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

Briefs

PATNA Tejashwi discusses RS poll strategy

Even as the fate of opposition candidate in Rajya Sabha polls hinges on the fact whether there will be a churn in RJD-AIMIM relationship in coming days, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday convened a meeting of the INDIA bloc's MLAs to discuss the alliance's strategy for the polls. Amid the uncertainty whether AIMIM would extend support of its five MLAs to the opposition candidate, state AIMIM Akhtarul Iman is likely to meet Tejashwi in connection with the RS polls on Wednesday.

CHANDIGARH Row in House over Cong MLA remark

Punjab assembly on Tuesday witnessed uproar over Congress MLA Sukhpal Khaira's allegedly derogatory remark on women, during the ongoing budget session even as the House also passed a resolution condemning it. The uproar broke out during the Zero Hour when the ruling AAP MLAs demanded strict action against Khaira for his 'derogatory' comments on women on his recent Facebook post. Finance minister Harpal Cheema referred to the said post in which Khaira purportedly said that women performing Gidha (folk dance) over the Rs 1,000 aid (announced by AAP government) cannot be expected to give birth to brave sons.

JAIPUR Raj passport offices get bomb threats

Several passport offices in Rajasthan had to be evacuated following bomb threats on Tuesday. An email sent to the Jaipur Regional Passport Office in the name of ISI stated that bombs would explode at 1 pm. The police and security agencies were alerted and intense search operations were conducted in passport and post offices in Jaipur, Sikar, Jaisalmer, Banswara, Pratapgarh, Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Kota, Bhilwara, Pali, Chittorgarh, Sriganganagar, Nagaur, and Jhalawar; however, no suspicious objects were found anywhere during the search.

LUCKNOW UP MLAs to propose ₹5 cr devp works

The Uttar Pradesh government has asked all MLAs to submit proposals for development works worth up to Rs 5 crore in their constituencies, with CM Yogi Adityanath directing officials to expedite the process and ensure timely implementation. As per official information, Yogi sought detailed proposals for development projects from legislators and asked that they be sent to the Chief Minister's Office within one week.

SUPPLY WOES | Restaurants explore alternatives like electric devices, coal & firewood to keep kitchens running

LPG crisis turns up heat on eateries

MUMBAI

A widening shortage of commercial LPG cylinders across several states is severely impacting hotels, restaurants and other businesses, prompting industry bodies to warn of an imminent crisis if supplies are not restored quickly.

Tamil Nadu: Representatives of the Tamil Nadu and Chennai Hotels Association met CM MK Stalin and warned that existing LPG stocks could last only one to two days. In a post on X after the meeting, Stalin said he had written to PM Narendra Modi urging the Centre to ensure the shortage does not affect the public, commercial establishments or MSME industries in the state, while also requesting that any additional power requirements be secured and supplied.

West Bengal: Industry leaders cautioned that small eateries would bear the brunt of the disruption. Sudesh Poddar, president of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India, said the Centre should distribute non-domestic cylinders more rationally. "Small restaurants and bakeries will suffer the most. The government should solve the matter at the earliest," he said.

Restaurant entrepreneur Anjan Chatterjee, chairman of Mainland China, Oh! Calcutta and Café Mezzuma, warned of an imminent crisis. "There will be a major crisis in the next few days if the scarcity of cylinders is not addressed immediately. Presently, we are rationing the cylinders we have in stock," he said.

Punjab, Haryana: The disruption has cast a shadow over the ongoing wedding season.



People queue up to book LPG cylinders at an Indane gas agency in Lalbagh area of Lucknow, on Tuesday -PTI

Residents in Nayagaon village in Punjab's Mohali district and Kansal village in Chandigarh said they had been visiting gas agencies for days and standing in long queues, only to be told that there was no supply. Similar reports have emerged from Ludhiana, Patiala and Jalandhar, where families preparing for weddings are scrambling to arrange cooking gas at the last minute.

Uttar Pradesh: Shortages have triggered concern in cities such as Lucknow, Prayagraj and Gorakhpur, where many consumers claim cylinders are not being delivered even four to five days after booking. Some residents waiting outside agencies in

Gorakhpur said they had been standing in line for two to three days, comparing the situation to two decades ago when people waited months for LPG supplies.

Lucknow District Supply Officer Vijay Pratap Singh, however, sought to reassure consumers. He said the district currently has LPG stock sufficient for about 25 days and supplies are continuing as usual.

Delhi: Restaurants and caterers are experimenting with alternatives to keep operations going. Amit Gupta, joint secretary of the New Delhi Traders' Association, said restaurants may increasingly rely on electrical appliances if the shortage persists.

"Restaurants may have to temporarily adapt by relying more on electric equipment wherever possible. However, that transition is not always

seamless, as some cooking techniques and menu items are specifically designed for gas-based cooking," said Arjun Sagar Gupta, founder of The Piano Man.

Sanjiv Mehra, president of the Khan Market Traders' Association, added, "If there is a shortage of LPG, then we will have to resort to using piped natural gas."

Kerala: Some restaurants have already begun reverting to traditional cooking methods. A medium-scale hotel in Kochi shifted part of its cooking to a firewood stove as supplies dwindled. "We cooked rice using the traditional firewood stove today. We could not close down the hotel all of a sudden as around 25 people are working here," the owner said, adding that they usually use up to five cylinders a day and now have none in reserve.

A hotel owner in Kozhikode said they would be forced to shut operations if the shortage persists. Civil Supplies Minister GR Anil said the state government has convened a meeting of industry stakeholders and officials to review the situation.

Bihar: Hospitality sector representatives said small eateries are struggling to cope. A hotel official in Patna said, "We have brought 20 sacks of coal on Tuesday morning, so that we can at least have arrangements for our staff."

"It is disturbing for people working in and running small eateries in eastern states, including Bihar. Many people are entirely dependent on small eateries for their livelihood there. They are facing a lot of difficulty," said Shreya De, Assistant Manager (Marketing and PR) of HRAEL.

Cabinet approves 3 road, rail projects worth nearly ₹12K cr across five states

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved three major infrastructure projects worth nearly Rs 12,000 crore, including a key road project that will improve connectivity between Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi and the upcoming Jewar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the revised capital cost of Rs 3,630.77 crore for the construction of connectivity to Jewar International Airport from Delhi-Faridabad-Ballabhgarh-Sohna spur of

Additional ₹1.51L cr Centre funding for 'source to tap' water supply model
NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) till December 2028 and enhanced the total outlay to ₹8.69 lakh crore. Central assistance has been increased by ₹1.51 lakh crore to ₹3.59 lakh crore. The Cabinet, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, also approved restructuring the mission to shift its focus from infrastructure creation to service delivery supported by drinking water governance and an institutional ecosystem for sustainable rural piped potable water supply.

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. It said the 31.42km road corridor will provide direct connectivity from South Delhi, Faridabad and Gurugram to the upcoming airport. The CCEA also approved

development of an 80.45 km four-lane corridor from Badnawar-Petladwad-Thandla-Timarwani on NH-752D in Madhya Pradesh at a cost of Rs 3,839.42 crore. The corridor will provide connectivity from

Ujjain to the Timarwani interchange on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway (DME).

The section of the corridor will also provide the shortest route for traffic from Gujarat and Maharashtra to Ujjain.

The CCEA also approved two multitracking projects of Indian Railways that will cover five districts of West Bengal and Jharkhand. The projects will increase the existing railway network by 192 km and will be executed at a cost of Rs 4,474 crore by 2030-31. The two lines covered under the projects are the Sainthia-Pukur fourth line and the Santragachi-Kharagpur fourth line.

'27% reservation for OBCs in central govt recruitment'

NEW DELHI

The government provides 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in direct recruitment to civil posts and services under the Centre, the Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday.

The implementation of the reservation policy is carried out by the Department of Personnel and Training, Minister of State for Social

Justice and Empowerment BL Verma said in response to a question.

"Government has a reservation policy through an office memorandum dated Sep 8, 1993 of the Department of Personnel and Training and other instructions issued from time to time, under which 27% of vacancies in direct recruitment to civil posts and services under the government are reserved for OBCs (Socially and

Educationally Backward Classes)," the minister said in a written reply.

He said the ministry is taking measures for the welfare of OBCs under the umbrella scheme PM Young Achievers' Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (PM-YASASVI), which includes pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, top-class education in schools and colleges, and construction of hostels for OBC boys and girls.

43 medical colleges set up in '25-'26

Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that 43 new medical colleges have been established across the country for the academic year 2025-26. As informed by the National Medical Commission (NMC), the government has approved 11,682 MBBS seats and 8,967 postgraduate (PG) seats for the same academic year, Patel said. The NMC invites online applications every year from medical colleges and institutions for the establishment of new medical colleges and for the increase of undergraduate (UG) and PG seats.

57K atrocities cases against SCs in 2023

Over 57,000 cases of alleged atrocities and crimes against Scheduled Castes were registered across the country in 2023, the government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. It said there is no proposal to amend the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, as changes have already been carried out in 2016 and 2018 to make its provisions more stringent in the interest of victims and witnesses. Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale said 57,789 cases of crime/atrocities against SCs were registered in 2023 as against 57,582 in 2022.

'Bengal poll will be violence-free'

KOLKATA

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday assured free and fair elections in West Bengal and urged voters to participate in the upcoming Assembly polls after holding review meetings with officials and political parties.

"Names of not a single genuine voter will be deleted from the voter list. No violence will be tolerated. Poll personnel must maintain absolute non-partisan conduct. I have asked



CEC Gyanesh Kumar interacts with media

DMs and SPs to enforce the rule of law without fear or favour. The Election Commission is committed to conducting free and fair elections," Kumar said.

He warned of strict action against officers involved in the

polling process if they show partiality while performing their duties. Kumar said home voting facilities will be available for voters aged 85 and above. West Bengal has around 3.78 lakh voters in this age group. "There are 294 Assembly constituencies, of which 210 are general, 68 reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and 16 for Scheduled Tribes (ST)," he added. Earlier in the day, the CEC visited Dakshineswar Kali Temple and Belur Math, where a few people raised "Go back" slogans.

Infiltration bid along LoC foiled, terrorist killed

Rajouri/Jammu: Army troops foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Tuesday, killing one terrorist during an encounter, officials said.

Acting on intelligence inputs, security forces detected the movement of two terrorists in the general area of Jhangar in Nowshera sector along the LoC at around 3 pm, the White Knight Corps said on X. -PTI

Vijay begins interviews to pick TVK candidates

CHENNAI

Actor-politician Vijay on Tuesday commenced interviewing his TVK party candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections, the first to be faced by the party.

The party would field candidates for all the 234 assembly seats in the state allocating key constituencies to party senior leaders, according to a source in the Tamilaga Vетtri Kazhagam.

Vijay, who arrived at the TVK headquarters in Panaiyer here would interview about 60 candidates today. The party had received over 4,200 applications from aspirants who expressed a desire to contest

on party tickets. The TVK is likely to shortlist the candidates soon. Party insider claimed that senior leaders: Bussy Anand, Aadhav Arjuna and Arun Raj are likely to be nominated for T Nagar, Villivakkam and Tiruchengode constituencies.

BJP on alliance
Tamil Nadu BJP state President Nainar Nagendran on Tuesday said that any decision regarding a possible alliance with Tamilaga Vетtri Kazhagam, ahead of Assembly elections, would be taken by the central leadership of the BJP, adding that removal of a party functionary who had invited the Vijay-led party to join the alliance was an internal matter of the party.

2 killed in firing, Army deployed in Meghalaya

SHILLONG

Army was deployed in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills district, where two persons were killed in firing by security forces after clashes broke out between two groups, officials said.

Security forces opened fire to disperse violent mobs amid tensions during the nomination process of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections, according to officials. "Army columns deployed in West Garo Hills on the request of civil administration and conducting a flag march," Defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahender Rawat told PTI.



wedding guest
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during his visit to farmer Sanjay Malik's residence for his daughter's wedding in Sonipat, Haryana

Chapter on judicial graft: NCERT apologises, withdraws textbook

New Delhi: The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) on Tuesday issued a public apology for including a chapter on judicial corruption in a recently published textbook that had drawn the

Supreme Court's ire. The council said the entire book has been withdrawn.

The Class 8 social science textbook stated that corruption, big backlog and lack of sufficient judges are among challenges faced by judiciary.

DK Shivakumar set to step down as KPCC chief

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who also heads the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), has decided to step down as the party's state president after completing six years in the post.

Shivakumar took charge as KPCC president on March 10, 2020 and completed his six-year term on Tuesday. He is among the longest-serving KPCC chiefs after Home Minister G Parameshwara, who held the post for eight years between 2010 and 2018.

To mark the occasion, Shivakumar has organised a meeting for Congress legislators and KPCC office-bearers on Tuesday evening. Shivakumar earlier said he

was not keen to continue as KPCC chief, citing multiple responsibilities as Deputy Chief Minister and a senior party leader handling key portfolios, including Bengaluru development and water resources. His decision also comes amid continuing political tensions with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the party's leadership dynamics in the state.

His detractors, especially Siddaramaiah and his team, are using Shivakumar holding two posts - both in party and government - to deny him the coveted CM post. Siddaramaiah, who is not keen in transferring power to Shivakumar as promised when the government came to power in 2023, has put the onus of changing him on the party high command.



CBSE maths exam paper QR code leads to song

NEW DELHI

A QR code printed on the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class 12 mathematics question paper led to the music video of Never Gonna Give You Up by British singer Rick Astley.

The incident resembled the

classic internet prank known as rickrolling even as the board maintained that the security of the question paper remains uncompromised.

The mathematics board examination was held on March 9. Soon after the exam concluded, images of the question paper began circulating on social media, with students

alleging that the QR code printed on it redirected them to the 1987 hit song's video on YouTube.

QR codes are typically included on board exam papers for authentication and security verification.

"Many security features are provided on question papers. These include QR codes to ver-

ify the genuineness of the question paper in case of a suspected security breach. On March 9, an examination in Mathematics was conducted for Class 12. In a few question paper sets, it appears that when one of the given QR codes is scanned, it links to a YouTube video," CBSE Examination Controller

Sanyam Bhardwaj said. "It appears that this has raised concerns about the veracity of the question papers among concerned students and parents. It is confirmed that question papers are genuine and the security of the question paper remains uncompromised," he added. The board noted that while

concerns about the veracity of the question papers have been put to rest, the matter has been viewed seriously and necessary steps are being taken to ensure such issues are not repeated in future.

The issue was also raised by the Congress's Kerala unit, which shared a student's video on X highlighting the incident.

Babasaheb dream will be fulfilled under the leadership of PM Modi: Ramdas

Lucknow

Hundreds of workers of the Republican Party of India (Athawale) gave a grand welcome to Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment and National President of RPI, Ramdas Athawale, at Indira Gandhi Airport in Delhi after he was selected as a Rajya Sabha candidate for the third consecutive time. Ramdas Athawale said that after India independence, the vision of India that the architect of the Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, had dreamed of, the NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to fulfilling that dream. He said that the Modi government is continuously moving forward on the Path of Babasaheb ideals and the social justice and equal rights for which Babasaheb devoted his entire life are no longer limited to books but are becoming a Reality.

On this occasion, the Union Minister of State said that under the capable leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, efforts will be made to



take the ideas of Babasaheb, the architect of the Constitution, to every citizen of the country. Ramdas Athawale said that he will continue to work with dedication for the rights and welfare of Dalits, the deprived, the oppressed, minorities and women in Society.

After being nominated as a Rajya Sabha candidate for the third consecutive time, hundreds of RPI workers gathered at the airport to welcome their national president upon his arrival in Delhi. During the occasion, workers filled the atmosphere with energy and enthusiasm by raising slogans of "Ramdas Athawale Zindabad" and "Narendra Modi Zindabad." Addressing the workers, RPI President Ramdas

Athawale said that in the coming days he will continue to help people from all sections of society with renewed energy and strength. He added that he will make his best efforts to realize Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a "Developed India." Athawale also expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of thousands of RPI workers to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP National President Nitin Nabin and all BJP leaders for nominating him as a Rajya Sabha candidate. He further said that through the and Empowerment, his priority will be to ensure ministry schemes reach every section of society for empowerment, welfare, social justice and Upliftment.

Four Books Released at the All India Bhojpuri Sahitya Sammelan



Patna

The National Executive meeting of the Prestigious Bhojpuri organization, the All India Bhojpuri Sahitya Sammelan, Patna was held in the auditorium of the Secondary Teachers' Union building, chaired by the organization's President, Dr. Mahamaya Prasad "Vinod." In addition to the members of the National Executive, special invitees from the organization senior committee also participated. The meeting reviewed the organization Past activities and several members emphasized the need for a clear outline of future action Plans, in Keeping with the organization glorious history and their Phased implementation. Several members at the meeting expressed the view that seminars, symposia, Poetry conferences, book and art exhibitions related to Bhojpuri literature and culture should be organized regularly under the aegis of "Abhabhosas" in various district headquarters of the Bhojpuri region and in various cities/metropolitan cities across the country. The literary figures present at the meeting offered suggestions for better Publication of the organization magazine, "Bhojpuri Sahitya Sammelan." The literary figures felt that the Publication of quality books should also begin soon under the aegis of "Abhabhosas." Serious consideration was also given to developing the organization website,

increasing the membership of the organization and the magazine. The meeting emphasized the need to work more seriously on issues such as Bhojpuri inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and its recognition by the Sahitya Akademi and to transform it into a mass Movement. The meeting expressed satisfaction with the success of the Amanour (Saran) convention. President Dr. Mahamaya Prasad Vinod stated that meaningful efforts would be made to promote Bhojpuri literature and culture by increasing the organization activism. During the program, books/magazines like 'Sone Phool Phool' (Author-Ganesh Choubey, Editor- Brajbhushan Mishra), 'Dharti Ke Geet' (Poet-Suresh Kantak) and 'Johar Bhojpuriya Maati' (Editor-Kanak Kishore) were also released. An exhibition of Bhojpuri books published by Abhidha Prakashan was also organised in the meeting. Former President Dr. Brajbhushan Mishra, Executive President Bhagwati Prasad Dwivedi, General Secretary Prof. Jaykant Singh, Treasurer Jitendra Kumar, Dr. Vishnudev Tiwari, Dr. Sunil Kumar Pathak, Shivanugrah Narayan Singh, Jagmohan Kumar, Ram Bahadur Rai, Saurabh Pandey, Jyotish Pandey, Dilip Kumar, Dr. Omprakash Rajapuri, Dr. Jagmohan Kumar, Jalaj Mishra Anupam, Kaushal Mohabbatpuri etc. many litterateurs expressed their views in the Meeting.

The Privileges Committee of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council will meet on March 14 at the Circuit House

Prayagraj. A meeting of the Privileges Committee will be held on March 14, 2026, at the Circuit House, Prayagraj, under the chairmanship of Govind Narayan Shukla, Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council. Various issues will be discussed with officials from the districts of Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Kaushambi, and Pratapgarh. The purpose of this meeting is to coordinate local administrative matters, issues of public interest, and the Privileges Committee's directives. All concerned officials have been instructed to attend the meeting on time.

Married woman hangs herself, video goes viral on social media

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A married woman committed suicide by hanging herself in Purkhipur village, under the Soraon police station area, at around 5:30 pm on Saturday evening. The video is now going viral on social media. The woman also filmed her suicide. Upon receiving the information, Soraon police arrived and took the body into custody and sent it to the district hospital for a post-mortem. The cause of the incident is still unknown. The deceased has been identified as 35-year-old Aarti Patel, wife of Vinay Kumar alias Bablu. It is reported that Aarti, enraged by some issue at her in-laws' home, hanged herself by making a noose of her saree from a fan inside her room. This incident has caused an uproar among her family members.

Noida Police Arrest Mobile Snatcher

Noida

Acting on local intelligence inputs and electronic surveillance, the team of Police Station Sector-113, Noida successfully Arrested A mobile Phone snatcher and took one juvenile into custody for their involvement in mobile Phone snatching and theft incidents in the Noida Area. The arrested accused has been identified as Arun, son of Ramjeevan, age About 20 Years, originally a resident of Village Kripalpur, PS Sandila District Hardoi and Presently residing at Village Hoshiarpur P.S Sector-



49 Noida. During the operation, Police recovered six stolen mobile Phones of different brands, one motorcycle (Registration No. UPI6DF4614) used in committing the crime and one illegal knife from the Possession of the Accused. During

sustained interrogation, the accused disclosed that he and his associate used to roam around various Parts of Noida on a motorcycle and target Pedestrians to commit mobile Phone snatching and theft. The stolen mobile Phones were later sold to

unsuspecting Passers-by at throwaway Prices by falsely claiming that they urgently needed Money. The accused further revealed that a few days earlier they had stolen a mobile Phone from an auto in Sector-119 Noida which was later sold

and the money was shared between them. Recovered Items* 06 mobile Phones (Different Brands). * 01 Motorcycle (Registration No. UPI6DF4614) used in the Crime. * 01 illegal knife. Registered Cases 1. Case Crime No. 44/2026, under Section 303(2) BNS, PS Sector-113 Gautam Buddh Nagar 2. Case Crime No. 70/2026, under Section 317(5) BNS & 4/25 Arms Act, PS Sector-113 Gautam Buddh Nagar. Further investigation and legal Proceedings are Underway.

Journalists Sushil and Shiv become members of the JCI Advisory Committee

Ghazipur the Nationwide organization of journalists, has nominated senior journalist Sushil Srivastava from Delhi and senior journalist Shiv Srivastava from Chhattisgarh as members of the National Advisory Committee. A.k Rai a senior journalist from Ghazipur and a member of the

National Advisory Committee of the Journalist Council of India, expressed his delight at the nominations and said that their nominations will inject new energy into the JCI and enable the organization to play a decisive role in addressing the issues facing journalists. The organization

National Convenor, Dr. R.C Srivastava, stated that the two senior journalists, who Play a significant role in journalist welfare work, have been nominated on the recommendation of the organization National President, Dr. Anurag Saxena and the National Committee.

Assam Sepon Central Rongali Bihu Committee cancels concerts in memory of Zubin Garg

Assam

The Sepon Central Rongali Bihu Committee of Assam has announced the cancellation of all concerts for the upcoming Rongali Bihu celebrations of 2026. This decision has been taken as a tribute to Assam great singer Zubin Garg. The official communiqué of the Committee recalled Zubin Garg unparalleled contribution to Assamese music and culture. Describing him as the 'Voice of Bihu', it was stated that his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. The Committee made it clear that instead of traditional cultural and musical events, the celebrations would be limited to sym-



bolic flag hoisting ceremonies only. The move marks a deep respect for Garg demise. Assam heartbeat legendary artist Zubin Garg Passed away on September 19, 2025 in Singapore under mysterious circumstances. The Special Investigation Team of the Assam Police then filed a detailed chargesheet against seven accused in December 2025,

including Shyamkanu Mahanta, a festival organizer. The accused are accused of conspiring behind Garg death. This decision of the Sepon Committee has received huge support on social media. Many have appealed to other Bihu committees across Assam to also take similar steps to honour the great singer Zubin Garg.

Nodal Officer Reviews Development Works and Health Services, Inspects under-construction 50-bed Critical Care Hospital

Barabanki

Neena Sharma, Director of the Uttar Pradesh Academy of Administration and Management and the Nodal Officer for Barabanki district, conducted a one-day visit on review the Progress of development projects and health services in the district. During the inspection, she directed officials to improve arrangements and ensure that construction works are completed on time with proper Quality.

Inspection of Under-Construction Critical Care Hospital

The inspection began with a visit to the under-construction 50-bed Critical Care Hospital near the District Hospital in Begamganj. The nodal officer closely reviewed the construction work and instructed officials to ensure modern facilities in the hospital. She also directed that proper pipeline arrangements be maintained to provide uninterrupted oxygen supply to every bed. Additionally, she issued guidelines regarding fire



safety and an efficient drainage System. **Review of Oxygen Plant and Interaction with Patients** During the visit, she also inspected the oxygen plant installed at the District Hospital. She instructed that if the oxygen supply through pipelines from the existing plant to the new critical care hospital is not feasible, a proposal should be prepared to establish a separate oxygen plant there. She also interacted with admitted patients and their attendants to gather information about the healthcare facilities being Provided. **Assessment of Construction Patients** Later, the nodal officer inspected the transit hostel located in the Government

Office campus and the under-construction Kalyan Mandap in the Nawabganj extension area. She directed the concerned officials to maintain quality standards while expediting the construction work. She also instructed that adequate drinking water facilities should be ensured in the Kalyan Mandap premises. Executive Officer of the municipality Sanjay Shukla and other staff members were Present during the Inspection. Public Grievances Hear in Gandhinagar Ward. During the visit, Neena Sharma also reached Gandhinagar Ward, where local councillors and residents welcomed her. She paid floral tribute at the statue of "Doctor Sahib." Local resident Lali, wife of Pappu,

informed her about problems related to drainage, roads and streetlights. The nodal officer directed the concerned officials to resolve the issues promptly.

Visit to Cow Protection Centre and Deva CHC

Neena Sharma also inspected the large cow Protection centre (Niblet) located in Jahangirabad. Amid Vedic chanting, she performed rituals, fed jaggery and gram to the cows and reviewed the arrangements at the centre. She directed officials to develop a system for collecting and utilizing cow urine and to ensure proper care of sick animals. She also Planted a banyan sapling as part of environmental conservation.

After that, she inspected Kasturba Gandhi Residential School in Mujibpur and interacted with students to learn about the educational facilities being Provided. Teachers Priyanka Singh and Ruby Prabhakar informed her that foul smell from a nearby factory was affecting the environment of the school.

Mayor and Commissioner presented the revised budget in the Municipal Corporation House; councilors raised ward issues

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Mayor Ganesh Kesharwani and Municipal Commissioner Seelam Sai Teja presented the revised budget for the city in the Municipal Corporation House today. Councilors from all wards and zonal officers were present. The budget includes schemes related to the development and welfare of urban and rural areas. In the House, councilors discussed issues in their respective areas, such as drinking water, road and drain construction, encroachments, drain cleaning, repair of clogged drains, platforms, toilets/urinals, house tax, and cleanliness on city streets. The Mayor directed the concerned officials to resolve these issues promptly. On this occasion, Additional Municipal Commissioner Deependra Yadav, Arvind Kumar Roy, Rajiv Kumar Shukla, Dinesh Chandra Sachan (Chief Engineer, Civil), Sanjay Katiyar (Chief Engineer, Electrical/Mechanical), Dr. Mahesh Kumar (City Health Officer), Gaurav Kumar (General Manager Jalkal),



Sanjay Manmgai (Chief Tax Assessment Officer), Dr. Vijay Amrit Raj (Veterinary Welfare Department),

Rampujan (Assistant Municipal Commissioner) and all zonal officers and employees were present. The

Municipal Corporation informed that priority has been given to the development of the city, cleanliness,

water supply and other civic amenities in the budget. Apart from this, based on the demands of the councilors,

the problems related to encroachment and cleanliness will be resolved immediately.

A media person who went to cover the seizure of the home of a wanted accused was assaulted and threatened with death



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Family members of Adil Wasi, a 25,000 rupee reward accused, have been accused of assaulting and threatening a media person in Hamam Gali, Shahganj police station area. The incident has sparked outrage among journalists. It is reported that the police, with court permission, had

seized the home of Adil Wasi, an absconding accused in a multi-crore rupee fraud case, on Sunday. A media person had reached Hamam Gali on Monday to cover this action. It is alleged that during this incident, some members of the accused's family began abusing the media person and then resorted to physical violence. Furthermore, the media

person was also threatened with death. Upon learning of the incident, local media persons were enraged. Journalists have demanded strict action against the accused. At the same time, the police say that information about the case has been received and necessary action will be taken after investigation on the basis of the complaint. send suggestion

Preparations for the 2025 Sub-Inspector and Civil Police Recruitment Examination in Prayagraj Complete, District Magistrate Issues Strict Instructions



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma chaired a briefing meeting for the 2025 Direct Recruitment for Sub-Inspector, Civil Police, and equivalent posts by the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board, Lucknow, in the District Panchayat auditorium on Tuesday. The meeting

reviewed preparations for conducting the examination in a safe, fair, cheating-free, and transparent manner. The District Magistrate stated that all officials, including sector and static magistrates, center administrators, and co-administrators, must act responsibly and sensitively in conducting the examination. He directed that confidential examination materials be delivered to examination centers only as



per the prescribed procedures, under CCTV camera surveillance, and deposited in police custody under double locks after the examination. He clarified that strict action will be taken against those who disrupt the sanctity of the examination, and any negligence or indifference will not be tolerated. The exam will be held in two sessions on March 14 and 15 at 43 examination centers across the district. The

first session will be from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., and the second session will be from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. A total of 53,760 candidates have registered for all four sessions. Additional District Magistrate (City) Satyam Mishra, DCP Pankaj Pandey, District Basic Education Officer Anil Kumar, Dr. Prabhakar Tripathi, and other relevant officials were present on the occasion.

District Magistrate holds meeting with officials to discuss preliminary preparations for Census 2027

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A meeting of district-level officials was held on Tuesday in Sangam Auditorium, chaired by District Magistrate and Chief Census Officer Manish Kumar Verma, regarding preliminary preparations and training for Census 2027. The meeting reviewed preparations such as house listing, population



count, district census hand-book, financial and utility cer-

tificates, publication and tabulation of data. The District

Magistrate directed all charge officers to ensure timely and quality completion of census-related tasks. He stated that in the first phase, house listing and house counting will be conducted door-to-door by enumerators from May 22 to June 20, 2026. For this, block creation and training will be completed in advance through the CMMS portal. The District Magistrate

directed the charge officers/assistant charge officers and their computer operators to attend the training on March 11 at 11 a.m. in Sangam Auditorium. He also said that the training of field trainers should be completed by March 25, and the training of enumerators and supervisors should be completed by April 30, so that the house count can be completed on

time. On this occasion, Additional District Magistrate Finance and Revenue/District Census Officer Vinita Singh, Additional District Magistrate Supply Vijay Sharma, Additional District Magistrate Nazul Sanjay Pandey, City Magistrate Vinod Kumar Singh, all Sub-District Magistrates, all departmental officers and charge officers of the district were present.

Editorial

India's online gaming ban shows today's thriving sector could be tomorrow's casualty

It took a mere six minutes in the Lok Sabha and a few minutes more in the Rajya Sabha to wipe out an established industry. In a matter of 48 hours, the passing of the Bill on Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill 2025 has adversely impacted 2,00,000 direct employees, Rs 23,613 crore in investments, over Rs 4,500 crore in advertisements and Rs 20,000 crores in direct and indirect taxes. The Bill, now an Act, was introduced in Parliament without undergoing the due process of a draft for public opinion, stakeholder consultations, or, at the very least, a warning. Policy corridor whispers imply that even allies were not aware of such a move. A decade-old, established sector constitutionally guaranteed under Article 19 has been asked to wrap up operations and told it will be held liable for criminal actions, including those of its employees, if it doesn't comply. While the Act aims to safeguard public health and address the concern of offshore illegal platforms, any ban, especially in the digital space, has consistently proven to have amplified the issue multiple times. The immediate fallout would include economic disruptions, shifts in user behaviour, and social harms. The opaque strategy adopted by the government in this case highlights the grave direction that policy-making is taking in India. The uncertainty goes far beyond the online real money gaming sector and will set a precedent for future policies in each sector. This swift and unconsulted legislative strike is not just a regulatory misstep but a stark warning of the growing unpredictability in India's policy landscape, one that could unravel investor confidence, domestic business trust, and exacerbate systemic issues like brain drain of talent and businesses. The immediate economic toll is staggering and underscores the bill's shortsightedness. Beyond the 2,00,000 direct jobs at risk, it affects ancillary industries like fintech, advertising, and content creation. Annual GST revenues of Rs 20,000-25,000 crore and TDS of Rs 1,080 crore (FY24) will evaporate, creating fiscal gaps at a time when India's fiscal deficit stands at Rs 15.77 lakh crore, amounting to 4.8 per cent of GDP. But the real cautionary tale lies in the investor disarray this creates. A reported foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$2.7 billion and startup funding of \$2.8 billion in real money gaming are now stranded. This unpredictability echoes broader patterns in India's policy environment, where sudden changes deter long-term commitments. For instance, the 2019 e-commerce FDI rules, which restricted inventory models for e-commerce platforms, led to a reported slowdown in US-India tech investments, with firms citing regulatory whiplash as a key barrier. Similarly, retrospective tax demands in the past (e.g., the Vodafone case) have been linked to a dip in FDI inflows, with studies showing that economic policy uncertainty reduces FDI by up to 30 per cent in emerging markets like India. The 2025 Kearney FDI Confidence Index highlights regulatory complexity and ease of doing business as concerns for investors in India, potentially showing off billions in inflows amid global uncertainties like US tariffs. Businesses, particularly in the digital economy, thrive on stability. This bill's passage without stakeholder input, bypassing the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, sends a chilling message: Today's thriving sector could be tomorrow's casualty. As the industry voices alarm, with petitions likely heading to courts, the precedent risks cascading effects on adjacent digital fields where India aims for global leadership but faces investor hesitation due to such volatility. In the larger scheme, this policy unpredictability is accelerating India's brain drain, particularly in tech and digital innovation, where skilled professionals seek more stable environments abroad. Data from 2025 reveals a stark reality: Over 1,05,000 global tech layoffs this year alone, with 20 per cent occurring in India, have pushed thousands of engineers and developers to migrate.



India-US intelligence ties flourished in the shadow of the War

Edward Heath, Great Britain's Prime Minister, felt the words wash over him, hot like a dragon's breath: "The United States had received nothing from India except a kick in the teeth, in exchange for \$4 billion last year," President Richard Nixon raged. The Indians, Nixon went on, thought "the white nations had no choice but to come in and bail India out." Alarmed, British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home stepped in. "The Indians were admittedly intolerably high-minded," he accepted. "But there was an important common interest in preserving Indian independence from Soviet and Chinese domination." The invective against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her nation, provoked by her refusal to back down on Bangladesh, continued in the privacy of Nixon's office, though: "A slippery, treacherous people," "bastards," "old witch," "b*tch". Even as the political leadership in both countries raged against each other, the relationship between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Research and Analysis Wing remained robust, historian Paul McGarr writes. In 1973, the head of Prime Minister Indira's secretariat, Prithvi Nath Dhar, and the chief of R&AW, Rameshwar Nath Kao, lobbied for CIA chief William Colby to visit New Delhi. As President Donald Trump appears to be leading the India-United States relationship into an abyss from which there is no return—adding restrictions to the outsourcing of jobs on the back of crippling tariffs—the period



between 1971 and 1973 shows the two countries have been locked in airless places before. The intelligence services of both countries, though, found ways to bypass potholes and cul-de-sacs, ensuring strategic conversation continued. Little understood, India-US intelligence ties flourished in the shadow of the Cold War, as New Delhi resolutely proclaimed its commitment to non-alignment. Late in the summer of 1949, India was struggling to contain its first post-Independence insurgency, an uprising by communists in the Telangana region. The Indian Army, sent to Hyderabad to battle the Nizam's armies, found itself at war with peasant insurgents in Telangana. Thousands died in the brutal conflict, Jonathan Kennedy and Sunil Purushotham have recorded, as the Army herded Adivasis into concentration camps in near-starvation conditions. Less than forty-seven years old and with little experience in global politics, an unassuming police officer was tasked with helping India find the right tools to deal with the crisis. TG Sanjeevi, earlier a Superintendent of Police in Madras, and now Director of the Intelligence Bureau, was

ordered to make a three-week visit to Washington. For decades before Independence, the Intelligence Bureau had been relentlessly focused on the threat of communist terrorism. Telangana was its first challenge after Independence—and, it seemed, its first potential failure. To Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, it seemed that the threat was transnational and a danger to the survival of the Indian republic. The colonial legacy meant India had a substantial relationship with the United Kingdom's intelligence services. The Security Service, popularly known as MI5, was a critical source of assistance in the first years after Independence. India became debilitatedly reliant on this relationship, Avinash Paliwal has recorded. "This is satisfactory," an MI5 memo on general dependence smugly noted—but India understood the need to widen its partnerships. George Kennan, then director of policy planning at the State Department, agreed with Prime Minister Nehru's assessment. To address the challenge, Kennan recorded, Sanjeevi would have to "look beyond India's borders and

seek to influence policy in regard to dangers from without." This meant that, despite Nehru's socialism, America would help him push back against the Communist threat. The visit did not begin well, though. Sanjeevi was affronted by the imperious behaviour of the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, J Edgar Hoover, and vowed never to allow contact between the Intelligence Bureau and the FBI. The damage was contained, however, during his subsequent meetings with the Central Intelligence Agency. Sanjeevi came away with positive impressions of his meetings with Colonel Richard Stilwell, Kermit "Kim" Roosevelt, and the director of central intelligence, Roscoe Hillenkoetter. Even though the two countries clashed over questions of ideology and global politics, the alignment of their interests wasn't particularly opaque. India's government provided arms and training to Tibet's ramshackle military after 1949, and even considered deploying troops in support of its independence. The problem was that the Indian Army just didn't have the resources. In 1954, India formalised this reality, ceding many of its colonial-era rights, like stationing troops in Lhasa, historian Karunakar Gupta has written. The Intelligence Bureau, though, looked the other way, as the CIA supplied weapons and equipment to Khampa insurgents from 1958 on, historian Claude Arpi has written. India also ignored CIA flights in support of Tibetan insurgents, which

crossed over its territory en route from Dhaka. Langley supported the founding of the Special Frontier Force, intended to carry the PLA along the China-India Line of Actual Control. The CIA also oversaw the insertion of nuclear-powered surveillance equipment to gather intelligence on China's nuclear-weapons programme. Even as this intelligence cooperation continued, Prime Minister Nehru publicly complained that the United States was interfering in Indian politics, "buying up newspapers and spreading a network of publicity organisations." Later, Prime Minister Indira assailed foreign powers plotting to "run down India." CIA agents, American intelligence officer Russell Jack Smith wrote sharply, "were to be found according to Madame Gandhi, beneath every charpoy and behind every neem tree." Even as Prime Minister Indira frequently railed against CIA intervention to bring about regime change—and public outrage erupted when the journal Ramparts disclosed CIA funding for Indian anti-Communist political parties in 1967—the relationship carried on in the darkness, as it were. As Sanjeevi told CIA interlocutors in 1950, "he frequently had to take independent action without the knowledge of his government". The intelligence relationship survived even in the face of contradictory United States objectives. For example, CIA personnel told India they had detected signals linking the jihadist warlord Sirajuddin Haqqani.

China will be more central to India now. Though an anti-US unity is premature

As I write this column from Boston, the biggest American newspapers have the Tianjin meeting of Prime Minister Modi, President Putin, and President Xi—all three smiling and shaking hands—as a leading news item. The sub-theme is also that President Trump's policies are driving them closer, perhaps opening the door to an anti-US unity in international geopolitics. The talk of an anti-American unity is perhaps premature. At least two of the three nations, China and India, have significant ties with the US, which can be ruptured only at a very great cost. Despite the talk of a decline, the US is still the world's largest economy. At the end of 2024, according to the World Bank, America's GDP was \$29.18 trillion, which amounted to 26.2 per cent of the world economy (\$111.33 trillion). A market of that size cannot easily be shunned. Indeed, most countries and corporations would covet access to it. But there is no doubt that Trump's radi-

cal break from America's post-Cold War foreign policy, especially his use of tariffs as an economic and political tool, is creating new geopolitical and economic scenarios. Countries must take into account these changes as they make adjustments in their foreign policies. Of course, Trump is known to be mercurial and abrupt changes in his policies cannot be wholly ruled out. However, three things are likely to remain constant: use of trade tariffs, opposition to immigration, and smaller American investments in international security. The changes in these realms, if any, are likely to be of degree. Fundamental changes can take place only if the results of these policies are catastrophic for his MAGA base, especially via inflation or if the judiciary intervenes more firmly than it has done so far. How should India, severely jolted by Trump's tariffs, imagine its way forward? Let me suggest that China will become even more central to India's foreign policy.

Vijay is winning the nickname war in Tamil Nadu. He's attacking Brand Stalin with 'uncle' taunt

In the world of marketing, a new entrant's toughest task is to break the perception built around the old guard. Established brands don't crumble because of direct attacks. They erode when their aura is punctured, when their carefully constructed image is made to look smaller, or even laughable. Politics is not different. Though for decades, MK Stalin was no more than a 'possible' political heir to former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M Karunanidhi, things changed in 2019. Stalin was turned into a brand, crafted meticulously as the only answer, as an able administrator, and a calm and composed CM post the 2021 elections. He was presented as the inevitable figure, the steady numero uno of contemporary Tamil Nadu Politics, a man positioned above ridicule. Even his critics rarely succeed in dismantling his image. Actor turned politician Vijay was out to destroy that brand when he called him, "My dear Stalin uncle." With such an open taunt at his second public rally, Vijay wasn't merely addressing the Chief Minister; he was reframing him. What at first sounds like cinema dialogue is,

in LinkedIn lingo, classic disruption. A single word that wedges into the aura of authority, triggering what one might call the 'uncle-ification of a statesman'. Stalin was recast as just another politician, a figure who is now the subject of memes. This is not an insult for insult's sake, but rather is a strategy through vocabulary. Political authority in Tamil Nadu has always been theatrical. MGR's heroism, Jayalithaa's imperiousness, Karunanidhi's oratory skills, Stalin's calm—these are curated performances. Brands with narratives. "Uncle" in this context is not reverential. It's casual, familiar, and even patronising. The strength of Stalin's brand lies in the distance it creates, and Vijay's jab collapses that distance instantly. It is lethal in politics. It forces a new narrative onto the mainstream discourse, away from discussions on policy and performance, and instead drags it into a battle of personalities. Marketing teaches us that the most viral campaigns are not the longest ones, but the most repeatable ones. The same applies to political communication in the social media age. 'Uncle' is not just a word but a weapon in what Tamil politics

increasingly resembles—nickname warfare. A meme-ready shorthand handed over to the trolls, clipped into reels, recycled into jokes, hash-tagged into tweets. DMK's own and meticulously built digital army, usually skilled at dictating the narrative, is now forced to rebut it. And rebuttal, sadly, is half the battle lost. As one would have expected, social media is abuzz with the keyword 'Uncle'. Not one but a thousand iterations of the same comment are afloat across the state's digital space — "What uncle. it is very wrong uncle." Every attempt at creating a 'third and alternate force' in Tamil Nadu—be it Kamal Haasan, Seeman, Vijayakanth, Vaiko, or GK Moopanar before them—has struggled because they failed to dent the DMK-AIADMK binary. Voters saw them as the 'Third' person outside of the duel, not mainstream players. Vijay is trying a different path. Not with a policy vision, not with organisational might, nor with uniquely positioned ideological sermons, but with classic brand disruption. By making Stalin react, or at least by forcing his sympathisers to, Vijay dug a pit in the binary.

Why hasn't India won the Nobel Prize for literature after Independence? Quality of education

Speaking in a distinguished institution, a political leader expressed concern that after Rabindranath Tagore in 1913, no Indian has received the Nobel Prize in Literature. His question—"Is the writing of our country not at the level anymore? Or has it been ignored by international institutions?"—was thought-provoking. But the tone was aloof. However, when you think about it, the answer is obvious. During the British Raj, India produced a number of great poets, artists, scientists, scholars, and thinkers. Many of

them have an international reputation. The solitary Nobel Prize in literature was also received during the British period. Under the British, our talents flourished. The educational institutions of the British rulers encouraged talents without discrimination on any ground. Did our desi leaders, post-British rule, continue that noble tradition? It is well-recognised that the educational institutions of British India declined rapidly after Independence. Instead of nurturing talent, new policies, knowingly or unknowingly,

worked toward their suppression or migration to the West. Isn't it curious that during the British Raj, hardly any Indian writer, scientist, artist, or scholar decided to settle abroad? Whereas in Independent India, talent of all kinds began settling in Europe and America, leaving India for good. To come to the issue, the leader who pointed out our lack of Nobels seems unaware that there are two essential prerequisites to help grow quality writers. One, to connect children & youth with great literature, taking care that they also get time

and encouragement to savour it. Second, to maintain a whole system of good institutions and platforms for learning, teaching, writing, publishing, and interacting. To ensure all this, staying away from narrowness or compromise must be a rule. But desi leaders, preachy and voluble, did the opposite! The British made arrangements in every field of knowledge and science to promote talent—modern public institutions, great libraries, newspapers, magazines, entire new learning disciplines like history, civics, etc.

Students opposed to the proposed two-stage DUSU elections

Delhi: In an effort to curb the "defacement" of property and the "use of muscle and money power," Delhi University (DU) is contemplating holding student union elections in two stages. However, this proposal has encountered opposition from both students and teachers, who have deemed it as an undemocratic action. At a meeting of the university's highest decision-making body, the executive council EC, the subject was raised. During the meeting, the administration presented a document that suggests restricting voting for the four office-bearers of the Delhi University Students Union DUSU to students who have won union elections at the col-



lege or department level. At present, the leaders of DUSU are elected by students directly from more than 50 colleges. Following the court's rebuke of students for vandalizing public property during last year's elections, DU sent a report to the Delhi High Court, which contained the recommendation. In order to investigate the matter of defacement, the court temporarily halted the counting of votes for approximately two months. The document

states that in response, the DU established a reform committee and submitted alternate solutions to the court. Among these options was the two-tier election system, which university officials justified as something to think about in the future rather than a definitive choice. Although no final decision was reached, the meeting was deferred with the possibility to address the topic again at the next meeting as a separate agenda item.

FM reports 1100 out of 1200 state and national schemes under DBT

Delhi: Direct bank account transfers have been assured for 1,100 out of 1,200 national and state government projects, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. One hundred out of one thousand two hundred federal and state programs get their funding sent straight to their bank accounts by DBT. She emphasized that the Public Financial Management System is crucial to the improvement of DBT. She said that PFMS has allowed the government to give benefits directly by cutting out middlemen at the 49th Civil Accounts



Day festivities. It was said "Everything is direct payment, so no middlemen, no unborn children getting allowances." All recipients have their funds deposited into accounts that have been biometrically verified. Out of the 1200 national and state schemes, DBT is in charge of 1100. By going

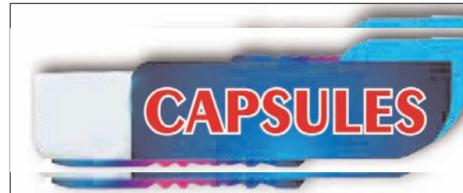
digital, PFMS has made all financial transactions more transparent and efficient, doing away with discrepancies and delays in fund distribution. The Minister of Finance made a point of mentioning that around 250 external systems, such as the Government e-Marketplace, GSTN, PM Kisan, and TIN 2.0, connect with PFMS. Efficient financial transactions and cooperative federalism are both facilitated by full integration. Through the integration of financial systems, the government may enhance the tracking of fund flows and ensure accountability.

EU, India will sign FTA by year-end

Delhi: The sides promised "concrete steps" to finish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. The FTA states that the parties would "work as trusted partners to enhance market access and remove trade barriers". Modi and Layan stressed IMEC. Modi said, "Concrete steps will be taken to take it forward. The

IMEC will promote global trade, sustainable growth, and prosperity. The IMEC was announced at the September 2023 G20 in New Delhi. India, the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and various European nations are involved. The corridor will link India, West Asia, and Europe via train, road, and sea. Lal was asked if

Europe would require lower wine, cheese, and automobile taxes. Layan traveled to India with 22 EU Commissioners. It emphasizes our value. India and the EU are and space cooperation. The two sides agreed to have "focused discussions" on the military sector and marine domain awareness to strengthen shared assessment.



US Polo targets Rs 3,000 cr in India, boosts marketing

Delhi: Arvind Fashions aims to increase marketing investments for its flagship brand, US Polo, to reach ₹3,000 crore in revenue, up from the current ₹2,000



crore. Over 3% of our corporate budget goes to advertising. This has reached 4% for US Polo and is rising. He noted that US Polo's company was predicted to increase 12-15% due to its strong omnichannel presence, taking advantage of the emerging rapid commerce channel and the square-foot expansion of stores, which can become supply hubs in smaller towns. Like-for-like growth is solid, including virtually double-digit full-price growth. Other categories including kids, women, and footwear are developing faster than the mother brand. Nearly 20% of the brand's revenues are in adjacent categories. "US Polo dominates the domestic market. We will invest in the brand and grow quicker than the market, he stated. Deloitte India and the Retailers Association of India reported in February 2025 that urban and rural families will spend more on discretionary items due to a doubling of per capita income by 2030. The report noted that "the Indian apparel and footwear market was valued at \$78 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach \$106 billion by 2028 at a compounded annual growth rate of 7.5-8%, driven by increasing disposable incomes, rising urbanisation, growing organised retail penetration.

When oil prices drop every month, US stocks go up

Delhi: Wall Street indexes rose in choppy rises as in-line European markets ended flat, continuing their 10-week winning streak. The Federal Reserve is expected to decrease interest rates twice this year, according to U.S. inflation figures. crude prices fell 1%, the first monthly decline since November, as markets braced for fresh levies from Washington and crude exports from Iraq's Kurdistan region. According to a White House source, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine will depart the Oval Office early Friday after a contentious meeting with Trump. Following reports of falling yearly inflation and sluggish consumer spending in the lat-



est statistics tracked by the Federal Reserve, U.S. Treasury rates hit multi-month lows. A drop of 2.93 points, or 0.34%, was recorded by MSCI's global stock index. Crypto values dropped after the Trump boom waned. The U.S. personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index fell from 2.6% in December to 2.5%

last month, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, which is part of the Commerce Department.

Core personal consumption expenditure, the favored inflation indicator of the Federal Reserve, fell to 2.6% from 2.9% following an upward revision. Inflation of 2% is the target of the central bank.

Manufacturing activity slows to a 14-month low in February

NEW DELHI: Activity in the country's manufacturing sector grew at its slowest pace in 14 months as production and new orders moderated but it still remained robust, a survey showed. The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) registered a reading of 56.3 in Feb, down from 57.7 in Jan, but still indicative of further improvement in the health of the sector. The 50-point mark separates from contraction in the survey, which is compiled from responses to questionnaires sent to 400 manufacturing firms.

Keep existing FY interest rate at 8.25%: EPFO board

Delhi: The central board of trustees of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation proposed keeping the interest rate at 8.25% for the current financial year. The finance minister must approve this before money is credited to seven crore subscribers. The Employees Provident Fund EPF has high and predictable returns compared to other fixed-income instruments, ensuring savings growth. The finance ministry taxed interest income obtained by people



who pay over Rs 2.5 lakh yearly a few years ago, claiming it would affect only 1% of subscribers. EPFO's 8.25% returns are far greater than PPF's 7.1%. Compounding is available with PPF's Rs 1 lakh annual investment cap. SBI is offering 7.5% on two- to three-year fixed deposits, however the interest income is

taxed and compounding is not available. A 30% taxpayer will receive 5.25% post-tax FD returns. The EPFO board also amended the Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance EDLI program to provide a minimum payment of Rs 50,000 to EPF members who die without one year of continuous service.

Graduates of state universities are unable to secure employment due to a lack of English ability

Delhi Divya: Using the success stories of Punjab and Karnataka, the NITI Aayog suggests that state public universities work with international language organizations to provide programs for English and foreign language proficiency. The employability of the students who graduate from these institutions is greatly impacted by their "inadequate" skill in the English language. State public universities are essential to reaching the NEP 2020 objectives; they educate more than 80% of all college-aged students and were the focus of a new report from the National Institution of Transforming India Aayog, "Expanding Quality Higher Education Through States and State Public Universities," which



NGT requests DPCC report after plea says unlawful dyeing units continue.

Delhi: The applicant, an environmental activist, told the National Green Tribunal that more illegal dyeing facilities were operating in Khyala and Meethapur village in Delhi after the authorities alerted them of their actions. The tribunal ordered the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to act and report in four weeks. In another matter related to such units, a joint committee recommended a campaign to sensitize the public about illegal industrial activity.

was published. Local businesses in a lot of states rely heavily on outside expertise and materials. One factor contributing to this trend, according to the poll, is the low English proficiency among local kids.

Apple will invest \$500bn and employ 20k in the US

Delhi: Apple will invest over \$500bn in the US over the next four years, starting with a Texas advanced manufacturing complex. Over that period, the tech giant intended to add 20,000 positions, with the "vast majority" in R&D, software, and AI. How much the spending accelerates the com-



pany's current activity is unclear. The amount includes

supplier and Apple TV production costs, according to Apple. Days after Apple CEO Tim Cook met with President Donald Trump, who has prioritized US business investment, the news was made. It stated that the 250,000-square-foot. Houston factory will construct servers "previously manufactured out-

side the US" to power Apple Intelligence, its AI system. The iPhone maker said it would open in 2026 and employ "thousands". Apple is also boosting its data center capacity in , Arizona, and Nevada and doubling its \$5bn funding for Trump's first-term manufacturing fund to \$10bn.

Byju's loses \$533 million loan fraud case in US court

Delhi: U.S. bankruptcy court rules Riju Ravindran, Byju's parent business Think & Learn, and hedge fund Camshaft Capital guilty of \$533 million fraud and "breach of fiduciary duty." The beleaguered edtech business Byju's Alpha has been found to have engaged in several fraudulent financial transfers and conversions, according to a ruling issued by the Delaware Bankruptcy Court. Byju brother Riju Ravindran was found to have breached his fiduciary duty as director of Byju's Alpha, according to the court. The



court's clear recognition that Riju Ravindran, Camshaft, and Byju's engaged in a worldwide fraud including the theft of \$533 million is something we are grateful for. In a statement, the lenders hailed this as a major victory in their fight to reclaim the stolen assets that properly belong to them. Byju successfully obtained a \$1.2 billion

five-year term loan from Glas Trust through the establishment of his Alpha special purpose financial organization. Having defaulted on its loans, Byju's Alpha was placed under trusteeship in March 2023. A group of 37 banks and other lending organizations gave Byju \$1.2 billion. Byju's Alpha's limited partnership interest in Camshaft Capital was transferred to William Morton's hedge fund, Camshaft Capital Fund. , with the proceeds of about \$533 million in term loans, according to the lenders.

Mittal's \$976 million Airtel stake sale

Delhi: Sunil Bharti Mittal's business sold \$976 million in India's No.2 wireless carrier to raise funding for new ventures. According to an exchange statement, Bharti Airtel Ltd. founder Indian Continental Investment Ltd. sold 0.84 percent interest or 51 million shares for Rs 8,485 crore (\$976 million), nearly a fourth of which was bought by Bharti Telecom Ltd. Other investors were not named in the trade at Rs 1660.46 per share, a tiny discount to

Monday's finish of Rs 1,675.6. The document said the shares were "allocated only to key marquee long only names, both global and domestic." Mittal is investing in Africa and OneWeb, which merged with Eutelsat in 2023, at the time of the sale. Last year, closely held Bharti Enterprises Ltd. bought 24.5% of BT Group Plc. Bharti Telecom now owns 40.47 percent of Airtel, reinforcing its "previously stated intent of strengthening its position . as the principal vehicle

Varun's Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai shifted to June 12

It is always healthy when film-makers support one another rather than compete unnecessarily, the makers of Varun Dhawan's upcoming film *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* said on Tuesday while announcing the movie's new release date.

The film, directed by Varun's father David Dhawan, was earlier scheduled to release in theatres across the country on June 5. It will now hit cinemas a week later, on June 12. The movie also stars Mrunal Thakur and Pooja Hegde.

The decision comes after Kannada superstar Yash's upcoming film *Toxic* was postponed to June 4 due to escalating tensions in West Asia.

Producer Ramesh Taurani's banner Tips Films shared the announcement of the film's new release date through a statement posted on its official social media pages.



Photo: Instagram_@varundvn



Photo: Instagram_@vickykaushal09

As per reports, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Love & War*, starring Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal, undergoes reshoots, pushing the film's budget higher

LOVE. WAR. & DELAYS.



Graphic by Neeraj Kathale

It is already known that Ranbir Kapoor and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's highly awaited drama *Love & War*, which was expected to reach the cinema halls by August this year, might be getting pushed.

A source close to the project revealed to IANS that the release of *Love & War* has been repeatedly delayed as

some crucial scenes from the film are being reshot, leading to a spike in the budget.

Filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali, who is known for creating a unique world of his own with every film, looks for perfection in every frame and hence is shooting a few of the important scenes from his next yet again. The source further revealed that this has also added to the budget of the drama, which is already being made on a jaw-dropping scale. It is further believed that all the rework has led to an indefinite delay in the release of the movie.

Who do the critics favour?

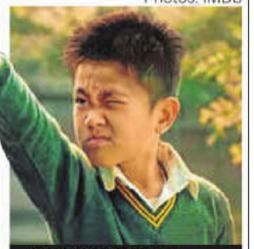
Neeraj Ghaywan's *Homebound* leads with six nominations as Critics' Choice Awards put the spotlight diverse films, series, documentaries and short films

The nominations for the 8th edition of the Critics' Choice Awards have been announced, celebrating outstanding work across feature films, web series and short films. The awards also mark the second consecutive year of recognising excellence in documentary filmmaking.

With nominations spanning multiple languages, formats and platforms, the Critics' Choice Awards continue their mission of spotlighting diverse, original and creatively ambitious storytelling from across India.

The awards are voted on by 56 leading film critics from across the country, all members of the Film Critics Guild. What sets the Critics' Choice Awards apart is its pan-Indian jury, which evaluates films, web series, documentaries and short films across languages throughout the year.

Leading the feature film nominations this year is Neeraj Ghaywan's *Homebound* with six nominations. It is followed by three nominations each for Rohan Parashuram Kanawade's Sundance-winning *Sabar Bonda* and Raam Reddy's *Jugnuma*. Anusha Rizvi's *The Great Shamsuddin Family*, Mari Sel-

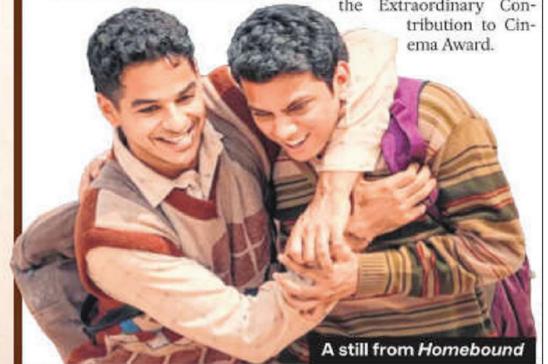


A still from Boong

varaj's *Bison Kaalamaan* and the BAFTA-winning Manipuri film *Boong* received two nominations each.

In the web series category, *Black Warrant* emerged as the most-nominated title with seven nominations, followed by *Paatal Lok Season 2* with five nominations and *The Ba***ds of Bollywood* with four.

The Best Documentary category features *Chaar Phool Hain Aur Duniya Hai*, a portrait of late Jnanpith Award-winning author Vinod Kumar Shukla, alongside Hot Docs winner *I, Poppy*. In the short film category, *Aasmaani Jhoola* and *Maaybaapache Aashirwaad* lead with five nominations each. The Critics' Choice Awards 2026 ceremony will also honour veteran actor Farida Jalal with the Extraordinary Contribution to Cinema Award.



A still from Homebound

BLACKPINK's Jennie flaunts bold look

When Jennie Kim arrives at an event, you know it's going to be a fashion moment worth remembering. And the BLACKPINK member did not disappoint at Chanel's latest runway show in Paris, stepping out in a sultry ensemble that fused timeless Chanel elegance with edgy contemporary flair. As the house debuted its Fall 2026 ready-to-wear collection under creative director Matthieu Blazy, Jennie's look once again confirmed her status as one of the label's most iconic muses. The singer stepped out in a coordinated Chanel knit set featuring a cardigan and matching skirt crafted in an open-knit design. The textured outfit shimmered with dark green beaded embellishments and three-dimensional detailing, adding depth and sparkle to the otherwise classic silhouette.



(Text by Aanchal Chaudhary) Photo: Instagram_@jennierubyjane

Sidharth to Anurag: Suicide is not the solution

YouTuber and influencer Anurag Dobhal, popularly known as UK07 Rider, recently sparked massive controversy after allegedly attempting suicide during a YouTube Live while driving his car at a speed of nearly 150 km per hour. The incident reportedly ended in a crash, leaving him seriously injured and hospitalised. The act triggered widespread reactions online, with many users debating whether the incident highlighted a serious mental health struggle or reckless behaviour that could have endangered others on the road.

Reality TV personality Sidharth Bhardwaj was among those who strongly criticised the act. After posting a video calling out the dangerous stunt, he faced backlash from Dobhal's fans, many of whom accused him of being insens-

itivity towards someone dealing with depression. Now, in an exclusive interview with Sidharth defended his remarks and warned that such actions by influencers with massive followings could inspire dangerous behaviour among young viewers.



Anurag Dobhal

Reacting to the criticism he received online, Sidharth questioned why people were abusing him for speaking about the issue. "People are abusing me for speaking about Anurag. Tell me one thing - what exactly did I say

wrong? I genuinely want to know. If people get inspired by this, someone who is depressed might say, 'I'll also crash my car. My parents will talk to me after that and I'll get attention.' Anurag has 7 million followers. Among them are so many children. What message are they getting from this? Even now you see kids hanging out of cars or sitting on car roofs making reels just for views." Clarifying that his criticism did not mean he was insensitive towards mental health struggles, Sidharth said he empathises with people dealing with depression but believes that putting others at risk cannot be justified. "If someone is depressed, come talk to me. Sit together and try to solve it. But don't run over someone's brother or someone's child with your car. Right now, I genu-

inely feel bad for Anurag because he hurt himself. But what if someone else had died? Today nobody died, but tomorrow someone might. If people start driving recklessly in the name of depression, sooner or later someone will die. Then who will be responsible? People are calling me insensitive today. But when someone actually dies in such an accident, those same people disappear. Who will go and give justice to the mother whose child dies because of something like this?"

According to him, influencers with millions of followers carry a social responsibility, especially because a large portion of their audience consists of teenagers. "Trends don't take time to start in our country. When someone with millions of followers does something like this, 14-15-year-old kids watching might think it's okay. They might say, 'I'm depressed too, let me take my father's scooter and crash it somewhere.'"

He concluded by saying that while mental health struggles are real and common in today's competitive world, turning them into social media spectacle is dangerous. "If you are depressed, it's okay. Anyone can go through mental health issues. But don't kill yourself and don't kill someone else on the street. That is not the solution. Maybe my way sounds aggressive, but my intention is not wrong."

Bombay HC protects Shilpa Shetty's personality rights

The Bombay High Court has passed an order safeguarding Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty's personality rights against misuse. In its order, the High Court has restrained the defendants from using or misrepresenting her name, image, voice, likeness, or persona in any manner.

Not just that, the Court has also directed that the defamatory and infringing content circulating on various platforms be immediately pulled down, thereby reinforcing that a public figure's identity and reputation cannot be commercially exploited or digitally misused without consent. This latest order has placed the responsibility on digital platforms and intermediaries to act swiftly in removing such unlawful content.

protected her personality rights and acknowledged that her name, image, voice, and persona are valuable legal rights which cannot be commercially exploited or digitally manipulated without her consent. "This order reinforces that digital platforms and intermediaries must act swiftly to remove such material and must restrain the misuse of technology that violates her dignity and reputation," the lawyer went on to add.



Photo: Instagram_@shilpashetty

Iranians flee cities, seek rural refuge

BEIRUT

Terrified by explosions shaking their homes in Tehran and other cities, tens of thousands of Iranians have packed up and left, finding refuge in small, remote towns to wait out massive bombardment by Israel and the United States.

Pouya Akhgari, 22, is holed up in a family house with aunts and cousins in a village 200 kilometres (120 miles) from his home in the capital, Tehran. As snow falls in the mountainous countryside of Zanjan province, he mostly spends his days watching movies and TV shows and sometimes ventures out to the nearest main town.

The village has been spared strikes, but Akhgari's friends in Tehran tell him about the blasts all around them.

"It just feels so chaotic. I thought it'd be very short, but it's dragging on," he told The Associated Press via a messaging app. "If it goes on like this, we'll run out of money." The UN refugee agency said that in the first two days of the war, about 100,000 people fled Tehran, a city of around 9.7 million. It said that the scale of displacement is likely much larger, though it didn't have figures for the days since or on the flight from other cities.

A strawberry farmer's relative safety

A 39-year-old lawyer endured a day of explosions



Protesters wave Iranian flags and hold a portrait of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his son Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei on Monday

that shook her home in the city of Ahvaz, 800 kilometres (500 miles) southeast of Tehran. The next day, on March 2, she packed up her things and hit the road with

her brother, sister and their families — and their dogs Coco and Maggie.

They went to their family's strawberry farm in a small town several hours away. She

and others reached by the AP spoke on condition of anonymity to prevent reprisals, and she asked that the town not be identified.

The town doesn't have any military bases, so it feels relatively safe. Still, southern Iran has been the target of some of the most intense bombardment. She said that the next town over — which is even smaller — saw an explosion when a strike hit an ammunition site belonging to the Revolutionary Guard, the nation's most powerful armed force.

She worries that strikes could target a gym used by Guard members a few hundred meters down the road from their farm.

Airstrikes have hit a number of sports facilities around Iran, apparently because the Guard often uses such sites as gathering places.

The gym is probably far enough away that it won't affect them if it's hit, she said, "but all the same, the danger exists." No one is going to work, and the kids are far from school. To pass the time and keep their minds off things, they walk the dogs, play board games and pick strawberries.

The peacefulness of the nature around them helps make the war feel distant — the clouds rolling across the green hills, the bleating of their neighbour's goats at sunset.

WHAT TRUMP SAID ON WAR

VANCE WAS 'PHILOSOPHICALLY LITTLE DIFFERENT'

US President Donald Trump on Monday downplayed differences with Vice President JD Vance over US strikes on Iran, saying the two were largely aligned. Speaking to reporters at his golf club in Florida, Trump rejected suggestions of tensions and said Vance had been "philosophically a little different than me" when the US and Israel launched joint strikes on Iran at the start of the war. Trump said the decision had been necessary for US security. "I think he was maybe less enthusiastic about going, but he was quite enthusiastic. I felt it was something we had to do," Trump said.

IRANIAN NAVY DESTROYED, 51 SHIPS SUNK

US President Donald Trump has claimed that American forces have effectively destroyed Iran's naval capability during the ongoing conflict, saying dozens of Iranian ships have been sunk and the country's navy is now "gone". Speaking at an event with Republican lawmakers in Miami, Trump said US strikes had devastated Iran's military infrastructure, particularly its naval forces. "Iran's drone and missile capability is being utterly demolished. The Navy is gone. It's all lying at the bottom of the ocean, 46 ships." "It's on the bottom of the sea. It's almost 50 ships. I was just notified, it's 51 ships."

STANDING FIRM ON CLAIM IRAN HIT GIRLS' SCHOOL

President Donald Trump stood by his claim that Iran could be responsible for the deadly missile strike on a girls' school. Speaking at a news conference at Mar-a-Lago on Monday, Trump said Iran and other countries use Tomahawk missiles like the one that struck the school in southern Iran during the initial wave of the US and Israeli air assault. Trump told reporters he had not seen video of the attack, which Iranian authorities say killed about 175 people, mostly children.

IRAN'S NAVAL, MISSILE, DRONE CAPABILITIES HIT

President Donald Trump said US strikes have severely damaged Iran's military infrastructure, claiming most of the country's naval assets and key weapons systems have been destroyed. Speaking at a news conference in Miami on Monday, Trump said US forces have struck more than 5,000 targets and significantly reduced Iran's weapons capability. "Their missile capability is down to about 10%, maybe less," Trump said, adding drone launchers have seen an 83% decline. "They have no navy, no air force, no radar and no telecommunications," he said.

DISAPPOINTED THAT MOJTABA IS SUPREME LEADER

US President Donald Trump on Monday criticised Iran's new leadership after Mojtaba Khamenei was elevated as supreme leader. Speaking at a press conference in Miami, Trump said, "I was disappointed because we think it's going to lead to just more of the same problem for the country." Asked whether the new supreme leader had "a target on his back", Trump replied, "I don't want to say whether or not he does because that would be inappropriate." He described the appointment as an unacceptable choice for Iran, and suggested it would deepen instability in the region amid escalating conflict there now.

CUBA IN TROUBLE, 'FRIENDLY TAKEOVER' LIKELY

President Donald Trump said on Monday that Cuba was in "deep trouble" on a humanitarian basis and indicated that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was dealing with the situation, which could lead to a "friendly takeover." "He's dealing (with it) and it may be a friendly takeover; it may not be a friendly takeover. Wouldn't really matter because they're really down to...as they say, fumes. They have no energy, they have no money," Trump, speaking at a news conference in Doral, Florida told reporters. The Cuban government has said it is not engaged in any high-level talks with the United States.

WAR UPDATES

FIRST 2 DAYS OF COST US \$5.6 BN, SAYS REPORT

The first two days of US military strikes on Iran cost about \$5.6 billion in munitions alone, according to a report by The Washington Post, underscoring the enormous financial cost of the conflict even as President Donald Trump suggests the war could end soon. The estimate, based on information shared with Congress, reflects the value of advanced weapons used in the opening phase of the campaign and has intensified debate in Washington about how long the United States can sustain such a high-intensity military operation.

1,900 IRANIAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN STRIKES: ISRAEL

Israel's military has killed about 1,900 Iranian soldiers and commanders since the start of the conflict, military spokesman Effie Defrin said, adding that Israel did not rule out targeting Iran's newly announced supreme leader. Speaking at a press briefing on Monday, Defrin also confirmed that a second person was killed earlier on Monday in an Iranian missile attack in Israel, bringing the total death toll from Iranian attacks in the country to 12 civilians, in addition to two soldiers killed in combat with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

US LAWMAKERS CLASH OVER TRUMP'S ACTION

US lawmakers sharply split over President Donald Trump's decision to launch military action against Iran, with senior Republicans defending the move as necessary for national security while Democrats warned it was an unauthorised war that could drive up economic costs and deepen instability in the Middle East.

AUSTERITY MEASURES IN PAK OVER ENERGY WOES

Facing a worsening fuel crisis triggered by rising global oil prices and geopolitical tensions in West Asia, the government of Pakistan has announced a series of austerity measures, exposing the country's deep dependence on imported energy and fragile economic position. In a pre-recorded televised address on Monday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif unveiled measures aimed at conserving fuel and raising funds to offset the impact of the crisis. The move comes after Pakistan recently raised petrol and diesel prices by 55 Pakistani rupees per litre — nearly a 20 per cent increase — citing surging global prices linked to tensions in the Middle East.

POTUS rings up Putin, discusses Iran & Ukraine

MOSCOW

US President Donald Trump dialled his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin late Monday night amid global energy disruption caused by American-Israeli strikes on Iran, leading to the virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz. According to Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov, the two leaders discussed the conflicts between the US and Iran and between Russia and Ukraine during an hour-long telephonic conversation.

Larjani mocks 'empty threats'

Dubai: A top Iranian security official has threatened US President Donald Trump in an online message.

Ali Larjani wrote the message on X Tuesday after Trump threatened to attack Iran "TWENTY TIMES HARDER" if Tehran stopped oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz. Larjani wrote: "The sacrificial nation of Iran doesn't fear your empty threats. Even those bigger than you couldn't eliminate Iran. Be careful not to get eliminated yourself."

Oz asylum for Iran's 5 women footballers

Sydney: Australian police extracted five Iranian women soccer players from the team's hotel before they were granted asylum, the interior minister said on Tuesday, as details of their escape from Iranian government minders emerged.

The five players, including team captain Zahra Ghanbari, sought protection after the team were branded "wartime traitors" for refusing to sing their national anthem before an Asian Cup match.

Iran launches attacks on Israel, Gulf countries

Dubai: Iran launched new attacks on Tuesday at Israel and Gulf Arab countries.

In Bahrain, authorities said an Iranian attack hit a residential building in the capital, Manama, killing a 29-year-old woman and wounding eight people. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed two drones over its oil-rich eastern region, and Kuwait's National Guard said it shot down six drones.

In the United Arab Emirates, firefighters battled a blaze in the industrial city of Ruwais — home to petrochemical plants — after an

Iranian drone strike. No injuries were reported.

Sirens also sounded in Jerusalem, and sounds of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv as Israel's defence systems worked to intercept barrages from Iran.

At the Pentagon, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth warned that Tuesday "will be yet again our most intense day of strikes inside Iran: The most fighters, the most bombers, the most strikes, intelligence more refined and better than ever."

-Agencies

China plans to strengthen roads along Indian border

BEIJING

China plans to further strengthen its strategic transport network in sensitive border regions with India over the next five years to fortify its remote frontiers during the 15th Five-Year Plan beginning this year.

One project involves building a 394 km highway linking the northern and southern sides of the rugged Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang, Uygur Autonomous Region, reported the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, quoting the draft report of the 15th Five-Year Plan.

The plan has been placed for approval of China's national legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), currently in session here.

The route will run parallel to a strategic road built through the disputed Aksai Chin area to improve military mobility following the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. Construction of the Dushanzi-Kuqa Highway in central Xinjiang began in September and is expected to finish by 2032.

The plan also proposes upgrading the three existing highways running into Tibet. The 15th Five-Year Plan, stated to be the most consequential for China's future placing more emphasis on AI and new productive forces like E-vehicles and batteries to boost the sagging economy, has already been approved by the ruling Communist Party.

The NPC, regarded as the rubber-stamp parliament, is set to approve it in its current session.

At UN, India slams Pak's Af airstrikes

UNITED NATIONS

India has condemned Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan as a "flagrant violation" of international law, saying it is "hypocritical" to invoke Islamic solidarity while carrying out attacks that have killed civilians during Ramadan.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan on Monday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni reiterated New Delhi's support for the UN Secretary-General's call for compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, and for ensuring the protection of civilians.

"India strongly condemns the airstrikes on Afghan territory which are flagrant violations of international law and the UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty."

"It is hypocritical to espouse high principles of international law and Islamic

'Wrongful detention'

Washington: The United States designated Afghanistan as a "State Sponsor of Wrongful Detention," with Secretary of State Marco Rubio accusing the Taliban of detaining Americans and other foreign nationals to extract concessions. Announcing the move, Rubio said Washington would not tolerate what he described as hostage diplomacy by the Taliban authorities.

solidarity on the one hand, while mercilessly carrying out air strikes during the holy month of Ramadan that have killed 185 innocent civilians as of March 6," he said.

According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), around 55 per cent of the 185 victims were women and children, and more than 100,000 people have been displaced due to the attacks.

UK condemns religious hatred after 'thugs' target Holi event

LONDON

The UK government has condemned any form of religious hatred as "abhorrent" after the targeting of a group of British Hindus gathered for a Holi celebration in northwest London was raised in Parliament.

Opposition Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman asked the Labour government to intervene to "cool community tensions" after a group of "thugs" disrupted an annual celebration of Holi at an old Civic Centre car park site in his constituency of Harrow last week.

Blackman, who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Hindus, called for an official statement in the House of Commons to reassure his constituents.

"This event has been run for many years. It is a joyful occasion, and more than a thousand people attended," Blackman told MPs.

Nepal's prospective PM Balen hopeful of boosting India ties

KATHMANDU

Rastriya Swatantra Party's (RSP) prime ministerial candidate Balendra Shah on Tuesday expressed confidence in further deepening "historic" Nepal-India ties and making them more "outcome-oriented".

The 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician is all set to become Nepal's first Madhesi prime minister and also the Himalayan nation's youngest elected executive head.

Shah made the remarks in a social media post while thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his wishes on the party's electoral success.

"Thank you for the good wishes honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji," he said in the post.

"I express my confidence that we will work together to further strengthen, deepen and make more outcome-oriented the historic, close, and multi-dimensional relations existing between Nepal and India in the coming days,"



he said. The RSP, formed in 2022, has won 125 of the 165 seats under direct voting in Nepal's parliamentary polls as vote counting under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system concluded on Tuesday, putting it in a position to form a majority government.

Modi on Monday congratulated RSP chief Rabi Lamichhane and senior party leader Shah for their election victory, and conveyed India's commitment to work with them for the mutual prosperity, progress and well-being of the two countries.

Shah defeated four-time

prime minister K P Sharma Oli by a huge margin in the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) stronghold Jhapa-5 constituency in Nepal.

In his social media post, Shah also extended congratulations to the Indian government and the Indian people for "successfully winning the World Cup title for two consecutive times."

India won the T20 World Cup on Sunday, defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final held in Ahmedabad, while also becoming the first side to win it on three occasions.

Toronto police probe reports of gunfire at US consulate

AP TORONTO

Canadian police are investigating reports that the United States consulate in downtown Toronto was hit by gunfire early on Tuesday morning.

No injuries have been reported.

Toronto police said Tuesday they responded to reports at around 5:30 am that someone shot a gun at the US consulate.

In a post on social media, police said they were at the scene near University Avenue and Queen Street West.

"Evidence of a firearm discharge has been located," police said in the post.

No suspect information has been released.

"The shooting that took place at the US consulate early this morning is an absolutely unacceptable act of violence and intimidation aimed at our American friends and neighbours," Ontario Premier Doug Ford said in a statement.

"Everyone at all levels of government and across Canada needs to make clear that there is zero tolerance for this sort of intimidating and dangerous behaviour." The reported shooting comes after two Toronto-area synagogues were struck by gunfire last weekend.

"The US consulate was shot at. This comes after shootings at synagogues," Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow said. "This cannot stand. Toronto's Jewish community has the right to practice their faith and culture and to live their day-to-day lives without fear, intimidation or violence. As we have seen too many times, antisemitic incidents spike when international incidents rise. It is never acceptable to target the Jewish community."

big bloom

Wildflowers spring to life at Death Valley

DEATH VALLEY

Death Valley, known as the driest place in North America, is teeming with life with a once-in-a-decade blossoming of wildflowers known as a superbloom, transforming a normally brown desert landscape into carpets of gold.

Wildflowers bloom across parts of southern California and Nevada to different degrees, usually every year. In some years, superblooms

are so vibrant they can be seen from space. But it's rare for Death Valley National Park, the hottest place on Earth, to burst with colour.

"This landscape that sometimes people think of as desolate or devoid of life is coming alive right now with this really beautiful palette of colours," said park ranger Matthew Lamar.

This year's bloom is the best the park has seen since 2016, thanks to steady rainfall and warm temperatures in the last six months,

Lamar said.

Death Valley received nearly a year's worth of rain since October and experienced the wettest November on record, according to the National Park Service, with 1.76 inches of rain, allowing long-dormant seeds buried in the soil to burst through the surface.

Known as the "desert sunflower," the desert gold flower blankets areas of the valley, with purple phacelia, brown-eyed primrose and the pink desert five-spot

sprinkled throughout.

Just north of the Furnace Creek Visitor Centre, Las Vegas resident Jackie Gilbert appreciated the contrast between the field of gold flowers and the mountains behind it and the blue sky above. She said the flowers' resilience is amazing.

"It's a good reminder that even in the face of all this adversity, they can still thrive," said Gilbert, who visited specifically to see the superbloom.



Briefs

DUBAI

Mandhana retains top spot in ODI list



Swashbuckling Indian batter **Smriti Mandhana** retained the top spot in the latest women's ODI batting ranking released here on Tuesday. Mandhana was joined by her captain Harmanpreet Kaur who remained static on eighth spot. However, Jemimah Rodrigues dropped a rung to 12th after India lost the three-match ODI series 0-3 against Australia. A host of New Zealand's best white-ball stars have been the big winners on the latest update. The White Ferns have been in superb form at home having opened up an unassailable 2-0 lead.

DUBAI

Arshdeep docked 15% match fee



India pacer **Arshdeep Singh** has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for throwing the ball "aggressively and inappropriately" at New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell during the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad. In addition, one demerit point has been added to Arshdeep's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period. Arshdeep was found to have breached Article 2.9 of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel.

AHMEDABAD

Titans appoint Hayden as batting coach



Former Australian opener **Matthew Hayden** has been named as the batting coach of Gujarat Titans for the upcoming IPL season, the franchise announced on Tuesday. A two-time ODI World Cup winner and one of the most dominant opening batters of his era, Hayden joins the Titans set-up with an illustrious

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BONDING | India batter gave the example of his bond with Abhishek Sharma

Kishan feels brotherhood overcomes competition

AHMEDABAD

Explosive India batter Ishan Kishan stated the strong bond among players including the likes of star opener Abhishek Sharma helped the team overcome internal competition and focus on collective success as the defending champions retained the ICC Men's T20 World Cup title at the Narendra Modi Stadium, here on Sunday.

Speaking alongside fellow opener Abhishek Sharma, Kishan emphasised that while competition for places exists in a talent-rich Indian side, the atmosphere in the dressing room encouraged players to support each other rather than see teammates as rivals.

"First of all, thank you very much. You have given us a very big gift," Kishan said while speaking to reporters after the triumph.

"Especially at this point in time when there is a lot of bad news in the world and whenever you read the newspaper you hear the same news again and again. So thank you so much. March 8, 2026 will be remembered for many years," he added.

When asked about the competition for the opening slots in the Indian team, Kishan admitted that the challenge of performing better than others existed earlier in his career but said his focus remained on improving his own game.

"To be very honest, this used to happen earlier. I will not deny it. There was competition but when I was playing domestic cricket the most important thing for me was to plan how I can be better and how I can perform better than



Indian cricketer Ishan Kishan arrives at Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport in Patna. ANI

others," Kishan said, revealing more details.

"Without any disrespect, I just focused on my performance. At the same time, when you see players like Abhishek, he has a very good nature. Even if he was not in a good phase of the tournament he was always looking forward to helping everyone."

Kishan highlighted Sharma's willingness to share ideas and help teammates even during challenging phases.

"Whatever batsman is batting, if he gets a point he shares it. That also shows the nature of a person. With that kind of person you cannot think of him as a competitor,"



Especially at this point in time when there is a lot of bad news in the world and whenever you read the newspaper you hear the same news again and again. March 8, 2026 will be remembered for many years

Ishan Kishan India batter

he said.

"At the same time, I feel the more Abhishek scores the better it is for the team. When he scores runs it benefits the entire India team. Rather than just looking for our own success, it should always be the team's victory."

Abhishek echoed Kishan's sentiments, saying the environment within the Indian squad promoted brotherhood rather than rivalry despite the intense competition for places.

"When we were playing together at Sunrisers Hyderabad, I think there was more brotherhood than competition," Sharma said.

"I never felt that if he scored

runs I did not score runs. Especially when you are playing a tournament like this, if India is on the winning side then it does not matter."

All praise for Sanju
Kishan said Samson's approach during the crucial matches demonstrated the importance of backing oneself.

"He just believed in himself and went for his shots when the ball was there," he said.

"That is the message to everyone. When you play for India you just have to go there and put the best show possible and try to make your team win." Kishan and Co did exactly that on March 8th.

ICC books commercial flights for stranded WI, SA players

The ICC's airline partner Emirates has been unable to operate flights because of shutdown of airspace

KOLKATA

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday booked separate commercial flights for players of West Indies and South Africa after their charter flight scheduled to depart from Kolkata was cancelled due to logistical issues.

According to sources, the cricket body arranged individual travel plans for the stranded players to ensure their safe return home.

"All the West Indies and South African players have been booked on individual commercial airline flights. Obviously, all cannot be booked on the same airline but the ICC has taken care of individual bookings. ICC chairman **Jay Shah** has personally spoken and assured players of a safe journey back home," an ICC source privy to the development told PTI on condition of anonymity.

"It must be mentioned that Darren Sammy is already on his way home, having left on Monday night," the source



It must be mentioned that Darren Sammy is already on his way home, having left on Monday night

ICC source

added. Both teams had played their final matches of the tournament in Kolkata but have been unable to leave the city due to international airspace restrictions across parts of West Asia following American and Israeli strikes

on Iran. West Indies played their Super Eight match on March 1, while South Africa featured in the semi-final on March 4 at the Eden Gardens.

The restrictions have forced several airlines to avoid routes through the Gulf region. The ICC's airline partner Emirates has been unable to operate flights because of the shutdown of Dubai airspace.

This disruption significantly complicated outbound travel from India towards the Caribbean and Africa, forcing cricket authorities to explore alternative routes and charter arrangements.

Earlier, both teams were scheduled to depart Kolkata on a shared charter flight to Johannesburg on Tuesday afternoon. From there, the West Indies contingent was expected to travel onward to Antigua, while the South African players were to disperse for their respective commitments. The flight arrangement was cancelled just hours before departure due to logistical issues, according to official of the Cricket Association of Bengal.

AHMEDABAD

Flamboyant India opener Abhishek Sharma credited team culture for India's momentous T20 World Cup victory beating New Zealand in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium, on Sunday.

Abhishek added that the team culture over the past one-and-a-half years had played a key role in creating that atmosphere.

"The environment in this team has been like this for the last one-and-a-half years. Even in the last series I never felt that someone was competing against someone else," he said.

"The entire team feels like a family. When you love each other so much and help each other, even when my runs are not coming it feels like the team's runs are being made. So I never felt any jealousy or competition."

The 25-year-old Abhishek, who was addressing the media after India's historic win with team-mate Ishan Kishan, also shared advice for youngsters facing difficult



India's Ishan Kishan, Arshdeep Singh and Abhishek Sharma dance in celebration with others. PTI

phases in their careers and said the people around a player could significantly influence how they overcome challenging periods.

"One thing matters a lot and that is your company," he said. "If people around you are trying to make you better and are happy to support you, that changes a lot."

"When my matches were not going well or I was not able to contribute, everyone still believed in me. The players, coaches and support



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Abhishek Sharma India opener

He added that helping teammates during difficult phases often strengthens the team.

"When you help others during their bad time, that thing comes back to you," Sharma said.

"At the end of the day we have to make sure everyone moves forward together. It is not just about one person getting credit. Everyone should work hard and achieve something together," Sharma elaborated.

SKY proud to join elite company of Rohit, Dhoni

Rohit Sharma had captained India at the 2024 T20 World Cup

MUMBAI

Two days after captaining India to a T20 World Cup title, **Suryakumar Yadav** said he is slowly taking in the enormity of the achievement that has placed him in the elite company of Kapil Dev, MS Dhoni and Rohit Sharma, who have also led or helped India lift major ICC trophies.

Soon after returning from Ahmedabad, where India won a record third T20 World Cup title on Sunday, Suryakumar reflected on the team's successful campaign and the road ahead.

"It feels good to win 2024 and 2026 back-to-back. It is a very special feeling. When we won in 2024, we thought it would be special to do this again at home in 2026," Suryakumar told PTI Videos at his residence.

"The next target is to win the Olympic gold in 2028. The team has good momentum. If India wins the T20 World Cup in the same year, it will be great." On being compared to Rohit Sharma and MS Dhoni, Suryakumar said joining their league is an honour.

"It feels good to join that elite company. I am slowly feeling it. It is a very special feeling to be talked about among such great people. I will try to do the same in the future and help India win more trophies," he said.

Rohit Sharma captained India when the team ended its ICC trophy drought with victory in Barbados in June 2024. Dhoni had earlier led India to triumphs in the 2007 T20 World Cup and the 2011 ODI World Cup. Kapil Dev's team had won the 1983 ODI World



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Suryakumar Yadav India skipper

Cup, which remains the country's first major global cricket title.

Speaking to reporters outside his residence, Suryakumar revealed that he had spoken to Dhoni ahead of the ICC event.

"I had met him before the tournament and he told me how to approach an ICC tournament. He said we have a good team and we just have to be courageous and we will definitely win. His reaction after the win was amazing," said the India captain.

The country is celebrating the historic triumph and the players also marked the victory with a long celebration after the final on Sunday.

Abhishek credits team culture for historic WC win

Star India opener stresses on importance of self-belief and confidence

workload management

Bumrah to prioritise ODIs as India eyes 2027 WC

NEW DELHI

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is likely to play more One-Day Internationals (ODIs) than Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is) over the next 18 months as the team prepares for the 2027 ODI World Cup.

According to sources, bilateral T20I series will be a lower priority during this period despite a packed international schedule and the Asian Games in Aichi-

Nagoya, Japan, where Suryakumar Yadav is expected to lead the Indian team.

It is learnt that Bumrah, like several senior Indian players, is keen on representing India at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will be played in the T20 format. However, the 32-year-old will focus primarily on the 50-over format as India builds towards the next ODI World Cup.

India's preparations for the global tournament are

expected to gather momentum after the Indian Premier League season, where Bumrah will lead the pace attack for Mumbai Indians.

Following the conclusion of the IPL, the national selection committee, the Centre of Excellence headed by VVS Laxman, and the team management led by head coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Shubman Gill are expected to draw up a blueprint for the next phase of the team's preparations.

A key element of that plan-

ning will be managing Bumrah's workload across formats.

It is understood that matches in the World Test Championship (WTC) cycle remain non-negotiable for the senior pacer.

As a result, his appearances in white-ball formats will need to be carefully managed.

Sources indicated that Bumrah's workload management could follow a pattern similar to the period between 2023 and 2026,

when he did not play a single ODI while focusing on other formats.

Since Nov 19, 2023, when India last played the ODI World Cup final against Australia, Bumrah has featured in 42 international matches, including 21 Tests and an equal number of T20Is.

Given his importance to India's success in global tournaments, the team management is expected to carefully prioritise the formats in which he plays.



India's Jasprit Bumrah holds World Cup trophy during celebrations. PTI