

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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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

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 Wiztown



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

offgrid

Rahul gets grandpa Feroze's lost driving licence

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

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



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 Thawar Chand 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 Immovable 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 cognizable 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

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 unorganized 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 Maanai Congress and AMMK in addition to the DMK alliance, the game may not change for the actor-politician, who was the first to openly declare that he would



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

Pandemic of greed has spread across India: Rahul

PTI
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said that the "pandemic of greed" has spread across the country, with urban rot as its most-terrifying face, as he urged people to demand accountability from the government.

The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha made the remarks in a post on X, along with a video of a report by a journalist purportedly from Sharma Enclave in Delhi's Mubarakpur Dabas, showing water spread across the locality due to sewage overflow.

"Every ordinary Indian's life today has turned into a hellish torment just like this. The system has sold out to those in power. Everyone pats each other on the back and then, together, they trample the public," Gandhi said.

"A pandemic of greed has spread across the country, with urban rot as its most-terrifying face," Gandhi added.

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 Graca 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

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 community members from the Bodu community are currently staying at Karigaon High School. In addition, 83 families have taken shelter at Tajougori in an open field, families from 10

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

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

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.

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.

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

is imperative to continue to work with renewed vigour

to strengthen Manipur's development trajectory, the Prime Minister said.

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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, discipline, 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

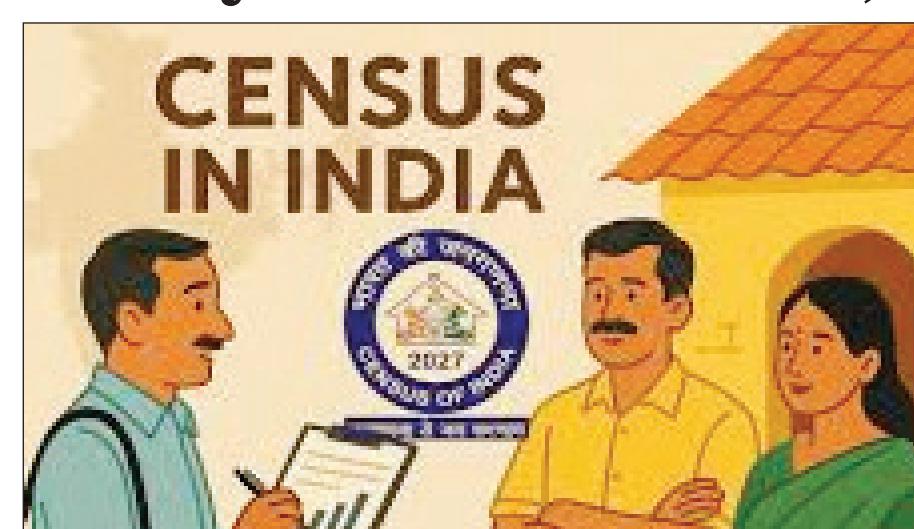


and to present details of significant agricultural initiatives during every Kisan Diwas, so as to motivate farmers to enhance their practices in the field. Universal Sompo Private Limited, the crop insurance company, was directed to encourage non-loanee farmers to enroll in crop insurance schemes. Additionally, 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

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



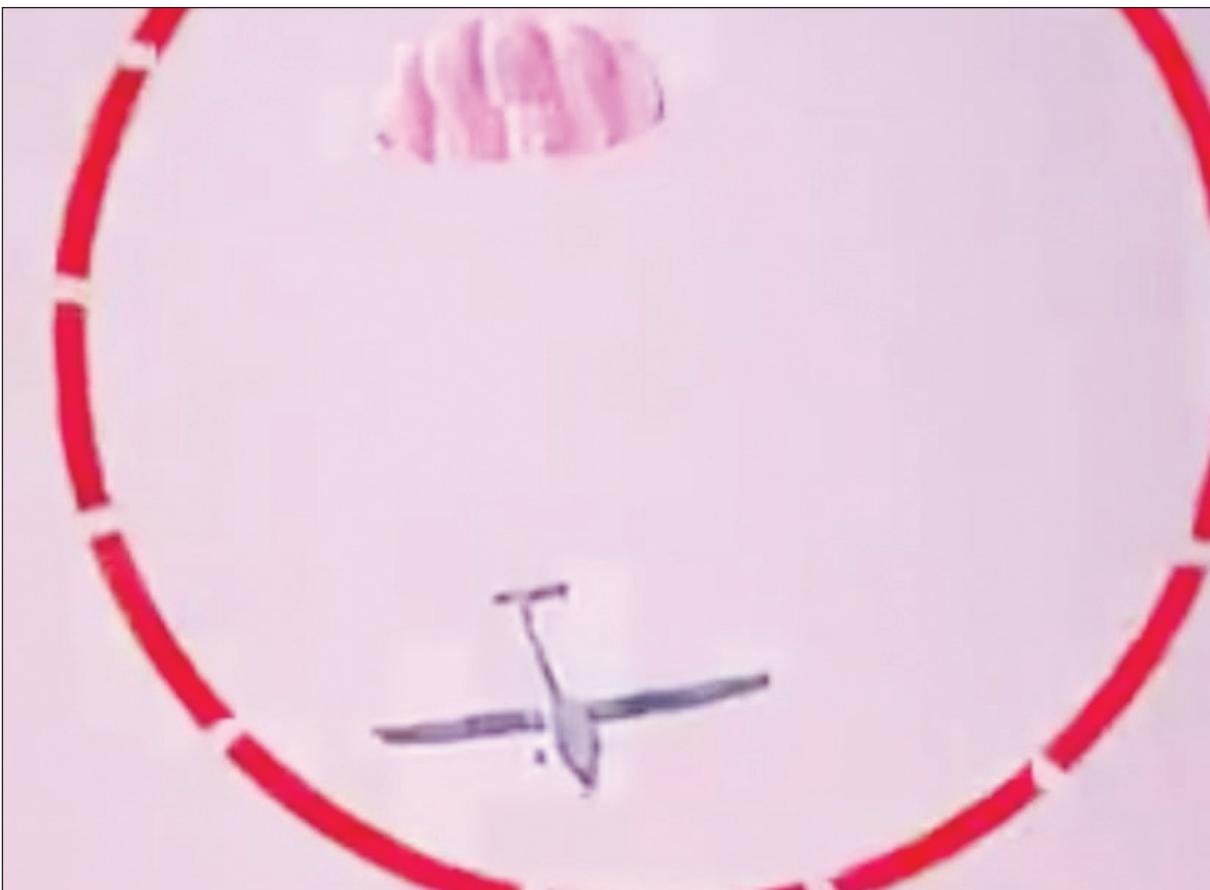
online portal will be used for this purpose. He instructed the officers to be technically vigilant and to complete all preparations within the stipulated time frame.

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), 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. Jitendra Kumar

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 them-

selves, 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

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, and possession has not yet been taken, the process of taking possession of such lands should be completed as soon as possible. The District

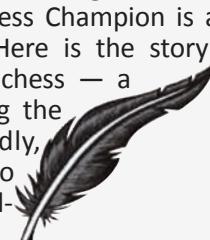
Notice

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 equaling 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.



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



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

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 welfareism—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 untroubled 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 Raqa 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 victorious 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 madrassa, 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 weak 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, southeast of Peshawar, where Jalaluddin had been a student. The insurrection

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

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



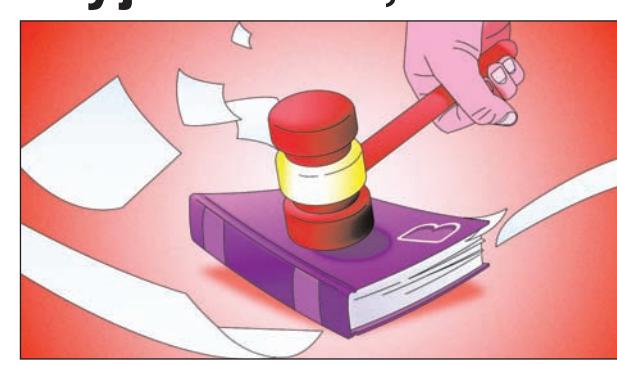
Delhi : Walmart-owned Flipkart is under a preliminary tax probe for allegedly changing its invoicing processes to lessen its GST tax due. Investigators claimed the corporation disguised seller marketplace fees as "transportation costs" to claim reduced GST rates for small road transport operators. It 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 (DGII) 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

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

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 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 assesses. 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



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.

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 dishwashers, have the same challenge. Customers are already contacting us in droves to find out when they may expect to see price reductions.

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.

Cotton imports were duty-free till year-end



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 dishwashers, 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.

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." Tirupur 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



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. 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.

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-Israel 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



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 roadblocks 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.

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.

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

In a 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 taatad bat doon, toh kai 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.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh



Anti-ICE stirs continue in US

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.

'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

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.

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

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, according

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

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

civilian interpreter, in Palmyra last month.

"Our message remains strong: if you harm our war-fighters, 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

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.

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," 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.

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".

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."



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-curling 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

'AI may be used as bioterror weapons'



Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates has warned AI could be used to develop bioterrorism weapons by non-government groups who may have access to open-source software. In his annual letter titled 'Optimism' with footnotes, Gates claimed though AI will change society the most, it carries considerable threats to the global population.

"In 2015, I gave a TED talk warning that the world was not ready to handle a pandemic. If we had prepared properly for the Covid pandemic, the amount of human suffering would have been dramatically less," wrote Gates. "Today, an even greater risk than a naturally caused pandemic is that a non-government group will use open-source AI tools to design a bioterrorism weapon."

Gates said humanity needed to be deliberate about how AI is developed, governed and deployed. He added there was no upper limit on how intelligent the AIs would become. "I

believe the advances will not plateau before exceeding human levels," said Gates.

Apart from the threat of bioweapons, Gates said the next big challenge will be the disruption to the job market. The pace of growth of AI was already disrupting the job demand in areas like software development. Biological weapons involve the use of bacteria, viruses, or toxins to cause disease or inflict harm on people, animals, and agriculture. This practice is categorised as biowarfare when conducted by nation-states and bioterrorism when orchestrated by non-state actors. The illicit trafficking of biological materials pose a challenge for the future of humanity.

Apple extends hotel stays in S Korea

media reports said.

Apple's purchasing teams are residing in 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.

AIRSPACE BREACH

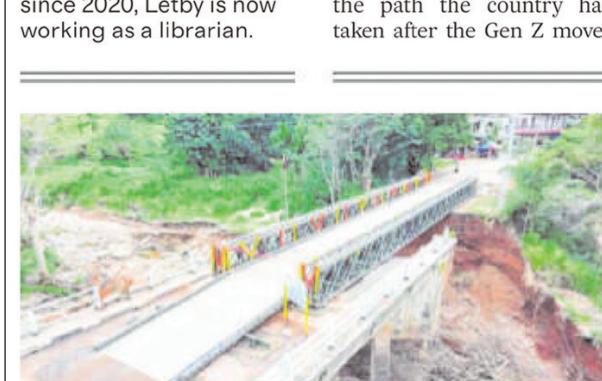
Defence Ministry denied Pyongyang's claim about the drone incursions from the South's military, raising the possibility that private entities may have been involved in the alleged drone operations, Yonhap News Agency reported.

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

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.

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



FIRST INDIA-FUNDED BAILEY BRIDGE OPENS FOR TRAFFIC IN CYCL

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 Birjwa, 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 Niluqade

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AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH
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Alahabad 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 nowadays 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 wkts, 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.

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 carried 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.

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 wkts, 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

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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 Rojai Insurance Winspeed, Thailand, produced a composed ride.

India are incomplete without Pandya: Chopra

NEW DELHI

Former India opener Akash 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."

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

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,

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 others voted against it."

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.

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."

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.

Rohit reflects on missing T20 WC

Ex-India skipper stated it will be strange watching from sidelines

NEW DELHI

Former India skipper **Rohit Sharma** on Wednesday said watching T20 World Cup from the sidelines for the first time in his career will be a "strange" experience as he reflected on the difficult selection calls and leadership decisions that defined his captaincy tenure.

Rohit and Virat Kohli, the two stalwarts of Indian cricket, now compete only in the 50-over format, having retired from Tests and T20 format.

India will begin the defence of their T20 World Cup title with a match against USA on February 7 in Mumbai.

The 38-year-old said the reality of stepping away from a global event hits harder than missing bilateral matches.

"We were talking about this at home, that it will be strange watching it from home, especially the T20 World Cup. From the time it started until now, I have been part of every World Cup, so it will feel different," Rohit said on a JioHotstar show.

"When you miss a World Cup, the reality really sinks in. That's when you realise you're not going to be part of it. However, I will be somewhere in the stadium. It won't be the same, but it will be a different experience," he added.

Reflecting on his captaincy journey, Rohit said one of the most challenging aspects of leadership at the highest level was taking tough selection calls while maintaining trust and respect within the dressing room.

"There have been many such instances of taking hard calls before World Cups. You will not be able to please everyone, but it is important



We were talking about this at home, that it will be strange watching it from home, especially the T20 World Cup.

Rohit Sharma

former India skipper

for the individual to know why a decision is taken," Rohit said.

Citing the example of Shreyas Iyer being left out of the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup in Australia in 2022, Rohit said team balance and multi-skill requirements often dictated selections.

"We felt we needed someone who could give us a little more with the ball. That's why we went with Deepak Hooda, who was in good form at the time. Shreyas would have felt bad, Deepak would have been happy - that's how it works," he said, adding that he and then head coach Rahul Dravid personally explained the decision to Iyer. Rohit said such conversations were also held with players like Mohammed Siraj, who missed out on the 2025 Champions Trophy.

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