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

Briefs

LUCKNOW

7 killed in multiple road accidents

A severe spell of dense fog swept across Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, triggering a series of road accidents in more than 10 districts and claiming at least seven lives, including that of a child. Poor visibility on highways and arterial roads led to collisions involving cars, buses, pickups and heavy vehicles, leaving over 40 people injured and overwhelming emergency services across the state. From western UP to Purvanchal, police and rescue teams remained engaged through the night and early morning as vehicle pile-ups and high-speed crashes were reported from Sultanpur, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Prayagraj, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Kanpur, Baghpat, Pratapgarh and Amroha.

CHANDIGARH

‘Defaulter’ shot dead in encounter

Notorious shooter Karan Pathak, alias “Karan Defaulter,” was killed in a police encounter on Saturday. The 23-year-old was the prime suspect in the high-profile murder of Kabaddi promoter Rana Balachauria. The encounter occurred after Karan allegedly escaped custody late Friday when a police vehicle, transporting him to a hospital due to chest pain, hit a divider in dense fog. During a subsequent six-hour man-hunt, Karan opened fire on officers, injuring one. Police returned fire, hitting him in the leg; he later succumbed to his injuries. The police are now investigating how the fugitive acquired a firearm while on the run.

JAIPUR

Cong accuses BJP of vote chori via SIR

Referring to media reports of alleged 1383 fake objections filed in a single day under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process in Ramgarh, Alwar, in the name of a BJP booth-level agent (BLA), the opposition Congress has accused the BJP of vote chori hijacking the mandate through forged documents. Former CM Ashok Gehlot said that the Ramgarh (Alwar) case is proof of not just vote chori but a well-planned conspiracy to hijack the mandate through forged documents. The BJP tried this across the state, but their plan has been exposed. He also demanded to lodge an FIR against the people involved in this alleged forgery.

money 🏠 special

Indian households add ₹117L crore in 2025 as gold rally boosts wealth

NEW DELHI

Indian households saw a massive jump in their wealth in 2025, driven mainly by a sharp rise in gold prices, a new report has said. The data compiled by HDFC MF Yearbook 2026 said household wealth increased by nearly Rs 117 lakh crore, or about \$1.3 trillion, during the calendar year, creating a strong spending buffer for families. The fund house said this was the highest wealth gain from gold price appreciation in the last 25 years. Gold prices rose by around Rs 57,000 per 10 grams in 2025.

EYE ON POLLS | The fully air-conditioned train will offer passengers an ‘airline-like travel experience at economical fares

PM flags off 1st Vande Bharat sleeper train

MALDA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday flagged off the country’s first Vande Bharat sleeper train between Howrah and Guwahati (Kamakhya).

He also virtually flagged off the return Guwahati-Howrah Vande Bharat sleeper train. During the event, Modi interacted with children and school students inside the train.

Developed to meet the growing transportation needs of modern India, the fully air-conditioned Vande Bharat sleeper train will offer passengers an “airline-like travel experience at economical fares,” according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office.

The train is expected to make long-distance journeys faster, safer and more convenient. The statement said that by reducing travel time by around 2.5 hours on the Howrah-Guwahati route, the service will also give a major boost to religious travel and tourism.

Later in the day, the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation and laid the foundation stone of multiple rail and road infrastructure projects



PM Narendra Modi during flagging off the first Vande Bharat sleeper train between Howrah and Guwahati, in Malda on Saturday

PTI

30 people arrested for Beldanga violence

Kolkata: At least 30 people were arrested on Saturday after fresh tension erupted in Beldanga in Murshidabad district. Talking to the media, Kumar Sunny Raj, Superintendent of Police of Murshidabad, said that 30 people were arrested for triggering violence at Beldanga. Notably, during the violence both on Friday and Saturday several journalists, video journalists were also injured.

—Aritra Singha

worth Rs 3,250 crore. The projects are aimed at strengthening connectivity and accelerating development in Bengal and the North East.

Modi is on a two-day visit to eastern India, during

which he is scheduled to criss-cross poll-bound West Bengal and Assam, combining infrastructure launches with political outreach as the countdown to the 2026 assembly elections enters a decisive phase.

Modi urges safety first

Kolkata: Before starting his address at a public rally in Malda in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday urged people to ‘come down’ from the pole they had climbed to see and hear the PM. “I know many people cannot see me but they can definitely hear my voice and the beating of my heart. I can see several people have climbed up the poles to see me but your life is more precious. I will be crestfallen if anything happens to you all and if you all get hurt. Your love for me is my world,” said Modi. Notably, in 2018, political controversy erupted after a tent collapsed injuring at least 90 people at Midnapore during the PM’s rally. The tent that collapsed was beside the dais and soon after the untoward incident the PM had immediately instructed a SPG to attend the injured people.

—Aritra Singha

DKS cancels Davos trip amid K’taka power tussle

BENGALURU

In a high-stakes move for the Karnataka leadership, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has cancelled his scheduled visit to the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, opting instead to camp in New Delhi to secure a firm commitment for the Chief Minister’s chair.

The Davos summit, set to begin on January 18, was initially on Shivakumar’s itinerary, but the Deputy CM has shifted his focus entirely to the ongoing power struggle within the state Congress.

While Shivakumar cited “official engagements” in Delhi and Bengaluru—including preparations for the party’s campaign against the Union Government’s replacement of MNREGA with the ‘G-RAM-G’ scheme and the upcoming special Legislature Session on January 22—sources suggest the real battle is for the state’s top post.

The political climate has reached a boiling point following the passing of the November deadline for an alleged power-transfer pact. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has maintained a firm stance, stating he will only step down if directed by Rahul Gandhi. However, the Congress high command remains non-committal, wary of alienating the OBC vote bank ahead of crucial general elections in five states.

DEATH OF NEET ASPIRANT

Oppn up in arms as medical report ‘confirms’ rape

PATNA

The opposition has upped the ante against Nitish government following the suspected rape and death of a NEET aspirant at her hostel in the state capital a few days ago, as the post-mortem examination report suggested that she resisted her assaulters for nearly one-and-a-half to two hours.

Contrary to initial claims by the police that there was no evidence suggesting that the girl was sexually assaulted, the post-mortem report has not ruled out the possibility of it.

Former Bihar Congress president and MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh visited the victim’s family in Jehanabad district and accused the police administration of trying to hush up the matter before the post-mortem report revealed the entire truth. He also demanded capital punishment for those found guilty of committing the heinous crime.

RJD spokesperson Chitrnjan Gagan alleged that the government appears to protect some high-ups.

Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor also visited the victim’s native village and met family members. On Friday, he met Patna senior

superintendent of police (SSP) Kartikeya Sharma with the victim’s family members

In view of the gravity of the case, Director General of Police (DGP) Vinay Kumar has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Friday evening to investigate the case. Patna Inspector General (IG) Jitendra Rana has been asked to supervise the probe and review it daily.

According to the post-mortem report prepared by a medical board at Patna Medical College Hospital (PMCH), the student resisted her assaulters for nearly one-and-a-half to two hours. The report said that all injuries found on her body were inflicted before death, indicating a prolonged and violent struggle rather than a sudden medical emergency. During the genital examination, fresh injuries, deep abrasions, tissue trauma, and excessive bleeding were found. The medical board has categorically stated that these injuries are not consistent with consensual sexual activity, but point toward forced penetration.

The case is being taken more seriously after the post-mortem report. To avoid any potential errors in the report, it is being sent to AIIMS Patna for a second opinion.

Indians flee unrest in Iran for home

NEW DELHI

Poignant scenes of relief and reunion unfolded at the Delhi airport on early Saturday as families embraced their loved ones who returned from Iran amid the worsening security situation there.

While some welcomed their children with flower garlands, a father held his daughter to his chest, smiling as tears welled up in his eyes - a moving image capturing the tumult of emotions these families endured while their children were stranded amid the political unrest in Iran.

Since Friday night, families were seen waiting anxiously outside the arrival terminal of the Indira Gandhi International Airport, scanning every group of passengers emerging through the gates in the hope of spotting a familiar face.

Many of those who returned from Iran on commercial flights, including students, described their last few days as tense and marked with uncertainty. “It was a very difficult time,” said a student who arrived from Tehran.

“The situation on the streets was tense and the internet shutdown made us feel completely isolated. Reaching India and seeing our families waiting for us brought a sense of safety and

Consular access

New Delhi: India will continue to press Iranian authorities to grant early consular access to the 16 Indian crew members of a commercial vessel that was detained last month, the Indian embassy in Tehran said on Saturday. The mission said it was informed in mid-December about the detention of the vessel, MT Valiant Roar, with the Indian crew onboard.

—Agencies

relief,” she said.

Recalling his departure from unrest-hit Iran, another student Shazid said the situation was uncertain, and the lack of communication made it worse.

“Once we were informed about the travel arrangements, there was a sense of relief. Reaching home and seeing our families waiting for us is something we truly needed,” he said.

A young woman, who is studying at a medical college in Shiraz, said, “The internet wasn’t working. So, we didn’t exactly know what was happening around the country.”

BJP accuses TMC of turning infiltrators into Indian nationals

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday charged that a “fake ID racket is running” in West Bengal under which the Trinamool Congress government in the state was projecting Rohingya and Bangladeshi infiltrators as Indians for electoral gains.

On a day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting the state, BJP national spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra while addressing a press conference at the party headquarters charged that as part of a major plan, “Rohingya and Bangladeshi infiltrators are being turned into Indians” in West Bengal.

Patra alleged that “TMC’s agencies have set up shop” for doing so. He added that this was why when ED raided the offices of political consultancy firm I-PAC on January 8, “chief minister Mamata Banerjee herself went and snatched the files”.

Asking if people have ever heard of such an intervention by a chief minister, Patra offered the reasons too saying she acted the way she did “because crores of rupees are being swindled, just to turn infiltrators into Indians. And the country will not tolerate this.”

AIADMK promises ₹2000 monthly for women, free bus ride for men

CHENNAI

Ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) on Monday announced a monthly assistance of Rs2,000 for ration card-holding families (women heads) and free bus travel for men in city buses as part of the first phase of its election promises.

Releasing the party’s initial set of commitments, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami said the proposed measures were aimed at easing household financial pressures and ensuring affordable public

transport for all sections of society.

Palaniswami said these announcements marked only the first phase of the AIADMK’s election commitments, adding that further promises covering education, healthcare, agriculture, youth employment and industrial growth would be released in due course.

Under the Kulavilakku Scheme, the AIADMK said Rs2,000 per month would be credited directly to the bank account of the woman head of every ration card-holding family. The party said the scheme was intended to promote economic equality and strengthen household security by placing financial sup-

19 Bills pending in RS, oldest dates back to 1992

New Delhi: As many as 19 government Bills remain pending in the Rajya Sabha, with the oldest, pertaining to population control, dating back to 1992. While the Bills pending in the Lok Sabha lapse when the House is dissolved, a Bill pending in the Rajya Sabha never lapses. According to a bulletin of the Upper House, there are 19 pending Bills at present, the oldest being The Constitution (Seventy-ninth Amendment) Bill, 1992. The Bill proposed to amend the Directive Principles of State Policy to provide that the State shall promote population control and the small family norm, and to include promoting and adopting the small family norm in the Fundamental Duties. It also proposed that an MP or an MLA should be disqualified if they have more than two children.

—Agencies

ICICI Bank Q3 profit slips 2.68% to ₹12,538 cr

MUMBAI

ICICI Bank consolidated profit for the December quarter declined 2.68 per cent to Rs 12,537.98 crore, hit by an RBI-mandated Rs 1,283-crore provision for agricultural loans wrongly classified as priority sector advances.

On a standalone basis, the country’s second-largest lender reported an over 4 per cent decline in the October-December profit at Rs 12,883 crore. The bank also announced that its board has decided to extend Managing Director and Chief Executive Sandeep Bakhshi’s term by two years, a surprising move given the usual practice of top leadership at banks getting three-year extensions.

Its Executive Director Sandeep Batra elaborated on the RBI’s action and added

that if not for that, the bank’s standalone net profit would have shown a 4 per cent increase.

Batra said ICICI Bank was asked by the RBI to set aside Rs 1,283 crore as standard asset provision for working capital advances on the agricultural lending front which should not have been classified as priority sector loans (PSL).

The provisioning requirements for PSLs is different from other loans, he said, adding that the RBI’s action is with respect of loans of Rs 20-25,000 crore done since 2012.

The central bank asked the bank to set aside the money following its annual supervisory exercise for FY25, Batra said, stressing that the bank is satisfied with the asset quality of loans and the provisions will get written-back as the loans get repaid.

TVK constitutes election campaign panel: Vijay

Chennai: With preparations gaining momentum for the forthcoming Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly General Elections, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) President Vijay announced the constitution of an Election Campaign Committee to coordinate and oversee poll-related activities across the state. In an official letter issued to party functionaries and cadres on Friday, Vijay said that the newly formed committee will be responsible for managing and supervising election campaign activities at the state, district and constituency levels.

—Agencies

port in the hands of women. In another major announcement, the AIADMK said free bus travel would be extended to men travelling in city buses, while the existing free bus travel scheme for

women would continue. The party stated that the move would help reduce commuting costs and improve access to public transport. Housing forms a key component of the first phase of promises.

Finally, truth has prevailed, Delhi CM says on Atishi row

New Delhi: Delhi



Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday said that “truth has prevailed” after Assembly Speaker Vijendra Gupta presented a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report confirming that there was no tampering in the audio-video

recording of the Delhi Assembly proceedings, where LoP and AAP leader Atishi allegedly insulted ‘Sikh Guri’.

CM Gupta also launched a sharp attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the controversy involving alleged remarks made by Atishi.

SRA Issues Lol to MHADA for 3 slum rehabilitation schemes in Mumbai

The Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) has issued Letters of Intent (LOI) to MHADA for the development of three slum rehabilitation schemes in Mumbai. These schemes are located at Jogeshwari (East), Nehru Nagar in Kurla, and the Chembur area. The Letters of Intent (LoI) have been granted to the following Slum Rehabilitation Cooperative Housing Societies: Saibaba Welfare SRA Cooperative Housing Society, Jogeshwari (East); Jagruti SRA Cooperative Housing Society, Chembur; and Shramik SRA Cooperative Housing Society, Nehru Nagar, Kurla. In this regard, a review meeting was held on January 16, 2026 at the office of the SRA under the

chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary (Housing), Asim Kumar Gupta. The meeting was attended by the Chief Executive Officer of SRA, Dr. Mahendra Kalyankar, along with representatives from MHADA, MMRDA, MSRDC, CIDCO, MAHAP-REET, and MIDC. The Government has decided to implement stalled slum rehabilitation projects under the Joint Venture (JV) model. Under this model, development works will be carried out through coordinated efforts between the SRA and various government agencies. During the meeting, issues faced by projects being implemented under the Joint Venture model were reviewed in detail, and necessary directions were issued to resolve them.

Opposition is working to spread confusion about MNREGA— Dr. Vinod Bind



Chandauli

MP Dr. Vinod Bind distributed blankets among hundreds of poor, deprived and helpless people in Chhatrashahpur and Dulhipur of Gyanpur Legislative Assembly. During the blanket distribution, the achievements made by the Modi government were told. He said that today we all have come here with the spirit of service, sympathy and determination through Vikas Bharat-Ji Ram Ji Public awareness campaign and blanket distribution program. Said that the opposition is working to spread confusion regarding MNREGA. I want to say clearly that if anyone has

done the work of strengthening MNREGA, providing timely work and payment to the workers, it is the present government Modi who has done it. Digital payments, transparency and curbing corruption are all today's truth, which the opposition wants to hide. Said that Prime Minister Modi Vikas Bharat Ji Ram Ji is not just a slogan, it is the respect of the poor, the rights of labourers, the income of farmers and the future of the youth. Said that while the opposition only spreads rumours, Modi government works on the ground and other public utility works including roads, electricity, housing, toilets,

Ayushman and employment are being done by them. He also gave this message through blanket distribution that Both the government and the society are committed to reach the last person. Questioning the people present, he asked whether there is no road in the village today? Is there no electricity? Are the poor not getting their rights? The truth is that development is visible and this is what is troubling the opposition the most. Said that let us all together strengthen the resolve of a developed India—Ji Ram Ji. Reject the politics of lies and illusion and move forward with true Development.

First Global Convention of Diaspora Assamese Begins at IIT Guwahati Assam



The first global convention of diaspora Assamese kicked off at IIT Guwahati, Assam with a two-day program. Hundreds of representatives from various countries across the world participated in the convention. Distinguished guests included Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles Pabitra Margherita, Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, Speaker of the Majuli Session Dr. Pitambar Dev Goswami and former Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University Dr. Amarjyoti Chaudhury. In his speech, Minister Pabitra Margherita urged diaspora Assamese, holding Assam flag, to unite in serving Assam Mata. Dr. Pitambar Dev Goswami, Satradhikar of the Majuli Satra, emphasized in his address that diaspora Assamese should play a leading role in showcasing

Assam vibrant cultural heritage on the global stage. Renowned academic and former Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University Dr. Amarjyoti Chaudhury appealed to diaspora Assamese to share their knowledge and experiences gained abroad with the land of Assam for the welfare of the homeland and its people. IIT Guwahati Director Prof. Devendra Jhaal formally inaugurated the opening session. Today program featured discussions on diverse topics including wildlife and artificial intelligence, Assam as a living museum, Assam tourism, urban planning in Assam, Assam commerce, Assam youth and human resources. Special bird experts also deliberated on nearly 900 species of birds found in Assam natural Environment.

BJP MP filled form number 6



Chandauli. For the maximum voter campaign run by the Bharatiya Janata Party, form number 6 was filled by MP Vinod Bind as a booth migrant at booth number 96 in Chandrapura. In which more than 50 new voters were formed. BJP MP Dr. Vinod Kumar Bind said that the work of adding new voters is being done by the workers with full dedication and promptness by observing the current voter list and the voter list of 2003. The work of saving votes is being done by showing the valid documents of the voters whose names are in the ASDD list to the concerned officer. In which booth president Surendra Bind BLO Sunita Yadav, Vishwanath Bind Mukesh Gaud etc. were mainly Present. Let us tell you that after the deletion of names of 2.89 crore voters across the state in SIR, all the political parties are losing sleep. The ruling party BJP is also restless. The party is more worried about urban seats and those seats which are won and lost with small margins. Keeping this in mind, BJP has decided to leave all work and concentrate only on SIR. The biggest focus is on making new voters through Form 6.

Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association Organizes Successful 'Rupohi Haat' Bhogali Mela on Magh Bihu

On the occasion of Magh Bihu, the Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association successfully organized a three-day 'Rupohi Haat' Bhogali Mela and traditional Uruka community feast at the Assam Bhawan premises in Kolkata, two days before the main Bihu celebrations. The event once again showcased the richness of Assamese culture, traditions and indigenous entrepreneurship, drawing enthusiastic participation from various communities. Launched in 2023 as an independent initiative by the Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association, Rupohi Haat featured vendors from various districts of Assam selling indigenous food items, textiles, jewelry and other traditional products. Over the years, this fair has carved out a distinct identity in Kolkata, earning praise not only from the Assamese community but also from Bengali-speaking residents, symbolizing cultural harmony between Assam and



Bengal. This year Rupohi Haat was inaugurated by Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka in the presence of Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association President Dr. Khnindra Pathak, Joint Resident Commissioner of Assam Bhawan Randeep Dam, Chief advisor Dev Sonowal and other members. The governor opened the main gate, crafted in the traditional Assamese Nangola style, to formally launch the fair. In his inaugural address, the governor described women empowerment as the cornerstone of creation, citing examples of

doctors achieving self-reliance through floriculture. He highlighted the hard work of Chhattisgarh beggar-free residents and appealed to everyone to plant and nurture at least one tree to do so in the future. Emphasizing the unique identity of the Assamese language and culture, the governor said no culture or personality is comparable to another, as each has its distinct features. He described cultures as complementary rather than competitive and praised the association efforts in organizing Rupohi Haat in Kolkata as a significant step toward cultural har-

mony. This year, participants from Suwalkuchi, Barpeta, Sribhumi, Bodoland, Guwahati and other areas of Assam took part. At the governor initiative, five vendors from Chhattisgarh joined as the 'guest state.' During his tour of the stalls, the governor interacted with vendors, offering advice and encouragement from his vast experience. On the final evening, around 400 Kolkata residents enjoyed the Bhogali feast featuring traditional Assamese dishes. This was followed by captivating performances by Indira Deka Roy, Sujata Paul, Abhipriya Goswami, Kanushree Barua, guest singer Anwesha Kann Bora from Tezpur, Harsha Rib Shandilya and Swapnil Kashyap, which mesmerized the audience. Conducting the program, association General Secretary Indukalpa Saikia said the main objective of such initiatives is to familiarize the younger generation in Kolkata with Assamese language.

Taxi Owners Association of Rupaidiha Organizes Khichdi Feast on Makar Sankranti

Bahraich

On the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti, the Taxi Owners Association Committee of Rupaidiha organized a Khichdi feast program, continuing a tradition from previous years. The event took place on Friday from 6 PM to 9 PM at Rahul Party Palace. The program was graced by the presence of respected members of the committee, well-wishers and many prominent citizens of the area. Everyone collectively enjoyed the Khichdi feast and exchanged Makar Sankranti greetings. The committee president, Jamaluddin, stated that



Makar Sankranti is a festival of social harmony, mutual brotherhood and unity, which the committee celebrates together every year. He said that such events promote mutual cooperation and harmony in society. The committee secretary, Santosh Kumar Shukla, said that such events strengthen

the organization and improve coordination among the members. The committee patron, Arvind Shukla, praised the event, saying that such programs play a vital role in keeping traditions alive and connecting society. The program concluded in a harmonious atmosphere.

Trade Association Elections in Border Town Rupaidiha Today, 836 Traders to Cast Votes

Bahraich

The elections for the Rupaidiha branch of the Industry and Trade Association will be held today in Rupaidiha, a border town located on the India-Nepal border. There is considerable enthusiasm among traders for this election, which is being held through ballot papers after 25 years. Meanwhile, the candidates are feeling the pressure. Voting will take place from 9 AM to 3 PM at Singh Market in Bajaja Line. A total of 836 registered traders will exercise their franchise to decide the fate of 28 candidates. The election preparations for the Industry and Trade Representatives Association, Rupaidiha branch, are in their final stages. The election will be conducted under the



supervision of a five-member management committee, which includes Sanjay Bansal, Shakeel Ahmed, Vivek Shukla Advocate, Maniram Sharma and Diwakar Pathak. The election will select one president, one general secretary, one treasurer and 11 executive committee members. There is a tough competition for the president post between Shailesh Jaiswal and Yogendra Sharma. Santosh Agarwal and Shahid Hashmi are contesting for the general secretary position. Amit Kaushal and Ghulam Waris are in the fray for the treasurer

post. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Nanpara and the local police administration have been informed and adequate security arrangements have been made for a peaceful and fair election. There is a wave of excitement among traders regarding this election, which is being held by ballot paper after 25 years, and an election atmosphere prevails throughout the market area. On the other hand, Anil Agarwal, the president of the Rupaidiha Trade Association, has appealed to keep the market open during the elections.

Bahraich

The illegal mining business is openly flourishing in the Mihipurwa tehsil area. The administration inaction has further emboldened the mining mafia. The latest incident involves the villages of Urna and Madhwapur, where large-scale illegal mining has taken place on village common land and enemy property. According to local villagers, approximately 50 tractor-trolleys of soil/sand were illegally mined in Urna village, while about 100 tractor-trolleys of material were extracted from land declared as enemy property in Madhwapur village. This has resulted in a revenue loss of millions of rupees for the government. This mining was carried out in broad daylight using JCB and tractor-trolleys, but no concrete action has been taken by the responsible authorities. Villagers reported that the illegal mining is not only damaging gov-

Illegal Mining Rife in Mihipurwa, Administration Remains Silent



ernment land but also affecting nearby fields, roads and the environment. Roads are being damaged due to soil erosion and waterlogging, causing inconvenience to commuters. Sources say that the mining mafia is operating under the protection of influential local people. Despite complaints, the administration action has been limited to

paperwork. Villagers have informed the tehsil and mining department several times, but the machinery is removed before officials arrive at the site.

The villagers have demanded that the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police immediately stop the illegal mining. They have also

demanding strict action against the culprits and the seizure of vehicles used in the mining. They have also requested that the village common land and enemy property be surveyed and compensation for the damage be ensured, so that effective control can be maintained over such cases in the future.

Kriya Yoga Practice Leads to the Realization of Truth: Swami Shri Yogi Satyam

Sadhana (spiritual practice) eliminates the distance between the seeker and the sought, Kriya Yoga practice leads to the experience of non-duality



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. At the Kriya Yoga Ashram camp located at the

Sangam Lower junction in the Magh Mela area, continuous service activities are underway, and daily Kriya Yoga practice is being

conducted under the guidance of the International Kriya Yoga Guru and founder and president of Kriya Yoga Ashram, Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji Maharaj. Seekers from India and abroad are participating in the practice at the Kriya Yoga Ashram camp, seeking spiritual peace along with the practice. Kriya Yoga is considered a science that leads to the realization of the truth inherent in all spiritual practices and forms of worship. Gururji Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji Maharaj explained that through the regular practice of Kriya Yoga, the distance between the seeker, the means, and the goal



is eliminated, allowing the seeker to directly experience the truth. He also explained that through Kriya Yoga, the seeker's consciousness expands, and they rise above external rituals, entering a state of spiritual experience. As the depth of practice increases, the feeling of duality gradually diminishes, and the seeker's perspective transforms into non-duality. From a spiritual perspective, Kriya Yoga is considered a path through which an inward journey is possible through practice. In this state, the seeker experiences themselves as inseparable from the truth. Kriya Yoga is not merely a method of spiritual



practice, but a scientific path to self-realization, which introduces a person to their true nature. Thus, through the practice of Kriya Yoga,

a person not only attains spiritual peace but also develops a broader and more holistic perspective on life.

Divisional Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition Inaugurated by Phulpur MPA

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. On the auspicious occasion of Magh Mela-2026, the Uttar Pradesh Khadi and Village Industries Board has organized a divisional-level Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition at Parade Ground, Triveni Road, Prayagraj. This exhibition will remain open to the public until February 15, 2026. In the inauguration ceremony held on Friday, the chief guest, Phulpur MP Praveen Patel, and the special guest, Member of the Legislative Council Surendra Chaudhary, jointly inaugurated the exhibi-



tion by cutting the ribbon. On this occasion, MP Praveen Patel emphasized strengthening the Swadeshi (indigenous) movement, stating that increased use

of Khadi and village industry products will improve the living standards of traditional artisans, craftsmen, spinners, and weavers in rural areas. He

described the Prime Minister's 'Local for Local' mantra as the foundation for the success of the Swadeshi movement. A total of 210 stalls have been set up for

Khadi institutions and village industry units in the exhibition. Khadi institutions from Uttar Pradesh, as well as from Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, and other states are participating. Various types of Khadi fabrics and garments, including cotton, wool, silk, Katiya, and poly Khadi, are being sold and displayed here. During the program, District and Regional Village Industries Officer Jawahar Lal welcomed the guests by presenting them with shawls and mementos. Finally, gratitude was expressed

to the guests and attendees. On this occasion, Regional Village Industries Officer Varanasi U.P. Singh, Village Industries Officer Bhadohi Rajesh Kumar Singh, Principal Assistant Varanasi Sanjay, and several other officers and employees were present. The stage was managed by Senior Auditor Rakesh Mohan Gupta and Anumati Dixit. Many people, including Sunil Kumar, O.P. Maurya, Mahendra Kushwaha, Amit Kumar, Rajesh Pandey, Ashish Yadav, Anuj Ramlal, Vishnu Mishra, Dinesh Dubey, Ashutosh Kumar, and Himanshu Yadav, were present at the event.

Complete Grievance Redressal Day Held at Aliganj

Etah

A Sampurna Samadhan Diwas (Complete Grievance Redressal Day) was organized on Saturday at Aliganj Tehsil under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh. The District Magistrate listened seriously to the grievances received from the general public and instructed concerned departmental officers to ensure timely, quality and satisfactory disposal of all cases within the prescribed timeframe.

Complete Grievance Redressal Day: Public problems addressed, 342 complaint letters received in seven tehsils

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur: To ensure the speedy resolution of public grievances, the Complete Grievance Redressal Day was held on the third Saturday of the month at the Tehsil auditorium in Mohammadabad, Ghazipur district, under the chairmanship of Avinash Kumar and in the presence of Superintendent of Police Dr. Iraj Raja. 126 complaints/petitions were received, of which 18 were resolved on the spot. According to information from all seven tehsils, a total of 342 complaints/petitions were received during the Complete Grievance Redressal Day, with 32 complaints/petitions resolved on the spot. In this regard, 46 complaints/petitions were received in Sadar Tehsil, of which 7 were resolved on the spot. In Kasimabad Tehsil, under the chairmanship of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, 23 complaints/petitions were received, of which 4 were resolved on the spot. In Zamania Tehsil, under the chairmanship of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, 28 complaints/petitions were received, of which 3 were resolved on the spot. In Jakhania Tehsil, under the chairmanship of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, 49 complaints/petitions were received, of which 3 were resolved on the spot. In Saidpur Tehsil, under the chairmanship of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, 21 complaints/petitions were received, of which 2 were resolved on the spot, and in Sevarai Tehsil, under the chairmanship of the Tehsildar, 49 complaints/petitions were received, of which 5 were resolved on the spot. On the



occasion of the Complete Grievance Redressal Day, the District Magistrate listened attentively to the grievances of the general public, resolving some complaints on the spot and forwarding the remaining complaints to the concerned officers with instructions for timely and quality resolution. On this occasion, officers and employees of the police and revenue departments were instructed that land disputes and interpersonal disputes are often related; therefore, officers of the revenue and police departments should coordinate with each other to ensure the resolution of these disputes. All the revenue officers of the tehsil were instructed that minor problems of the complainants, which can be resolved immediately, should be addressed without causing any inconvenience to the individuals. On this occasion, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Dr. Harshita Tiwari, Tehsildar Mahendra Bahadur, Circle Officer Sudhakar Pandey, and all district-level officers were present.

Tikait's Announcement at the National Deliberation Camp: Anti-Farmer FTA Will Not Be Accepted



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: National spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, Chaudhary Rakesh Tikait, said that the United States should not put any kind of pressure on the Indian government regarding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). During the national deliberation camp held in Prayagraj, he said that India is an agrarian country and farmers are the backbone of the country's economy. In such a situation, the Indian government will have to adopt a protectionist agricultural policy to protect the interests of the farmers. Chaudhary Rakesh Tikait clearly stated that any compromise on the interests of farmers, laborers, and the rural economy in any international agreement will not be accepted.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union will strongly oppose any free trade agreement with anti-farmer clauses. He said that the Bharatiya Kisan Union stands with the government on national and international issues related to farmers' interests, but the neglect of farmers will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Giving information about the organization's upcoming programs, he said that from February 11 to 15, a delegation of the Bharatiya Kisan Union will visit Karnataka and interact with various farmer organizations and farmers. After this, a comprehensive public relations campaign will be launched in Uttar Pradesh to further strengthen the farmers' movement. As part of the program, Kisan Panchayats (farmers' assemblies) will be organized in Sitapur



on February 16, Barabanki on February 17, Bahraich on February 18, Fatehpur on February 19, and Mathura on February 20. On February 21, a large joint Kisan Panchayat will be held in Amroha, Bijnor, and Moradabad. Following this, a joint Kisan Panchayat of Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Baghpat, and Meerut districts will be organized on February 22, in which a large number of farmers are expected to participate. The Kisan Panchayat organized as part of the national deliberation camp was presided over by the State President of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, Rajpal Sharma, while the proceedings were conducted by the Central Zone President, Shaligram Yadav. Senior office bearers and representatives from various states of the

country, including Odisha State President Sorry Kumar Sahu, Madhya Pradesh State President Anil Yadav, Rajaram Dhull from Haryana, Tejram Vidrohi from Chhattisgarh, Rajveer Singh Jadoun, Ghanshyam Verma, and Ompal Malik, were present at the panchayat. The panchayat (village council meeting) extensively discussed issues such as a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), rising agricultural costs, fair prices for crops, electricity, irrigation, stray animals, and agricultural policy. The speakers unanimously resolved that the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Indian Farmers' Union) will continue to fight for farmers' rights through peaceful and democratic means and will further strengthen the organization across the country.

Editorial

Constitutional Crossfire:
President's Reference Puts
Judiciary In The Dock

In an extraordinary move that has the scope to reshape the contours of the Indian Constitution, the President of India has invoked a rarely used power under Article 143 to refer a legal question to the Supreme Court. The question? The very scope and legitimacy of the Supreme Court's extraordinary powers under Article 142. At its heart, this momentous referral has placed two of the republic's most powerful constitutional authorities—the President and the Supreme Court—on a potential collision course. The reference from the Rashtrapati Bhawan paraded close to a month after the Supreme Court ruled that the President must decide on bills referred by Governors within three months. This landmark decision came after the court overturned the Tamil Nadu Governor's decision to withhold approval for pending bills. The court ruled that Governors cannot indefinitely delay assent to Bills passed by the state legislature. Such inaction amounts to a 'pocket veto', a concept alien to the Indian constitutional system. Bills can be reserved for the President only in specific circumstances (e.g., when required by Articles like 254(2), 31A, etc.). It cannot be used as a tool to block legislation falling within the State's domain," the bench, comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, had said in the verdict dated April 8, 2025. President Droupadi Murmu's reference in a way challenges the alleged judicial activism of the apex court, particularly questioning the reach and limits of its power to "do complete justice". Article 142 has often been described as a judicial wild card—a provision invoked to bridge legal gaps, deliver equitable outcomes, and, at times, sidestep the legislature. The invocation of the advisory jurisdiction by the President of India appears to seek clarity on the scope and extent of the extraordinary jurisdiction of the apex court. However, the said reference, if looked at from a wider lens, appears to be much more than unusual since an extraordinary constitutional power is being used to challenge another i.e. Article 143, which empowers the President to seek the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court on questions of public importance, but is a rarely used tool. When Was This Extraordinary Measure Last Used By A President? The last time this jurisdiction was invoked was in 2016, when then-President Pranab Mukherjee sought the court's opinion on whether the government could bypass the Rajya Sabha to enact the Goods and Services Tax (GST) by treating it as a Money Bill. On April 12, 2012, the then President Pratibha M Patil used it in connection with the 2G spectrum allocation, asking eight questions. These included judicial interference in policy matters and whether auction as the only method that can be used to allocate natural resources. President Murmu's current reference invoking the advisory jurisdiction is more than just a legal query—it is a moment of reckoning for the basic structure doctrine itself. Speaking to News18, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra said, "This reference to my mind is to determine what is the way going forward, to what extent the Supreme Court will direct Governors and Presidents to act, to what extent will they determine and sit over jurisdictions of Governors and Presidents."

Senior advocate Sanjay Hedge, meanwhile, said, "Reference is not a review. Presidential reference is a question to court in its advisory jurisdiction. Supreme Court had clarified its advisory jurisdiction is recommendatory and not binding. "Judgment of court is a verdict of court, it can be overcome only through process known to law which is an adjudicatory process. This is an opinion; it cannot directly override a judgment," he added. The apex court, for the longest time, has asserted that certain foundational principles—like judicial independence, federalism,



No Pak general has survived an extended term

The Pakistan government has cemented its relationship with the powerful army chief, General Asim Munir, by rewarding him with the title of Field Marshal. While it's not clear whether the idea originated with the army or the government, Munir's elevation to a five-star rank signals the Shehbaz Sharif government's allegiance to the commander of the largest service branch, an act that will have far-reaching political and institutional implications. Notwithstanding the general sense of jubilation in the country over the popular perception of a tactical victory against India, this particular decision came as a shock and may not serve Asim Munir's interests in the long run. Many people who were previously silent after the end of the conflict, or who had been generally happy with the Pakistan Air Force's achievement, suddenly took to their keyboards to mock the decision. Some pointed out how Munir has been steadily accumulating prefixes, while others drew comparisons to Ugandan dictator and army chief Idi Amin or joked about whether the title of Quaid-e-Azam would be next. There is a growing sense among many that the government should have stopped at celebrating the military achievement, rather than indulging in this kind of overdrive. As some observers I spoke to suggested, the decision may reflect the political cunning of the government, which could be attempting to shift negative focus back onto the powerful army chief—previously hailed as a hero. Others said the initiative was entirely the government's



way of signalling to Munir that, since the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) could go so far as to make him Field Marshal, he should remain invested in this partnership and not consider rapprochement with Imran Khan or his party. Indisputably, the government prioritised short-term political gains over long-term institutional consequences. With his promotion to five-star general, Munir is now the most senior commander in the country—disrupting the institutional balance within the armed forces. Ironically, he now outranks the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), a four-star general who heads the body created in the 1970s to ensure parity among the three services and coordinate joint planning. A five-star army chief attending CJCSC meetings renders the proceedings practically ceremonial. This

institutional imbalance echoes a similar issue from the Zia-ul-Haq era when, after declaring martial law and becoming president in 1977, Zia could no longer participate in CJCSC meetings. As a result, the Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS) attended instead, undermining the intended balance among the services. This not only weakened joint planning but also sidelined the question of political control over the largest service. Munir's elevation is likely to create similar complications. As some of my sources suggested, he may try to resolve the issue by appointing a four-star VCOAS—a move believed to be aimed at calming nerves within the army, where many are now uncertain about their futures. But history suggests that a four-star general in the army often ends up being the army chief's undoing. It would be a mistake to dis-

miss this decision as a mere political stunt, given its institutional implications. Crucially, the promotion is unlikely to make Munir more powerful than he already is. He and the institution he leads are already immensely powerful. No political party worth its salt today has even a notional interest in holding him or the military accountable. The last institution with any capacity to do so—the higher judiciary—backed off at the start of the conflict, when the Supreme Court conceded to the use of military courts to try civilians for treason. Furthermore, Munir has already outlined his vision for the state: a "hard state", hellbent on crushing dissent, refusing dialogue with those that appear belligerent, and upholding the national ideology through military means. One is also reminded of his earlier promises to transform Pakistan into a trillion-dollar

economy—a goal far more ambitious than convincing people to sacrifice for sustaining the military, especially in the wake of recent conflict. The civilian government's eagerness to appease the general also suggests that no one will raise questions this November when his current three-year term ends, and it comes time to legally extend it by another two years—taking him to November 2027. After that, another five-year extension seems likely. This is when the road may get bumpy for him. Even the two-year extension is already a problem: many three-star generals, who serve four-year terms, will now retire without a chance at promotion. Sadly, Pakistan has not seriously considered the implications of these extensions. Another five-year term after 2027 could open up a Pandora's box, as it has for previous generals during their second extended tenures. This is when all powerful generals tend to make mistakes, including caving in to international pressures, resulting in a push from within the institution. So far, no general has survived an extended term or managed to end their second term nicely—from Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf to Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Qamar Javed Bajwa, the ending for all of them was not as rosy as their beginning. Munir will struggle to maintain a balance within his own service, a task fraught with pitfalls. As many within army circles recall, even Musharraf had to negotiate hard with his corps commanders to get decisions accepted during his extended term.

Can China's Arms Market Recover From
India-Pak War Embarrassment?

India's Operation Sindoor is haunting both Pakistan and China, the former due to the non-explanation for sponsoring cross-border terrorism and the massive physical loss of military assets and face, and the latter due to the utter failure of its military equipment sold to Pakistan and the diplomatic fallout of supporting an "ironclad" friend. Diplomatically, after the Pahalgam terror attacks, China expressed its concern and called for restraint on India's part, while reiterating support for Pakistan both regionally and in the United Nations' #1267 al-Qaeda sanctions committee. China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, discussed issues with his Pakistan counterpart, Ishaq Dar, and India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, without any concrete proposals in hand. Ironically, Chinese bloggers criticised India for 'escalation' and called its actions 'destabilising' even as they cheered Pakistan's drone strikes on Indian borders. Many even said

Pakistan was not involved in cross-border terrorism attacks in India, despite substantial evidence in this regard. Beijing offered mediation between the two warring South Asian countries but was at a loss when Pakistan preferred to approach the United States for a ceasefire. China's efforts to white-wash Pakistan-based terrorists and its diplomatic support to Islamabad have dented the image of China as a responsible country. Its myopic vision to back its "all-weather" friend at all costs is expected to cost it its long-term strategic objectives. However, it was in the military showdown that China's image took a dent. Most of its military equipment - estimated to have cost Pakistan more than \$20 billion - underperformed, missed their targets, malfunctioned, destroyed, or fell like duds in the war theatre. For instance, China sold to Pakistan its "vigorous dragon" J-10 C fighter aircraft at \$40 million a unit.

Calculated Pressure' Should Be India's
Mantra As Pak Chooses Escalation

When the Pahalgam attack took place on April 22 this year, with loss of innocent lives and the disgraceful religious and gender profiling, it was obvious that India's limit of tolerance had been crossed not by a few but by manifold notches. Although the government of India convened the Cabinet Committee for Security (CCS) immediately in the aftermath of the attack, the decisions of the CCS harped on politico-diplomatic-economic options to punish Pakistan. To strategic minds, it was obvious that it was a window of opportunity created for the armed forces to plan, acquire necessary intelligence and establish full readiness for both the launch of the designed offensive and the necessary guarding of flanks and depth to absorb any retaliation. Militaries usually work on surprise, but that may not be the most efficient way of executing an operation in which retribution is a major factor. In other words, failure or even non-attainment of the full aim cannot be an option. The delivery of the mission was a national compulsion, for, on it rested the image and the future status of India as a responsible nation that

could defend itself. Operation Sindoor, a very appropriate name of the operation, of which much has been written in the media, was designed to showcase India's capability for escalation dominance without a full-scale war. It was also conceived to impose material costs on Pakistan's hybrid war apparatus. With its emerging global strategic importance, India also ensured pre-emptive global diplomatic outreach to shape the post-strike narrative as a legitimate act of self-defence. In the operational-strategic domain, the shift from 'surgical strikes' and single objective missions, to strategic, punitive missile diplomacy has been a marked change in the strategy that India has followed. It's important to break down the components of the entire operation and look at these from angles that have hitherto not been considered strategically significant. The codename is one of them. The choice of the name, 'Operation Sindoor', is a lesson in strategic communication and is reputed to have the Prime Minister's personal stamp. 'Sindoor' (vermilion) symbolises a sacred mark on the forehead in Indian cul-

ture, often associated with martyrdom (evoking the blood of fallen soldiers), resolve, and sanctity (especially, feminine strength in mythology). It is also a symbol conveying the betrothal of a woman to her husband. Thus, it's a sacred red line - which, once crossed, invites decisive retaliation. The psychological messaging from the codename was the reflection of India's restrained but resolute posture. On the choice of the nine targets and the means of hitting them, it's also good to understand why women officers of the Indian and the Indian Air Force (IAF) were nominated to sit on the Foreign Secretary's panel and explain the operation in detail. The era of strategic optics is now decidedly upon us. Most of India makes up its mind by watching visuals and staring at their mobile screens. The optics of the briefing focused on India's modern, inclusive, and capable armed forces. It countered stereotypes about patriarchal militaries. There was a symbolic projection of 'Nari Shakti' (women power) in national security roles to also link it with the tragedy that befell the unfortunate women who lost their husbands.

What If Nuclear War Breaks Out? Here Are The
7 Devastating Consequences

Amid the ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, one thing that's constantly making the rounds on the internet is the possibility of a nuclear war between the two countries. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive man-made thing ever created, because of the extensive devastation they cause and their distinctive, persistent, and genetically damaging radioactive fallout that spreads uncontrollably. The atomic bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9,

1945, carried out by the United States, during World War II, were the first and only use of atomic weapons in warfare, till now. As per the estimates, the bombing had killed an estimated 140,000 people in Hiroshima, and 74,000 people in Nagasaki by the end of 1945. A single nuclear weapon has the potential to destroy a city and kill most of its people. Multiple nuclear explosions over urban areas could lead to catastrophic consequences. This scenario could wipe out tens of millions of lives. According to reports, A

nuclear explosion's fireball comes to its maximum size in just about 10 seconds, unleashing massive energy in the form of blast, heat, and radiation. The shockwave, after the explosion, travels at hundreds of kilometres per hour, and has the potential to cause destruction beyond imagination. The blast can claim many lives near ground zero and inflict injuries, including lung damage and internal bleeding, at far distances. Collapsing structures and flying debris also harm people. Near ground zero, thermal radiation's extreme heat

vaporizes everything, which leads to severe burns and sparking massive fires that merge into devastating firestorms. The disaster can also kill people in underground shelters due to lack of oxygen or carbon monoxide poisoning. Talking about the long-term, nuclear weapons produce ionizing radiation.

This could contaminate the environment, including rivers and air, which kills or sickens those exposed, and has long-term health consequences, including cancer and genetic damage.

In a joint venture, Ambani and Adani will sell transportation fuel

Delhi : In a joint statement, Adani Total Gas Ltd and Jio-bp, an arm of Reliance Industries Ltd, announced their partnership to sell auto fuel at select outlets. Certain ATGL outlets will offer Jio-bp's gasoline and diesel, while Jio-bp outlets will incorporate ATGL's compressed natural gas (CNG) dispensers. "This partnership will enable us to leverage each other's infrastructure, thus enhancing customer experience and offerings," said Suresh P. Manglani, executive director and CEO of Adani Total Gas. After Reliance bought a 26% interest in an Adani Power project in Madhya Pradesh, the two opposing billionaires teamed together again. "We are united by a shared vision to offer our customers a superior selection of high-quality fuels," stated Jio-bp chairman Sarthak



Behuria. "The partnership between RIL and the Adani Group is anticipated to be extremely complementary, providing substantial operational advantage via their combined physical presence," stated Nirav Karkera, head of research at Fisdcom. A more holistic consumer experience is the goal of the relationship, which is why both companies are offering complementary items. Both parties stand to benefit from this partnership, which is especially noteworthy in an industry where state-run corporations predominate.

Centre will borrow 8L cr, 54% of the objective

The government plans to borrow Rs 8 lakh crore, 54% of its Rs 14.8 lakh crore FY26 borrowing, in the first half. It didn't front-load the borrowing program to avoid raising rates while the RBI pumped record liquidity into the system. Since the market reported little demand for 30-year and longer bonds, the government announced it would borrow less in FY26. Thus, front-loading of the borrowing program has been avoided due to government (fiscal consolidation without compromising quality of expenditure).

JioHotstar Reaches 300 Million Subscribers, Closer to Netflix

Delhi: JioHotstar, a worldwide OTT player from India, is closing in on Netflix's subscriber dominance. JioCinema and Disney+Hotstar now have 300 million users, up from 50 million in February 2025 after the 2025 TATA IPL. The 2025 Indian Premier League season greatly impacted JioHotstar's client base. It rose from 50 million subscribers in February to 280 million by May and 300 million currently. Digital viewership overtook television for the first time, causing tremendous development. Digital reach was 652 million versus 537 million TV viewers. The final IPL 2025 match



received 237 million digital viewers and 189 million TV viewers. Along with user growth, the platform broke revenue records. JioStar, the parent company of JioHotstar, announced that the 2025 IPL had the largest advertising and subscrip-

tion revenue. Historically, league rights were auctioned for 23,575 crore for TV and 20,500 crore for digital over 5 years, indicating great value. The IPL's peak internet viewership was 55.2 million and TV viewing time was 514 billion minutes.

Bank loan growth drops for eighth straight month in February, RBI data reveals

Delhi: Central bank statistics revealed that personal and credit card loans fell for the eighth straight month in February due to Reserve Bank of India tougher policies. Last month, banks' credit rose 12% year-over-year, slower than 16.6% a year earlier,

excluding HDFC Bank's merger. Housing Development Finance Corp, Loans rose 11% in February, compared to 20.5% a year earlier, including the merger. In January, loan growth fell to 12.5% excluding the merger and 11.4% including it. Retail

demand for unsecured loans drove strong loan growth for several years in the banking sector. However, in late 2023, the RBI tightened capital requirements for personal, credit card, and non-banking finance company loans. in its Mumbai headquarters.

JSW to acquire Dulux Paints for 9,000 crore

Delhi : JSW Paints will buy 75% of Dulux-owner Akzo Nobel's India operations for Rs 9,407 crore (\$1.1 billion), the sector's biggest purchase amid rising competition. JSW Paints, founded by steel tycoon Sajjan Jindal in 2019, will become the fourth largest participant in the sector, controlled by Asian Paints, Berger Paints, and Kansai Nerolac. Aditya Birla Group launched Birla Opus in 2024. According to Indian takeover legislation, JSW Paints would openly offer Rs 3,929 crore to Akzo Nobel India's public stockholders for a 25% stake. Public shareholders would



receive Rs 3,418 per share in the open offer, while JSW Paints will pay the Dutch firm Rs 2,762.

Based on the open offer response, JSW Paints would buy enough shares from the Dutch company to maintain 75% ownership in

Akzo Nobel India. JSW Paints, part of the \$23-billion JSW Group, will market Akzo Nobel India after the purchase, with the Dutch corporation perhaps remaining a public shareholder.

Birla Co. recovers Rs 2 crore in stolen digital gold

Delhi : Hackers breached the ABCD mobile app run by Aditya Birla Capital and stole digital gold valued at approximately Rs 1.95 crore from 435 user accounts, according to Delhi. On June 9, the scam was exposed after multiple consumers contacted the company's call center to express their dissatisfaction with the theft of their digital gold. Concerned about this, the company's technical staff launched an internal investigation and filed a first information report. According to our sources, the affected accounts now have their balances returned by the company.

The BSE was fined 25L for the unfair distribution of corporate information



Delhi : According to Delhi, the 45-page SEBI order confirmed that the BSE's system design allowed paying clients and the internal listing compliance monitoring (LCM) staff to view business announcements ahead of schedule. Prior to the information being made public on its website, this occurred. Because there were no measures in place to ensure that all stakeholders had equal and contemporaneous access to the data, the regulator deemed this to be a breach of norms. To keep information

comply with the rules. Additionally, the regulator brought attention to the fact that BSE neglected to establish a really basic syndication (RSS) feed, which would have mitigated the possibility of unequal access to corporate filings. Inspections revealed gaps, but BSE just created a time gap to fix the problem, according to SEBI. The regulator also pointed out significant problems with BSE's oversight of client code updates, which are permitted only for legitimate mistakes.

NHAI to blacklist FASTags 'kept in hand', seeks details from toll operators

Delhi: Drivers who don't fix their FASTags on the windshield of their vehicles will face permanent blacklisting of tags, a measure taken in view of the malpractice of people handing out "loose or unfixed tags" for payment of highway-user fee, which leads to congestion at toll plaza lanes and sometimes altercations with toll collectors. The NHAI company dealing with toll collection and management of highways, IHMCL, has asked federations of toll collectors, highway builders and operators to report such cases for quick action. "Tags-in-hand" have been categorised as "loose tags". Despite repeated advisories against the practice there have been several cases of people handing out FASTag at toll gates for deduction



Total bids for three initial public offerings (IPOs) reached 22.5 billion rupees

Delhi : Nearly 22,500 crore rupees were raised in three separate initial public offerings (IPOs) that concluded. The combined target amount for all three was 2,562 crore rupees. According to data from the exchanges and merchant bankers, the 119 crore rupee IPO of Globe Civil Projects was subscribed 86 times, the 853 crore rupee IPO of Ellenbarrie Industrial Gases was subscribed 22 times, and the 1,590 crore rupee IPO of Mumbai-based real estate giant Kalpataru was subscribed 2.3 times.

of user fee. In letters addressed to these federations, IHMCL said, "This leads to lane-level congestion due to manual handling and viola-

tion issues, misuse in closed-loop tolling operations, generation of false chargeback demands and overall disruption.

GST compensation fund likely to have 95k cr surplus

Delhi: They requested anonymity and stated the GST Council may determine how to use this extra compensation cess. Cess funds are used for a specified purpose and are levied in addition to taxes. These insiders claimed the GST Council, the top indirect



tax decision-making body, will meet before or after the Monsoon session of

Parliament, depending on member availability. They said the Council meeting is overdue and coming soon. Last December 21, the 55th GST Council met in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. They stated the Council will discuss tax rate rationalization, compliance

ease, and cess reform during its 56th meeting. The council may replace the GST compensation cess on sin goods and luxury commodities like cigarettes and cars with two specific-purpose levies to fund health and clean energy projects.

1 in 5 Indians with over Rs 5 crore worth plans to relocate overseas



Delhi: One in five ultra-rich Indians with a net worth over Rs 25 crore plans to settle abroad for investment opportunities, tax advantages, and greater global connectivity, according to a Kotak Mahindra Bank private banking survey. The first two quarters of 2024-25 survey interviewed 150 ultra-high networth people (UHNIs) and private bankers in 12 cities. EY ordered and validated the findings with industry. For this report, those worth over Rs 25 crore were canvassed.

However, Kotak's private banking division targets individuals worth over Rs 300 crore. Many UHNIs buy abroad property for migration and permanent residency. "Ultra-HNIs are diversifying their portfolios and embracing domestic and global assets, setting the stage for a sig-

nificant increase. Alternative assets and equities are becoming more popular in domestic and international markets. Nearly a third of India's Ultra-HNIs own worldwide assets. With two in three ultra-HNIs planning structured wealth transition, succession planning is crucial.

JB Chemicals' promoter KKR will sell 10% of the company for 2,6k crore rupees

Delhi: In a series of block agreements, the promoter of JB Chemicals — Tatu Investment Holdings, a subsidiary of global private equity giant KKR — is selling around 1.6 crore shares, or 10.2% of the firm, for approximately Rs 2,575 crore (\$300 million). According to the deal's term sheet, the minimum price at which the shares can be sold is Rs 1,625—a 5%

reduction to JB Chem's closing price of Rs 1,709 on Wednesday on the NSE. Shareholding reports on the BSE indicate that as of December 31, 2024, KKR owned 53.7% of the pharmaceutical company situated in the city. Midway through 2020, at a share price of Rs 745, the PE giant had taken over the pharmaceutical manufacturer.

Yash starrer *Toxic* lands in legal trouble

Social activist moves Central Board of Film Certification over 'obscene and morally offensive scenes' in the teaser

Actor Yash starrer *Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups* has found itself in the middle of a legal controversy, days after the makers unveiled the film's first teaser. Social activist Dinesh Kallahalli has filed a formal complaint with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), objecting to the "obscene, sexually explicit and morally offensive scenes" in the teaser.

According to the complaint document addressed to CBFC chairperson Prasoon Joshi, the social activist asserted that the teaser of *Toxic* contains "scenes that are grossly obscene, sexually explicit, and vulgar in nature."

"The said trailer is being widely circulated on various social media platforms without any effective restriction, thereby exposing

the general public, including minors and young persons, to content that is legally impermissible and socially harmful," he said.

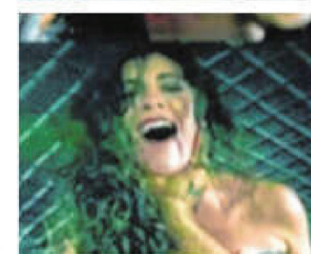
Claiming that the teaser violates constitutional rights under the freedom of speech and expression, the complaint added, "The content displayed in the trailer of *TOXIC* clearly exceeds these constitutional limits and therefore does not merit any constitutional protection. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has consistently held that obscenity and sexually explicit material are not protected forms of expression."

He also referred to the provisions under the Cinematograph Act, 1952, the Certification of Films Rules, and the guidelines issued by the Central Board of Film Certification, adding that films, trailers, and other promotional materials are required to conform to the "standards of decency, morality, and social responsibility."



Photos: Instagram

Karnataka Women's Commission seeks CBFC action



Kannada star Yash's upcoming film *Toxic*, directed by Geetu Mohandas, has landed in controversy over its teaser. The 2.51-minute teaser shows Yash as a gangster named Raya engaging in a sexual act with a woman inside a car parked near a cemetery, while violence unfolds outside, with armed men seen in another vehicle.

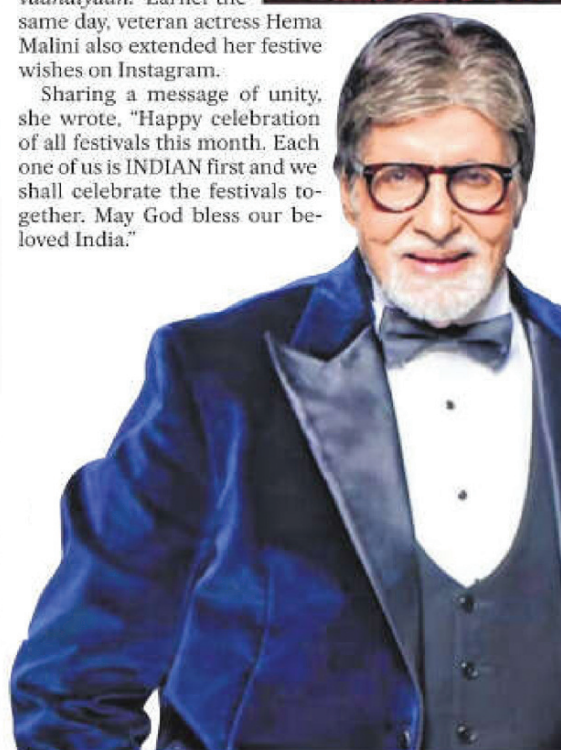
According to PTL, the visuals triggered a row after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday lodged a complaint with the Karnataka State Commission for Women (KSWC), objecting to what it described as obscene scenes. Leaders of the AAP's women's wing in the state met commission officials and submitted a complaint seeking appropriate action, including the removal of the teaser.

Big B shares Lohri wishes



Veteran Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan celebrated Lohri by sharing a post on social media. On Tuesday, the actor took to Instagram and posted a screenshot of a generic Lohri image. He captioned it, "Lohri diyaan lakh lakh vadhaiyaan." Earlier the same day, veteran actress Hema Malini also extended her festive wishes on Instagram.

Sharing a message of unity, she wrote, "Happy celebration of all festivals this month. Each one of us is INDIAN first and we shall celebrate the festivals together. May God bless our beloved India."



Actress Beatriz Taufenbach deletes her Instagram account

Actress Beatriz Taufenbach has deleted her Instagram account amid growing buzz around Yash-starrer *Toxic*. The film's teaser, released on Yash's birthday on January 8, quickly grabbed attention, particularly for an intimate scene that sparked widespread discussion. While initial reports speculated that the actress featured in the scene was Natalie Burn, director Geetu Mohandas later clarified via her Instagram story that it was Beatriz Taufenbach. The scene has drawn mixed reactions online, with a section of viewers expressing displeasure, pushing *Toxic* into controversy. As curiosity around Beatriz grew, her Instagram profile was searched by many, only to find that the account is no longer available, adding further intrigue to the ongoing discussion surrounding the film.



Photos: Instagram, @shrutzaahasn

Nimrit, Mouni ...ap up *Hisaab* shoot



Actors Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia and Mouni Roy have wrapped up the shoot for their upcoming thriller series *Hisaab*, the makers announced on Tuesday.

The project, which will stream on Amazon MX Player, recently concluded filming after two elaborate schedules and has now entered post-production, a production said.

"The camaraderie between Nimrit and Mouni wasn't just off camera, it strengthened their performances. Their comfort with each other

added layers to the narrative, making their on-screen dynamic one of the most compelling aspects of the series," the insider said.

Described *Hisaab* as a gripping murder mystery, the series will also feature Shaheer Shaikh, Sanjay Kapoor, Avinash Mishra and Harman Singh. Ahluwalia is best known for appearing in reality shows such as *Bigg Boss 16* and *Khatron Ke Khiladi 14*. She was most recently seen in *Shaunki Sardar*, which marked her debut in Punjabi cinema. Roy last featured in the action espionage thriller series *Salakar*, alongside Naveen Kasturia and Mukesh Rishi.

'FOCUS, FIGHT, FIND'

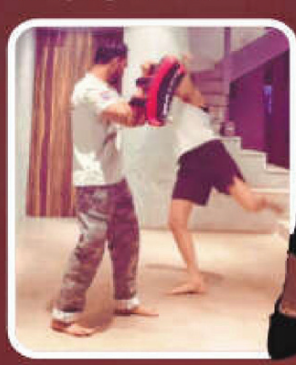
Actress Shruti Haasan inspires with her post break workout

Actress Shruti Haasan is well known for her love for kickboxing and fitness in general. However, recently she had taken some time off her fitness regime to focus on her health as she was suffering from the flu.

Now, Shruti has decided to finally get back to her routine and also dropped a sneak peek of her recent workout session on social media.

Talking to her Insta Stories, she posted a video of herself working on her arm strength using resistance bands hanging from the roof. In the next clip, she was seen practicing her impressive kickboxing moves with her trainer. Through the various texts in the posts, Shruti conveyed that getting back to her workout session post-break feels like death.

Nevertheless, she is determined to fight and focus on improving herself. Once Shruti was done with her intense session, she decided to celebrate with a small dance, expressing her joy after powering through. Shruti's social media feed is full of such inspiring workout sessions of the *Coolie* actress. Work-wise, Shruti will next grace the screen with the highly-awaited sequel, *Salaar Part 2: Shouryanga Parvam*.



Mardaani 3 villain sparks buzz online

Mallika Prasad's chilling turn as Amma in *Mardaani 3* sparks massive buzz, with audiences praising the franchise's latest terrifying antagonist.

Yash Raj Films unveiled the trailer of *Mardaani 3* on Wednesday, instantly setting social media abuzz. While audiences welcomed the return of Rani Mukerji as ACP Shivani Shivaji Roy, it is the film's antagonist, Amma, portrayed by Mallika Prasad, who has emerged as the biggest talking point. Known for delivering some of Bollywood's most disturbing villains, the *Mardaani* franchise once again appears to have struck a nerve. Within hours of the trailer's release, netizens flooded social media with reactions ranging from fear to outrage, praising Prasad's bone-chilling portrayal of Amma, the mastermind behind a brutal human-trafficking net.

Reacting to the overwhelming response, Mallika Prasad said she feels "truly humbled by the curiosity and excitement Amma has already sparked," calling *Mardaani 3* one of the most defining experiences of her career. She expressed gratitude to director Abhiraj Minawala, producer Aditya Chopra, casting director Shanoor Sharma, and the entire cast and crew for their support.

Directed by Abhiraj Minawala and produced by Aditya Chopra, *Mardaani 3* continues the franchise's tradition of socially relevant storytelling. The film is set to release in cinemas worldwide on January 30, 2026.



Is Disha dating Talwiinder?

New romance on the cards? Bollywood actress Disha Patani, who was earlier rumoured to be in a relationship with actor Tiger Shroff, parted ways with him in 2022, though the two never officially confirmed their relationship. Now, four years after their reported split, it appears Disha may have found love again, this time with Punjabi singer Talwiinder.

On Monday, Disha, who was in Udaipur to attend Kriti



Sanon's sister Nupur's wedding to singer Stebin Ben, was spotted at the Udaipur airport with her close friend, actress Mouni Roy, and her husband, Suraj Nambiar. However, what caught everyone's attention was Tal-

wiinder being spotted with them. The singer, known for never revealing his face publicly, was seen wearing a face mask, as he usually does when not performing with face paint. Disha and Talwiinder were also seen enter-

ing the airport terminal together, with the actress helping him with his boarding pass. At one point, Talwiinder briefly revealed his face for CISF verification during the identification process, further fuelling speculation about their bond.

After landing in Mumbai, Talwiinder was seen walking ahead of Disha, seemingly to avoid being photographed together. While exiting the airport, the singer was also seen sharing a warm hug with Mouni Roy.



Poster of new show *Bharat Ke Super Founders*

Bharat Ke Super Founders trailer launched

Amazon MX Player on Monday unveiled the trailer of its upcoming entrepreneurial reality series *Bharat Ke Super Founders*. Streaming free from January 16, 2026, the show is hosted and mentored by Suniel Shetty and features a panel of leading business tycoons. Produced by Rusk Media and Recur

Club, the series spotlights entrepreneurs from across *Bharat*, including small towns, competing for a Rs 100 crore investment pool—the largest for an Indian startup reality show. Focused on verified pitches and real business fundamentals, the show blends high-stakes decision-making with personal stories of ambition, resilience, and innovation.

Briefs

Judge junks Trump govt voter info suit

A federal judge on Thursday dismissed a US Department of Justice lawsuit against California that sought detailed voting records and personal data on its 23 million registered voters, concluding that the government's request was "unprecedented and illegal". The Trump govt's lawsuit, filed last year, contended California and other states were illegally blocking the federal govt's wide-ranging effort to scrutinise detailed voter data that states said was private and protected.

Achakzai new LoP in Pak assembly

Pakistan authorities on Friday appointed veteran Pashtun tribal politician Mehmood Khan Achakzai as the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly. The post was lying vacant since August last year after Omar Ayub Khan of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) was disqualified after conviction in a case of vandalism. Achakzai leads the opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan and was nominated by PTI's incarcerated founder Imran Khan. PTI is also part.

Over 100 dead in southern Africa floods

Torrential rains and flooding have killed over 100 people in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and authorities warned on Friday severe weather was expected in several countries in southern Africa. South Africa has reported over 19 deaths in two provinces following heavy rains that began last month led to severe flood. Tourists and staff were evacuated this week by helicopter from flooded camps to other areas in the Kruger National Park.

4.7mn social media Oz a/cs removed

Social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children in Australia since the country banned use of the platforms by those under 16, officials said. "We stared down everybody who said it couldn't be done, some of the most powerful and rich companies in the world and their supporters," communications minister Anika Wells told reporters on Friday.

‘Can men get pregnant?’ Dr Nisha Verma dodges Senate question 14 times

An Indian-origin doctor has been at the centre of all the attention for her response to a question about "male pregnancy" at a US Senate hearing on abortion pills. **Nisha Verma**, who provides reproductive healthcare in Georgia and Massachusetts, was first questioned by Senator Ashley Moody and later by Republican Senator Josh Hawley on whether men could get pregnant.

Testifying before a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing on the safety and regulation of the abortion pill mifepristone, including concerns about misuse or coercion, Verma did not give a direct yes-or-no answer.

She said she hesitated because of "how the conversation was going or what the goal was," adding she treats patients with different identities. Hawley said the question was about biology and science, and accused her of

GLOBAL REALITIES | Canada PM agrees to cut levies on Chinese EVs in return for lower tariffs on his country's farm products

Xi, Mark seek new chapter in China-Canada relations

BEIJING

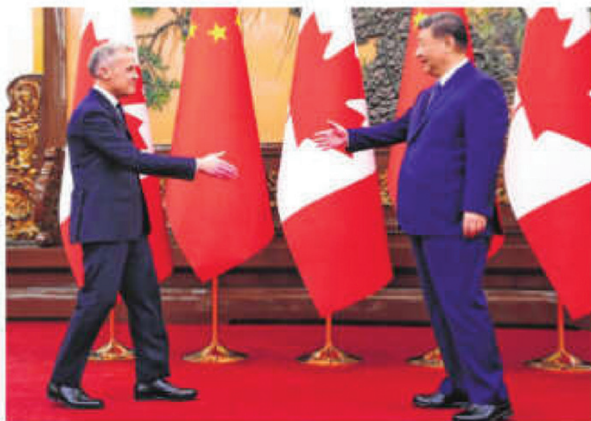
Breaking with the US, Canada has agreed to cut its 100% tariff on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on Canadian farm products, Prime Minister **Mark Carney (L)** said on Friday.

Carney made the announcement after two days of meetings with Chinese leaders. He said there would be an initial cap of 49,000 vehicles on Chinese EV exports to Canada, growing to 70,000 over five years. China will reduce its tariff on canola seeds, a major Canadian export, from about 84% to about 15%, he told reporters.

"It has been a historic and productive two days," Carney said, speaking outside against the backdrop of a traditional pavilion and a frozen pond at a Beijing park. "We have to understand the differences between Canada and other countries, and focus our efforts to work together where we're aligned."

Earlier on Friday, he and Chinese leader **Xi Jinping** pledged to improve relations between their two nations after years of acrimony.

Xi told Carney in a meeting at the Great Hall of the People he was willing to continue



working to improve ties, noting that talks had been on restoring and restarting coop-

eration since the two held an initial meeting in October on the sidelines of a regional

economic conference in South Korea. "It can be said that our meeting last year opened a new chapter in turning China-Canada relations toward improvement," China's top leader said.

OTTAWA TO IMPROVE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Carney, the first Canadian PM to visit China in eight years, said better relations would help improve a global governance system that he described as "under great strain". He called for a new relationship "adapted to new global realities" and cooperation in agriculture, energy and finance.

Taiwan calls \$250bn trade deal with US its best; Beijing bristles

Taipei: Taiwan's premier on Friday hailed a new trade deal with the US as the "best tariff deal" enjoyed by countries with trade surpluses with Washington, as meanwhile a Chinese official in Beijing condemned the accord.

The agreement cuts US tariffs on Taiwanese goods to 15% in exchange for \$250 billion in new investments in the US tech industry. It is com-

parable to deals with the EU and Japan worked out after President Donald Trump proposed sweeping tariffs for many US trading partners.

"For the time being, we obtained the best tariff deal enjoyed by the countries with trade surplus with the US," said Taiwan Premier Cho Jung-tai. "This also shows that the US sees Taiwan as an important strategic partner."

"Our goal is to lower mutual tariffs" Cho said. "Therefore, according to the results of the negotiations, Taiwan has successfully obtained 15% in tariffs with no added fees. This is the same tariff imposed on Japan, Korea and the EU."

Trump initially had set the tariff at 32% on Taiwanese goods but later changed it to 20%.

Hindu teacher's home set ablaze

BANGLADESH

DHAKA

As a disturbing pattern of violence against minorities continues to escalate in Bangladesh, a Hindu home was set ablaze in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet district.

The incident took place at the house of a school teacher, Birendra Kumar Dey, sparking fear and panic among his family and nearby residents.

A video of the attack circulated widely on social media, showing flames rapidly engulfing the house as family members struggled to escape.

A video on X, and media reports stated a Hindu household had again come under attack. Reports said the home of a school teacher was allegedly set afire by Islamist groups in Babor village of Nandirgaon union under Gowainghat upazila in Sylhet.

HINDUS MURDERED IN BANGLADESH: UK MP

The UK government has condemned "all acts of violence" in Bangladesh and called for peaceful and credible elections as the issue of killings of



Hindus and other religious minorities in the country was raised in House of Commons.

Opposition Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman asked the Labour government to intervene to protect minorities and ensure elections scheduled for February are "free and fair" in a parliamentary statement on Thursday.

Blackman, who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Hindus, told UK members of Parliament he was "horrified" over the "disastrous situation" that has involved Hindus being murdered and their temples burned. "Hindu men are being murdered on the streets, their houses being burned, the temples are being burned, and other religious minorities are suffering similar fates," said Blackman.

"Next month, the so-called free and fair polls are due. The Awami League, a major political party, is banned, though they command something like 30% in the opinion polls."

Immigration agents in US filmed dragging woman from car

Washington: A US citizen on her way to a medical appointment in Minneapolis was dragged out of her car and detained by immigration officers, as per a statement by the woman on Thursday, after a video of her arrest drew millions of views on social media. Aliya Rahman said she was brought to a detention centre where she was denied medical care and lost consciousness. Department of Homeland Security said she was an agitator obstructing ICE agents conducting arrests.

Rahman said she was on her way to a routine appointment when she encountered federal immigration agents at an intersection. Video appears to show immigration agents shouting commands over a cacophony of whistles, car horns and screams from protesters. One masked agent smashes Rahman's passenger side window while others cut her seatbelt and drag her out of the car through the driver's side door. Other guards carried her by her arms and legs towards an ICE vehicle. "I'm disabled trying to go to the doctor up there, that's why I didn't move."

US LAWMAKERS SEEK TO REASSURE COPENHAGEN

COPENHAGEN

A bipartisan delegation of US lawmakers met the leaders of Denmark and Greenland on Friday to reassure them of congressional support, despite President Trump's threats to seize the Arctic island.

The 11-member US delegation, led by Democratic Senator Chris Coons, was scheduled to meet Danish PM Mette Frederiksen and her Greenlandic counterpart Jens-Frederik Nielsen, as per Frederiksen's office. "At a time of increasing international instability, we need to draw closer to our allies, not drive them away," Coons said in a press release earlier this week.

RUSSIA: GREENLAND A DENMARK TERRITORY

The Kremlin said on Friday Russia considers Greenland to be Danish territory, and added the security situation surrounding the island was "extraordinary" from the perspective of international law.

The Kremlin said the said desire of Italy, France and Germany to resume talks on Ukraine with Russia was a shift which matched its own view of how things should evolve.

All options on Iran on the table, says US

Washington: President Donald Trump is keeping "all of his options on the table" on Iran as the White House weighs how to respond to the regime's violent crackdown on nationwide protests, even as lawmakers from both parties urged caution against US military strikes that could escalate the crisis.

Asked how close the president was to launching strikes and whether Gulf states had dissuaded him, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt dismissed what she called speculative reporting based on anonymous sources.

"The truth is only President Trump knows what he's going to do and a very, very small team of advisers are read into his thinking on that," Leavitt said, adding, the president continues to monitor developments in Iran. Trump was informed planned executions in Iran would stop, and "we have seen 800 people, their lives have been spared".

PUTIN CALLS BIBI, PEZESHKIAN

President Vladimir Putin on Friday dialled Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to discuss the crisis situation in West Asia amid threats of a US strike on Tehran.

Putin called for stability and security in the region to be ensured through diplomatic means, expressing Russia's readiness to mediate



SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE: With one puff of a cigarette, a woman in Canada became a global symbol of defiance against Iran's bloody crackdown on dissent — and the world saw the flame. A video that has gone viral in recent days shows the woman, who described herself as an Iranian refugee, snapping open a lighter and setting the flame to a photo she holds. It ignites, illuminating the visage of Iran supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

in this dialogue, a Russian government press release said.

"Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone call with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. The situation in the Middle East and Iran were discussed," it said. Putin and Pezeshkian called for the speedy normalisation of the situation around Iran and the region as a whole. "The two leaders noted Russia and Iran consistently take a united position in favour of the earliest possible de-escalation of tensions around Iran and in the region as a whole."

Russian news agency TASS reported US Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff outlined Washington's demands for Tehran to achieve a diplomatic solution. "I hope a diplomatic solution will be

found. There are four issues: nuclear enrichment, missiles—they need to reduce their arsenals—the actual nuclear material they have, about 2 tons, enriched to 3.67-60%, and, of course, proxies."

Further, West Asian allies have urged the US to hold off on strikes against Iran, said an Arab diplomat. Officials from Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have raised concerns a US military intervention would shake the global economy and destabilise an already volatile region. Meanwhile, Cleric Ahmad Khatami leading Friday prayers in Tehran sought the death penalty for detained protesters and threatened US Trump. Also, exiled crown prince Reza Pahlavi urged the world to help agitators topple Iran's government.

South Korea's ex-prez jailed for five years

Seoul: A South Korean court sentenced former President **Yoon Suk Yeol** to five years in prison Friday on some charges related to his imposition of martial law.

The verdict is the first against Yoon in the eight criminal trials over the decree he issued in late 2024 and



other allegations. The most significant charge against him alleges he led a rebellion in connection with his martial law enforcement and it carries a potential death penalty. The Seoul Central District Court in the case decided on Friday sentenced him for other charges like his defiance of authorities' attempts to detain him.

Yoon hasn't publicly responded to the ruling. But when an independent counsel earlier demanded a 10-year prison term for Yoon over those charges, Yoon's defence team accused them of being politically driven and lacking legal grounds to demand such "an excessive" sentence.

India slams Pak at UN

UNITED NATIONS

India called out Pakistan for misusing UN platforms to drive its "divisive agenda" after Islamabad's envoy raised the issue of Kashmir in the General Assembly.

Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of India to the UN Eldos Mathew Punnoose on Thursday said the right to self-determination must not be abused to encourage secession in pluralistic and democratic states.

"At a time when member states have to rise beyond their narrow considerations, Pakistan continues to misuse all platforms and processes in the UN to drive their divisive agenda," Punnoose said.

"This forum is no exception either and Pakistan made an unwarranted reference to the Union Territory of J&K, an integral and inalienable part of India," Punnoose said, while delivering the national statement at the UN General Assembly Plenary on 'Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organisation'.

Those who try to cling to privileges today risk paying the price tomorrow: UN chief

UNITED NATIONS

UN chief **Antonio Guterres** said the world's most powerful nations should be on the frontlines to reform the Security Council as he cautioned those who try to cling to privileges today risk paying the price tomorrow.

"Reform must be about institutions that reflect today's world. 1945 problem-solving will not solve 2026 problems. If structures do not reflect our times, our world, our realities — they will lose legitimacy," Secretary General Guterres said on Thursday in his address to the 193-member General Assembly on his priorities for 2026. Giving a clarion call for reform of global institutions to reflect contemporary realities, Guterres said the share of global GDP held by developed economies shrinks bit by bit every day while emerging economies grow in size, strength and influence.

Guterres emphasised it is "manifestly" in the interests of

NEED FOR UNSC REFORM



those who hold the most power to be on the frontlines of reform. "Those who try to cling to privileges today risk paying the price tomorrow. And so we must all be bold enough to change. The world is not waiting. Neither should we," the UN chief, whose second five-year term at the helm of the world body comes to an end on December 31, 2026, said in his traditional address to the General Assembly on his priorities for 2026.

It is Guterres's last year as UN Secretary General. He told the 193-member General Assembly he would make every day count and remains committed and determined to keep working, fighting, and pushing for a better world.

GUTERRES: UN CHARTER NOT 'À LA CARTE MENU, EROSION OF INT'L LAW UNFOLDING IN 4K

Asserting the UN Charter is not "à la carte menu", UN chief denounced nations for brazenly violating international law, saying when leaders "pick and choose" which rules to follow, they undermine global order and set a "perilous" precedent.

Against the backdrop of the recent US military action in Venezuela, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine as well as other geo-political challenges, Guterres said the world is brimming with conflict, impunity, inequality and unpredictability. "A world marked by self-defeating geo-political divides...brazen violations of international law...and wholesale cuts in development and humanitarian aid. These forces and more are shaking the foundations of global cooperation and testing

the resilience of multilateralism itself," he said. "That is the paradox of our era: at a time when we need international cooperation the most, we seem to be the least inclined to use it and invest in it. Some seek to put international cooperation on deathwatch. I can assure you: we will not give up," the UN chief said.

Guterres, who has spoken against the Russian invasion, said no effort must be spared to stop the fighting in Ukraine and achieve a just and lasting peace in line with the UN Charter, international law and UN resolutions. He criticised nations for violating international law and not adhering to the UN Charter, which he said is a "compact" that "binds us all". Underlining the UN Charter is not an "à la carte menu" but is "prix fixe", Guterres said "we must adhere to the UN Charter, fully and faithfully. No ifs, no ands, no buts. The Charter is the foundation of international relations, the bedrock of peace, sustainable development, and human rights."

Briefs

BULAWAYO

Cric-Kit Fair 2026 Opens at Wankhede



The much-awaited Cric-Kit Fair 2026 was inaugurated today at the iconic Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, by India cricketer Ajinkya Rahane, in the presence of members of the MCA Apex Council. The two-day fair, organised with the objective of making quality cricket equipment accessible and affordable, has already witnessed an overwhelming response from players, parents, coaches and cricket enthusiasts.

NEW DELHI
Vijender in Asian Boxing Council

Indian boxing icon Vijender Singh has been appointed as a member of the Asian Boxing Council, marking another significant milestone in his journey from an elite athlete to global sports administrator. Vijender, India's first Olympic medalist in boxing, brings with him nearly two decades of experience at the highest level of the sport, both in amateur and professional boxing. His appointment to the Asian Boxing Council reflects his deep understanding of the sport.

MARANELLO (ITALY)
Hamilton to get a new race engineer

Lewis Hamilton will have a new race engineer talking to him over the radio in Formula 1 after Riccardo Adami was moved to another role with Ferrari. Race engineers are the staff members most often in contact with drivers on track, discussing race incidents, car setup and strategy. The radio chatter between Hamilton and Adami came in for scrutiny during the British driver's disappointing 2025 season. Ahead of the start of pre-season testing this month, Italian said Adami would work.

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3RD ODI | New Zealand eye historic first series win over Shubman Gill's team

India look to protect record

INDORE

India's absolute dominance at home will come under examination when they meet a determined New Zealand in the decisive third ODI at the high-scoring Holkar Stadium here on Sunday, with the three-match series locked at 1-1.

India have not lost a bilateral ODI series at home since March 2019, when Australia overturned a 0-2 deficit to win 3-2, including the decider in Delhi. But that history is now firmly on the line.

For New Zealand, the context is equally compelling.

The Black Caps have toured India for bilateral ODIs since 1989 but have never won a series in India and this is arguably their best opportunity to break that barren run.

India head coach Gautam Gambhir would not like another tumbling at home under his regime after getting a number of unwanted firsts. India lost five Tests at home under Gambhir apart from losing an ODI series in Sri Lanka for the first time.

India's defeat in the second ODI at Rajkot was shaped less by one extraordinary innings than by how New Zealand seized control of the middle overs.

Daryl Mitchell's unbeaten century was built on calculated aggression, particularly against spin, an area where India have been struggling of late.

Indore, with its short boundaries and minimal assistance for bowlers, offers even less margin for error.

India's ability to tackle spin has raised questions. Despite depth and power, the side has continued to show discomfort against spin in the middle overs. Strike rotation has stalled at key phases, forcing batters into high-risk options



India's captain Shubman Gill during a training session ahead of the third ODI. PTI

Teams:

India: Shubman Gill (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravindra Jadeja,

Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ayush Badoni, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Mohammed Siraj, Harshit Rana.

New Zealand: Michael Bracewell (c), Devon Conway (wk), Mitchell Hay (wk), Nick Kelly, Henry Nicholls, Will Young, Josh Clarkson, Zak

Foulkes, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Adithya Ashok, Kristian Clarke, Kyle Jamieson, Jayden Lennox, Michael Rae.

rather than controlled accumulation.

On a ground where totals can quickly spiral beyond 350, those quiet overs can decisively tilt the momentum.

Will there be a RoKo show

Much of the spotlight will be on Rohit Sharma, who is enduring a lean run in this series. His ultra-aggressive approach at the top has been a defining feature of India's recent ODI philosophy, but repeated early dismissals has added a bit of pressure.

Virat Kohli, meanwhile, remains the fulcrum around which India's ODI batting

revolves. With India's next 50-over assignment for senior players likely to come in July during the tour of England, the fans would hope for another RoKo show.

Selection balance

The choice between Nitish Kumar Reddy and Ayush Badoni is effectively a debate between depth and control.

Reddy adds seam-bowling insurance, though used sparingly, and late-innings power, while Badoni offers a tighter technique against spin and composure in the middle overs.

The case for including left-

arm pacer Arshdeep Singh also gains weight at Indore, where variations rather than raw pace often determines success. Arshdeep's ability to swing the new ball, attack the stumps and execute yorkers at the death offers India a different tactical dimension, particularly against New Zealand's largely right-handed top and middle-order.

His inclusion would also reduce the burden on the spinners in the middle and late phases, allowing India to rely more on pace-off deliveries, wide yorkers and hard lengths - methods better

suited at Holkar Stadium than spin.

The challenge lies in whom he replaces. Mohammed Siraj's new-ball role makes him difficult to leave out. The most likely trade-off would be a spinner or a seam-bowling all-rounder, depending on conditions and batting depth.

KL Rahul's role is one area where clarity already exists.

His inclusion would also underline the value of keeping him in that position rather than pushing him down to six, where his ability to manage tempo and rebuild under pressure is diluted.

No concern over Jadeja's form: Siraj

India pacer says one wicket will bring him back to form

INDORE

India pacer Mohammed Siraj on Saturday backed senior all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja to rediscover his rhythm quickly, insisting that it would only take one wicket for the left-arm spinner to return to his best in the series-deciding third ODI against New Zealand, here on Sunday.

Jadeja went wicketless in the first two ODIs against New Zealand (0/44 and 0/56) in the ongoing series and could scalp only one batter in the preceding three-match series against South Africa at home.

"I don't think there is any concern about Jadeja's form. It is a matter of just one wicket. Once you get that breakthrough, you will see a different bowler altogether," Siraj said at the pre-match press conference.

Despite recent lean returns, Jadeja's overall ODI record remains valuable -- nearly 2,900 runs at just over 32 and 232 wickets across 209 matches. Siraj underlined that the bowling unit remained confident despite being put under pressure in the second ODI, where missed chances allowed New Zealand to level

I don't think there is any concern about Jadeja's form. It is a matter of just one wicket. Once you get that breakthrough, you will see a different bowler altogether

Mohammad Siraj
India pacer

the three-match series.

"We played very well in both matches. In the first ODI, our bowling and batting were very good. In the second match, even after losing early wickets, KL Rahul batted well and Nitish Reddy also contributed," he said. Reflecting on Daryl Mitchell's match-winning knock, Siraj felt India had their chances.

"There was an opportunity. When the catch dropped, if we had taken that chance, the result could have been different. World-class batters don't give you many opportunities, and when they get one, they make you pay," he said.



India's Ravindra Jadeja, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh and others during a training session ahead of the third ODI. PTI

Miss American Pie fancied for feature

The well-bred runner has been consistent in her recent outings

MUMBAI

Miss American Pie appeals the most for the Mulraj Goculdas Trophy, the feature attraction on the eighth day of the Mumbai racing season, scheduled to be held at the iconic Mahalaxmi Racecourse here on Sunday.

The well-bred runner has been showing consistent form in her recent outings and, with favourable track conditions expected, is likely to put in a strong performance when it matters most.

Turn And Burn and Divine Star also emerge as serious contenders in this keenly anticipated contest. Both horses have displayed promise and competitiveness in their previous starts and possess the ability to challenge the favourite should the race unfold to suit them.

With a quality field lining up, the Mulraj Goculdas Trophy promises to be an engaging and closely fought affair for racing enthusiasts. **First race: 2:00pm**



Representational image

Selections

1. The Maharaja Sir Pratapsingh Gaekwad Trophy: 1. (6), 2. (2), 3 (8)
2. The Mulraj Goculdas Trophy: 1. Miss American Pie (1), 2. Turn And Burn (5), 3. Divine Star (6)
3. The Jayaramdas Patel Gold Trophy: 1 (5), 2. (1)
4. The P R Mehta Trophy: 1. (1), 2. (4), 3. (6)
5. The Y M Chaudhry Memorial Trophy: 1 (4), 2. (5), 3. (9)
6. The S M Shah Salver: 1 (5), 2. (4), 3. (12)
7. The Ferrari Plat: 1 (2), 2. (5)

Real Madrid jeered by angry fans before beating Levante

BARCELONA

Real Madrid was jeered by its disgruntled fans before Kylian Mbappé scored to spark a 2-0 win over Levante in the Spanish league on Saturday.

Spectators at the Santiago Bernabeu whistled, booed and waved white handkerchiefs before the opening kickoff to express their anger after back-to-back losses and a sudden coaching change.

Madrid fired Xabi Alonso after last weekend's loss to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final only for the team to then lose to a second-tier side in the Copa del Rey in the debut of Alonso's replacement.

New coach Álvaro Arbeloa, who was promoted from its B team, as well as his players could have ill afforded another slip against a relegation-threatened Levante in front of their home supporters. Levante, however, generated as much in attack as Madrid did in the first half. It took a penalty converted by Mbappé in the 58th to break the deadlock.

VHT final: Saurashtra, Vidarbha in battle of equals

Unlike in the past, both Saurashtra, Vidarbha do not have any superstars

BENGALURU

A fascinating battle of equals is on cards as a closely-matching Saurashtra and Vidarbha vie for their third and maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy title respectively here at the BCCI Centre of Excellence grounds on Sunday.

Unlike in the past, both Saurashtra and Vidarbha do not have any superstars in their line-up. But their batters and bowlers have so far performed like a well-oiled machine in this edition of the tournament, helping them humble some more fancied teams en route to the final.

Saurashtra have been served well by the likes of skipper Harvik Desai, their top run-getter with 561 runs, and Vishvaraj Jadeja, who fashioned their semifinal win over Punjab with a blistering hundred.

On the other hand, Vidarbha's batting has been propped up by **Aman Mokhadé**, the tournament's



highest run accumulator with 781 runs, and Dhruv Shorey (515 runs). Mokhadé, an opener in the classic mould, has been quite impressive thus far, and his century in the semifinal against Karnataka here was masterclass in innings building and nerveless construction of chase.

Ravi Kumar Samarth too has underlined his value with some useful contributions in the

middle-order, aggregating 427 runs. Nothing really separates these two teams in terms of batting, and bowling too offers a similar tale.

Pacers Ankur Panwar (21) and Chetan Sakariya (15) have kept Saurashtra's new ball attack tight, and they have been effective at the death as well. Vidarbha have relied on Nachiket Bhut (15) and Yash Thakur (15) in this tournament, and they will hope for an encore from the young pace duo in the final.

Teams:

Teams (from):
Vidarbha: Harsh Dubey (c), Yash Thakur (vc), Atharva Taide, Dhruv Shorey, Aman Mokhadé, Yash Rathod, Shivam Deshmukh (wk), Akshay Wadkar, Nachiket Bhute, Darshan Nalkande, R. Samarth, Parth Rekhadé, Dipesh Parwani, Praful Hinge, Shubham Dubey, Ganesh Bhosle.
Saurashtra: Harvik Desai (wk/c), Vishvaraj Jadeja, Prerak Mankad, Sammar Gajjar, Chirag Jani, Ruchit Ahir, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, Ankur Panwar, Prasanta Rana, Aditya Jadeja, Chetan Sakariya, Hetvik Kotak, Pranav Karia, Yuvraj Chudasama, Parth Bhut, Tarang Gohel, Jay Gohil, Ansh Gosai, Parswaraj Rana, Hiten Kanbi.

U-19 WC

Vihaan's four-for sparks stunning Bangladesh collapse

BULAWAYO

Off-spinner Vihaan Malhotra produced a sensational spell of 4 for 14 to trigger a dramatic Bangladesh batting collapse as India pulled off an 18-run victory via the DLS method in a rain-hit Under-19 World Cup match here on Saturday.

Bangladesh, who bowled out India for 238 in a reduced 49-over contest, were firmly in control of the chase before losing eight

wickets for 40 runs to lose the match from a winning position.

It was India's second consecutive victory in the tournament.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 146 in 28.3 overs, well short of the revised target of 165 from 29 overs.

Players from both sides were seen exchanging handshakes and pleasantries on the field at the end of the match after both the captains avoided the customary gesture at the toss.

India now lead group B standings with four points from two matches, while Bangladesh and USA were yet to open their accounts. New Zealand are yet to begin their campaign in Group B.

Chasing a revised target of 165 from 29 overs after a second rain delay of over one hour and 30 minutes, Bangladesh were cruising at 102 for 2 after 20 overs, comfortably ahead of the DLS par score of 88.

What followed, however, was a stunning collapse

engineered by Malhotra's disciplined off-spin and supported by timely strikes from the other end.

Malhotra, who had struggled earlier with the bat in his 24-ball 7, found sharp turn and bounce to dismantle the middle order, removing Kalam Siddiki (15), Sheikh Parvez Jibon (7), Rizan Hossain (15) and Samiun Basir (2) in a decisive spell that swung the match sharply India's way.

Bangladesh lost five wickets in the space of 33

balls as panic set in.

Left-arm spinner Khilan Patel delivered the decisive blow by dismissing Bangladesh skipper Azizul Hakim, who top-scored with a patient 51 off 72 balls (4x4, 1x6).

Hakim, aware of the DLS equation, had played a composed innings but misjudged a waist-high full toss from Khilan, looking to clear long-on only to pick out the fielder in the deep, effectively ending Bangladesh's resistance.



Vihaan Malhotra (2nd left) celebrates. ICC