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

Briefs

AYODHYA

Ram Yantra signals BJP south push

The installation of the 'Shri Ram Yantra' at Ayodhya's Ram Mandir ahead of Navratri is being seen as carrying political undertones, signalling the BJP's outreach to Tamil Nadu before upcoming polls. Crafted in Tamil Nadu and installed during President Droupadi Murmu's March 19 visit, the yantra symbolises a north-south cultural link. Weighing 150 kg and gold-coated, it holds religious significance, but analysts view it as part of BJP's broader strategy to expand its base in the southern state.

PATNA

Successor must follow Nitish: Manjhi

HAM leader Jitan Ram Manjhi on Friday warned that any successor to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar would have to follow his path to survive politically. Speaking during Nitish's 'Samridhi Yatra' in Gaya, Manjhi said, "Whoever succeeds him will have to follow in his footsteps." Amid reports of Nitish moving to the Rajya Sabha, BJP and JD(U) are said to have agreed on a new government structure, with the BJP likely to take the chief minister's post.

PATNA

Successor must follow Nitish: Manjhi

Seat-sharing talks between the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Congress for the Assam Assembly polls are in the final stage, JMM leader Manoj Pandey said on Friday. He asserted that the party would contest the elections "under any circumstances" and may try to win some seats to finalise an alliance aimed at ousting the BJP. Congress, while open to an alliance, said seat allocation should reflect ground strength as both parties look to consolidate support among tribal communities.

JAIPUR

Raj rejects Punjab water royalty claim

The Rajasthan government has rejected Punjab's demand for Rs1.44 lakh crore as water royalty, calling it unconstitutional and legally untenable. Water Resources Minister Suresh Singh Rawat said past agreements on Ravi-Beas waters contain no provision for royalty, and inter-state river water is a national resource under Article 262. He added that allocations to Rajasthan are governed by Centre-supervised arrangements, dismissing Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann's claim based on a 1920 agreement as factually incorrect.

CHANDIGARH

Cong issues notice over cross-voting

The Congress on Friday issued a show-cause notice to a fifth MLA, Jarnail Singh, over alleged cross-voting in the March 16 Haryana Rajya Sabha polls. Four other MLAs had earlier been served notices for reportedly backing BJP-supported independent candidate Satish Nandal. The party has asked all five legislators to respond within seven days or face action. The move follows concerns over party discipline after voting irregularities in the closely contested election.

FUEL CRISIS | LPG a concern but supply steady; deliveries near booking levels

India is impacted but no LPG, NG, or crude shortage: Centre

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said the ongoing West Asia war is impacting India, even as it confirmed that all Indian vessels and sailors in the Gulf remain safe. It added that a Russian crude oil shipment is expected to arrive on March 21 and assured that supplies of LPG, natural gas and crude oil are being managed effectively.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum Sujata Sharma said at a press briefing that the conflict in West Asia is having an impact since "90% of our LPG import was from the Middle East and 47% of our LNG import was from Qatar".

She said the Centre's efforts to seek the support of states in the expansion of the piped natural gas network by offering additional 10 per cent commercial LPG to states and UTs has paid off as "approximately 1.25 lakh new domestic, commercial, and industrial connections have been provided in the last two weeks."

Sharma said while LPG situation "remains a cause for concern due to the ongoing war", no gas shortage has been reported at any distribution centre and the delivery of cylinders on Wednesday was 54.91 lakh as against 56 lakh bookings.



A man sits over an LPG cylinder amid rainfall, during an ongoing supply crisis, in Prayagraj on Friday -PTI

India scripting a decisive chapter: PM Modi

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India is scripting a decisive chapter in the global energy landscape, driven by a strong push towards electrification, clean energy and manufacturing. Prime Minister Modi shared an article written by Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy Shripad Yesso Naik, highlighting the rapid transformation of India's energy sector. Taking to social media platform X, Prime Minister emphasised that the country's energy transition is being guided by practical policy decisions and a clear focus on self-reliance. -IANS

IEA advocates work from home, reduced air travel

New Delhi: The International Energy Agency (IEA) has advocated a set of immediate demand-side measures, including work-from-home, lower speed limits, and reduced air travel to cushion the impact of a historic global oil supply shock triggered by disruptions in the Middle East.

Covid-like exodus being seen: Cong

NEW DELHI

The Congress has claimed that the ongoing shortage of LPG in many parts of the country is once again leading to an exodus from cities to villages of the kind witnessed during the Covid crisis.

The party on Friday put out images of people leaving while carrying their goods on their head due to both the "LPG crisis" and the "Corona crisis".

The Congress also shared a video of a news report in which people returning to their home states from Gujarat narrated how due to shortage of gas they were unable to cook and have been compelled to return to their villages. It showed one of them saying, "We've been eating just once a day for the last three days, so we're returning to our village".

The Congress said "this is the pain of the poor struggling with the LPG shortage, whom Narendra Modi has abandoned to their fate". The party alleged that "people are extremely distressed and unable to get gas, they are forced to abandon their work and livelihoods, returning hungry and thirsty from Gujarat to their homes."

The video also showed another person complaining that cooking has become prohibitively expensive with LPG cylinders being sold for as much as Rs 5,000. "At least we have wood and other fuel to cook in our villages," the unnamed person was shown saying.

Zomato fee up by 19%

New Delhi: Food delivery platform Zomato has increased platform fee by 19.2 per cent or Rs 2.40 per order, according to the latest billing details available on its app on Friday.

On a pre-GST basis, the platform fee now stands at Rs 14.90 per order, up from Rs 12.50 earlier.

The latest hike comes amid rising energy costs, which have increased operating expenses for restaurants and delivery partners. -IANS

C'garh: Tough law for exam malpractices

RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh assembly on Friday passed a bill to curb paper leaks and malpractices, proposing up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 1 crore to ensure transparency in public recruitment and professional entrance exams.

The Chhattisgarh (Lok Bharti evam Vyavsayik Parikshao me Anuchit Sadhano ki Roktham) Vidheyak 2026 (Chhattisgarh Public Recruitment and Professional Examinations Prevention of Unfair Means Bill), was passed after a detailed discussion in the House. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said the legislation sends a strong message against those involved in examination-related malpractices.

The CBI is investigating the alleged scam in the CGPSC recruitment unearthed during the previous Congress government.

"This law sends a strict message to the exam mafia. Whoever is involved in cheating or irregularities in examinations will face stringent action," Sai said.

Man dies after being trapped in hospital lift

Kolkata: A middle-aged man died after allegedly getting trapped in a lift at a state-run hospital in north Kolkata on Friday, an official said.

The man had come to R G Kar Medical College and Hospital with his four-year-old son for treatment, family members said. He was stuck inside a lift at the trauma care unit along with his wife after it suddenly malfunctioned. -PTI

Union minister Jayant Chaudhary gets death threat

New Delhi: Union minister Jayant Chaudhary allegedly received a death threat from an unknown caller, following which a police complaint was lodged, an official said on Friday. Police said the complaint was submitted on Chaudhary's behalf at Tughlak Road police station here and the matter is now under investigation. -PTI

Kerala can't just rely on remittances, lotteries, liquor: Tharoor

NEW DELHI

The LDF government in Kerala keeps the state reliant on remittances, lotteries, and liquor, a model that will not work anymore, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has said, as he battled for the UDF, which has been out of power in the state for a decade.

In an interview with PTI, Tharoor said the Congress-led UDF's plank for the upcoming polls in Kerala is much more positive than just the anti-incumbency element against the LDF's 10-year rule.

He accused the Left Democratic Front dispensation of mismanagement, saying the state government runs out of salaries by September and has to borrow money to pay. Asked whether the central plank of the Congress would be the anti-

POLL WATCH KERALA

incumbency against the Pinarayi Vijayan government, Tharoor said, "No, I think our plank is much more positive. It is about Kerala 2.0." "Yes, there is an anti-incumbency element. One of our key campaign slogans is - it's time for an accounting of everything that the government has done wrong."

"But in addition to that, there is a very positive message. For example, we delivered specific five guarantees from free travel for women in buses to improved pension payments, which is something that the Left front government has consistently failed to do," Tharoor told PTI.

People of Kerala ready for change: Rahul

New Delhi

People of Kerala are ready for change, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday, as he pitched for a UDF government in the state.

"Team UDF is Team Kerala," he said in a post on X.

"Each candidate reflects the voice, the aspirations and the trust of the people of Kerala. This is a collective of experienced leaders and young change-makers - a strong team of men and women who understand the intricacies of the constituencies they represent," Gandhi said in his post.

TMC releases 10-pts election manifesto

KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday unveiled its 10-point election manifesto, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee calling it her "10 protigya before the people of Bengal".

"If we make promises we keep them. I am placing my 10 commitments before the people of Bengal," Mamata said, adding that the pledges focus on expanding welfare schemes, increasing financial support, strengthening public healthcare, boosting industry, aiding farmers, enhancing skill development and modernising education.

POLL WATCH WEST BENGAL

She also alleged that the Centre had imposed an "undeclared President's rule" in the state. "People do not like BJP and BJP will not return to power at the Centre. Election Commission is working at the behest of the BJP. There is a limit to everything," she said.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari alleged Mamata had "violated" the Model Code of Conduct by using her official letterhead for political purposes.

Cong's Shama Mohamed flags low representation

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress national spokesperson Shama Mohamed on Friday expressed dissatisfaction over the low representation of women in the party's candidate list for the upcoming Kerala Assembly elections.

In a Facebook post, the AICC leader said it was disappointing that very few women have been given tickets.

"Rejected, but not defeated. I respectfully urge my leader, Rahul Gandhi ji, whom I admire and respect deeply, to support Congress women in Kerala," she said.

According to Mohamed, out of the 92 seats the Congress is contesting, only nine have been allotted to women.

She also pointed out that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, only one woman was given a ticket out of 16 seats.

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SIT finds DGP Rao videos authentic

BENGALURU

Director General of Police (DGP) K Ramachandra Rao has been found guilty by a SIT probing videos that allegedly show him in compromising positions with two women in his office.

Though the incident dates back to his tenure as IGP in the Belagavi division, the videos surfaced recently amid multiple controversies involving the officer.

An SIT led by ADGP Hitendra, constituted after the videos went viral, relied on a forensic science laboratory (FSL) report which ruled out any tampering. The report stated the footage was original and recorded on a mobile phone in 2016-17.

Investigations also found that the two women frequently visited the IGP office during Rao's tenure. A driver and other staff members reportedly identified them.

The SIT said one of the women may have recorded and circulated the videos. Both are currently absconding.

Rao had earlier dismissed the videos as AI-generated and alleged a conspiracy to malign him before going on leave. He was subsequently suspended, and a departmental inquiry has now been initiated by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DP&AR).

The findings could impact Rao's retirement benefits, with his superannuation due on May 31.

Rao had earlier courted controversy in May 2025 when his stepdaughter, Kannada actor Ranya Rao, was arrested by the DRI at Kempegowda International Airport for allegedly smuggling 14.5 kg of gold. Subsequent probes also flagged alleged financial irregularities linked to investments in the name of poultry businesses.

Citing HC order, police seal UNI's office

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Friday sealed news agency UNI's office here, citing a high court order, even as the media organisation termed the action an "unprecedented atrocity and attack on freedom of media".

The news agency also alleged that their female staff members were manhandled by the police team.

However, Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Sachin Sharma told PTI that legal process was followed and no wrongdoings happened as everything was videographed.

Earlier, Delhi High Court dismissed a petition filed by the news agency challenging the cancellation of its land allotment.

The case pertained to an order issued by the Land and Development Office (L&DO) under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, which had asked the news agency to vacate the premises.

ABVP raps Jinnah chapter in course

JAMMU

The ABVP on Friday staged protests at the University of Jammu, demanding the withdrawal of a chapter on former Pakistan president Muhammad Ali Jinnah included in the revised post-graduate political science syllabus under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The university, however, maintained that the chapter on Jinnah is part of academic curricula in several universities across India and aligns with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines.

Led by ABVP Jammu and Kashmir secretary Sannak Shrivats, activists assembled on the university campus and raised slogans against the administration, seeking immediate removal of the chapter from the "Modern Indian political thought" module under the paper "Minorities and the Nation".

Woman stabbed to death by stalker for refusing his advances

Bengaluru: A 34-year-old married woman was stabbed to death here allegedly by a man who had been stalking her after she repeatedly refused his advances, police said on Friday.

The victim, Firdos Banu, a resident of Gangondanahalli, worked as a house help, they said.

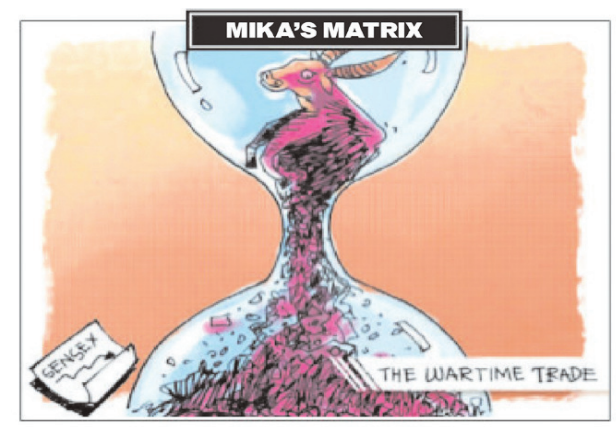
The accused, identified as Hafiz, a mechanic, has been arrested in connection with the incident, which took place on the afternoon of March 19.

Hippo mauls vet at Shivamogga zoo

BENGALURU

A young veterinary doctor was mauled to death by a hippopotamus at Thyavarekoppa near Shivamogga, about 300 km from Bengaluru. The deceased has been identified as Dr Sameeksha Reddy, who had recently joined the zoo on a contract basis.

The incident occurred around 11.30 pm when she was returning to the clinic after treating birds in the aviary. While passing the hippopotamus enclosure, she reportedly stopped to click a photograph when the animal suddenly attacked her. She was rushed to a Shivamogga hospital but succumbed to her injuries around 6.30 am.



7-Year-Old Aarav Sai Brings Glory to Prayagraj, Secures First Place

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | The All-India Music and Dance Competition, organized by the Prayag Sangeet Samiti, concluded on a grand note this year, marking the occasion of its centenary year. Talented artists from across the country delivered stellar performances, making the event truly memorable. In this prestigious competition, Master Aarav Sai captivated the hearts of both the judges and the audience with his melodious and impressive singing. On the strength of his magnificent performance, he secured the first position in the vocal category, thereby bringing glory to the city of Prayagraj. Participants enthusiastically took part in various disciplines of music and dance featured in the program. While com-



mending the participants, the panel of judges remarked that such events provide new direction and vitality to Indian music and culture. This special centenary celebration not only provided a platform for budding talents

but also proved to be an unforgettable experience for art enthusiasts. A wave of joy has swept through Master Aarav Sai's family, mentors, and the local community following this remarkable achievement.

102 Complaints Received on 'Samadhan Diwas'; 8 Resolved on the Spot; Action Directed Against Negligence



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | During the 'Sampurna Samadhan Diwas' (Complete Resolution Day) organized on Monday at the Sadar Tehsil, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma adopted a strict stance regarding negligence in the redressal of public grievances, directing officials to ensure time-bound and high-quality resolutions. He explicitly stated that no form of apathy in resolving complaints would be tolerated. While listening to the grievances of petitioners who had arrived for the resolution session, the District Magistrate directed officials from the Revenue, Police, and other departments to conduct on-the-ground investigations into all matters and resolve them within the stipulated timeframe. Furthermore, he emphasized the need to ensure the satisfaction of complainants by actively seeking their feedback. During the event, a serious complaint came to light wherein Abu Huzaifa, a resident of Hatwa village, alleged that a *Lekhpal* (revenue official) had

demanding and accepted ₹5 lakh under the pretext of conducting a land survey and facilitating the eviction of encroachers. Responding to this, the District Magistrate entrusted the investigation of the matter to Additional District Magistrate (City) Satyam Mishra and issued orders for the immediate suspension of the concerned *Lekhpal*. A total of 102 complaints were registered during the 'Samadhan Diwas,' comprising 37 complaints related to the Revenue Department, 19 to the Municipal Corporation, 14 to the Police Department, and 32 to other departments. Of these, 8 cases were resolved on the spot, while the remaining cases were forwarded to the respective departments with instructions to ensure their resolution within the prescribed timeframe. Present on this occasion were DCP (City) Manish Kumar Shandilya, Additional District Magistrate (City) Satyam Mishra, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Sadar) Abhishek Singh, and Tehsildar Anil Pathak, alongside officials from various other departments.

Kotwali Police Apprehend Youth with Stolen Goods; Mobile Phone and Wallet Recovered



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | Acting on a case of theft, the Kotwali Police have arrested an accused individual and recovered a stolen mobile phone, a wallet, and other important documents from his possession. According to the police, acting under Case No. 30/2026 registered at the Kotwali Police Station, the accused was arrested on Monday based on a tip-off from an informant. The arrest took place near the GIC School, under the Rambagh Bridge. The arrested accused has been identified as Aditya Singh (20), a resident of Gorakhpur. During a search, a stolen mobile phone and a wallet were recovered from the accused. Inside the wallet, police found Union Bank and Bank of Baroda debit cards, an Aadhaar card, a driving license, a PAN card, a watch, a charger, earbuds, and a Union Bank chequebook. The police stated that, based on the arrest and the recoveries made, relevant sections of the law applicable to the case have been enhanced. Further legal action is being initiated against the accused. Several officers and personnel of the Kotwali Police Station team played a pivotal role in this operation; their vigilance proved instrumental in successfully apprehending the accused.

34 Applications Resolved on 'Sampurna Samadhan Diwas'

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur: To facilitate the speedy resolution of public grievances, the 'Sampurna Samadhan Diwas' (Complete Resolution Day) was held in the Tehsil Auditorium at Tehsil Saidpur, presided over by Avinash Kumar. During the event, 70 complaints/applications were received, out of which 06 were resolved on the spot. According to reports from all seven tehsils regarding the prompt resolution of public issues, a total of 241 complaints/applications were received across the district during the Sampurna Samadhan Diwas, with 34 of these being resolved on the



spot. Continuing this process, at Tehsil Zamania—presided over by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM)—14 complaints/applications were received, 02 of which were resolved on the spot. At Tehsil Kasimabad, under the chairmanship of the SDM, 14 complaints/applications were received, with 05 resolved on the spot.

At Sevrai Tehsil, presided over by the SDM, 23 complaints/applications were received, and 03 were resolved on the spot. At Tehsil Jakhania, under the chairmanship of the SDM, 29 complaints/applications were received, with 02 resolved on the spot. At Tehsil Sadar, presided over by the SDM, 35 complaints/applications

were received, 06 of which were resolved on the spot; similarly, at Tehsil Mohammadabad, under the chairmanship of the SDM, 56 complaints/applications were received, with 10 resolved on the spot. On the occasion of Sampurna Samadhan Diwas, the District Magistrate listened attentively to the grievances of the general public, resolving some complaints on the spot. The remaining complaints were forwarded to the concerned officials, who were directed to ensure their resolution in a time-bound and high-quality manner. Furthermore, officials and personnel from the Police and Revenue Departments

were instructed that land disputes and interpersonal conflicts often stem from the same underlying issues; therefore, officials from both the Revenue and Police Departments must establish mutual coordination to ensure the effective resolution of such disputes. All Lekhpals of the Tehsil were directed to ensure that complainants are not harassed regarding minor issues that can be resolved immediately. Present on this occasion were Chief Development Officer Santosh Kumar Vaishya, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Saidpur), Tehsildar (Saidpur), Circle Officer (Saidpur), and all district-level officials.

Major Police Action: Two Smugglers Arrested with 3 Cattle and 2 Pickup Vehicles

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur: The police force of the Zamania Police Station in the district has arrested two accused individuals, seizing 03 head of cattle and 02 pickup vehicles in the process. As part of the ongoing campaign against crime and criminals, on March 23, 2026, Sub-Inspector Ashwani Pratap Singh—along with his accompanying team—was conducting a routine check near the Hetimpur culvert. Acting on a specific tip-off from a confidential informant, the



team proceeded to the vicinity of the Bahadurpur culvert, where they arrested two accused individuals: 1. Manish Kumar (son of Mangru Kumar) and 2. Amit Yadav (son of Ramashray Yadav). The arrests were made while the accused were

in possession of 03 head of cattle and 02 pickup vehicles. In connection with this incident, Case Crime No. 80/2026 has been registered at the local police station under Sections 3/5A/8 of the Cow Slaughter Prevention Act and Section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Further legal proceedings against the arrested accused are currently underway. The police team responsible for the arrests included Sub-Inspector Ashwani Pratap Singh and his accompanying personnel.

UPSIDC approves 8 new Projects, 800 crore investment proposed

Lucknow

Under the leadership of CM Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh government is rapidly moving forward towards making the state A \$1 trillion economy. In this direction, Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) has taken a significant step to strengthen the logistics and warehousing sector by approving 8 new Projects, with an Estimated investment of around 800 Crore. Under the Uttar Pradesh Warehousing and Logistics Policy-2022, investors are being encouraged to set up logistics and storage units on Private land through incentives, financial assistance and tax exemptions. As a result of this Policy, investor confidence is steadily increasing. Newly approved Projects

include 5 Silos, 2 warehousing units and 1 logistics Project, which will be established in districts such as Unnao, Auraiya, Balrampur, Shravasti, Sultanpur, Lucknow, Gautam Buddha Nagar and Hapur. These Projects will be developed across approximately 110 acres, strengthening the State agricultural and industrial supply Chain. With these 8 new approvals, UPSIDA has now approved a total of 61 Projects under the Warehousing and Logistics Policy-2022 and PIP Policy. These Projects will be developed over around 810 acres, with a proposed investment exceeding 12,900 crore.

They will enhance safe storage capacity for food grains, Provide better storage and logistics facilities to farmers and accelerate the development of multi-modal logistics hubs,

warehouse clusters and modern distribution centers. Additionally, they will generate large-scale employment opportunities. State government aims to Position Uttar Pradesh as a leading logistics hub in the country. To achieve this, Priority is being given to the development of multi-modal logistics hubs, Cold Chains, Silos and distribution centers. Efforts are also being made to continuously improve the ease of doing business to attract more Investors.

The authority is committed to ensuring that all incentives under the Policy are delivered to investors in a simple, transparent and time-bound manner. Government is not only focused on attracting investments but also actively ensuring their implementation on the Ground.

Day Six of NSS Camp Proves Special: Sanitation Drive, Community Cooking, and Intellectual Sessions Boost Student Enthusiasm



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur. The sixth day of the seven-day special camp organized by the National Service Scheme (NSS) at the Shaheed Smarak Government College—located in the Mohammadabad region of the district—concluded with immense success, marked by a variety of activities and inspiring events. Throughout the day, the volunteers presented an exemplary demonstration of service, discipline, and social responsibility. The day commenced with a comprehensive sanitation drive within the college campus. Students participated in the cleaning drive with complete dedication and energy, practically embodying the message that "Cleanliness is Service"

(*Swachhata Hi Seva*). The objective of this initiative was not only to keep the campus clean but also to spread awareness regarding cleanliness within society. Following this, the volunteers participating in the camp formed groups to collectively prepare a community meal. This activity served to strengthen the spirit of cooperation, coordination, and teamwork among the students. This collaborative process of working together provided them with an opportunity to learn essential values pertinent to practical life. An intellectual session held during the camp emerged as a special highlight of the day. Mr. Sudhakar Pandey, the Circle Officer (CO) of Mohammadabad, participated in this session as the Chief Guest. In his address, he shed light in detail on



the significance of social service, personality development, skill enhancement, and the necessity of acquiring modern technical knowledge for the volunteers. He inspired the youth to consolidate their foundational knowledge and to embrace discipline in their lives. The program was presided over by the college Principal, Dr. Arun Kumar. Sharing his views, he stated that the National Service Scheme is not merely a program, but a powerful initiative for nation-building. He encouraged the students to fulfill their duties toward society by adopting the principle of "Not Me, But You." On this occasion, the Road Safety Nodal Officer, Dr. Avneesh Kumar Singh, administered a road safety pledge to the students and appealed to them to

remain vigilant regarding the observance of traffic rules. He emphasized that awareness and responsibility are absolutely essential for a safe life. At the conclusion of the program, the Senior Program Officer, Dr. Aditya Kumar, expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest and other dignitaries present. The presence of media representative Pradeep Kumar Pandey during the intellectual session further enhanced the dignity of the program. The proceedings were skillfully anchored by Dr. Madhavam Singh. Overall, the sixth day of the camp proved to be a powerful confluence of education, service, and social concerns, which not only sensitized the volunteers but also inspired them to become responsible citizens.

Cold Storage Collapses Following Ammonia Gas Tank Explosion; Four Dead, Compensation Announced



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | A cold storage facility belonging to SP leader and former minister Ansar Ahmed—located on the Prayagraj-Lucknow Highway in Chandapur, within the Phaphamau area—collapsed with a loud explosion. The accident occurred due to the rupture of an ammonia gas tank. More than eighteen laborers were trapped beneath the debris. Rescue efforts were launched immediately to extract everyone. Reports indicate that four laborers have died in the incident, while the condition of six others is described as critical. Ambulances from across the district have been mobilized for relief and rescue operations. Teams from the NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) and SDRF (State Disaster Response Force) are actively engaged in the rescue operation.



Consequently, vehicular traffic on the Lucknow Highway at Malak Harhar has come to a complete standstill. District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar, and numerous other officials have arrived at the scene. Over eighteen people were buried under the rubble. The injured have been extracted and transported via ambulance to SRN Hospital. Police forces from several stations, including Phaphamau and surrounding areas, have reached the site. It is reported that the condition of four laborers rescued from the scene remains critical. NDRF and SDRF teams have commenced rescue operations at the site. More than a dozen JCB excavators are being utilized to clear the debris and search for those still trapped underneath. By 4:15 PM, three bodies had been recovered. All the laborers are reported to hail from the Saharsa district of Bihar. One of the deceased has been identified as Jyotish, a native of Saharsa.

Ambulances from Across the District Rush to Cold Storage Accident Site; Relief and Rescue Operations Intensified

Prayagraj | Following the accident at the cold storage facility, the administration immediately ramped up relief and rescue operations, summoning ambulances from across the district to the scene. Teams from the Health Department remained active to ensure that the injured were transported to hospitals as quickly as possible. Upon receiving news of the incident, ambulances from various areas converged on the accident site; the injured were extricated and admitted to nearby hospitals. Amidst the chaos prevailing at the scene, teams from the police and the administration conducted relief operations in an organized and systematic manner. According to officials, the top priority was the safe extraction of the injured and providing them with timely medical treatment. To this end,



adequate arrangements for ambulances were made to ensure that no injured person had to wait for medical attention. Meanwhile, police, health department personnel, and administrative officials continue to maintain constant vigilance at the site. Relief and rescue operations continued late into the night, as efforts remain underway to bring the situation completely under control.

DM Manish Kumar Verma Speaks

Regarding the cold storage accident, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma has stated that the actual causes of the incident will only be ascertained after the investigation report is received. Preliminary information suggests the possibility that the explosion was triggered by gas, leading to the subsequent collapse of the wall. The District Magistrate informed that a committee, headed by the ADM (Finance), has been constituted to investigate the matter; this committee is



expected to submit its report within 24 to 48 hours. The precise cause of the accident will become clear—and further action will be

initiated—solely on the basis of this report. He further stated that, so far, four people have lost their lives in the accident, while 12 injured individuals are currently undergoing treatment in the hospital. The administration is reaching out to the families of the deceased, and the process of providing them with every possible assistance is currently underway. Relief and rescue operations are continuing ceaselessly at the accident site.

The administration and relevant teams are keeping a close watch on the situation to ensure that they are prepared to handle any potential emergency.

Lakhs: CM Yogi Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath described the horrific accident at the Prayagraj cold storage facility as "heart-wrenching" and expressed his

deepest condolences to the bereaved families. The Chief Minister announced financial assistance of 2 lakh each for the families of the deceased, directed that the injured receive immedi-

ate and superior medical treatment, and issued necessary instructions to the district administration. He also offered prayers for the salvation of the departed souls.

Cabinet Minister Sanjay Nishad Sits on Dharna on National Highway Demanding Removal of Mosque in Shringverpur Declares mosque an illegal structure; expresses concern over threat to the existence of Nishadraj Fort; Delhi-Kolkata Highway remains blocked for hours

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Shringverpur Dham. Dr. Sanjay Nishad—a Cabinet Minister in the Uttar Pradesh government and the National President of the Nishad Party—staged a sit-in protest (dharna) on Monday, blocking traffic on the Delhi-Kolkata Highway located at Shringverpur Dham. The Minister's sudden protest caused a stir among administrative officials. He was joined by a large number of Nishad Party workers and office-bearers, resulting in long queues of vehicles forming on both sides of the road. Consequently, the entire traffic system ground to a complete halt. The demand of Cabinet Minister Dr. Sanjay Nishad, who was leading the protest, was that the mosque situ-

ated near the temple in Shringverpur Dham be removed with immediate effect. He alleged that the structure had been constructed illegally and that its presence posed a threat to the existence of the historic fort of Nishadraj. Dr. Nishad stated that this site serves as a center of faith for millions of people. He asserted that no form of illegal encroachment would be tolerated at this location. During the protest, Dr. Sanjay Nishad not only demanded the removal of the mosque but also expressed his displeasure regarding illegal mining and other encroachments taking place within Shringverpur Dham. He alleged that land mafias and criminal elements were causing damage to this historical heritage site. Addressing the



party workers, he made it clear that he would not back down until he received assurances of concrete

action. Upon receiving news that the Minister had begun a sit-in protest, a heavy police force and administra-

tion officials rushed to the scene. Due to the blockade on the highway, long queues of vehicles stretched out on both sides, causing significant inconvenience to travelers. Officials made extensive efforts to persuade and pacify Dr. Sanjay Nishad. After hours of negotiations and persuasion, the Cabinet Minister finally called off the protest around 2:00 PM. Inset:- Ritual Worship at Nishadraj Fort; Grand Procession Taken Out Shringverpur Dham. Every year, on behalf of the Nishad Party, Dr. Sanjay Nishad organizes a grand event to mark the birth anniversary of King Nishadraj Guh—the ruler of Shringverpur Dham. On this auspicious occasion, members of the community from across the state gather here. Addressing the large crowd that

had assembled once again this year, he reiterated his pledge to safeguard the interests and cultural heritage of the community. Earlier in the day, he had arrived at the Dham as early as 8:00 AM. He inaugurated the program by performing elaborate rituals and worship at the Nishad Fort, accompanied by his family members and party workers. Dr. Sanjay Nishad then paid his obeisance at the temple of Nishadraj Guh, situated at Shriram Ghat, before leading a grand procession. Throughout the event, the atmosphere resonated with enthusiastic slogans and cheers raised by the party supporters. Meanwhile, for security purposes, a heavy contingent of police and PAC personnel had been deployed and remained on high alert.

Editorial

Iran and Israel weren't always enemies. In fact, they were allies

The war in the Gulf has entered its fourth week today. But the forces that are fighting each other were not always in conflict, although it is alluring to think of the current war as inescapable between irreconcilable national projects. All geopolitics is complex, and its history is heart-breaking. Regions exist in a world created by their inherited state of brokenness, the trauma of dealing with violence and the undying desire to strive for a higher ideal while protecting their interests. Looking back at history—if you still read books—you can almost feel the Zeitgeist staring back at you. Step back, for once, from the Strait of Hormuz tensions, Iran's drone strikes on Gulf infrastructure, the parallel war near Israel's border with Lebanon, a powerful yet unpredictable US and the whole world stressed about energy prices. There was a time, not long ago, when Iran and Israel were partners, finding mutual benefit in cooperation. Israel even helped source American defence equipment for Iran, who learnt from Tel Aviv about drones against Soviet air defences in Syria. The story that follows now seems to belong to another universe, but I'll unwind it, showing how cooperation, competition, rivalry, national interest, ideology, and oil have rewritten the texture of war—all emanating from one Original Sin—the promise of Palestinian statehood. No, don't give up on it right away. Palestine might never have a state, yet its quest has been used, abused and exploited by everyone in the Gulf and the Levant—Arab monarchies, to the Baathists, to the Muslim Brotherhood—and by Israel itself. We need a starting point to come back to the present. Let's begin with the 1970s. In the 1970s, the world looked different. Mossad (and the West) trained SAVAK (Shah's feared intelligence service). In Tehran, lived the largest Jewish community in the Middle East. Jews looked upon the Persian kings as saviours and Iran—the only major non-Arab state in the Middle East—had close ties with the US, something like today's strategic partnerships. Then came the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the Shah fled. Fifty-two Americans were held hostage for 444 days. You'd think that ended Iran-Israel ties. Reasonable guess—but wrong. Part of the reason was back-channel negotiations. The Ronald Reagan administration tried to get their hostages in lieu of weapons (sourced from Civil wars in Nicaragua) to the Ayatollahs—later exposed as the Iran-Contra Affair—a fascinating story of intelligence services "sleeping with your enemy". Then came the eight-year Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, where American and Israeli interests started to diverge. Saddam Hussein, Ba'athist, ambitious, expansionist and hostile to Israel, dominated the Arab world. Israel saw him as a new Arab leader, a new Nasser in the making and decided to back Iran to counter Iraq. And soon, the best strategy was to prolong the Iran-Iraq war. Here, the US-Israeli approach to the Iran-Iraq war sees a further drift. The US wanted the hostages back and then to see the Ayatollah regime weakened. But Israel wanted a strong enough Iran to contain Saddam. That was the era before Ayatollahs chanted death to Israel, even when they were chanting death to America. Israel supplied Iranians spare parts for Iran's 200 F-4 Phantom fleet, acquired during the West-friendly regime of the Shah and even sent their own Phantom fleet engineers to keep the Iranian fleet flying. Meanwhile, the Gulf Monarchies backed Saddam against Shia Iran, in line with the USA. And the Palestinian cause? Largely sidelined. Run down by the long asymmetrical war—a drain on both sides, more so on Iran—the Iranians take up the Palestinian question as a tool of influence across local populations—both Shia and Sunni—in the Gulf and Levant.



The Inside Story Of The Decline Of Bengal

Half a century ago, far removed from the cacophony of today's reality, Calcutta - now Kolkata - glistened with the promise of progress and prosperity. It stood as an emblem of industrial might, a city that whispered to the ambitions of a newly independent nation. A journey from Asansol-Burnpur, twin cities where I spent my school days, southwards to Calcutta, was a route that spoke volumes about the industrial trajectory. The ancient national highway, the Grand Trunk Road, besides which my school, St Patrick's, as well as my home, lay, wove through booming towns where manufacturing giants thrived-



Barakar, Kumardhubi, Kulti, Burnpur, Asansol, Raniganj, Durgapur—each a cog in the vast ecosystem of Bengal's surging economy. From my home, which lay at the border between Asansol and Burnpur, I could observe the glow of the Indian Iron and Steel

Company (IISCO) factory, first incorporated in 1918. Its precursor was Bengal Iron Works Company, established in 1875, at Barakar, which later became part of IISCO. I grew up in an atmosphere rich with the scent of melting iron and the promise of intricately

forged steel. The foundries and factories that lined our path to the Burnpur Club, where I participated in debating competitions, were more than mere brick and mortar; they were the lifeblood of a society intertwined with ambition and enterprise. The Durand Institute, walking distance from my school, where I learnt to appreciate art, culture, music and dance, combined the best of cosmopolitan Anglo-Indian tradition with that of Rabindra Sangeet. As you drive eastward, the landscape transformed into a montage of colliery towns like Nirsra, Sitarampur, Jamuria, Pandaveswar, Chinakuri, and Raniganj, once basking in the

BJP has an edge over Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. Here are reasons

Mamata Banerjee's most important strength is her street-fighting ability, not governance. She won West Bengal for the first time in 2011 by beating the Left Front, which earlier ruled the streets, by repeated physical confrontations with the law and order machinery and the Left's musclemen. As a woman, the Left Front found it difficult to take her on, given her willingness to risk life and limb on the streets, thus giving her a decisive psychological advantage in 2011 after several earlier electoral failures. In 2021, the BJP made the fatal mistake of targeting her personally and bringing in Hindi-belt bravado, thus giving her an easy victory based on a massive minority vote (close to 30 percent of the electorate) and a substantial Hindu vote that did not consolidate behind her challenger. This time it could be different. Not that the BJP is home and dry – no such luck – but it is certainly building up momentum in its favour. One of the early pre-poll surveys, by IANS-Matrise, gives Mamata's Trinamool Congress a clear win, with 155-170 seats in a 294-member West Bengal assembly. The BJP comes second with 100-115. In 2021 the BJP won only 77 seats. The other parties drew a near blank. What is different this time? Many things. First, in what would be called unforced errors in tennis, Mamata Banerjee has been fighting the wrong battle on the streets: the Election Commission. Whether it is the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which went without incident in many states, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Bihar, or the



enforcement directorate's raid on I-PAC (the Indian Political Action Committee which works with the Trinamool Congress on election strategy), Didi went for bare-knuckle fights. In the midst of the raid she barged in and took away some laptops which could have contained important data. Now, the ED is livid, and seeking the Supreme Court's help to restrain the West Bengal Chief Minister. The court is not amused with her antics. Nor was it happy when she wore her legal hat to appear in a case involving SIR, which the Supreme Court has allowed with some safeguards. The unforced error is this: Mamata Banerjee has spent most of the last few months fighting the Election Commission (her party has sought to impeach the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar), not the BJP. Regardless of whether you think the Commission has been fair to all parties or not, this is not the fight she has to win. She has wasted time that she could have usefully spent wooing her electorate. She may be facing anti-incumbency after 15 years of uninterrupted rule during which West Bengal had done little to make itself attractive to investors who may bring

jobs. Second, unlike the last time, the BJP has not made any unforced error so far. It has chosen to attack the Trinamool's rule, which includes the extortion-based political system that infuriates most ordinary Bengalis. The pejorative term used to describe the Trinamool's rule is "tolamul", which is a reference to the bribery-extortion structure that rhymes with "Trinamool". Third, instead of trying to attack Mamata personally, the BJP this time is trying to push her into a corner by fielding its strongest candidate, Suwendu Adhikari, who beat Mamata in his home constituency of Nandigram in 2021. This time he is challenging her in her home base of Bhabanipur in Kolkata. This is the playbook started by Arvind Kejriwal, who challenged Sheila Dikshit in her home constituency of New Delhi and defeated her in 2015. The BJP did the same to him 10 years later, when it fielded its strongest candidate against Kejriwal, Parvesh

Verma, and defeated him. The BJP is fielding Suwendu from Bhabanipur in order to force her to spend more time defending her own seat when she could be campaigning more for her candidates elsewhere. Suwendu is also fighting from Nandigram, and if he wins from anywhere, and if the BJP crosses the half-way mark, he will be a shoo-in for Chief Ministership. Fourth, Adhikari's candidature in the heart of Kolkata, which is Trinamool's fortress, sends a strong message to the voters, especially the "bhadralok", that they now have a viable option to Trinamool. If the BJP manages to breach the fortress, it will be able to carry the momentum to all the neighbouring areas of north and south 24-Parganas. Over 47,000 names have been deleted in Bhabanipur after the SIR exercise, and while some of them may be restored after the appeal process, the fact that many voters will have to wait till the last minute to get their names in sends its own subtle message: Mamata could not halt the process, and her writ may not run in future. Didi does have the clout she did in 2021. Fifth, the momentum is now with the BJP, not the Trinamool. The Matrise-IANS poll, the only one currently available, gives 41-43 percent vote share to the BJP and 43-45 for Trinamool, with others getting 13-15 percent. In a tight race, where the final fight becomes a straight one

between the two main contestants, the BJP would require a swing of only 2-3 percent from the "others" or even the Trinamool to cross the half-way mark. Since the fully committed vote can be assumed to be the minority vote and a segment of the Hindu vote, this battle will be won or lost among Hindus: the question is how much Mamata can retain of the Hindu vote. If 45 percent of the 70 percent non-minority vote swings to the BJP, Trinamool is toast. The West Bengal vote most closely resembles the 2004 general election, where the NDA led the opinion polls (but was slipping slowly) all the way to the election dates, but still managed to lose the crucial undecided vote. Trinamool is in just that situation, with Didi's vote share probably overstated due to the fear factor ruling voters who may not want to openly say they are voting for the BJP. Sixth, the Election Commission, which opted for a multi-phase poll in 2021, is now wiser after seeing the violence and intimidation that accompanied voting and results. It has realised that the tuggish elements linked to the Trinamool will get less of a chance to move freely between phases and intimidate more voters. With only two phases, 23 and 29 April this time, and with 2,300 central armed police personnel being deployed, this time the voter knows that the intimidation tactics will be kept at bay. Last, the voter has learnt that Mamata Didi's histrionics have not cut any ice with the Election Commission, and more specifically with the Supreme Court.

If the BJP manages to breach the fortress, it will be able to carry the momentum to all the neighbouring areas of north and south 24-Parganas

The Russia-China Axis That Has Made Iran So Difficult For Trump

Earlier this month, Donald Trump described the United States and Israel's ongoing war with Iran as a "little excursion" that he said would finish pretty quickly. "We took a little excursion because we felt we had to do that to get rid of some evil," Trump told Republican lawmakers in Florida. But the war has already gone into its third week, with Iran appearing to be setting its tone, course and even duration. There is no doubt that Iran has suffered significant losses. Its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was assassinated, along with over 40 senior officials, on the first day of the war. The National Security



Advisor, Ali Larjani, was killed on Monday, and the Intelligence Minister, Ismail Khatib, a day later, in Israel's policy of decapitating Iran's regime with the aim of inciting an uprising. Khamenei's son and the new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba, has not been seen in public since his appointment amid reports that he has been seriously injured. Relentless American and Israeli attacks have destroyed a large part, if not most, of Iran's military infrastructure.

Israel has also inflicted major damage on Iran's oil and gas facilities in an attempt to cripple its economy. But these setbacks have not deterred Iran, which has escalated the war with attacks not only on Israel and US diplomatic and military installations but also on civilian targets across the Gulf, including airports, hotels, and energy infrastructure. Trump now says he is surprised by Iran's retaliation, despite his military commanders' warning him beforehand of the exact scenario. On Tuesday, Trump's top counterterrorism official, Joe Kent, resigned over the war, urging the president to "reverse course."

India is successfully walking West Asia tightrope. Modi has skilfully avoided taking sides

The Strait of Hormuz, named after the Zoroastrian God Ahura Mazda, or Hormizd, has been a choke point in the current war against Iran. It has been a crucial link between India and Iran ever since a few thousand Parsis left Iran some 1,200 years ago with sacred ash from the Fire Temple. This was probably India's first diplomatic outreach centuries ago. And now, in the middle of an impasse, the Strait of Hormuz was once again opened for Indian oil tankers to pass through. The greatest victory is that which is won without fighting a war, it is said. India probably did just that, managing a significant diplomatic tightrope. The West Asia conflict is a complex one. Though not a party to it directly, taking sides would have not only been rash but also detrimental to a policy structure that was built and nurtured through years of hard work and diplomatic finesse. In spite of changes in governments, New Delhi's core foreign policy formulations on West Asia have not witnessed any major shift. While India supported the Palestinian cause and favoured a negotiated settlement, it also kept upgrading its security ties with Israel. Israel is one of India's major defence partners, but

the oil-rich Arab states continue to be a major source of energy and employment for the Indian diaspora. Without getting into the minefield of Shia-Sunni conflict, India engaged with Iran on port and connectivity projects by getting the Chabahar project and a window to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The US-Israel war on Iran and the counterattacks by Tehran have upset the delicate diplomatic matrix. It is this delicate balance that India has reconstructed through deft diplomatic manoeuvres and back channel talks. Besides diplomatic parleys, two more factors could have played a significant role in turning the situation in India's favour, albeit temporarily. New Delhi has taken into consideration certain changes that have occurred in the region after the war began. One is that the prospects of regime change appear to be bleak, even assuming that it was the primary objective of America and Israel. The elimination of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has not resulted in a power vacuum, leading to the sudden and total collapse of the regime in Tehran. Mojtaba Khamenei's appointment as Iran's new Supreme Leader, an

unprecedented move considering that this is the first time in the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 revolution that the power has passed on from father to son, has stabilised the regime. No questions about Mojtaba's rank in the religious order, his knowledge of the scriptures, or his lack of political and administrative experience have been raised. The regime in Tehran is fighting an existential battle. To its relief, the street protests are off, or probably too few to be reported. The old regime under a new leader has to fight a war and also stabilise the economy.

Economic woes can directly trigger social unrest and allow dissidents to muster people for a road show against the regime. Any business, trade in oil and revenue at this time will boost its morale and give it breathing space. Tehran needs India just as much, or probably more than, India needs the gas refill. In such circumstances, New Delhi making a quick and decisive move toward securing passage for its supplies was definitely a winning move. Another aspect that merits attention here is the unending nature of the current conflict. There is certainly.

Govt. asks Telegram to remove pirated content

Delhi: The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has issued a notice to messaging platform Telegram, asking it to remove pirated movies and OTT content from its platform. The move comes after complaints from streaming services, including JioCinema and Amazon Prime Video, alleging widespread copyright infringement.

Government sources revealed that a total of 3,142 Telegram channels were identified as distributing illegal content, including films and OTT shows, prompting action under the Information Technology Act, 2000. The changes, which take effect from November 15, 2025, aim to make online platforms more accountable for unlawful content. Rule 3(1) (d) now requires intermediaries to remove illegal content in a transparent, proportionate, and accountable manner upon receiving notification from the



The amendments include safeguards to ensure responsibility

The amendments also include safeguards to ensure senior-level responsibility, clear identification of unlawful material, and periodic review of government directions. Streaming platforms have increasingly complained about piracy, which they say affects revenue and content creators' rights.

Govt. intention to crack down on illegal content distribution

The notice from the MIB signals the government's intention to crack down on illegal content distribution and hold platforms responsible for timely removal of such material. Review by MeitY found the need for stricter measures to enhance online safety, security, and accountability for intermediaries, including social media and messaging platforms. Telegram is expected to comply with the notice by removing pirated content.

India plans new 1 lakh crore fund to support local chipmaking

Delhi: India plans to unveil a more than 1 trillion rupee (\$10.8 billion) fund aimed at bolstering domestic chipmaking, advancing its ambitious bid to become a global manufacturing hub. The fund, which will provide subsidies for chip design projects, manufacturing equipment and supply chain development, may be launched in two to three months, people familiar with the matter said, asking not to be named as the plan isn't yet public. The plan is still under discussion and may change. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to accelerate India's chip campaign, which is in early stages



with just a handful of major projects underway. Governments around the world are ramping up support for their chip industries to become more self-sustaining and fulfill rising demand from developers of everything from AI and smartphones to cars and appliances. India's push, though smaller in scale, is similar to the \$52 billion US Chips and Science Act that funds local chipmaking capacity.

Tata Group is also building a semiconductor plant

That effort helped kick-start India's chip journey, drawing companies like US memory maker Micron Technology Inc., which is establishing an assembly facility in western Gujarat state. Indian salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group is also building a semiconductor fabrication plant in Modi's home state of Gujarat, along with a separate chip packaging unit. Several other ventures tied to chip manufacturing and packaging, including Foxconn Technology Group's test and assembly facility.

Rising shipping costs worry meat exporters

Delhi: India's meat exporters are facing logistics disruptions and sharply rising freight costs due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, even as demand from the region remains largely stable, industry representatives said. Secretary general of the All India Meat & Livestock Exporters Association (AIMLEA), RK Boyal,

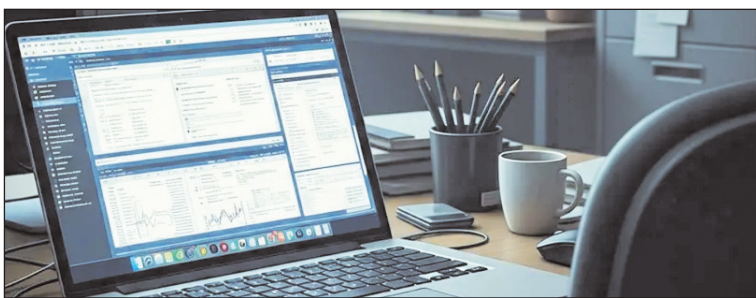


that exporters do not see any major drop in demand so far, but the biggest concern is the surge in shipping costs. "Freight rates have gone up significantly, with marine container charges

rising sharply in a very short span of time. Such sudden spikes are quite concerning for exporters and make planning shipments extremely difficult," he said. Gulzeb Ahmed of HMA Group, a prominent exporter to West Asia, said the Feb to April period is usually the peak demand season, but shipments and new orders slowed due to the crisis.

Firms return to WFH, as Iran targets UAE

Delhi: With the West Asia crisis escalating and recent Iranian strikes targeting the UAE, several IT companies and global capability centres (GCCs) have activated their business continuity plans (BCPs), introducing measures such as work-from-home, travel advisories and temporary office closures. Amid rising geopolitical uncertainty, many tech firms and GCCs are increasingly relying on India as a stable hub for global operations. Many are running mirror command centres from India to ensure operational continuity during disruptions. TCS, which has over 9,000 employees across the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, has asked its staffers to work remotely. The company has activated a call tree, with asso-



Cognizant has pre-identified alternate food vendors

"If the situation persists, we could actually see an acceleration of GCC ramp-ups in India as a stable anchor," he said. After Infosys, Cognizant has encouraged employees to adopt BYOF (Bring Your Own Food) wherever feasible, to reduce reliance on office cafeterias while it monitors the evolving situation linked to the West Asia crisis. Cognizant has pre-identified alternate food vendors that

do not rely on commercial LPG. The company said the current situation does not indicate an immediate disruption but could evolve into a prolonged period of operational pressure. Transport services are another area being closely monitored. Email to employees noted a "moderate risk of service strain" in commute operations due to fuel cost escalation impacting cab and shuttle vendors.

"We are also coordinating closely with local authorities"

"We are also coordinating closely with local authorities and the Indian embassies to track developments and will continue to provide timely updates as the situation evolves," the company. Infosys has introduced tighter travel restrictions. The company said only critical travel will be permitted for now, with group meetings, events, offsites and conferences currently restricted. JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs and Standard Chartered have asked their employees to work from home, among others. Vikram Ahuja, co-founder of ANSR, said organisations that were in the middle of setting up or expanding GCCs in the region.

HDFC Bank Loses Rs 61,715 Crore In Market Value

Delhi: HDFC Bank saw its market valuation erode by Rs 61,715 crore this week as a sharp sell-off in equities dragged down the combined market capitalisation of India's top-10 companies by Rs 4.48 lakh crore. The decline came during a turbulent week for the stock market when the benchmark indices, BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty 50, witnessed steep losses. Rising crude oil prices and growing concerns over inflation, along with the widening conflict in West Asia, dampened investor sentiment and triggered heavy selling across sectors. During



the week, the Sensex plunged 4,354.98 points, or 5.51 per cent, while the Nifty dropped 1,299.35 points, or 5.31 per cent. Among the country's most valued companies, HDFC Bank was one of the biggest losers. Its market value declined by Rs 61,715.32 crore, taking its total valuation down to Rs 12,57,391.76 crore. Public sector lender State Bank of India suffered the steep-

est decline in valuation, with its market capitalisation falling by Rs 89,306.22 crore to Rs 9,66,261.05 crore. Financial services major Bajaj Finance also saw a sharp erosion of Rs 59,082.49 crore in its valuation, which dropped to Rs 5,32,053.54 crore. The market value of IT giant TCS declined by Rs 53,312.52 crore to Rs 8,72,067.63 crore. Meanwhile, the valuation of ICICI Bank fell by Rs 42,205.04 crore to Rs 8,97,844.78 crore, while telecom major Bharti Airtel lost Rs 38,688.78 crore in market value.

Ambani Backing U.S. Refinery Deal Shows Shifting Energy Dynamics

Delhi: The landmark U.S. oil refinery project announced by President Donald Trump earlier this week marks a fundamental shift in global energy dynamics, with India's Reliance Industries—controlled by Asia's richest person, Mukesh Ambani—backing the deal, according to Chicago-based research firm Zacks Investment Research. "The strategic rationale for Reliance's massive U.S. bet is deeply intertwined with current geopolitical turbulence," Zacks wrote in a research note. "Global oil supply chains have become increasingly precarious amid the ongoing geopolitical volatility, marked by escalating conflicts in the Middle East and Trump's 'Operation Epic Fury' targeting Iranian influence."



This is a historic \$300 billion dollar deal - the biggest in U.S. history: Trump

Trump announced on his Truth Social platform that America First Refining would construct a new oil refinery at the Port of Brownsville, Texas. "This is a historic \$300 billion dollar deal - the biggest in U.S. history," Trump wrote. "Thank you to our partners in India, and their largest privately held energy company, Reliance, for this tremendous investment," he said. Trump did not provide details of the project, which would be the first new oil refinery to be constructed in the

U.S. in 50 years. Zacks said the project includes "a 20-year agreement for Reliance to process and distribute American shale oil, strengthening the India-based conglomerate's presence in the U.S. energy sector." Reliance did not reply to Forbes Asia's emailed request for comments. It received a nine-figure investment from a global company at a 10-figure valuation last month, along with a binding 20-year offtake deal to buy and process U.S. shale oil.

Government bars PNG users from retaining or refilling LPG connections

Delhi: Seeking to ensure a steady supply to domestic consumers exclusively availing liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) amid the impact on imports due to tensions in West Asia, the government on (March 14, 2026) mandated that individuals with a piped natural gas (PNG) connection will neither be allowed to obtain a new LPG connection nor retain an existing additional connection of liquefied petroleum gas. The amended supply order also bars them from obtaining any refill.



Production of cooking gas has increased by about 31%: Ministry

Addressing reporters at an inter-ministerial briefing Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), said that production of cooking gas has increased by

about 31% as of date since the government instituted the supply maintenance orders. Ms. Sharma told that a total of 29 States and UT have already started disbursing commercial cylinders.

"Individuals having both LPG and gas connections 'immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection'"

Further, the order states that individuals having both LPG and natural gas connections at present "immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection". The order comes amid imports of cooking gas being affected because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing tensions in West Asia. For context, India imports about 60% of its overall cooking gas requirements. Of this, around 90% is routed through the

Strait of Hormuz. It is also essential to note that the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in two separate maintenance orders, had directed that all propane and butane, among other streams, be utilised to spur the production of cooking gas. LPG is a mixture of propane and butane. The orders had also directed that public sector oil marketing companies ensure that these supplies are directed to domestic LPG consumers.

FASTag Annual Pass Fee Raised to Rs 3075 for FY27 : NHAI

delhi: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) announced a marginal increase in the fee for the FASTag annual pass for the financial year 2026-27. The annual pass fee has been revised to 3,075 from



the existing 3,000, with the new rate set to take effect from April 1,

2026, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said in a statement. According to NHAI, the revision has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates

and Collection) Rules, 2008.

The FASTag annual pass, introduced on Independence Day, August 15, 2025, has gained traction among private vehicle owners, with over 56 lakh users currently availing the

facility.

The pass is available for eligible non-commercial vehicles with a valid FASTag and can be used at around 1,150 toll plazas across national highways and expressways in India.

Mumbai hosts Sitar for Mental Health

Rishab Rikhiram Sharma's Sitar for Mental Health concert at Mahalaxmi Racecourse saw Deepika Padukone, Tara Sutaria and Gauri Khan among attendees

Mumbai witnessed a unique blend of music and mental health awareness as sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma performed at Mahalaxmi Racecourse on Friday. The concert, attended by over 20,000 people, focused on promoting conversations around mental well-being through music. Celebrities including Deepika Padukone, Tara Sutaria, Gauri Khan, Mrunal Thakur and Soha Ali Khan were present. The performance is part of Rishab's multi-city Sitar for Mental Health India tour.



Photos: PTI



Salman Khan greets fans with Salim Khan

On the occasion of Eid, Bollywood superstar Salman Khan greeted hundreds of fans gathered outside his residence, Galaxy Apartments, continuing his festive tradition. The actor appeared on the balcony along with his family members and acknowledged the crowd with waves and smiles. His father, veteran screenwriter Salim Khan, made his first public appearance after being recently discharged from hospital and also greeted well-wishers. Mother Helen and brother Sohail Khan were also present. Several videos and photos from the gathering surfaced online, with fans celebrating the moment and extending Eid wishes to the Khan family.



Photos: Instagram



Photos: PTI / Instagram

ANANYA PANDAY walks for Rahul Mishra, showcasing detailed embroidery and elegant design reflecting the designer's signature blend of tradition and innovation.

'She brings beautiful energy'

Rahul Mishra calls actor Ananya Panday his muse, praises her beautiful energy and creative comfort while collaborating again at Lakmé Fashion Week

When Rahul Mishra presents a new collection, you know it's never just about clothes - it's about storytelling, craft and emotion coming together on the runway. And at Day 2 of Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI 2026 in Mumbai, the ace designer did exactly that, elevating the experience further by bringing Ananya Panday back as his muse for a showcase that felt both intimate and impactful. For Mishra, choosing Ananya as his showstopper wasn't just a styling decision, it was rooted in familiarity and creative comfort. Speaking about their association, the designer shared with

"Ananya has been a dear friend for a long time, and I really enjoyed every time working with her." Their collaboration goes back to his Paris showcase years ago, and bringing her back this season felt like a full-circle moment. "Her being there also gives that beautiful energy to the whole idea, the whole feeling," he added.

Ananya as Mishra's muse
For the runway, Ananya stepped out in a chic ensemble from Mishra's Fall/Winter 2026 collection, White Gold, under his ready-to-wear label AFEW. The ensemble

struck a balance between sharp tailoring and playful femininity.

The Gen-Z star donned a crisp white shirt with a relaxed silhouette, elevated with delicate crystal dragonfly brooches. The look was paired with a pleated mini skirt featuring a bold indigo border, bringing contrast and movement. A structured, oversized blazer layered on top tied everything together.

Collection that spotlights cotton

This season, Mishra shifted focus from ornate excess to something more thoughtful and tactile. "This time the collection is all about restraint, all about handloom, all about Supima fibre," he explained.

In collaboration with SUPIMA, the showcase highlighted the versatility of premium cotton, proving that luxury doesn't always need heavy embellishment. "Sometimes even you don't need to do embroidery on that," he noted, underlining the beauty of simplicity. The White Gold collection also revisited Chanderi textiles through a contemporary lens, incorporating traditional weaving techniques and organic processes. Nature-inspired motifs, from cotton buds to florals, quietly ran through the collection, reinforcing Mishra's deep-rooted connection to craft and sustainability.

Moreover, the showcase also marked Mishra's 20 years since GenNext debut at Lakmé Fashion Week, reflecting his journey, evolution and enduring design philosophy.

With Ananya bringing her signature charm and Mishra redefining modern Indian luxury, this Lakmé Fashion Week moment was equal parts nostalgic and forward-looking.



Fashion designer Rahul Mishra

Bollywood stars light up fashion runway

RADHIKKA MADAN grabs attention in a vibrant designer ensemble, reflecting playful design elements balanced with structured silhouettes at the fashion showcase.



TAMANNAAH BHATIA turns showstopper for Bhumika Sharma, radiating elegance in a statement ensemble celebrating rich textures, traditional craft and modern femininity.

KHUSHI KAPOOR turns showstopper for Aisha Rao, impressing the audience with a bold look combining glamour, confidence and youthful runway presence.

NIMRAT KAUR presents designer Jajaabor's collection, walking the runway in a contemporary outfit highlighting craftsmanship and modern Indian fashion aesthetics.

SHANAYA KAPOOR walks for Ritika Mirchandani, flaunting a glamorous silhouette that blends contemporary drama with intricate detailing and modern couture sensibilities.

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



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

OTT Releases

- NETFLIX**
- Digman! S1
 - Furies S2
 - Eva Lasting S4
 - Radioactive Emergency
 - Beauty in Black S2 P2
 - Unicorn Academy - Secrets Revealed
 - The Plastic Detox
 - Peaky Blinders



JIOSTAR

- Chiraiya



SONY LIV

- Jazz City

AMAZON PRIME

- Deadloch S2

Theatrical Releases

- Dhurandhar - The Revenge

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

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

TEHRAN

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

Araghchi added that while

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

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

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

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

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

The UK government, how-



ever, has pushed back. In the same conversation, Cooper cautioned Iran against targeting "UK bases, territory or interests", underscoring the risk of further escalation. Araghchi compared the tone of US government statements to the overoptimistic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US gives 1-month waiver on Iranian oil sanctions

WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

INDIAN REFINERS LOOK TO BUY IRANIAN OIL

Indian refiners plan to resume buying Iranian oil while refiners elsewhere in Asia are

examining such a move, traders said on Saturday.

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

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

COMPLICATED BUYING

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

aboard ageing shadow fleet ships, traders said.

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

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

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

WAR SNIPPETS

20 COUNTRIES VOW SUPPORT FOR SAFER STRAIT OF HORMUZ

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

PUTIN OFFERED TO DITCH IRAN IF US CUT OFF UKRAINE?

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

US CURBS ON GLOBAL NETWORK FINANCING

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

CUBA-BOUND FUEL TANKER DIVERTED

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

TWO TRY TO ENTER N-SUB BASE, HELD

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

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

DUBAI

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

TEHRAN TARGETS HIT

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

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

RETALIATORY ATTACKS UPS ENERGY CONCERNS

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

AMONG THE SITES STRUCK

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

■ A missile production components storage facility

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

■ Ballistic missiles components production site

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

CASUALTIES MOUNT ON BOTH SIDES

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

Natanz nuclear facility hit again

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

DUBAI

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

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

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

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



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

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

DRONE HITS INTEL HQ IN IRAQ; OFFICER KILLED

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

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

BRITAIN ALLOWS US TO USE ITS BASES

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

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

AIRSTRIKES IN LEBANON

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

SYRIA INFRA TARGETED

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

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

Insta pulls plug on 'MAGA dream girl'

MUMBAI

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

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

Authorities found no rec-

ord of Foster's military service, an Army spokesperson said. The account did not label its content as AI-generated but showed signs of fabrication, mixing pro-Trump messaging with sexualised content. The account initially directed users to OnlyFans, which removed it for violating rules requiring verified human creators, before redirecting to Fanvue.

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



Hawaii suffers worst flooding

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

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

Musk misled investors in Twitter deal: Jury

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

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

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

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

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

US: PIO judge convicted

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

KP George, Fort Bend County judge, was found guilty of misusing campaign funds for personal expenses.

Prosecutors said he transferred \$46,000 to personal accounts for private use, including a home-related payment, while the defence said the transfers were reimbursements.

The jury returned verdict after deliberation.

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

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

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

compelled to repeat over and over, again and again.

Judith Rapoport, a leading child psychiatrist at the US National Institute of Mental Health, helped bring the condition into public understanding. Her widely read book, *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing*, offered a clear,

humane account of OCD and its impact on young patients and their families. Her work helped shift perceptions of the disorder from eccentric habit to serious medical condition, guiding diagnosis and

treatment for decades.

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



14 die in fire at S Korean unit

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

About 170 workers were believed to have been inside the factory when the fire was reported on Friday. It was not extinguished until Saturday afternoon. President Lee Jae Myung visited the site and called for better protections for the workers, over 10,000 of whom died at work from 2000 to 2024, as per data.

Briefs

BRIGHTON
Ekitike injured in Liverpool's match



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

GOLD COAST (AUS)

Diksha, Hitaashee in top 10



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

VALSPAR PALM HARBOR

Rai, Theegala miss cut at Valspar



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

Akash Deep ruled out of IPL with back injury

KKR face mounting pace concerns as injuries hit bowling resources

KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

BCCI source

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

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

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

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

VIEWPOINT | Ex-India spinner cites fading novelty, injuries and personnel gaps

KKR bowling lacks fear factor ahead of IPL, says Ashwin

CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

In another setback, KKR have also lost India seamer

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

R Ashwin
former India spinner

Akash Deep for the entire season.

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

longer part of the squad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"When you come into the IPL auction, the expectation is that you will bowl four overs and also contribute with the bat. If there are restrictions, the team should be allowed to make deductions," he elaborated.

"Imagine if you are Shah Rukh Khan and you have paid Rs 5 crore for a player, but he says he will bowl only one over. How will you feel?" Ashwin said.

Kohli urges RCB to stay sharp ahead of title defence

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

BENGALURU

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

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

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



momentum from the very beginning of preparations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Virat Kohli
RCB batter

past success.

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

squash

Olympic inclusion a watershed moment: Ghosal

EW DELHI

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

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

sport.

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

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

On India's rise in squash,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Devajit Saikia, BCCI secretary

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

India have toured Ireland three times in the past eight years, drawing strong crowds at Malahide, located on the outskirts of Dublin.

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

