

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Thursday, 22 January, 2026

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

Briefs

MUMBAI

Embraer to be in spotlight at Wings India

Brazil-based global aerospace company Embraer will display two of its commercial aircraft, the E195-E2 and the E175, at the Wings India 2026 in Hyderabad. As India records increasing regional airlines, Embraer's aircraft are said to become the centerpoint of attraction for the small carriers for the right-sized capacity and strong flexibility to open new routes connecting secondary and tertiary cities. The E195-E2 on static display is said to be the world's quietest and most fuel-efficient aircraft.

LUCKNOW

UP signs \$25 bn MoU at Davos

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday signed a landmark memorandum of understanding with AM Green Group at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 in Davos for a proposed \$25 billion investment to set up one of India's largest advanced compute data centres, anchoring a broader investment push across digital infrastructure, renewable energy and electric mobility. The MoU, signed through Invest UP, covers the development of a 1 gigawatt compute data centre in Greater Noida to support the fast-expanding demand for high-performance computing and artificial intelligence workloads.

PATNA

FIR filed in death case of NEET aspirant

In the case of the death of a NEET aspirant at the Perfect Girls' Hostel in Patna, the student's father has filed a First Information Report (FIR) at the Gandhi Maidan police station, alleging conspiracy, mental harassment, and murder. In the FIR, the father has accused a young man and some of his friends of being involved in a conspiracy that allegedly led to his daughter's death. He has categorically rejected the suicide theory, claiming that his daughter was mentally harassed and killed, and has demanded a fair, impartial, and thorough investigation into the incident.

Techie death: Builder sent to judicial custody

NOIDA

A builder arrested in connection with the death of the 27-year-old software engineer in Greater Noida was on Wednesday sent to judicial custody for a week, as a Special Investigation Team (SIT) stepped up its probe into the incident, questioning officials of the Noida Authority that is facing allegations of negligence. "Abhay Kumar, one of the accused builders and the director of MZ Witztown



ANOTHER SHOWDOWN | Gehlot refuses to address joint session of Assembly unless 11 paragraphs of speech are deleted

Now, Guv takes on govt in Karnataka

BENGALURU

After Tamil Nadu and Kerala, now it is the turn of Karnataka Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot, who has refused to address the joint legislature session which begins today. However, after meeting a high-level government delegation headed by Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil, signals have been sent that he may address the legislature, except for 11 paras of the speech prepared by the government. The Karnataka government is holding a special session from January 22-30, debating and opposing the Union Government's VV G-RAM-G bill replacing the MNREGA. The surprise move came only on Wednesday after-



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, right, interacts with Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot during the silver jubilee celebrations and inauguration of a new incubation centre, in Bengaluru, on Wednesday

noon, when Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary, refusing to read the speech during joint legislature. Sources said that the

Government had sent the address copy to the Governor on Wednesday morning. After going through the speech copy, where the state government had dedicated

much space for criticising G-RAM-G and GST, the Governor wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary, expressing his inability to address the session. A private message has also been sent to the government that he may address the session if there was a revised speech skipping these two issues.

By evening, Patil along with Chief Minister's political advisor Ponnanna and Advocate General Shashikiran Shetty held a meeting with the Governor to persuade him.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Patil said that the Governor had expressed reservation about 11 paragraphs of the speech and asked the government to drop them, and added that the Governor had responded positively after the meeting.

Bill to curb property transfer in disturbed areas cleared by Raj

JAIPUR

Following Gujarat, the Rajasthan government has cleared a Bill to restrict the transfer or sale of immovable property in areas notified as "disturbed areas".

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immoveable Property and Provision for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Bill, 2026 was approved by the state cabinet at its meeting on Wednesday.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel said a demographic imbalance affects public order, harmony, and the community character of peaceful coexistence. In such areas, when riots and mob violence create unrest, permanent residents are forced to sell their immovable properties at low prices. After a particular area is declared a disturbed area, the transfer of immovable property in that area will be considered

The Bill is scheduled to be presented in the coming budget session of the Assembly

invalid and void without the prior permission of the competent authority.

The Bill provides that the transfer of immovable property will only be possible with the prior permission of the competent authority, and violation will constitute a non-bailable and cognisable offence, punishable with imprisonment ranging from 3 to 5 years and a fine.

The Bill is scheduled to be presented in the coming budget session of the Assembly.

"After the passage of this Bill, the properties of permanent residents and the rights of tenants on those properties in areas declared as disturbed areas in the state will be protected," Patel told media.

Rickshaw driver dies in Indore; family blames water

INDORE

A 50-year-old e-rickshaw driver has died in Indore's Bhagirathpura area, which has witnessed several deaths due to contaminated drinking water in the last few days, but officials said the cause of death in his case was cancer.

Hemant Gaikwad (50) died on Tuesday night while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city.

Locals have put the death toll due to vomiting and diarrhoea caused by contaminated drinking water in Bhagirathpura at 25, a claim not confirmed by civic authorities.

Hemant's younger brother Sanjay Gaikwad told PTI, "My brother died due to contaminated water. We lost him after just 15 days of illness." Hemant, who drove an e-rickshaw, was the sole breadwinner of his family, and the state government should provide them assistance, he added.

Cabinet approves continuation of Atal Pension Yojana till '30-31

Also approves equity support of ₹5,000 cr to SIDBI

NEW DELHI

For ensuring continuation of old age income security, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the extension of funding support for promotional and developmental activities and gap funding for the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) up to financial year 2030-31. This is likely to benefit nearly 8.86 crore people registered under the scheme.

At a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Cabinet decided to continue the scheme and extended the funding support for it.

The decision, the Cabinet note said, would ensure old-

The decision would ensure old-age income security for millions of low-income and unorganised sector workers

age income security for millions of low-income and unorganised sector workers; enhance financial inclusion and support India's transition to a pensioned society; and strengthen the vision of making India a developed country by 2047 by providing sustainable social security.

The APY was launched in 2015 with the objective of pro-

viding old-age income security to workers in the unorganised sector and it offers a guaranteed minimum pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per month from the age of 60, based on contributions.

In another decision, the Cabinet also approved equity support of Rs 5,000 crore to Small Industries Development Bank of India and noted that this would increase flow of credit to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by enabling them to generate additional resources at competitive rates.

The Cabinet said nearly 25.74 lakh new MSME beneficiaries will be added through the programme.

After backlash, Kerala minister Cherian sorry for remarks

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Expressing regret over the pain caused by his recent remarks, Kerala Culture Minister Saji Cherian on Wednesday withdrew the statement related to the recent Kasaragod municipality and Malappuram election results, saying his views "had been twisted and falsely portrayed as being against a particular community".

The row erupted after Cherian, on Sunday, said that while the RSS promoted majority communalism, minority communalism was also being encouraged by the Muslim League, a key ally of the Congress in Kerala.

NDA gets huge boost in TN with return of Dhinakaran

CHENNAI

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election visit to Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK-BJP inclusive NDA in the state got a boost with the return of TTV Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) to the alliance fold on Wednesday.

The NDA, which looked weak until recently, now comprises the AIADMK, BJP, PMK faction led by Anbumani Ramadoss, Tamil Maanila Congress and AMMK in addition to some fringe players. Thus, it has acquired a form where it can give the ruling DMK a run for its money in this summer's Assembly elections.

In all probability, this devel-



AMMK General Secretary TTV Dhinakaran meets Union Minister Piyush Goyal in Chennai. AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi Palaniswami also present.

opment leaves actor Vijay's Tamilaga Vetttri Kazhagam almost friendless. With the Congress likely to stick on to the DMK alliance, the game may not change for the actor-politician, who was the first to openly declare that he would

go in for a power-sharing arrangement with allies.

The DMK and AIADMK have so far maintained they will form a single-party Government, as has been the case in Tamil Nadu since Independence.

Calm returns to Kokrajhar but relief camps tell a grim story



Army personnel during a flag march through sensitive areas in Kokrajhar, Assam, on Wednesday

GUWAHATI

After two days of tension and violence, parts of Kokrajhar district are slowly returning to normalcy, with security forces stepping up presence on the ground and community leaders coming together to appeal for peace. Authorities said no fresh incidents of violence or arson were reported in the last 24 hours, even as the human cost of the unrest con-

tinues to unfold in relief camps.

However, mobile internet services remained suspended for a second consecutive day on Wednesday as authorities feared the possibility of fresh unrest.

The violence, which broke out on Monday evening following clashes between two groups, claimed two lives and left at least four others injured.

Assam Handloom and Textile Minister Urkhao Gwra

Brahma described the Karigaon incident as deeply unfortunate, saying it has spread fear across the area and forced many families to flee their homes and take shelter in relief camps.

The minister said 99 displaced families comprising 463 members from the Bodo community are currently staying at Karigaon High School. In addition, 83 families have taken shelter at Tajjouguri in an open field, families from 10

villages are staying at the Baoragoan relief camp (open field), while 50 families are at 6 No. Bashbari, 60 families at the Manikpur relief camp and 30 families at the Gograpara relief camp. He added that Karigaon High School is also accommodating affected families from the Santhali community.

Brahma expressed concern that essential relief materials have yet to reach many of the displaced families.

Techie death: Builder sent to judicial custody

NOIDA

A builder arrested in connection with the death of the 27-year-old software engineer in Greater Noida was on Wednesday sent to judicial custody for a week, as a Special Investigation Team (SIT) stepped up its probe into the incident, questioning officials of the Noida Authority that is facing allegations of negligence.

"Abhay Kumar, one of the accused builders and the director of MZ Witztown

Mozambican activist Machel gets Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

NEW DELHI

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace Disarmament and Development for 2025 is awarded to Mozambican rights activist Graça Machel, the jury for the award announced on Wednesday.

She has been chosen by the international jury of the prize, chaired by former National Security Advisor Shivshankar



Menon, for her path-breaking work in the field of education, health and nutrition, economic empowerment and humanitarian work under difficult circumstances, the

Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust said in a statement.

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development consists of an award of Rs one crore and a trophy with a citation.

Machel is a distinguished African stateswoman, politician and humanitarian whose life's work is rooted in the struggle for self-rule and protection of human rights, the statement said.

Working to empower northeast region: PM

IMPHAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that since 2014, his government has worked with the resolve of 'Act East, Act Fast' to empower the Northeastern region, unlock development opportunities, and fulfil the aspirations of people.

In a letter to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on the occasion of Manipur's Statehood Day, the Prime Minister said that he

has always been a firm believer in the immense potential of the people of the Northeast and reaffirmed the Centre's commitment to their inclusive growth and prosperity.

He said: "I salute my sisters and brothers of Manipur for their remarkable courage and unwavering faith in peace and progress."

It is imperative to continue to work with renewed vigour to strengthen Manipur's development trajectory, the Prime Minister said.

offgrid

Rahul gets grandpa Feroze's lost driving licence

RAE BARELI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi was handed over his grandfather Feroze Gandhi's decades-old lost driving licence during his two-day visit to his parliamentary constituency Raebareli.

The rare document had been preserved for years by a local family in Raebareli and was formally returned to the

Gandhi family during Gandhi's engagements on the second day of his visit. Rahul Gandhi also shared a photograph of the driving licence with Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on WhatsApp, according to people present at the meeting.

The driving licence was handed over by Vikas Singh, a member of the organising committee of the Rae Bareli Premier League cricket tournament. Singh said the licence



had come into his family's possession many years ago.

"During a programme in Rae Bareli, my father-in-law found this driving licence. He

kept it safely with him. After his death, my mother-in-law continued to preserve it. When we came to know that Rahul Gandhi was visiting Raebareli,

our family felt it was our duty to return it to the Gandhi family," Singh said.

He added that his family had always treated the document as a trust and believed it was important to hand it back at the right time.

Meanwhile, posters featuring Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav dressed in Indian cricket team jerseys appeared across the city. The posters also carried the photo-

graph of SP Lohia Vahini state secretary Rahul Nirmal Bagai and mentioned Shivam Kumar as the requester. The slogan "PDA Rakshak" was printed at the bottom. The posters have triggered fresh political speculation in local circles, indicating the possibility that Samajwadi Party and Congress may once again work out a seat-sharing arrangement for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, similar to their alliance in Lok Sabha polls.

65,000 Students to Appear for Exams at 149 Centers Across the State

Open University Exams to Begin from January 22

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The December 2025 session examinations of Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj, are starting from January 22, 2026. Approximately 65,000 candidates will participate in the exams at 149 examination centers across the state. This information was given by the Examination Controller, Professor Girish Kumar Dwivedi, on Wednesday. He informed that the examinations will be conducted until February 21, 2026. An effort has been made to establish one examination center in each district, maintaining a standard number of students, so that the examinees do not face any inconvenience. Examination Controller Professor Dwivedi also informed that examination centers have been set up in four central

jails of the state, including Bareilly, Fatehgarh, Basti, and Gorakhpur. The examinations will be conducted in two shifts: from 10 AM to 1 PM and from 2 PM to 5 PM. The Examination Controller said that this time the examination will be conducted through the Samarth portal. He also informed that to maintain the sanctity of the examination, it has been made mandatory for everyone to fill out the examination form, and admit cards have been issued only to those who submitted their assignments on the stipulated dates. He informed that the admit cards of all subjects have been made available online. Students can download them and appear for the examination. The university is continuously committed to using digital mediums and technology as much as possible in all levels of examination processes. Vice-Chancellor

Professor Satyakam has given special instructions to the center superintendents to conduct the examination successfully and transparently throughout Uttar Pradesh. Flying squads and teams of observers will continuously visit the examination centers to ensure a cheating-free examination. He has also instructed the establishment of a help desk at the regional center to assist the students. Public Relations Officer Dr. Prabhat Chandra Mishra informed that a help desk has been set up in the Examination Controller's office to ensure that no examinee faces any problem at the examination center and to provide quick solutions to the problems of the examinees.

Teachers and staff equipped with technical skills have been deployed to address the various problems faced by the examinees.

Nagla Premi Murder Case: District Probation Officer Meets Victimized Children, Assures Government Assistance

Etah

In the aftermath of the gruesome Nagla Premi murder case, the administration is taking active measures to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of the affected children. Under the direction of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh, District Probation Officer Ajay Pal Singh, along with his team, visited the crime site in Sunahri Nagar Phase-2 on Wednesday. The horrific incident involved Kamal Singh, son of Ganga Singh Shakya, who brutally murdered four members of his own family—his parents, wife and daughter. During the inspection, officials found the house locked and later gathered information about the incident from the neighbor, Tursumpal Singh. At the site, the deceased daughter 25-year-old daughter, Lakshmi, accompanied by her maternal uncle



Balister Singh of Aliganj Road, met the officers for a detailed discussion. It was revealed that the accused 9-year-old son, Devansh, is currently safe under the care of his maternal uncle. Lakshmi expressed her desire to continue living with her aunt and uncle. District Probation Officer Ajay Pal Singh consoled the bereaved family and assured them of all possible government support. He stated that Devansh would be immediately enrolled under the Child Welfare Scheme and Sponsorship Programme to ensure uninterrupted education and proper care. Additionally, Jyoti Sharma Project

Coordinator of the Child Helpline, was instructed to assist in the collection of necessary documents to expedite the provision of benefits. The meeting was attended by Anand Pandey, Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Jyoti Sharma, Project Coordinator of Child Helpline, case worker Suryapratap Singh and other departmental officials.

The administration emphasized that the protection, psychological support and financial rehabilitation of the affected children are of top priority and all necessary measures will be taken promptly to ensure their well-being.

SP listens to Public grievances at Public Hearing



Fatehpur: A Public hearing Program was organized by Superintendent of Police Anoop Kumar Singh at the police office on Wednesday. During the Public hearing, the problems of complainants from various areas of the district were heard attentively and necessary instructions were given to the concerned officers and station house officers for the qualitative, impartial, and timely resolution of each case. The SP of Fatehpur took detailed information on complaints including land disputes, family disputes, assault, fraud and harassment of women during the public hearing. He instructed the officers to ensure the swift resolution of every complaint received under the legal process, so that the victims do not have to repeatedly visit the offices. The Superintendent of Police clearly stated that resolving the problems of the public is the top priority of the Police. Negligence, indifference or unnecessary delay at any level will not be tolerated. He also instructed that the complaints received in the public hearing be regularly monitored and the complainants be informed about the progress of their resolution. Emphasizing the strengthening of trust between the police and the public through the public hearing programme, the SP said that the objective of the police is not only to maintain law and order but also to provide justice to the common people. He instructed the concerned officers to resolve the complaints with sensitivity, decency and transparency. Senior officers and employees of the police department were present during the public hearing. At the conclusion of the program, the Superintendent of Police appealed to the general public to take maximum advantage of the public hearing platform for the resolution of their Problems and to Cooperate with the Police.

Five-Day Parasailing Adventure Activity Grandly Inaugurated

A powerful initiative towards the all-round development of young cadets, inspired by the values of courage, discipline, and national service, Adventure training is the foundation for building disciplined, self-reliant, and empowered youth - Brigadier Upendra Singh Kandil

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwai. On Wednesday, a five-day parasailing adventure activity camp was organized by the 17 UP Battalion NCC Prayagraj under the aegis of the NCC Group Headquarters Prayagraj at the Padila airstrip in the Phaphamau Air Force area, Prayagraj. This camp is a powerful initiative towards the all-round development of young cadets, inspired by the val-

ues of courage, discipline, and national service. This five-day adventure camp was led by NCC Group Commander Prayagraj Brigadier Upendra Singh Kandil and Lieutenant Colonel Arvind Singh. On this occasion, Brigadier Kandil himself took a flight in a parasailing balloon to encourage the cadets and practically demonstrated the importance of adventure training. In his inspiring address, Brigadier Kandil

said that adventure training is the foundation for building disciplined, self-reliant, and empowered youth. This training develops leadership qualities, self-confidence, courage, and the ability to make decisions in challenging situations in the cadets, which ensures their effective role in nation-building. The main objective of this camp is to develop leadership qualities, strengthen self-confidence, and build an adventurous spirit in the

cadets. The camp is being organized under strict safety standards, ensuring continuous supervision by trained instructors, complete use of standard safety equipment, and strict adherence to established protocols so that the cadets can have a safe, exciting, and enriching experience. Such adventure activities, which are an integral part of NCC training, play a significant role in strengthening character building, camaraderie, disci-

pline, and patriotism among the youth.

More than 500 NCC cadets are enthusiastically participating in this adventure camp. This activity is being successfully conducted under the leadership and expert management of Lieutenant Colonel Arvind Singh of 17 UP Battalion NCC Prayagraj. On the first day of the camp, cadets from 15 UP Battalion NCC Prayagraj and 17 UP Battalion NCC Prayagraj

participated. The contribution of Lieutenant Colonel Farah Deeba of 6 UP Girls Battalion was also highly commendable and noteworthy on this occasion. This five-day parasailing adventure camp is not only a symbol of adventurous training, but it is also an inspiring step towards building dedicated, capable, and confident young leaders for the nation, embodying the NCC's motto of unity and discipline.

Kisan Diwas Celebrated at Shatakshi Auditorium, Vikas Bhawan Etah

Etah

Under the guidance of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh, Kisan Diwas (Farmer Day) was organized on January 20, 2026 at the Shatakshi Auditorium in Vikas Bhawan Etah under the Chairmanship of Chief Development Officer Dr. Nagendra Narayan Mishra. The event, conducted in accordance with government directives, provided a platform for farmers to raise their issues, many of which were addressed on the Spot. During the programme, the Chief Development Officer appealed to farmers to adopt balanced use of fertilizers, implement crop residue management and take measures to improve soil health. He also instructed all departments related to agriculture to regularly update farmers about government schemes



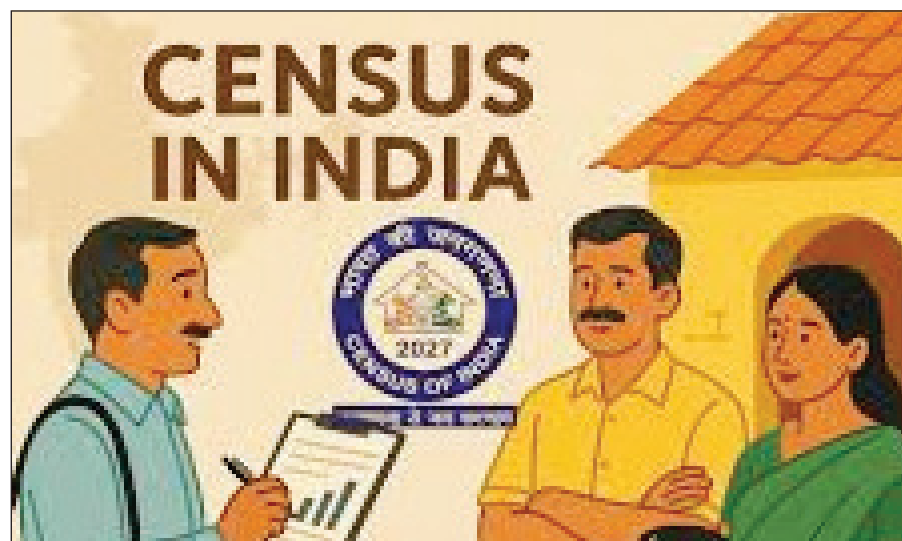
and to present details of significant agricultural initiatives during every Kisan Diwas, so as to motivate farmers to enhance their practices in the field. Universal Sampo Private Limited, the crop insurance company, was directed to encourage non-loanee farmers to enroll in crop insurance schemes. Additionally, the Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer informed farmers that the seventh phase of vaccination against Foot-and-Mouth Disease has commenced and urged all farmers to ensure their livestock are vaccinated. Farmers were

advised to fully cooperate with veterinary teams visiting their villages. The programme was attended by progressive farmers of the district, representatives of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), District Horticulture Officer, Assistant Engineer of Minor Irrigation, District Agriculture Officer, lead managers from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Senior Marketing Inspectors and other departmental officials. The event highlighted the government commitment to empowering farmers through practical guidance, modern techniques and timely Support.

Preparations for Census 2027 begin in Prayagraj; First phase to be held from May 22 to June 20, 2026

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The first meeting of the District Level Census Coordination Committee was held on Wednesday at the Sangam Auditorium to discuss preparations for Census 2027 in the district. The meeting was chaired by District Magistrate and Principal Census Officer Manish Kumar Verma. During the meeting, he gave necessary instructions to the concerned officers to ensure the timely and error-free completion of the census work. The District Magistrate informed that the upcoming Census 2027 will be conducted entirely through digital means. A mobile app and



online portal will be used for this purpose. He instructed the officers to be technically vigilant and to complete all preparations within the stipulated time frame.

It was informed that the first phase of the census will be conducted between May 22 and

June 20, 2026. Instructions were given to prepare the list of Master Trainers, Field Trainers, enumerators, and supervisors to be deployed for this purpose in digital format beforehand, so that the database of the concerned officers can be uploaded on the

Census CMM portal in a timely manner. The meeting was conducted and coordinated by the Additional District Magistrate (Finance and Revenue) and District Census Officer. On this occasion, Assistant Director and District In-charge Jitendra Kumar

Srivastava and Assistant District In-charge Somnath Goswami from the Census Operations Directorate team gave a detailed presentation on Census 2027 through a PPT. The officials informed that this will be the 16th census of the country, while it will be recorded as the eighth census since independence. The Additional Municipal Commissioner, Additional District Magistrate (Finance and Revenue), District Basic Education Officer, District Panchayat Raj Officer, Economics and Statistics Officer, District Informatics Officer, and all other charge officers were present at the meeting.

Air Force training aircraft crashes in Prayagraj, falls into a pond; both pilots safe



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. An Air Force training aircraft crashed in the middle of the city on Wednesday afternoon. After wobbling in the air, the aircraft fell into a pond located behind KP College. Both pilots aboard the two-seater

microlight aircraft ejected using parachutes in time, saving their lives. The location is said to be about three kilometers from the Magh Mela area. According to eyewitnesses, at around 12:20 pm, the aircraft suddenly became unbalanced and descended rapidly. Before the aircraft hit

the ground, both pilots jumped out using parachutes and landed in the pond. Due to the marshy conditions and water hyacinths in the pond, they were trapped for some time before being rescued with the help of local residents. The pond where the aircraft crashed is surrounded



by schools and residential colonies. Fortunately, the aircraft crashed in a relatively deserted area, preventing any loss of life. Upon receiving information about the accident, teams from the army, fire brigade, SDRF, and NDRF reached the spot and launched a rescue opera-

tion. Defense Wing PRO Debartho Dhar said that the microlight aircraft took off from Bamrauli Air Force Station at 12:15 pm for a training flight. During the flight, the aircraft developed a technical fault. The pilots, showing great presence of mind, tried to steer the air-

craft away from populated areas, thus preventing any loss of life or property. He said that a Court of Inquiry has been ordered to investigate the causes of the accident. Security agencies are present at the spot, and the situation is completely under control.

Encroachments removed from Nazul land near Royal Hotel, illegal shops

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA), with the cooperation of the Municipal Corporation, removed illegal encroachments and demolished all shops built on Nazul land next to the Royal Hotel on Nawab Yusuf Road. This action was taken as part of a special drive conducted on Monday. The PDA had previously issued notices to the



encroachers to remove the illegal shops themselves, but despite the

given deadline, the shopkeepers did not remove the encroachments. Following this, the PDA sought the cooperation of the Municipal Corporation to clear the Nazul land of encroachments. Under the leadership of Additional Municipal Commissioner Arvind Kumar Rai, the anti-encroachment team reached the spot and took action. During the operation, all illegal shops were demolished. The concerned police station was also informed to pre-

vent any further encroachment. The operation was attended by Additional Municipal Commissioner Arvind Kumar Rai, Anti-Encroachment In-charge Colonel Dinesh Tanwar, the Municipal Corporation's anti-encroachment team, local police force, and junior engineers from the Prayagraj Development Authority. The administration has made it clear that no kind of encroachment on Nazul land will be tolerated in the future

District Road Safety Committee Meeting Concludes Ethah

Under the directions of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh, a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee was held at the Collectorate Auditorium, chaired by Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Satyaprakash. During the meeting, a detailed review of various activities and public awareness programs conducted

Esha Singh of Prayagraj to be Special Guest at Republic Day Parade 2026, receives National Honor as 'Water Warrior'

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Esha Singh, the District Project Officer (Namami Gange) of Prayagraj, who has made a remarkable contribution to the field of Ganga conservation, has been invited as a special guest to the Republic Day Parade 2026. The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, has released a list of 'Water Warriors' selected from across the country who have done commendable work in the field of conservation, rejuvenation, cleanliness, and public awareness of the Ganga River. The inclusion of Esha Singh's name in this prestigious list is a matter of pride for Prayagraj. Esha Singh has been actively involved in transforming Ganga conservation into a mass movement for several years. She has trained youth in villages along the Ganga riverbanks, raising awareness about water conservation, sanitation, and environmental responsibilities. She has strived to connect every section of society with the Namami Gange project, not limiting it to just a government program. Through her initiatives, the active participation of women, youth, and the transgender community has been ensured. Social participation was strengthened through programs like 'Nadi Utsav' and 'Ganga Utsav'. At the district level, painting competitions, quizzes, street plays, cultural programs, rallies, and cleanliness drives were conducted at the ghats in schools to inspire students and



common citizens towards Ganga and environmental conservation. During the massive Mahakumbh 2025 event, Namami Gange exhibitions, public awareness rallies, and campaigns were conducted under Esha Singh's leadership, which further strengthened the sense of responsibility towards the Ganga among millions of devotees from India and abroad. She has already been honored with a certificate of appreciation by the District Magistrate for her efforts. Her work in the field of Ganga conservation has been appreciated at the national and state levels before. She has been awarded the 'Water Digest World Water Warrior Award' by the Union Minister of Jal Shakti and the 'Ganga Samman' at the state level. Their selection as a special guest at the Republic Day Parade in 2026 is being seen as a natural culmination of their continuous, dedicated, and effective efforts.

District Magistrate holds meeting with concerned officials regarding resolution of land acquisition problems for various projects

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A meeting was held on Wednesday at the Sangam Auditorium under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma with all the concerned officials involved in various projects to address the problems related to land acquisition. In the meeting, the District Magistrate sought detailed information from the concerned officials regarding land acquisition problems related to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction-Prayagraj third line project, two ROBs between Bamrauli-Manouri station, Inner Ring Road Phase-1 and 2, additional land acquisition for National Highway No. 24B, compensation payment for airport runway expansion and four-lane road, Jasra bypass, and projects related to UPIDA, and issued necessary instructions. He instructed the Additional District Magistrate



Namami Gange/Land Acquisition Officer to coordinate with the project officials and the Sub-Divisional Magistrates of the concerned tehsils to expedite the resolution of land acquisition cases and to hold a meeting of all project officials every 15 days to ensure the resolution of all issues and problems. He instructed that the payment process for the lands acquired, where payment is still pending, should be completed expeditiously. He said that for the land

owners who have already received compensation after land acquisition and no dues are pending, the process of taking possession of such lands should be completed as soon as possible. The District

Magistrate also directed that encroachments be removed from the acquired land. He said that illegal mining should not be allowed under any circumstances on the acquired lands where the acquisition process has been completed. He instructed the Sub-Divisional Magistrates of Phulpur and Karchhana tehsils to quickly resolve the problems related to land acquisition for Ring Road Phase 1 and 2 and illegal encroachments on the acquired land.

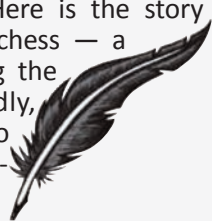
Notice

This is to inform the general public that my name has been mistakenly recorded in the records as Pratibha, daughter of Shri Shiv Sagar Singh, which is incorrect. My correct name is Pratibha Singh, daughter of Shri Shiv Sagar Singh, resident of village and post Kasia Purab, Chayal, district Kaushambi.

Editorial

18 And King: Gukesh's Stunning Chess Victory

b Dommaraju, aged eighteen, the teenage chess prodigy from India, became the undisputed king of the chess world on December 12 after defeating the defending champion, Ding Liren of China. He triumphed in a thrilling endgame—the final match of a 14-game series—in a dramatic turn of events. The endgame, which extended beyond five hours and was widely expected to end in a draw, saw Gukesh prevail with a masterful performance. Prior to the 2024 edition, there had been 50 editions of the World Chess Championship since its inception in 1886, when Wilhelm Steinitz won the first title. Over the years, the championship has been won by 17 individuals. Gukesh now becomes the 51st World Chess Champion and only the eighteenth person to achieve this pinnacle of success. And he has done it in style, defeating Ding Liren 7½–6½ at the conclusion of the 14-game match. “Historic and exemplary! Congratulations to Gukesh D on his remarkable accomplishment. This is the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work, and unwavering determination. His triumph has not only etched his name in the annals of chess history but has also inspired millions of young minds to dream big and pursue excellence.” Viswanathan Anand, the only other Indian to hold the title of World Chess Champion and mentor to Gukesh, tweeted on X: “Congratulations! It’s a proud moment for chess, a proud moment for India, a proud moment for WACA, and for me, a very personal moment of pride. Ding played a very exciting match and showed the champion he is.” More significantly, among the eighteen World Chess Champions in history, the blossoming Gukesh has stunned the world by becoming the youngest-ever king of the 64 squares at the age of 18 years, 6 months, and 14 days. Before Gukesh, the youngest player to win the World Chess Championship was Garry Kasparov, often regarded as the greatest chess player in history. Kasparov became World Chess Champion at the age of 22 years and 210 days, defeating Anatoly Karpov in 1985. Between 1985 and 2000, Kasparov won the championship a record six times (1985, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1995), thereby equalling the record of the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, who held the crown six times between 1886 and 1921. A prodigy, Gukesh started playing chess at the age of six, and as he himself says after becoming World Champion, he harboured this audacious dream for the last ten years, since he was eight years old. Unsurprisingly, winning young soon became the way of life for Gukesh. His first international win was at the Asian School Junior Championship in the Under-9 category in 2015, followed by winning the World Youth Chess Championship in the Under-12 category. Gukesh continued his impressive run by pocketing five gold medals at the 2018 Asian Youth Championship in the Under-12 category — in individual rapid, blitz, team rapid, team blitz, and individual classical formats. Gukesh completed the requirements for the title of International Master in March 2017 at the age of ten, at the 34th Cappelle-la-Grande Open. His rise thereafter has been meteoric, making “winning young” synonymous with being Gukesh. On January 15, 2019, he became the world’s third youngest Grandmaster at the age of 12 years, 7 months, and 17 days. Apart from becoming the third youngest Grandmaster, Gukesh also became the third youngest player to reach a chess rating of 2700 and the youngest to reach a rating of 2750. Gukesh becoming World Chess Champion is a moment of triple delight. Here is the story. Bharat is the birthplace of chess — a game first discovered during the Gupta period. Undoubtedly, chess is a gift from Bharat to the world, but it was later relegated to the backdrop.



INDIA Bloc's Survival Depends On Finding A Narrative, Not Just Opposing BJP

After the setback in Haryana and the disastrous performance in Maharashtra, the allies have begun questioning the Congress Party's leadership within the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc. One of the first to raise concerns was the Trinamool Congress (TMC), led by its supremo Mamata Banerjee, who is also the Chief Minister of West Bengal. She has even expressed her desire to lead the bloc. Banerjee has garnered support from INDIA bloc parties such as the Samajwadi Party, the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) or NCP (SP), and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), led by former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, which, notably, has historically been close to the Congress. Mamata Banerjee or the Samajwadi Party raising concerns about Congress's credibility to lead the INDIA bloc is less significant than Lalu Prasad Yadav, who has been close to the Gandhi family, doing the same. It is worth noting that his party, since its inception in the 1990s, has often either directly or indirectly supported the Congress at the Centre and has also contested elections alongside it. It has never been a part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Clearly, these latest developments suggest that the grand old party is now being cornered by its own allies. The party had believed that Rahul Gandhi's political



stature had risen after the Lok Sabha elections, but now even the allies are beginning to question that. The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the name of the Opposition bloc in the state, comprises two major regional parties — the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction). Even these two parties performed poorly in the state elections. In fact, the NCP (SP), led by veteran leader Sharad Pawar, delivered its worst performance in its stronghold regions of Western Maharashtra and Marathwada. This indicates that solely blaming the Congress for the Opposition bloc's disastrous performance in Maharashtra is an overstatement. A similar blame game unfolded in Haryana, where some regional parties criticised the Congress for not allying with Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Their argument was that such an alliance would have prevented the BJP from winning the elections.

However, the data did not support this theory. Even if the Congress and AAP had allied, the BJP would still have secured a simple majority. Then what about the victories of the INDIA bloc in Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand? Don't these victories reflect the effectiveness of regional parties in countering the BJP? Firstly, the INDIA bloc's victory against the BJP in Jammu and Kashmir was not particularly surprising. The saffron party has historically been a marginal force in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley, which is currently led by the regional National Conference (NC) under Farooq Abdullah. Even in the Muslim-majority areas of the Jammu region, the BJP often faces significant challenges. In Jharkhand, it is true that the BJP-led NDA failed to unseat the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led INDIA bloc — and much of the credit for this goes to JMM chief and Chief Minister Hemant Soren. The BJP was unable to effectively count-

er the JMM's strong regional narrative, which resonated deeply with the state's voters, particularly the tribal communities. However, it is not accurate to claim that the BJP consistently underperforms against regional parties, as some suggest — particularly those aligned with regional blocs. Even this year, the BJP defeated the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and came to power in Odisha for the first time, a significant political development. This achievement, however, did not receive much attention due to the BJP falling short of the majority mark in the Lok Sabha. Nevertheless, regional parties do present a significant challenge as they focus on regionalism, sometimes mixed with welfare — as seen with the JMM in Jharkhand or the TMC in West Bengal — to counter the BJP's Hindutva narrative. However, the critical question is whether this approach can be scaled into a national model. This is where the core issue lies for the Opposition bloc. The ideology of regionalism, centred on a single state, is unlikely to resonate in other states — and this is the fundamental challenge faced by regional parties.

A coherent and unified ideology is the need of the hour for the constituents of the INDIA bloc. Crucially, apart from the Congress and the three Communist parties — the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M), and the Communist Party of India

(Marxist–Leninist) Liberation or CPI(ML)(L) — the ideology of most other constituents is largely rooted in regionalism. Currently, the primary factor keeping these parties united within the bloc is their shared anti-BJP stance. This was evident again when parties like the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction), Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction), Samajwadi Party, and RJD endorsed Mamata Banerjee's pitch to be the face of the INDIA bloc, should Rahul Gandhi be deemed unable to lead. These parties seem unturbed by the fact that Banerjee's tenure as Chief Minister has been marked by widespread allegations of political violence and suppression of the Opposition. Her elevation as the bloc's leader is likely to discredit the coalition further. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether the CPI(M), an arch-rival of the TMC, would accept Banerjee as the leader of the bloc if she were to assume such a position. The fact is that, for now, anti-BJPism may hold the INDIA bloc together, but this unity is unlikely to endure unless the constituents agree on a common agenda. The Opposition alliance cannot rely solely on anti-BJP rhetoric, which has proven ineffective in appealing to voters, as demonstrated in Haryana and Maharashtra. The current divisions within the INDIA bloc over the leadership issue are merely a symptom of this deeper problem.

Why Syrians Are Between A Rock And A Hard Place

The replacement of the much-reviled Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria by a so-called “rebel force” that is actually just an Islamist offshoot of al-Qaeda and ISIS—which, remember, was headquartered in the Syrian city of Raqqa from 2014 to 2017—once again underlines how the turbulent history of that region is painted in countless shades of grey. As if the ongoing war between Israel and the equally Islamist Hamas left you in any doubt about that, of course. The Assads had ruled Syria with a mix of fear and murderous brutality for over 50 years. But that family, their Ba'ath Party and that general cohort were not religious fanatics. In fact, they professed the sort of secular socialism which evolved into the crony socialism-cum-authoritarianism seen in many countries ruled by similarly inclined people and parties. Even India and the Congress Party of the mid-1970s were not unlike Syria during that same period. The difference, of course, is that the

Emergency in India marked the apogee and also the end of authoritarianism. India never degenerated into a single-party rule—which appears to be the main cause of the rise of the Islamist factions all over West Asia today. Ironically, authoritarian secularism (and in Syria's case, also minority rule by the Shia Alawite tribe of the Assads) has led to the ascent of doctrinaire Sunni Islam and power being captured by its adherents.

As the news channels broke the news of the fall of Assad's government in Syria, I saw London's Oxford Street become an impromptu victory procession of cars with young men honking, shouting and hanging out of windows brandishing their homeland's distinctive opposition flag. It continued for well over an hour without any of London's uniformed finest visible. Maybe the Metropolitan Police were just relieved it was not yet another fraught pro-Gaza demonstration.

The Khalil Haqqani assassination shows a power struggle in Afghanistan

Gunfire erupted from the back window of a car driving past the fairground in Karachi's Liaquatabad: The blood of the dead was soaked up by posters and bunting calling for support of the jihad in Kashmir. Few people, an American diplomat reported in a secret cable on the February 1995 massacre, had heard of the group that had organised the fundraising event: Harkat-ul-Ansar. The Harkat, he wrote, was made up of Afghan jihad veterans who had served under Islamist warlord Jalaluddin Haqqani. The organisation promised “permanent jihad against Governments which they accuse of persecuting Muslims.” Four years later, months after their country had bombed his camps in Afghanistan, American diplomats came face-to-face with Jalaluddin, hoping to persuade him to hand over Osama Bin Laden. The warlord was exquisitely polite: It was, he said, “good to meet someone from the country which had destroyed my base, my madrasa, and killed 25 of my mujahideen.” He declined the request to hand over al-Qaeda's chief. Earlier this week, Khalil-ur-Rehman Haqqani—brother to Jalaluddin, uncle to his heir Sirajuddin, and a key figure in the network responsible for over 1,000 suicide bombings in Afghanistan—was killed in a suicide attack claimed by the Islamic State. There's more to the story, though, than mere irony. Less than a week before his uncle's assassination, Sirajuddin, the Islamic Emirate's deputy chief, had lashed out at its Emir, Hibatullah Akhundzada, for labelling the Taliban's opponents “infidels or apostates.” Tensions also flared over the imposition of taxes in Haqqani-ruled territories, which had been exempted for over a century. Likely, the gushing praise of his errant second-in-command in the Western press further stoked Hibatullah's rage. Most importantly, Islamabad has grown increasingly concerned about the Haqqanis'

failure to enforce the ceasefire they negotiated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists, who are regularly striking across the border. Once described by a senior American intelligence officer as a “veritable arm” of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Haqqanis now appear to be slipping out of Islamabad's control. “I do not know who carried out this act,” Sirajuddin proclaimed at his uncle's funeral—a statement of obvious significance, coming hours after the Islamic State claimed responsibility. Emir Hibatullah chose not to attend the last rites. From their strongholds in the remote Shah-i Kot mountains, Haqqani wireless operators once relayed news of the trials of war to the ISI. “Brother Jan, you are very waek writer by English [sic.],” one irate message from 1989 reads, perhaps protesting delays in supplies. Following 9/11, the once-powerful jihadist citadel seemed to crumble. Late in 2007, with peace on the horizon, the United States funded the construction of an all-weather asphalt road cutting north-west from Khost to Gardez along paths Haqqani forces had once used to assault Soviet and Afghan troops. The Indian subcontractors hired for the \$176 million project came under relentless terrorist attacks, halting construction.

The problem was resolved only when \$1 million a month was arranged for the Haqqani network. The warlord whom Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson once called “goodness personified” was now being financed by the very country that had come to Afghanistan to destroy jihad. Ever since the 1970s, Jalaluddin waged war against Afghanistan's socialist rulers, providing northeastern access through his Loya Paktia stronghold to ISI-backed Islamists. The network's leadership was drawn from seminars linked to the Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqaniyya in Akora Khattak, south-east of Peshawar, where Jalaluddin had been a student. The insurrection

How Noida's Jewar Airport Will Transform India's Aviation Sector

Noida International Airport Ltd (NIAL) at Jewar, in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, conducted its first flight validation test on 9 December. According to NIAL officials, the first commercial flight from Noida International Airport is scheduled to take off on 17 April 2025. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the construction of NIAL during a well-attended foundation stone-laying ceremony on 25 November 2021. An IndiGo test flight travelled from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) to NIAL, completing the final security-related analysis for the facility. Officials stated that



the flight was conducted under close coordination between the pilots and the air traffic controllers (ATC). There were no passengers on board when the flight landed on the 3.9-kilometre runway shortly after noon. Earlier, the Directorate General of Civil

Aviation (DGCA) had granted flight and security approvals. Technically, the airport will now be ready for commercial operations. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) oversaw the exercise, and all data collected will be submitted to the DGCA for review.

Supervising personnel included officials from the DGCA, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), NIAL, and the Uttar Pradesh Civil Aviation Department. The test assessed systems such as airspace coordination, communication protocols, emergency response readiness, and runway performance. Previous milestones included the successful calibration of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) and the Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) in October 2024. “With the validation flight completed, we are committed to finishing the airport project before the end of April”, said Union Minister.

Flipkart Under Investigation for GST Billing Loophole

Delhi : Walmart-owned Flipkart is under a preliminary tax probe for allegedly changing its invoicing processes to lessen its GST tax due. Investigators claimed the corporation disguised seller marketplace fees as "transportation costs" to claim reduced GST rates for small road transport operators. It would lower the company's tax bill. Online marketplace activities like buying, selling, charging vendors commission, listing, and facilitating payments normally incur 18% GST. The article said the Directorate General of Goods and Services Tax Intelligence (DGGI) is investigating Flipkart accusations. Mint said that regulators will submit a show-cause notice for prosecution if they have comprehensive proof against the corporation. A Madras High Court lawyer wrote to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Flipkart's invoicing practice. The



Federation of International Trade Investor Gunodaya Association raised the issue in a press statement on August 23, the article said. The Supreme Court of India monopolistic heat hit the company earlier this year. The apex court said the e-commerce giant created market monopolies and worried about smaller businesses' future. Flipkart's apparent use of its dominant position prompted the bench to notify the company's counsel of their monopoly investigation. The investigating Amazon and Flipkart's alleged anti-competitive actions in 2020, including subsidizing some e-retailers.

PM to inaugurate SEMICON India 2025

Delhi : The administration boasted that the fourth edition of SEMICON India 2025, which has grown double the size of last year's edition, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 2. New Delhi's Yashobhoomi (IICC) will host the gathering from September 2-4, 2025. Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea will all have their very own pavilions during SEMICON India. The United States, Malaysia will each host one of six country-specific roundtables. The number of states

In a \$235 million lawsuit against Byju's CEO, QIA

Delhi : Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) subsidiary Qatar Holding has petitioned the Karnataka high court to enforce an arbitral award of \$235 million (Rs 2,060 crore) against Byju Raveendran and Byju's Investments. From Feb 28, 2024, the claim includes 4% annual interest compounded every day, totaling over \$14 million (Rs 123 crore). The disagreement began in September 2022 when Qatar Holding loaned BIPL \$150 million. Raveendran personally insured the debt to buy 17.8 million Aakash Educational Services shares. The funding terms prohibited the transfer of those shares, but Raveendran trans-



ferred them to another Singapore corporation, breaking the agreement. Qatar Holding wanted \$235 million early payments after repeated failures. Arbitration in was held in March 2024 when BIPL and Raveendran failed to comply. An emergency arbitrator froze assets up to the disputed amount worldwide, which the

Singapore high court confirmed. Finally, on July 14, the panel ordered \$235 million plus interest paid immediately. The enforcement suit seeks recognition of the award as a court judgment and an injunction on transfers and attachment of Raveendran and BIPL's Indian moveable and immovable assets.

The CCI approves Adani's plan to acquire JAL

Delhi : A regulator for fair trade If Adani Group is successful in its effort to acquire debt-ridden Jaiprakash Associates during the current insolvency process, the deal would be sanctioned in principle by CCI.

In a press release, the regulator described the proposed combination as involving the

acquisition of up to 100% of Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) shares by Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL), Adani Infrastructure and Developers Pvt Ltd (AIDPL), or another entity within the Adani Group.

The Adani Group's acquisition of JAL has been authorized by the Competition

Commission of India (CCI). The firm in question must obtain the competition watchdog's approval before submitting a resolution plan, as a result of a recent Supreme Court decision pertaining to the interpretation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

CAG report criticizes income tax department's arrears

Delhi : The CAG report on Income Tax department performance, tabled in Parliament, raised concerns over non-sharing arrears and outstanding demand data with the audit team. The report (No. 14 of 2024) found that the I-T department failed to furnish information for over 42% of requisitioned instances, restricting audit scope. "The I-T dept did not provide data on cases closed after March 2020, preventing verification of the correctness of the closure of these cases," noted. On March 2021, CAG reported that the I-T outstanding demand, raised but not achieved, was Rs 14.41 lakh crore, with Rs 10.58 lakh crore 'under dispute', 73% of the total. "Audit noticed instances of exaggerated tax demands



raised by the I-T dept, such as not allowing credit for taxes already paid by the assessee, levying incorrect interest, and committing mistakes while giving effect to the appeal orders," the CAG said. The report also found that nullified demands remained in outstanding demand, and the delay in implementing appeal orders delayed refunds, result-

ing in the I-T department issuing refunds for the inflated demands with interest and harassing assesseees. Audit found incorrect reporting of outstanding demand, failure or delay in recovery of outstanding demand, and systemic issues like lack of granular data, risk scoring technique in setting targets, dossier report non-maintenance.

DGCA approves IndiGo's 6-month extension of agreement with Turkish Airlines

Delhi: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has approved IndiGo's request to extend its agreement with Turkish Airlines, subject to regulatory conditions, the airline confirmed. Sources confirmed that the extension has been granted for 6 months, till February 28, 2026. The present extension was supposed to expire on August 31. In a statement issued by IndiGo, it said, "We acknowledge the acceptance of IndiGo's request for extension to its wet lease arrangement with Turkish Airlines, subject to conditions laid down by the regulator.

Distributors want bottled water, aerated drinks and GST lowered

Delhi : Before the 56th GST Council meeting next month, a key consumer products distributor association has called for a reconsideration on classifying aerated beverages as "sin" commodities and a reduction in the 18% GST on bottled water. The All India Consumer Products Distributors Federation (AICPDF) said taxing aerated beverages as "sin" goods at 28% with cigarettes and tobacco ignores the fact that over 70% of sales come from small packs of 10-20 drinks, mostly consumed by



low-income groups. These products are in the highest GST slab (28%), plus a 12% compensatory cess. "Listing these with dangerous products like cigarettes and tobacco is unjust and disproportionate. It reduces affordability and demand in a sector that sustains millions of

shopkeepers "AICPDF national president Dhairyashil H Patil stated. Over 450,000 wholesalers and 13 million are represented by the federation. The federation also claimed lowering GST on bottled water from 18% will increase compliance, affordability.

Suzuki commits to investing Rs 70,000 cr in India

Delhi : While speaking at the e-Vitara launch, Toshihiro Suzuki, President of Global Suzuki, announced that Suzuki will spend Rs 70,000 cr in India over the course of five to six years. According to the head of the manufacturer, the investment would help boost production, introduce new models, and protect the company's position in the world's third-largest automobile market. More than 11 lakh people have found direct employment in the value chain thanks to the Japanese company's investment of more than Rs 1 lakh crore in India. Production of the e-Vitara electric SUV will begin in Gujarat, India, and will go to 100 different nations. Nevertheless, e-Vitara's launch in India has not yet been scheduled. The business plans to



Flight deck of Airbus helicopters to be manufactured by Mahindra

Delhi: An additional supplier for the main fuselage of the H125 helicopter, Mahindra Aerostructures (MASPL) has been given a contract by Airbus Helicopters, which is a boon to the "Make in India" aviation industry. Industrialization is scheduled to commence at the MASPL site in Bengaluru as per the contract, with the first fuselage delivery anticipated for 2027. After MASPL was awarded the contract to manufacture the fuselage of the H130 helicopter in April 2025, this work package was initiated.

tories on the 640-acre property, with a total annual capacity of 750,000 units. image.png

Cotton imports were duty-free till year-end

Delhi : The Centre has extended a cotton-import duty exemption until the end of the year to make the domestic garment sector more competitive, especially with the US's 50% tax on Indian exports. The Centre suspended 11% customs charges on raw fibre imports from August 19 until



September 30. The tax break would last until December 31, the finance minister declared.

Srijit Misri, a member of the Apparel Export Promotion Council, praised the decision, saying, "Council chairman Sudhir Sekhri wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting a policy initiative to save the sector and livelihoods due to the business environment and US tariffs. This move

is welcome." Tiruppur Exporters Association general secretary and Esstee Exports India Pvt Ltd chairman N Thirukumaran stated the exemption "stabilise the cotton prices in India to be at par with international prices". "The extension has come as a timely relief for the textile industry.

Three Bangladesh-India border land ports to close

Delhi : Though the news of a decrease in the goods and services tax (GST) has brought joy to consumers and businesses alike, it has also created an unusual dilemma for brick-and-mortar and online stores. According to businesses, festive demand, which typically starts with the Ganesh holiday in Maharashtra and Onam in the south, is being subdued while consumers wait for the GST rates to truly decrease, leading to a decline in retail prices. In the days leading up to Dussehra and Diwali, the festive opening is typically a very busy time, so this



is causing us concern. Companies selling automobiles and consumer products, as well as retailers, are sitting on their hands until a decision is made on the ground, due to the news of a GST rate cut and the imminent fall in retail prices. Stores selling white goods, such as televisions, air conditioners, and dishwash-

ers, have the same challenge. Customers are already contacting us in droves to find out when they may expect to see price reductions. According to the CEO of a leading consumer products company, buyers are now saying they will wait for the price cut before taking delivery.

Gangwal sold his 3.1% share in Indigo for more than Rs 7,000 crore.

Delhi : Interglobe Aviation (Indigo) promoter Rakesh Gangwal and the family trust are selling 1.2 crore shares, or 3.1% of the company's equity, for a minimum of Rs 7,028 crore, or \$801 million. 11 Improvements to the Cloud in 2025. The sale's term sheet said that the Indian branches of JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley are in charge of the block deal, which is set to conclude on Thursday at a floor price of Rs 5,808

per share, which represents a 4% discount to Interglobe Aviation's Tuesday closing. In September 2022, when he and Rahul Bhatia, another co-founder and promoter of the company, resolved their disagreement, Gangwal, one of the founding promoters of India's leading airline, began selling his stake in the business. This will be Bhatia's eighth round of stake sale in Indigo, according to statistics from 2022.

Always alert around Manoj: Priyamani

Priyamani opens up about Manoj Bajpayee's instinctive acting, revealing how his surprises keep co-stars alert during rehearsals for the new season

Actress Priyamani opened up about her experience working with veteran actor Manoj Bajpayee on the sets of *The Family Man 3*. In an interview with IANS, she revealed how his instinctive acting keeps co-actors alert on set.

She shared that being around Bajpayee requires constant focus, as you never know what surprises he might bring to a scene. When asked about working with Manoj Bajpayee, Priyamani described the on-set process of bringing the layered and authentic relationship between his character and Suchitra to life.

She shared, "I believe both of us are very instinctive actors. Whenever Manoj sir is on set, we rehearse thoroughly before going for a take. But you have to be very alert around him - always on your toes. You never know what surprise he might throw your way, so your presence of mind needs to be sharp."

Speaking about her character, Priyamani shared, "I don't think Suchi has grey shades. From her perspective, she's absolutely justified. At the end of the day, she just wants to be seen and heard. She wants someone to sit down, have a conversation with her - about what's happening around her, especially in her personal and professional life. She's seeking understanding, and in that sense, she's valid in her stance. I wouldn't take that away from her." "I can't reveal much about the guilt or tension. But as a character, Suchi has grown a lot. Her dynamics have evolved significantly. You'll understand more once season three releases," she added.

Priyamani is set to return as Suchitra Tiwari in *The Family Man 3*, the upcoming season of the Amazon Prime Video series. The show, created by Raj and DK, also stars Manoj Bajpayee, Sharib Hashmi, Ashlesha Thakur, and Vedant Sinha. The new season is reportedly slated for release around *Diwali* 2025.



A still from *Barfi*

Saurabh Shukla overcomes acting struggles

Saurabh Shukla opened up about his low phase, overcoming frustration with cameo roles, and rediscovering passion through *Barfi*

Actor and writer Saurabh Shukla recently opened up about a difficult time in his life when he had almost started to lose interest in acting.

The veteran performer, known for his outstanding roles in films like *Satya* and *Jolly LLB*, shared that there was a phase when he only received small "cameos" in movies, which left him "frustrated." However, it was during the filming of *Barfi* that he rediscovered his love for acting, thanks to his interactions with Ranbir Kapoor.

While speaking to ANI, Shukla talked about the "low phase" and recalled how he had almost decided to step away when *Barfi* director Anurag Basu approached him for the film.

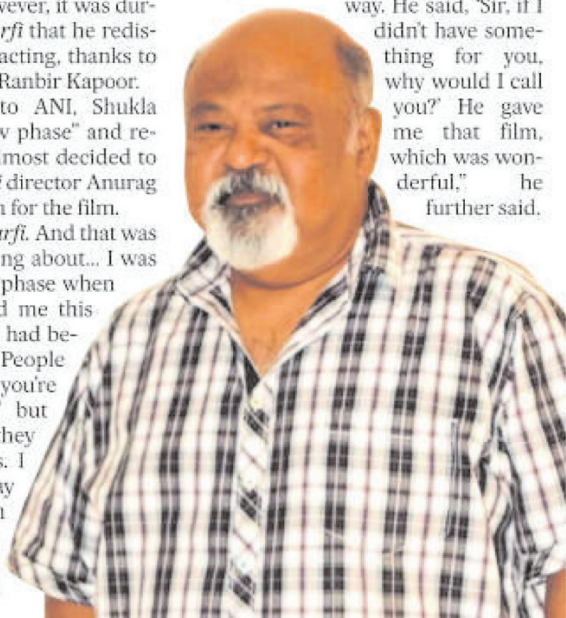
"I met Ranbir in *Barfi*. And that was the phase I was talking about... I was going through a low phase when Anurag Basu offered me this film, *Barfi*. By then, I had become so frustrated. People used to say, 'Saurabh, you're such a good actor', but when roles came, they were always cameos. I mean, you'd have a day of shooting... and in that one day, what could you do? How much of a role would

you have, and how much of your acting could you show?" said Shukla.

"I was really struggling. So, I started telling people that I don't act; I'm not an actor. I'm a writer, and I've made films. I started saying that. I was going through a low phase at that time," he added.

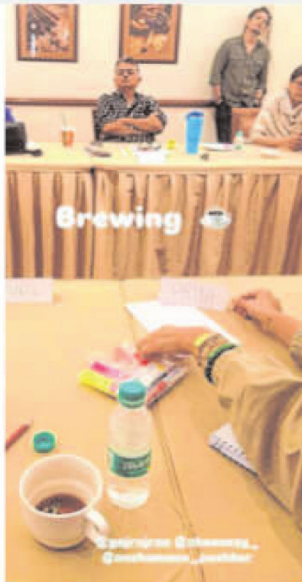
"When Anurag offered me this film, my first words were, 'Anurag, if you have something for me, call me. Otherwise, don't call me at all.' And I'm so lucky that he didn't take it the wrong way. He said, 'Sir, if I

didn't have something for you, why would I call you?' He gave me that film, which was wonderful," he further said.



New film brewing

Abhishek Banerjee, Gajraj Rao, Ahsaas Channa, and Anshumaan spark buzz with social media posts hinting at new project



Actors Abhishek Banerjee, Gajraj Rao, Ahsaas Channa, and Anshumaan Pushkar have sparked excitement on social media, fueling speculation about a new project.

The talented performers shared glimpses of a table read, with scripts spread across tables, hinting at a collaboration. Fans quickly connected the dots as the actors

tagged each other with intriguing captions and behind-the-scenes photos.

Known for their distinct screen presence, Abhishek Banerjee's versatility, Gajraj Rao's charm, Ahsaas Channa's fresh appeal, and Anshumaan Pushkar's nuanced performances have heightened curiosity about the project. While details remain under wraps, a source revealed that the film blends humour, emotion, and a rooted story. "The chemistry between the cast is already quite electric," the insider shared.



LAKME FASHION WEEK 2025

Runway filled with glamour

Vaani Kapoor closed the show at Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI Day 3, walking the ramp in a swirling pink floral lehenga paired with a corset blouse and spaghetti straps.



Views

Mrunal Thakur stole the spotlight as she walked for designer duo Pankaj & Nidhi in a bold golden metallic bodice and sleek black skirt. Her powerful, futuristic look wowed audiences.

Veteran actress Tabu mesmerized in a deep green embellished *Anarkali* for ITRH's "Noor" collection. Her graceful presence and traditional look radiated elegance and timeless beauty on the runway.



Yacht date sparks rumors

Katy Perry and Justin Trudeau spark dating rumors again after being spotted sharing a passionate kiss on her yacht in California



Popstar Katy Perry and former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have once again ignited dating rumours after being spotted getting cosy and sharing a kiss on her lavish yacht in Santa Barbara, California.

This comes after reports suggested the two had drifted apart, with Trudeau reportedly feeling 'uncomfortable' with the media frenzy following their intimate dinner date in Montreal. However, the recent photos seem to put those rumours to rest.

In the viral photos, Katy was seen in a black swimsuit, passionately kissing a shirtless Justin, who wore denim jeans, as they enjoyed some quality time together. The couple was also spotted hugging, with Trudeau seemingly nuzzling Perry's cheek.

A witness told The Daily Mail, "She pulled up her boat next to a small public whale-watching boat, then they started making out. I didn't realise who she was with until I saw the tattoo on

the guy's arm and I immediately realised it was Justin Trudeau."

As of now, neither Katy Perry nor Justin Trudeau have reacted to the dating rumours. Earlier in July, the duo were spotted together for the first time, enjoying a cosy dinner date in Montreal. Trudeau later attended Perry's sold-out *Lifetimes* tour stop in Canada.



Briefs

Landlord kills Hindu farmer in Pak's Sindh

A Hindu farmer was shot dead in Pakistan's Sindh allegedly by his landlord for building a shelter on his land, leading to widespread protests by the Hindus. Police arrested landlord Sarfaraz Nizamani and his facilitator Zafarullah Khan from Hyderabad.

Bride, groom, 6 others die in cylinder blast

A newlywed couple was among 8 people who died in a gas cylinder blast in Islamabad on Sunday. The incident occurred at a house where a wedding was underway. Rescuers said 8 people were killed and 11 hurt, as they pulled 19 people out of the debris.

At -37°C, air travel badly hit in Finland

Thousands of tourists were stranded in Finland on Sunday after flights at Kittilä were cancelled due to severe cold. The airport temperature dropped to -37°C on Sunday morning, after days of similar frigid weather, making de-icing of aircraft and other operations difficult. Finland's national public broadcaster Yle reported.

Mamdani flays language used at stir

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani criticised the language used during a protest outside a synagogue in Queens, where pro-Palestinian demonstrators chanted in support of Hamas while pro-Israeli demonstrators shouted racial and homophobic slurs, 'The New York Times' reported. The NYT said the protest was held on Thursday night and featured chants of "Say it loud, say it clear, we support Hamas here", after which Mamdani was questioned by reporters on Friday about the demonstration.

Renowned US historian Howe dies

Daniel Walker Howe, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian whose "What Hath God Wrought" became a widely acclaimed chronicle of the vast technological and social changes in the US in the first half of the 19th century, has died at age 88. Walker died on December 25, according to a spokesman for the University of California, Los Angeles, where he was a professor emeritus.

Killer nurse gets 'top' job in UK prison

Lucy Letby, the UK nurse convicted of murdering 7 babies and attempting to kill 6 others, has landed a new job at a prison in Surrey. After working as a cleaner at the prison, where she has been held since 2020, Letby is now working as a librarian.

TALKING TOUGH | Havana will get no more oil, money: Trump**Make a deal: US to Cuba**

WASHINGTON/CARACAS

US President Donald Trump on Sunday warned Cuba to "make a deal" with the United States or face serious consequences, warning that Venezuelan oil and money flowing to Havana would stop.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that Cuba had long relied on large amounts of Venezuelan oil and financial support, but that would no longer continue.

"Cuba lived, for many years, on large amounts of oil and money from Venezuela. In return, Cuba provided 'security services' for the last two Venezuelan dictators, but not anymore! Most of those Cubans are dead from last weeks USA attack, and Venezuela doesn't need protection anymore from the thugs and extortionists who held them hostage for so many years. Venezuela now has the US, the most powerful military in the world (by far!), to protect them, and protect them we will," Trump said.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel condemned the US for attacking Venezuela and capturing its president at a massive rally near the US embassy in Havana.

"Cuba condemns and denounces these actions as an act of state terrorism," Diaz-Canel said. "It is a shocking violation of the norms of international law — the military aggression against a



There will be no more oil or money going to cuba — zero! I strongly suggest they make a deal, before it is too late. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Donald Trump, US President

peaceful nation that poses no threat to the US," he added.

Venezuela supplies around 30% of Cuba's already scarce oil imports in exchange for thousands of medical personnel who work in the South American country.

Also, Trump signed a new executive order on Venezuelan oil revenue, which is meant to ensure the money remains protected from being used in judicial proceedings.

The executive order said if the funds were to be seized for such use, it could "undermine critical US efforts to ensure economic and political stability in Venezuela." "I love the Venezuelan people, and am already making Venezuela rich and safe again," Trump said. "Congratulations and thank you to all those people who are making this possible!"

JAILED MADURO: WE'RE WELL, I AM A FIGHTER

Venezuelan lawmaker Nicolas Maduro Guerra said his father President Nicolas Maduro sent a message through his lawyers saying he was in good condition and remained resolute in US custody.

"The lawyers told us they

were strong and we should not be sad," Guerra told leaders of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela. He quoted his father as saying: "We are well. I am a fighter."

AMERICANS TOLD TO LEAVE VENEZUELA

The US state department's Bureau of Consular Affairs warned as flights have resumed, US citizens in Venezuela "should leave the country immediately". The bureau said the security situation in Venezuela "remains fluid" and there were "reports of groups of armed militias, known as colectivos, setting up road-blocks and searching vehicles for evidence of US citizenship or support for the US."

US citizens are advised to "remain vigilant and exercise caution" when travelling by road and to monitor airlines' communications and websites for updated information. Xinhua agency reported.

PRISONERS RELEASED

The release of prisoners continued on third day in Venezuela, as Diogenes Angulo was freed on Saturday after a year and five months.

America launches new retaliatory strikes against ISIS in Syria after deadly ambush

WASHINGTON

The US has launched another round of retaliatory strikes against the Islamic State in Syria following last month's ambush that killed two US soldiers and one American civilian interpreter in the country.

The large-scale strikes, conducted by the US alongside partner forces, occurred around 12.30 pm ET, accord-

ing to US Central Command. The strikes hit multiple IS targets across Syria.

The Jordanian military later announced it had taken part in the strikes.

Saturday's strikes are part of a broader operation that is part of President Trump's response to the deadly IS attack that killed Sgt Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt William Nathaniel Howard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, the

civilian interpreter, in Palmyra last month.

"Our message remains strong: if you harm our warfighters, we will find you and kill you anywhere in the world, no matter how hard you try to evade justice," US Central Command said.

A day earlier, Syrian officials said their forces had arrested the military leader of IS's operations in the Levant.

The US military said

Members of Venezuela's opposition, activists, journalists and soldiers were among the detainees that families hoped would be released.

Angulo was detained two days before the 2024 presidential election after he posted a video of an opposition protest in Barinas, the home state of the late President Hugo Chavez. He was 17 at the time.

Trump said the release of people detained for political reasons came at US's request. "Venezuela has started the process, in a big way, of releasing their political prisoners," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "Thank you! I hope those prisoners will remember how lucky they got that the US came along and did what had to be done." Trump added should prisoners forget, "it will not be good for them."

'DON'T STAIN INDIA TIES'

An eminent Republican Indian American warned the proposed US bill targeting countries importing Russian oil could hurt India-US relations. Ashok Mago, founder chairman of the Greater Dallas Indo American Chamber, now the US-India Chamber of Commerce, said the move was "not very helpful while negotiations are going on between Delhi and Washington about the tariffs", and argued lawmakers should allow talks to reach a conclusion before escalating pressure.

"The 500% tariff is not a very good idea," Mago said.

Saturday's strikes were carried out alongside partner forces without specifying which forces had taken part.

The US is calling the response to the Palmyra attacks Operation Hawkeye Strike. Both Torres-Tovar and Howard were members of the Iowa National Guard. It launched on Dec 19 another large-scale strike that hit 70 targets in central Syria that had IS infrastructure and weapons.

Not 1, not 1,000: Azhar's suicide bombers alert

An audio recording allegedly by Masood Azhar, the chief of the banned terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed, has surfaced, where he claims a large number of suicide attackers are prepared to strike at any moment, 'NDTV' reported.

Azhar is heard saying over 1000 suicide bombers are ready and pressing him to allow them to infiltrate India.

He said the sheer number of fighters would shock the world if made public. He said, "Ye (suicide bombers) ek nahi, do nahi, 100 nahi, ye 1000 bhi nahi, agar poori taadat bata doon, toh kal duniya ki media par hungama mach jayega." (These suicide bombers are not one, not two, not 100, not even 1,000. If I tell you the number, there will be an uproar in the world media).

He said the individuals are motivated to carry out attacks and achieve martyrdom. The date and authenticity of the tape could not be verified.

'The Grateful Dead' guitarist-singer Bob Weir, 78, passes away

LOS ANGELES

Celebrated singer-guitarist and co-founder of 'The Grateful Dead', Bob Weir, has passed away at 78.

As confirmed by his family on social media, Bob Weir died after a long battle with cancer and lung issues. "It is with profound sadness that we share the passing of Bobby Weir. He transitioned peacefully, surrounded by loved ones, after courageously beating cancer as only Bobby could. Unfortunately, he succumbed to underlying lung issues," they wrote.

In a statement, his family reflected on his journey that started six decades ago and added, "For over sixty years, Bobby took to the road. A guitarist, vocalist, storyteller, and founding member of the Grateful Dead. Bobby will forever be a guiding force whose unique artistry reshaped

**Anti-ICE stirs continue in US**

MINNEAPOLIS (US)

Thousands of people have marched in Minneapolis to protest the fatal shooting of a woman by a federal immigration officer there and the shooting of two protesters in Portland, Oregon, as Minnesota leaders urged demonstrators to remain peaceful.

The Minneapolis gathering on Saturday was one of hundreds of protests planned in towns and cities across the country over the weekend. It

came in a city on edge since the killing of Renee Good on Wednesday by an ICE officer.

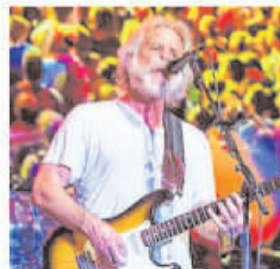
"We're all living in fear right now," said Meghan Moore, a mother of two from Minneapolis who joined the protest on Saturday. "ICE is creating an environment where nobody feels safe and that's unacceptable."

On Friday night, a protest outside a Minneapolis hotel that attracted about 1,000 people turned violent as demonstrators threw ice, snow and rocks at officers, Minneapolis police said.

Moms pass on maths anxiety to girls: Sunak charity survey

London: Mothers tend to pass on their own anxiety over maths to daughters, creating a gender gap of confidence in the subject over time, new research by an education charity set up by UK's former PM Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty has found.

The findings of the survey by the Richmond Project, reported in 'The Sunday Times' ahead of its official publication next week, reveal girls become less confident and hence less able in maths from the age of 8. It found 51% of boys aged 4 to 8 thought maths was "easy" compared to 41% of girls. This gap widened over time, with 86% of boys aged 9 to 18 saying they were confident in the subject compared to 63% of girls. "Our survey shows if they are parents, women tend to struggle more with helping kids with maths homework compared to men," Murty said. —PTI



American music. His work did more than fill rooms with music; it was warm sunlight that filled the soul, building a community, a language, and a feeling of family that generations of fans carry with them. Every chord he played, every word he sang was an integral part of the stories he wove. There was an invitation: to feel, to question, to wander, and to belong."

Weir was diagnosed with cancer and lung disease in July last year, when he began treatment before returning to his hometown stage for the celebration of 60 years of music.

Nepal royalists want monarchy restored

KATHMANDU

Supporters of Nepal's deposed royal family rallied in Kathmandu on Sunday, demanding the restoration of the monarchy ahead of March elections. It was the first rally by supporters of ousted King Gyanendra since a wave of violent demonstrations by disgruntled youth in September installed an interim government that set fresh parliamentary elections in March.

"We love our king. Bring back the king," the rally participants chanted around the statue of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who started the Shah dynasty in the 18th century. The last Shah king, Gyanendra, was forced to step down, and the monarchy was abolished in 2008, making Nepal a republic. "The last and only alternative for this country is a king and monarchy only, said protester Samrat Thapa.

"In the present context and the path the country has taken after the Gen Z move-

ment, there needs to be a monarchy restored to manage the situation."

Sunday marks the birth anniversary of Prithvi Narayan, and the annual rally in the past has turned violent with clashes between demonstrators and police.

Meanwhile, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel called for "safeguarding" national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as the Himalayan nation observed National Unity Day — the birth anniversary of nation-builder Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Paudel paid tributes to then-Gorkha King Shah on his 304th birth anniversary. He unified around two dozen smaller states into a greater Nepal in the mid-18th century.

Meanwhile, dissident faction of Nepali Congress kicked off a Special General Convention in Kathmandu on Sunday to chalk out the strategy ahead of the March 5 general election, despite objections by senior leaders.

Mandelson declines to apologise for association with Epstein

LONDON

Peter Mandelson declined to apologise to Jeffrey Epstein's victims for remaining friends with the paedophile financier after his conviction but said he was sorry for "a system" that meant Epstein's victims were ignored. 'The Guardian' reported. The Labour peer, who was sacked as US ambassador when details of his support for Epstein emerged in September, gave an interview to the BBC on Sunday, saying he had paid a "calamitous" price for his association with the "evil monster".

Lord Mandelson's association with Epstein had long been known when Keir Starmer appointed the peer as US ambassador. However, he was removed from his diplomatic post after No 10 said it had been unaware of emails from Mandelson to Epstein suggesting the financier's 2008 conviction for soliciting a child for prostitution was wrongful and should be challenged.

In his interview with the



BBC's Laura Kuenssberg on Sunday, the peer sought to distance himself from Epstein, saying he was "at the edge of this man's life", despite "toe-curlingly embarrassing" emails showing his support and a birthday message describing him as a best pal.

The interview is Mandelson's first broadcast appearance since being sacked from his diplomatic role in Washington in September 2025. Mandelson said: "I never saw anything in his life when I was with him, when I was in his homes, that would give me any reason to suspect what this evil monster was doing in preying on these young women."

He added: "The issue is as I was a gay man in his circle, I

was kept separate from what he was doing in the sexual side of his life."

If he wanted to apologise, Lord Mandelson said: "I want to apologise to those women for a system that refused to hear their voices and did not give them the protection they were entitled to expect."

Pressed on whether he would apologise for his friendship with Epstein after his conviction, the peer and former business secretary said: "If I had known, if I was in any way complicit or culpable, of course I would apologise ... but I was not culpable, I was not knowledgeable for what he was doing, and I regret, and will regret to my dying day, the fact that powerless women were not given the protection they were entitled to expect."

Asked if he deserved to be sacked, he said: "I understand why I was sacked." "I understand why [Starmer] took the decision he did. But one thing I'm clear about is I'm not going to seek to reopen or relitigate this issue. I'm moving on."



FIRST INDIA-FUNDED BAILEY BRIDGE OPENS FOR TRAFFIC IN CYCLONE-HIT SRI LANKA: The first Bailey Bridge built with India's aid to Sri Lanka has been opened for traffic in the cyclone-hit island nation, the Indian mission said in Colombo on Sunday. The 100-ft Bailey bridge was erected by the Indian Army, restoring a vital road link between the Central Province and Uva Province, the Indian High Commission said.

Kim Jong Un's sister seeks explanation from Seoul

SEOUL

The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has called for Seoul to provide a detailed explanation about recent drone incursions, claiming the drones from South Korea clearly violated the South's airspace.

Kim Yo-jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, made the remarks as South Korea's

AIRSPACE BREACH

Defence Ministry denied Pyongyang's claim about the drone incursions from the South's military, raising the possibility that private entities may have been involved in the alleged drone operations. Yonhap News Agency reported. "Fortunately, the ROK's military expressed an official stand it was not done by itself and it has no intention to provoke or irritate us," Kim said.

Apple extends hotel stays in S Korea

Apple has stationed executives in South Korean hotels close to Samsung and SK Hynix factories as the company works to secure long-term memory chip supplies. The move comes amid a global shortage of DRAM, with RAM prices surging up to 300% since mid-2025. The team is negotiating multi-year contracts for LPDDR5X modules required in upcoming iPhone models, currently costing \$70/12GB unit more than double the price at the start of 2025,

media reports said.

Apple's purchasing teams are residing in hotels in Hwaseong, Gyeonggi, within easy access to semiconductor plants. The strategy aims to ensure a stable supply of critical components as AI-driven demand continues to strain the global memory market.

TECH GIANTS COMPETE FOR SCARCER MEMORY

Apple is not the only tech company taking extreme measures. Dell, Google, and Amazon have also established

extended stays in South Korea to secure memory chips. The high demand has even benefited hotels, with business accommodations like Doubletree and Nine Tree in Pangyo seeing significant rise in long-term bookings.

Samsung and SK Hynix remain firm on short-term contracts, providing quarterly agreements, anticipating further price hikes through 2027. Server DRAM prices in Q1 2026 have risen 60-70% compared to Q4 2025, highlighting the tight supply situation.

AI DEMAND FUELS MEMORY CRUNCH

The shortage is largely driven by AI infrastructure needs, particularly high-bandwidth memory (HBM3E) for AI accelerators like Nvidia's H200, which requires eight HBM3E units per card.

Chinese orders alone have added \$3 billion in new demand since receiving US export approval, limiting DRAM availability for smartphones and other consumer devices.

Briefs

DUBAI

Mitchell topples Kohli for top spot



Indian superstar Virat Kohli was on Wednesday displaced from the top spot by New Zealand swashbuckler **Daryl Mitchell** in the latest ICC ODI rankings for batters following the latter's stupendous run of form in the just-concluded series. New Zealand won the series 1-2, their first on Indian soil in the ODI format, to end a 37-year wait. Mitchell scored two hundreds during the rubber and the 34-year-old also became the fourth-fastest male.

MUMBAI

Euro T20 league's 3 franchises



European T20 Premier League (ETPL), officially sanctioned by the International Cricket Council (ICC), today announced the owners of its first three franchises at an international press conference in Sydney, staged against the iconic backdrop of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge. The League confirmed Amsterdam, Edinburgh and Belfast* as the first franchise cities to join the competition which is scheduled to begin in the late summer of 2026.

SURAT

Srinagar Ke Veer clinch their first win



Srinagar Ke Veer secured a gritty 6-run victory over Falcon Risers Hyderabad in Match 19 of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) Season 3 at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium on Wednesday. Defending a modest total of 72, Srinagar's bowling unit, spearheaded by Dilip Binjwa, triggered a dramatic middle-order collapse to restrict Hyderabad to 66 for 9 in their allotted 10 overs, and secured their first win of the season. Batting first, Srinagar Ke Veer struggled to find rhythm against a disciplined Hyderabad attack. Amol Niluade

English Daily

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code

UPENG04488

Prayagraj

Printer, Publisher & Owner Swami Shree

Yogi Satyam for

Yog Satsanga Samiti

Printed at

PARASHAKTI OFFSET

118A/2A Chaukhandi

Kydganj, Prayagraj-211003

Uttar Pradesh

Published from

Kriyayoga Asharam

& Anusandhan Sansthan

Jhansi, Prayagraj-211019

Editor:

SWAMI SHREE YOGI SATYAM

All disputes of news and publication against the AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH are the subject matter of Allahabad Jurisdiction.

Email ID:

akhandbharatsandesh1@gmail.com

Mob. 9415235084, 9565333000

FIRST T20I | World's top ranked T20I batter showed no mercy on the Kiwis

Abhishek stars in India win

NAGPUR

Abhishek Sharma sent the New Zealand bowlers on a leather hunt with a scintillating 35-ball 84 after which the Indian bowlers put up a disciplined performance to beat the visitors by 48 runs in the first T20I, here on Wednesday.

Chasing 239 for victory, New Zealand were never in the race except for Glenn Phillips' (78) and Mark Chapman's (39) 79-run fourth-wicket partnership.

Eventually, the Kiwis were restricted to 190/7 in 20 overs, handing India a comfortable 48-run win.

Earlier, the world's top ranked T20I batter showed no mercy while making the Black Cap fielders look like mere bystanders with eight towering sixes and five fours.

Abhishek's carefree hitting also helped his skipper Suryakumar Yadav (32 off 22 balls) get some runs although he was far from his best. But the young opener's attack at all costs gave his skipper a chance to play himself in during a 99-run stand off 47 balls for the third wicket.

Towards the end, Rinku Singh (44 not out off 20 balls) got to play an innings of substance after a long time with India ending their 20 overs in fantastic fashion.

For someone who now-adays can hardly put a foot wrong, it took Abhishek exactly five deliveries to set his eye in against Jacob Duffy (2/27 in 4 overs) before the first of his eight maximums came out of the closet. It was a lofted six into the sight screen.

In between, Sanju Samson (10) and Ishan Kishan (8) wasted opportunities and when Abhishek got his chance next time, there was no looking back. Abhishek's USP is his tremendous bat-speed that he generates and New Zealand's attack didn't have any bowler



India's Abhishek Sharma plays a shot during the first T20I. PTI

Scoreboard

India: S Samson c R Ravindra b K Jamieson 10, A Sharma c K Jamieson b I Sodhi 84, I Kishan c M Chapman b J Duffy 8, S Yadav c T Robinson b M Santner 32, H Pandya c M Chapman b J Duffy 25, S Dube c & b K Jamieson 9, R Singh (not out) 44, A Patel c D Mitchell b K

Clarke 5, A Singh (not out) 6. **Extras:** (LB-1, W-14) 15. **Total** (For 7 wks, 20 overs) 238. **Fall of wickets:** 18-1, 27-2, 126-3, 149-4, 166-5, 185-6, 209-7. **Bowling:** J Duffy 4-0-27-2, K Jamieson 4-0-54-2, K Clarke 4-0-40-1, I Sodhi 3-0-38-1, G Phillips 1-0-20-0, M Santner 3-0-37-1, D Mitchell 1-0-21-0.

New Zealand: D Conway c Samson b A Singh 0, T Robinson c Dube b Varun 21, R Ravindra c A Sharma b Pandya 1, G Phillips c Dube b Patel 78, M Chapman c A Sharma b Varun 39, D Mitchell c sub (Ravi Bishnoi) b Dube 28, M Santner (not out) 20, K Clarke c Singh b Dube 0, K Jamieson (not

out) 1. **Extras** (W-2) 2. **Total** (For 7 wks, 20 overs) 190. **Fall of wickets:** 1-0, 2-1, 3-52, 4-131, 5-143, 6-189, 7-189. **Bowling:** A Singh 4-0-31-1, H Pandya 2-0-20-1, J Bumrah 3-0-29-0, A Patel 3.3-0-42-1, V Chakravarthy 4-0-37-2, S Dube 3-0-28-2, A Sharma 0.3-0-3-0

of express pace to challenge the Punjab southpaw. The bat comes straight and gives him ample chance to create more scoring zones in-front of the square.

The deliveries from Kristian Clarke and Kyle Jamieson came at an ideal speed of early 130 clicks on a featherbed and balls sailed over the ropes.

Such was his six-hitting prowess that his first three boundaries came off spinner Glenn Phillips' bowling after he had smashed four maximums.

At the other end, Suryakumar looked scratchy but two shots -- a back-foot punch through covers off Duffy and a whiplashed six off Clarke behind square -- did

provide glimpses of a vintage Indian skipper. But in general, he is still far from his best.

A normally consistent Black Caps skipper Mitchell Santner (1/37 in 3 overs) did try to slow things and got some partial success when Suryakumar was holed out at long-on, failing to get required the elevation.

Undeterred, Abhishek car-

ried on with his mayhem although he was out in the very next over when leg-spinner Ish Sodhi just shortened the length of his leg-break a tad bit and Jamieson gobbled it with his giant palms. Towards the end, Rinku got to face enough deliveries to make an impact as he clobbered Daryl Mitchell's for 21 runs.

PGT: Mudgway bags Yellow Jersey

Back-to-back victories have placed him firmly at top of general list



PUNE

The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 delivered exactly what its billing promised: a bruising examination of endurance, teamwork and nerve.

The Maratha Heritage Circuit, stretching 105.3 kilometres across Pune district, took the race deep into a landscape shaped by forts, steep gradients and unforgiving descents.

Starting from the Ladies Club in Camp at 12:30 pm and finishing along Sinhagad Road at Nanded City, the stage was designed to stretch the peloton physically and men-

tally. At the end of another relentless afternoon, it was once again Luke Mudgway of Li Ning Star, China (02:31:49), who stood tallest. Having claimed Stage One, Mudgway doubled down on his authority by winning the Maratha Heritage Circuit and retaining the Yellow Jersey.

The back-to-back victories have placed him firmly at the top of the general classification battle as the race moves deeper into Maharashtra's demanding terrain.

Mudgway did not have it all his own way. Alan Carter Bettles of Roojai Insurance Winspeed, Thailand, produced a composed ride.

India are incomplete without Pandya: Chopra

NEW DELHI

Former India opener Aakash Chopra says India are "incomplete" without Hardik Pandya, underlining the all-rounder's unmatched value as the team begins its final preparation for the T20 World Cup with a crucial five-match series against New Zealand.

The series is India's final T20I assignment before they begin the defence of their T20 world title.

Speaking on JioHotstar's 'Game Plan', Chopra reserved special praise for Pandya, calling him irreplaceable in the Indian setup.

"Team India is incomplete without Hardik Pandya. There is only one Hardik in the entire world. What he provides with bat and ball, no one else in India can do," he said.

"You might want a spinner like Varun Chakravarthy or Kuldeep Yadav in the eleven, but then you also need a batter at number eight. You can't have everything, you can't field twelve players.

ICC Board votes against BCB request on T20 WC travel

Bangladesh matches to be played in India as per the schedule

DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday rejected the request from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to shift its team's T20 World Cup fixtures to Sri Lanka, saying the matches will proceed as scheduled since there was no credible threat to the safety of Bangladesh players, officials or fans at any of the tournament venues in India.

The decision was taken at an ICC Board meeting held via video conference, which was convened to discuss the situation after the BCB raised concerns and sought a change in venues.

"The ICC Board noted that relocating matches under the present circumstances could jeopardise the sanctity of ICC events and undermine the organisation's neutrality as a global governing body," the ICC said in a statement.

According to the ICC, the Board reviewed multiple security assessments, including independent evaluations,



Jay Shah, ICC Chairman

all of which concluded that there was no credible threat to Bangladesh players.

ICC sources told PTI that out of 16 members, 14 voted against BCB's relocation request. The ICC has given BCB one more day to reflect and take a final position.

"Of all the members, only BCB and Pakistan voted in favour of the relocation request while all other voted against it. Bangladesh was given time till January 21 to confirm its participation but they have been given one more day by the ICC Board to

state their position," said the ICC source.

The ICC also said that making changes to the schedule at such a late stage was not feasible and that altering fixtures in the absence of a verified security risk could set an "undesirable precedent" for future global events.

The world governing body said its management had held a series of meetings and correspondences with the BCB in recent weeks, sharing detailed information on the tournament's security arrangements.

Of all the members, only BCB and Pakistan voted in favour of the relocation request while all others voted against it.

ICC statement

These included venue-specific plans and assurances of layered protection involving federal and state law enforcement agencies.

An ICC spokesperson said the organisation had engaged in "sustained and constructive dialogue" with the BCB with the objective of ensuring Bangladesh's participation in the tournament.

"Independent security assessments, comprehensive venue-level security plans and formal assurances from host authorities consistently concluded that there is no credible or verifiable threat."



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus celebrates after defeating Bai Zhuoxuan of China. AP

Sabalenka, Alcaraz, Gauff and Zverev advance

MELBOURNE

Another day, another record crowd. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz advanced in straight sets Wednesday and the No. 3 seeds - Coco Gauff and Alexander Zverev - also progressed to the third round of the Australian Open.

The combined numbers for day and night sessions, 103,720 fans, set a full-day record for the third time in

four days of the main draw at the season-opening major, which has become a festival of tennis.

Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka opened Day 4 with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Bai Zhuoxuan on Rod Laver Arena, and Gauff beat left-hander Olga Danilovic 6-2, 6-2 at Margaret Court Arena.

Alcaraz fended off Yannick Hanfmann 7-6 (4), 6-3, 6-2 in title at Melbourne Park to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

Zverev, who lost last year's

ing with Roger Federer.

"I didn't see myself playing that good but then talking to my team, I realized that I played better than I thought," he said of his tough outing against the free-hitting Hanfmann.

"I'm still getting used to the conditions, getting used to playing better." Alcaraz, 22, is trying to win his first title at Melbourne Park to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam.

Zverev, who lost last year's

final here to Jannik Sinner, had to wait through a half-hour rain delay and concern over a sore left ankle before beating Alexandre Muller 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

He was leading the fourth set 2-1 and serving at 15-0 when he had to halt the match and sit in a court-side chair for treatment.

"I took a painkiller. It was fine after that," he said. "I was a bit scared because it was toward the Achilles tendon. I just wanted the physio to check it out. After the

medical timeout I was moving fine, playing fine." He was playing a night match on John Cain Arena, the third of Melbourne Park's arenas with a retractable roof, where only ground pass tickets are needed for entry. So on a day with a massive crowd, it was still full late.

"The atmosphere is insane. The crowd is wild," he said. "I love playing here." Local hope Alex de Minaur beat Hamad Medjedovic 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 on Rod Laver Arena around the same time.