefs

SEOL  
Ex-president challenges jail sentence

Jailed former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol appealed his life sentence for rebellion on Tuesday, following his conviction for the brief December 2024 martial law decree. Yoon's legal team labeled the ruling "illogical" and biased, arguing his actions were intended to protect the nation from "anti-state forces." The case now moves to a specialized Seoul High Court panel. Yoon was removed from office in April 2025 after his six-hour power grab triggered a historic political crisis. While prosecutors previously sought the death penalty, Yoon remains the first leader sentenced to life since dictator Chun Doo-hwan. His lawyers maintain that the lower court committed significant errors in fact-finding and misinterpreted constitutional law during the initial trial.

LONDON  
UK to release papers linked to Andrew

Britain's House of Commons on Tuesday approved the release of papers related to former Prince Andrew's appointment as a trade envoy, a position he held for about a decade during which he is suspected of improperly passing government information to disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein. The approval came in a voice vote. It was unclear when the release could occur, as the former prince was arrested last week on suspicion of misconduct in public office. The government has made clear it does not want to interfere in the inquiry. Ed Davey, the leader of the opposition Liberal Democrats and the lawmaker who introduced the motion, argued that it was time for transparency. Andrew was stripped of his princely title last year due to revelations about his relationship with Epstein.

TEHRAN  
Four killed in Iran military chopper crash

An Iranian military helicopter crashed into a fruit and vegetable market in central Iran on Tuesday, reportedly killing at least four people. The crash happened in the town of Dorcheh, some 330 kilometres (205 miles) south of Iran's capital, Tehran, in the country's Isfahan province, Iranian state television reported. Isfahan is home to a major Iranian air base, as well as a nuclear site struck by the US during the Iran-Israel war in June. The army helicopter had been on a training flight, state TV said. The pilot and co-pilot died in the crash, it added, showing footage of debris and smoke rising from the market. Iran's semi-official Fars news agency said two people on the ground at the market died in the crash.

BANGKOK  
Japan firms face china import curbs

China restricted on Tuesday exports to 40 Japanese entities it says are contributing to Japan's "remilitarisation," in the latest escalation of tensions with Tokyo. Beijing has shown continued displeasure with Tokyo since Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in November implied Japan could intervene if China used military force against Taiwan, an island democracy China claims as its own. The Chinese Commerce Ministry put 20 Japanese companies on an export control list and 20 others on a separate watchlist.

## 4 YEARS OF WAR | Kremlin haven't 'broken Ukrainians', says president as Moscow now holds 20% of his country's territory

## Zelenskyy vows to fight on: 'Russia has not won'

KYIV

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared Tuesday that Russia has not "broken Ukrainians" nor triumphed in its war, four years after an invasion that has severely tested the resolve of Kyiv and its allies and fuelled European fears about the scale of Moscow's ambitions.

In a show of support, more than a dozen senior European officials headed to the Ukrainian capital to mark the grim anniversary of the conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people, upended life for millions of Ukrainians, and created instability far beyond its borders.

Zelenskyy said his country has withstood the onslaught by Russia's bigger and better equipped army, which over the past year of fighting captured just 0.79 per cent of Ukraine's territory, according



A woman at the memorial to the fallen Ukrainian soldiers on Independence Square to mark the 4th anniversary of Russian attack, in Kyiv on Tuesday -AP

to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. Russia now holds nearly 20 per cent of Ukraine. "Looking back at the beginning of the invasion and reflecting on today, we have every right to say: We have defended our independence, we have not lost our statehood," Zelenskyy said on

social media, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin has "not achieved his goals." "He has not broken Ukrainians; he has not won this war," Zelenskyy said.

At a makeshift memorial in Kyiv's central square, where thousands of small flags and portraits show photos of fallen soldiers, Zelenskyy said

KILLING FIELDS  
LIVES LOST

Russian soldiers killed 325,000, missing & wounded 875,000

Ukrainian soldiers killed 140,000, missing & wounded 460,000

Number of Ukrainian children killed 766

LOSS OF HOME  
Ukrainian refugees 6.9 mn, internally displaced 3.7 mn

REBUILDING  
Over 10 years, Ukraine will need \$524 bn

he would like U.S. President Donald Trump to visit and witness for himself Ukrainian suffering.

"Only then can one truly understand what this war is really about," Zelenskyy said.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that the invasion would continue in pursuit of Moscow's goals.

MEXICO CITY

Mexican authorities successfully neutralised Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, the elusive leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), by exploiting a rare lapse in his personal security: a romantic liaison.

According to details released by the country's defense secretary, the breakthrough in the years-long manhunt for "El Mencho" came when intelligence units identified and shadowed one of his romantic partners. By discreetly tracking her movements, investigators were led directly to a secluded safe house tucked away near the picturesque mountain town of Tapalpa, ending the anonymity of the world's most wanted drug trafficker.

The decision to follow the woman proved to be the undoing of a kingpin who had long evaded high-tech surveillance and military dragnets. Security officials revealed that the romantic partner unknowingly acted as a beacon, guiding elite units to a



A burned vehicle blocks a road leading to Tapalpa, a day after the Mexican army killed Jalisco New Generation Cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as 'El Mencho' -AP

## Mexico has deployed 10,000 troops to quell clashes sparked by the killing of El Mencho

fortified cabin in a wooded area 80 miles southwest of Guadalajara. The strategy relied on the gamble that even a man with a \$15 million bounty on his head would eventually risk contact with those closest to him.

When the military moved to encircle the cabin, the presence of the woman confirmed they had finally found their target.

The raid quickly turned into a chaotic battlefield as El Mencho's inner circle realized the security breach. Bodyguards unleashed a barrage of gunfire so intense it forced a military helicopter into an emergency landing. Amid the smoke and fire, the 59-year-old cartel leader attempted a desperate escape into the surrounding forest.

## Trump to defend policies in speech

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump will use Tuesday's State of the Union address to champion his immigration crackdowns, his slashing of the federal government, his push to preserve widespread tariffs that the Supreme Court just struck down and his ability to direct quick-hit military actions around the world, including in Iran and Venezuela.

The Republican hopes he can convince increasingly wary Americans that his policies have improved their lives while ensuring that the U.S. economy is stronger than many believe — and that they should vote for more of the

same in November.

The balancing act of celebrating his whirlwind first year back in the White House while making a convincing case for his party in midterm races in which he personally won't be on the ballot is a tall order for any president. But it could prove especially delicate for Trump, given how happy he is to veer off script and ignore carefully crafted messaging.

A main theme will be that the country is booming with a rise in domestic manufacturing and new jobs, despite many Americans not feeling that way. "It's going to be a long speech because we have so much to talk about," said Trump, who promised a heavy dose of talk about the economy.

## Kushner and Witkoff to shape Trump's Iran airstrike decision

WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's decision to order airstrikes against Iran will hinge in part on the judgment of Trump's special envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, about whether Tehran is stalling over a deal to relinquish its capacity to produce nuclear weapons, according to people familiar with the matter.

The president has not made a final determination on any strikes, as the administration prepares for Iran to send its latest proposal this week, ahead of what officials have described as a last-ditch round of negotiations scheduled for Thursday in Geneva.

Those talks will be led by Witkoff and Kushner, whose

## Iran looks to buy supersonic anti-ship missiles from China

London: Iran is close to a deal with China to purchase anti-ship cruise missiles, according to six people with knowledge of the negotiations, just as the United States deploys a vast naval force near the Iranian coast ahead of possible strikes on the Islamic Republic. The deal for the Chinese-made CM-302 missiles is near completion, though no delivery date has been agreed, the people said. The supersonic missiles have a range of about 290 kilometres and are designed to evade shipborne defences by flying low and fast. Their deployment would significantly enhance Iran's strike capabilities and pose a threat to U.S. naval forces in the region. -Agencies

assessment on the likelihood of a deal will shape Trump's calculus. If there is no deal, Trump has told advisers he is considering limited strikes to pressure Iran and, failing that, a far larger attack to force regime change.

A US official said on Monday that Witkoff was part of the group advising Trump on his decision about how to proceed with Iran and had been involved in all meetings related to the matter.

## Dems table Senate bill on tariff refund

WASHINGTON

US Senate Democrats have introduced legislation to force the Trump administration to refund billions of dollars in tariffs after the Supreme Court struck them down as unlawful.

US Senator Ben Ray Lujan said President Donald Trump had "ignited a global trade war the moment he took office by illegally imposing sweeping tariffs and causing pain for millions of Americans."

The proposed Tariff Refund Act of 2026 would require full refunds, with interest, of tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Lawmakers estimate the administration collected about \$175 billion.

"President Trump's sweeping, reckless tariffs are responsible for driving up prices and hurting small busi-

nesses and working families across New Mexico and the country," Lujan said.

"That is why I'm joining Senate Democrats in introducing legislation that requires the Trump administration to provide certainty to New Mexico's small businesses by refunding the costs they have endured."

Senator Ron Wyden said: "Trump's illegal tax scheme has already done lasting damage to American families, small businesses, and manufacturers who have been hammered by wave after wave of new Trump tariffs."

He added, "A crucial first step is helping people who need it most, by putting money back in the pockets of small businesses and manufacturers as soon as possible."

Senator Edward Markey said, "Trump's illegal tariff taxes cost small businesses, consumers, and families up to \$175 billion. That money must be repaid immediately."

## Imran shifted back to prison after hospital eye treatment

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Pakistan's incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan was on Tuesday taken to a hospital at Islamabad for treating an eye ailment, officials said even as his party demanded "transparency, not secrecy" about his health updates.

The 73-year-old cricketer-turned-politician, who has been at the Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, since 2023, was last month diagnosed with right central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) affecting his vision.

Khan was brought to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) at Islamabad for a second dose of anti-VEGF (Vascular endothelial growth factor) intravitreal injection, a doctor at the hospital said. He was later shifted back to the Adiala Jail. He had received treatment earlier on January 24.

## Bondi effect: Australia begins sweeping anti-semitism probe

MELBOURNE

A wide-ranging federal inquiry began on Tuesday into a rise in antisemitism across Australia before two gunmen believed to be inspired by the Islamic State group allegedly killed 15 people at a Sydney Jewish festival in December.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced last month that Australia's most powerful form of public inquiry, known as a royal commission, would investigate the Dec. 14 massacre at Bondi Beach.

Alleged shooter Sajid Naveed was shot dead by police. His son, Naveed Akram, faces charges including committing a terrorist act, 15 counts of murder and 40 counts of attempted murder. He has entered no pleas.

Royal Commissioner Virginia Bell, who heads the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social



Royal Commissioner Virginia Bell

Cohesion, said she did not want evidence that she heard to prejudice Akram's criminal trial.

"One might expect a royal commission set up to inquire into an attack would lead evidence of it and of the heroism of those who sort to confront the shooters and of those who ran toward the gunfire to offer medical assistance to the wounded," Bell said in an opening address.

"The trial of that individual (Akram) will be the occasion to lead evidence of the attack. This commission must do its

work without risking any prejudice to that criminal proceeding," she added.

Royal commissions, which can imprison witnesses who refuse to cooperate, often request time extensions as more evidence is discovered.

Bell is the sole commissioner. As well as lawyers, the commission's staff include analysts, researchers and other office workers, according to Richard Lancaster, who leads a team of lawyers in his role as the Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission. Lancaster's job is to manage the investigation's direction, present Bell with evidence and question witnesses.

Completing her report by the deadline of the massacre's first anniversary is a "matter of critical importance," Bell said.

"This imposes a tight time frame and it's going to impose limitations on how the commission approaches its terms of reference," the retired high court judge said.

## Panama takes control of 2 key ports, Hong Kong protests

Bangkok: Hong Kong is protesting Panama's seizure of two ports on a canal vital for global trade that were operated by a Hong Kong-based company for decades, the city's government said Tuesday.

Hong Kong's Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said in a statement it had lodged "stern protests" with Panama's consulate, adding that it had expressed strong opposition and dissatisfaction and would "staunchly support the legitimate rights and interests of Hong Kong corporations overseas."

The ports located at the mouth and tail of the Panama Canal, which have been operated by a subsidiary of CK Hutchison since 1997, became embroiled in a legal dispute after getting caught in the middle of the US and China's competition for influence in the region.

## Actor Robert Carradine dies

Los Angeles: Robert Carradine, a member of the famed acting family who was known for his roles in *Revenge of the Nerds* and *Lizzie McGuire*, has died aged 71. Carradine killed himself after years of living with bipolar disorder, his family said in a statement. "It is with profound sadness that we must share that our beloved father, grandfather, uncle, and brother Robert Carradine has passed away," the Carradine family said in a statement to Deadline on Monday.

offgrid  
Northeast US digs out from brutal snowstorm

NEW YORK

Millions across the northeastern United States on Tuesday contended with treks to school and work as they dug out from a major — in some areas record-breaking — storm that blanketed the region with snow, cancelled flights, disrupted transit and downed power lines.

Even as the snow moved north Tuesday, giving way to sunshine in parts of the region, National Weather

Service forecasters warned another storm originating in the Great Lakes was right around the corner.

In New York City, more than a million students in the nation's largest public school system had a regular day, Mayor Zohran Mamdani declared, inviting kids to pelt him with snowballs over his decision.

Many students and their caregivers seemed open to taking the mayor up on that idea, as they scrambled over mountainous snow banks

and dodged salt spreaders during the morning drop-off.

"We're walking on thin ice here. One more day would've been fine," said Danielle Obloj, the parent of a Brooklyn fifth grader.

"They should never have let these kids come back to school." Others hailed the city's efforts at snow-clearing.

"It was much better than last time — an easy commute, no problems whatsoever," said Raul Garcia, as he exited a cab with his three

school-age children. "We thought it was going to be really bad walking, but looking at the streets, they're so clean." Philadelphia switched to online learning on Monday and Tuesday.

Districts on Long Island and elsewhere in the New York suburbs said they would cancel school again on Tuesday.

Monday's storm, which meteorologists are calling the strongest in a decade, dumped more than 2 feet (61 centimetres) of snow in parts of the Northeast.



## Briefs

MUMBAI  
MCA's T20  
Mumbai  
League S4

Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) today announced the return of T20 Mumbai League with an exhilarating Season 4 and also launched the inaugural T20 Mumbai Women's League, pitted to be the most exciting domestic tournaments in the women's arena. The trophies were unveiled by Rohit Sharma at a glittering event in Mumbai that was also attended by Mumbai star and India player Sayali Satghare, MCA President Ajinkya Naik, Cabinet Minister and former MCA President Ashish Shelar.

LAHORE  
Pak selectors  
not happy with  
Hesson's say

Pakistan's national selectors have expressed concern over the absolute authority given to white-ball head coach **Mike Hesson** in selecting players for the national side. Senior selectors Aaqib Javed, Misbah-ul-Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Asad Shafiq addressed a media conference in Lahore on Saturday and said they had asked the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to review the selection structure once the team returns from its ongoing tour of Bangladesh.

SHANGHAI  
Ratcliffe  
praises  
Carrick

Manchester United co-owner **Jim Ratcliffe** said temporary coach Michael Carrick is doing an "excellent job" but the British billionaire wouldn't entertain a question about the former player possibly keeping the job long term. United is up to third place in the Premier League under Carrick, the former England and United midfielder who was hired in January on a contract through end of the season. "He's doing an excellent job, yeah absolutely," Ratcliffe told Sky Sports at the Chinese Grand Prix on Saturday. Ruben Amorim was fired in early January after 14 months on the job and with United in sixth place.

English Daily  
**AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH**  
Title Code  
**UPENG04488**  
Prayagraj  
Printer, Publisher &  
Owner Swami Shree  
Yogi Satyam for  
Yog Satsanga Samiti  
Printed at  
**PARASHAKTI OFFSET**  
118A/2A Chaukhandi  
Kydganj, Prayagraj-211003  
Uttar Pradesh  
Published from  
Kriyayoga Asharam  
& Anusandhan Sansthan  
Jhansi, Prayagraj-211019  
Editor:  
**SWAMI SHREE YOGI SATYAM**  
All disputes of news and  
publication against the  
AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH  
are the subject matter of  
Allahabad Jurisdiction.  
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BCCI to felicitate  
T20 WC-winning  
Indian team

Board to honour 5 ICC title-winning teams at Naman Awards

MUMBAI

The Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian team, which scripted history by winning the T20 World Cup, will be felicitated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) during its annual Naman Awards ceremony in Mumbai on Sunday. The highlight of the BCCI Naman Awards 2026 will be the felicitation of five Indian teams that have captured International Cricket Council (ICC) titles in recent years, a historic first, the cricket board said on Saturday.

The Gautam Gambhir-coached side defeated New Zealand by 96 runs in the final in Ahmedabad on March 8 to become the first team to win the T20 World Cup three times, the first to successfully defend the title and the first to achieve the feat on home soil.

The ceremony will also honour other Indian teams that lifted ICC trophies in recent years, including the senior women's team that won the ODI World Cup 2025, the men's team that clinched the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, the Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2026 winners and the women's Under-19 T20 World Cup team of 2025.

Meanwhile, the BCCI also confirmed several individual honours that were announced earlier this week.

India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill will receive the Polly Umrigar Award for Best

International Cricketer (Men) for the 2024-25 season, while Smriti Mandhana will be honoured as the Best International Cricketer (Women) for the fifth time in her career.

Former stalwarts Roger Binny and Rahul Dravid will be conferred the Col C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, the board's highest honour, while former India captain Mithali Raj will receive the BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award for Women.

Binny, a member of India's 1983 Cricket World Cup-winning team and the tournament's highest wicket-taker, later served the game in several roles including coach, selector and BCCI president from 2022 to 2025.

Dravid, one of India's greatest batters with more than 24,000 international runs, also played a significant role in shaping the country's next generation of cricketers. He was the head coach when India won the T20 World Cup in the previous edition in 2024.

Among other awardees, Ira Jadhav will receive the Jagmohan Dalmiya Trophy.



Suryakumar Yadav

## 2001 | Laxman-Dravid, Harbhajan and memories from 25 years back at Eden

THE  
GREATEST  
TEST EVER  
PLAYED

MUMBAI

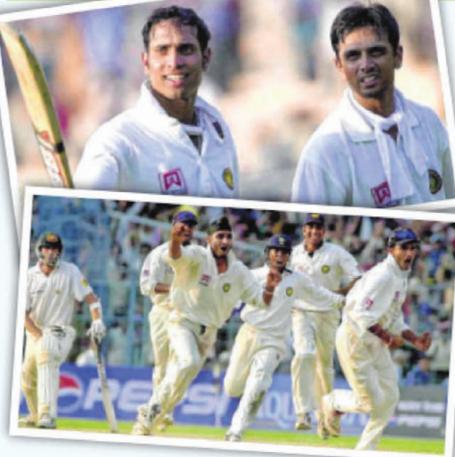
It's time to go down memory lane and reopen an unforgettable chapter in the annals of Indian cricket folklore that happened 25 years ago at the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

Yes, mention Kolkata and 2001 and one could conjure visuals of the legendary VVS Laxman-Rahul Dravid partnership of 376 runs that galvanized and energized India into winning a Test match after they were asked to follow-on by the then mighty Australia, led by the astute and steely Steve Waugh.

The invincible Australians were on a rampage across the cricketing world then coming into the Kolkata Test with a 16-match winning streak, a world record at the time, with the Sourav Ganguly-led India team ending that run in epic fashion in front of a capacity crowd at the joyous Eden Gardens.

Personally, for this correspondent, it was the match that was the turning point in Indian cricket at the turn of the century at a time when the general public was losing its confidence in the country's most loved sport owing to the infamous match-fixing scandal of 2000, better known as Cronjagate.

Then came the match against Australia which completely changed the trajectory of Indian cricket in the manner in which it was played



**281**  
Laxman

**180**  
Dravid

**376**  
Laxman-Dravid's 5th  
wicket stand in  
the second innings

**6/73**  
Harbhajan's splendid  
bowling display in 2nd  
innings

Australia coach John Buchanan then made a decision that he would later come to regret and that was to make the hosts follow-on.

What ensued was the stuff of dreams as India, who were at one stage 232/4 after the wicket of captain Sourav Ganguly, were propelled to a massive 657/7 declared in 178 overs.

The chief architects of that total would be Laxman and

Dravid, who played the innings of their careers, with the former slamming a then Indian Test record score of 281 for the highest individual score and Dravid cracking 180 as their fifth-wicket partnership of 376 runs saw them bat through an entire day mentally batting Australia out of the game.

To see this magic unfolding in front of TV screens those days was an incredible sight as office-goers returning from work would cram into neighbourhood electronics showrooms or hair salons to catch a glimpse of two Indian batters scripting something truly special.

Laxman's masterful innings of 281 comprised 44 fours and came in 452 balls and 631 minutes while Dravid's workman-like 180 was carved in 353 balls and 446 minutes with 20 fours. Australia set a daunting target of 384 were then bundled out for 212 in the fourth innings.

Kumble criticises KKR's  
decision to let go of Iyer, Salt

Shreyas Iyer left Kolkata Knight Riders to join the Punjab Kings

MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders took the wrong decision by allowing Shreyas Iyer and Phil Salt to leave after their title-winning campaign in the 2024 Indian Premier League (IPL), and unless the three-time champions recognise the importance of retaining key players, they cannot be considered serious contenders for the trophy, former India captain Anil Kumble cautioned.

Iyer left Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) to join Punjab Kings, whom he guided to their first appearance in an IPL final in nearly a decade last season. Phil Salt, another crucial contributor to KKR's success in 2024, moved to Royal Challengers Bengaluru and played a significant role in the franchise securing its maiden IPL title last year.

"Two years ago, KKR won the IPL and lifted their third trophy. Two important cogs in that

Two years ago, KKR won the IPL and lifted their third trophy. Two important cogs in that wheel were Shreyas Iyer and Phil Salt. Both played crucial roles in helping them win, but KKR let both of them go," Kumble said in a JioHotstar release.

"There is no consistency from them in terms of player retention. KKR took the wrong decision by letting Shreyas Iyer and Phil Salt leave and that has left them without an IPL-winning captain." Kumble pointed out that while KKR have an experienced campaigner in Ajinkya Rahane as captain, he is yet to win the IPL as a skipper.

"Yes, Ajinkya Rahane is an experienced campaigner. He has led Mumbai in domestic cricket and Rajasthan Royals in the IPL. But he has not lifted the IPL title as a captain yet," Kumble said.

"Having a skipper who has won the trophy gives you an advantage. KKR let go of that advantage. They need to learn how to keep hold of their key players. Otherwise, they will keep struggling and cannot be considered favourites to win the trophy," the former leg-spinner added. Kumble also praised Iyer's

leadership qualities, highlighting his impact after moving to Punjab Kings.

"Shreyas Iyer is certainly an underrated skipper. It is not easy to win a trophy with one franchise and then go to another. There is a different management, atmosphere and team. The pressure is also different," he said.

"The new franchise he joined had not played in the final in the last 10 years and in just his first season with Punjab Kings he took them to the final. I was not just impressed by his captaincy, but also by the way he led the team from the front."

Kumble added that Iyer continues to face scrutiny despite consistent performances. "There are some players who have to prove themselves every time. Shreyas is like that. Even after performing, questions still come up. I think he is underrated, but he is an exceptional leader," he said. Meanwhile, former India batter Cheteshwar Pujara described Sunrisers' opening pair of Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head as more destructive.

Anil Kumble  
former India  
captainPietersen will not serve as  
Capitals mentor in IPL 2026

Ex-England captain says he cannot commit the time required for the role but will return to commentary

NEW DELHI

Former England captain **Kevin Pietersen** said on Saturday that he will not serve as mentor of Delhi Capitals (DC) in the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) as he cannot commit the time required for the role.

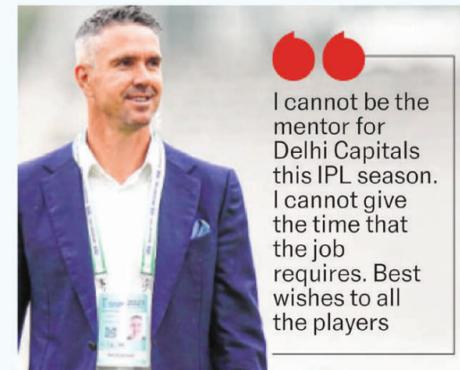
The IPL 2026 season will begin on March 28 with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.

"I cannot be the mentor for Delhi Capitals this IPL season. I cannot give the time that the job requires. Best wishes to all the players for this season."

"However, I will see you back in the commentary box. IPL is the world's best league and I cannot wait to see you all soon," Pietersen said in a post on X written in Hindi.

Delhi Capitals will start their IPL 2026 campaign against Lucknow Super Giants at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on April 1.

The franchise will play its



I cannot be the mentor for Delhi Capitals this IPL season. I cannot give the time that the job requires. Best wishes to all the players

**Delhi Capitals will start their IPL 2026 campaign against Lucknow Super Giants at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on April 1.**

first home match against Mumbai Indians on April 4.

Pietersen, who played for three teams across five IPL seasons, was appointed mentor of Delhi Capitals before the start of the 2025 edition. He had earlier represented the franchise when it was known as Delhi Daredevils.

The former England batter also led teams in 17 matches in the IPL. He briefly captained Royal Challengers Bengaluru during the 2009 season before leading Delhi Daredevils in 2014.

Delhi Capitals are yet to win the IPL title since the tournament began in 2008.

## transition

## Pathan believes time for Dhoni to pass the baton



NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder **Irfan Pathan** believes the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) could be the last time fans see **MS Dhoni** playing for Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and feels it's time for him to pass on the baton to the younger players to shoulder more responsibility within the franchise.

"We have seen him take responsibility for many years

now, but I think this is the time for the baton to pass on to the likes of Ayush Mhatre, Dewald Brevis, Shivam Dube and Ruturaj Gaikwad, who is a young captain as well," he said. As the 2026 IPL approaches, speculation around Dhoni's retirement has gathered pace once again.

The discussion intensified after CSK traded Sanju Samson from Rajasthan Royals, a move many felt could allow the veteran to reduce his on-field involve-

ment this season while continuing to mentor the side.

"CSK is incomplete without MS Dhoni. This season might be the last time we see him in the yellow jersey and it is tough to imagine CSK and the IPL without him," Pathan said on JioHotstar's Game Plan. "As soon as the IPL comes around, we start seeing Mahendra Singh Dhoni again, which means he is fully prepared for it, and he is looking very fit as well," he added. The 44-year-old joined the CSK camp in

Chennai earlier this month and has been training with the squad led by captain Ruturaj Gaikwad.

Pathan said Dhoni's role could increasingly revolve around guiding the group and helping develop the next generation of leaders in the team.

"This season Dhoni will play an important role in bringing everyone together. I am not sure how many games he will play, but his presence in the dressing room will help a lot.

"Sanju will benefit because he will be part of the leadership group as well. Ruturaj Gaikwad is the leader. But as a group, two or three players are being groomed for the future. That is where MS Dhoni comes in. I hope he makes a difference."

Pathan said questions about Dhoni's fitness, batting position and workload are likely to continue throughout the season. "Questions about his fitness, batting position and whether he will play all games will still come up."