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

Briefs

Bihar 'Bhoo Yoddha' Award

The Bihar government has announced a "Bhoo Yoddha" award to encourage people to recover old or lost land documents and help resolve long-pending land disputes. Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Vijay Sinha said original records such as khatian, receipts and registry papers are key to settling ownership issues and improving transparency. The announcement was made in the Assembly. Sinha also ordered a probe into alleged encroachments in Kishanganj but cited an official report denying claims of outsider. He added illegal transfers would be cancelled and such land restored to the government, while urban projects will now follow a tender process.

Rahul warns Punjab Cong leaders

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday warned faction-ridden Punjab leaders to act as a team or face being sidelined, saying those not aligned would be "put in reserve". Addressing an MGNREGA rally in Barnala, he stressed that no individual is bigger than the party. Gandhi also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over MGNREGA and the India-US trade deal, alleging it would hurt small farmers. He cited concerns over the China border situation and claimed he was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha. Mallikarjun Kharge echoed concerns on farmers and rising drug abuse in Punjab.

Punjab Police foil major terror plot

Punjab Police on Saturday said it foiled a major terror plot by busting a foreign-based module and arresting two suspects with a fully assembled 2.5 kg RDX-laden Improvised Explosive Device and a Glock pistol with four live cartridges. Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav said the suspects acted on directions of foreign handlers and had concealed the device near the SBS Nagar bypass. In separate operations, police arrested 10 suspects, seized 5.4 kg heroin and three pistols. Six more suspects were held in a narcotics case, with drugs and Rs9 lakh recovered.

ILL-TIMED | Party Says PM's trip signals partisan alignment, risks strategic fallout and election sensitivities at home

Cong condemns Modi's Israel visit as shameful

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel "shameful" and "ill-timed," saying it creates the perception of a political endorsement of military escalation which is deeply antithetical to India's historic commitment to a rules-based international order. The party also called for urgent steps to safeguard Indians in the region.

In a statement, Salman Khurshid, Chairman of the Congress Foreign Affairs Department, said the Congress is "deeply concerned" at Modi's visit to Israel from February 25 to 26 at a moment of heightened tensions, a breakout of hostilities and the palpable risk of wider conflict and the palpable risk of wider conflict in West Asia.

US President Donald Trump on Saturday announced that his country has begun "major combat operations in Iran" after Israel launched strikes.

BJP calls Cong 'army of rats'

New Delhi: The ruling BJP slammed the Congress on Saturday for targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the US and Israel launching military strikes on Iran, calling it an "army of rats" and claiming that it has become the nature of the opposition party to make "negative comments" on every sensitive matter. The ruling party said the Congress and its leaders must refrain from making "childish statements" amid the prevailing show and have faith in the Modi government. This came after Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X, said, "Two days after Mr Modi celebrated his visit to Israel, Israel and the US have begun their joint assault on Iran. This was fully expected given their military build-up in the last few months."

The Congress said Modi's visit is "particularly ill-timed" because it creates a perception of partisan alignment and tacit endorsement of unprovoked aggression could have grave strategic consequences. It also said it risks conveying alignment with and endorsement of an incumbent government ahead of national elections.

Congress general secretary, Jairam Ramesh also said that two days after Modi "celebrated his visit to Israel", Israel and

the US began their joint assault on Iran.

"This was fully expected given their military build-up in the last few months. Mr. Modi nevertheless chose to go to Israel, where he displayed the highest moral cowardice. He declared that India stood with Israel and got himself an award for saying so.

"This Israeli visit was shameful and it is even more so in light of the war that has been launched by two of Mr. Modi's 'good friends'," Ramesh wrote on X.

Cong is now MMC: Modi

Jaipur: Taking a dig at Congress over its youth wing's "shirtless protest" at the AI summit a few days ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed Congress "Muslim League-Maoist Congress". "Congress is continuously losing across the country, and in anger it is taking revenge by defaming India. Congress was once INC, i.e., Indian National Congress, but now INC is no more; Indian National Congress is no more. Today, instead of INC, it has become MMC, i.e., Muslim League-Maoist Congress," said PM Modi, addressing a public meeting in Ajmer on Saturday where he launched a nationwide HPV vaccination campaign to prevent cervical cancer among girls and women.

Iran-Israel war: Kerala sets up helpdesk for expatriates

Thiruvananthapuram: Amid fast-escalating hostilities between Iran and Israel, the Kerala government has moved swiftly to address mounting concerns over the safety of expatriates in West Asia. Tensions flared after a joint US-Israel strike on Iranian targets triggered a major retaliatory missile barrage from Tehran.

Iran reportedly launched around 30 missiles at Israel in a coordinated assault, prompting the activation of the Israeli Air Force and its air defence systems.

The developments have triggered anxiety in Kerala, which has a substantial diaspora presence in Bahrain, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Lakhs of Malayalis are employed across sectors such as healthcare, construction, retail and financial services in these countries, making stability in the Gulf critical to both families and the state's remittance-driven economy.

Responding to the situation, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has directed the Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) Department to immediately set up a dedicated helpdesk.

Weaponising the law: Sibal targets BJP

NEW DELHI

A day after former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was discharged in the liquor policy case, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday accused the BJP of "weaponising" the law to target opposition leaders.

The senior advocate urged the Supreme Court to direct the government to amend laws for ensuring that arrests are made only after a magistrate is shown oral and documentary evidence justifying the action.

Sibal also accused the government of following a colonial mindset of arresting first and gathering evidence later.

His remarks came after a Delhi court discharged Kejriwal, his former deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others in the politically charged liquor policy case and pulled up the CBI by saying it found no "overarching conspiracy or criminal intent" in the policy.

"We want to ask the government who will bear responsibility for the 126 days that Kejriwal spent in jail and 503 days that Sisodia spent in



jail. There should be accountability," Sibal said at a press conference.

"They (BJP) used to say that it is a Rs 100 crore scam. The judge said that this was pre-meditated. The judgement said it was a pre-conceived plan to make them accused and then the CBI decided how to do that," he said.

Sibal added that the prime minister keeps talking about the colonial mindset. "This whole law is about the colonial mindset, first to arrest and then gather evidence. This law should be amended." He alleged that probe agencies were following a set pattern by arresting someone and then getting that person to name another individual as accused, whom they want to target.

PM Modi launches nationwide HPV vaccination campaign

JAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign for 14-year-old girls from Ajmer in Rajasthan.

The campaign against cervical cancer was formally inaugurated at a programme held in Kayad, Ajmer, where several girls were administered the vaccine. The prime minister also interacted with the beneficiaries on the occasion.

According to officials, a single-dose "Gardasil 4" vaccine, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine, will be used under the campaign. The injection provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which are



responsible for cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11.

The Union Health Ministry, in an official communication sent to all states on February 25, stated, "All 14-year-old girls across the country will be administered a single dose

of the 'Gardasil 4' vaccine at government health facilities, including Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Primary Health Centres), Community Health Centres, sub-district and district hospitals, and government medical colleges and hospitals."

Himanta flags off 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra'

GUWAHATI

In a politically significant and symbolically charged event, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia on Saturday flagged off the Bharatiya Janata Party's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' from the sacred premises of Gupteshwar Temple in Dhekiajuli.

The yatra commenced at 10 am from the historic town, a place etched in the annals of India's freedom struggle. Dhekiajuli is remembered for

the supreme sacrifice of several brave freedom fighters who laid down their lives during the 1942 Quit India Movement in defiance of British rule. Against this backdrop of patriotism and sacrifice, the BJP launched what it described as a people-centric outreach campaign aimed at carrying forward the message of development and public welfare.

Addressing a large gathering at the launch event, Chief Minister Sarma said the choice of Dhekiajuli was deliberate and meaningful.

Flight fails to land in Nepal for second day

Bengaluru: Chaos prevailed at Kempegowda International Airport here after passengers bound for Nepal have staged a protest against Air India Express, alleging gross mismanagement that disrupted their travel plans for two consecutive days.

According to passengers, the flight departed Bengaluru for Kathmandu at 10.30 am on Thursday. However, the aircraft returned without landing in Kathmandu under circumstances that were not clearly communicated to travellers, they alleged.

EC publishes final Bengal voter list; 7 cr registered

KOLKATA

The Election Commission (EC) on Saturday began publishing the final electoral roll in West Bengal following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), with the total number of voters standing at 7.04 crore.

Chief Election Commissioner Manoj Agarwal said 64 lakh names have been deleted from the rolls, while around 60 lakh voters remain under adjudication. "The total number of voters post-SIR is 7,04,16,630. We have added 1,83,036 new voters. Nearly 64 lakh names have been deleted — around 58 lakh during the draft stage and another 7 lakh subsequently," Agarwal said.

YouTuber stabbed in Gzb; 7 booked

LUCKNOW

A YouTuber who had renounced Islam was brutally attacked inside his office in broad daylight in Ghaziabad, police said. Masked assailants arrived on a motorcycle without a number plate, stormed into the office and stabbed him repeatedly, attempting to slit his throat before fleeing when he raised an alarm.

Neighbours rushed in after hearing his screams and informed his family. The victim, Salim Ahmad alias Salim Vastik, 50, was first taken to a nearby hospital and later referred to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital in Delhi. Doctors said he suffered 14 stab wounds to the chest,

abdomen, neck, arms and legs. His condition was stated to be serious but stable.

The attack took place in the Kotwali police station area of Loni. Based on a complaint filed by his son Usman, police have registered an FIR against seven people, including a local leader of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said those who play with law and order will not be spared and that there is no place for terror in Uttar Pradesh. BJP MP and actor Manoj Tiwari visited the hospital. Police said they placed Yati Nursing and Giri under house arrest after receiving information that he was planning to reach the hospital.

Rahul flags healthcare and tax issues of ex-servicemen

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has in a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman urged adequate funding to the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) and withdrawal of newly introduced income taxes on disability pensions.

Raising the twin issues concerning ex-Servicemen, Gandhi wrote that, "The Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme is designed to give veterans the best healthcare. Today, it is suffering from severe funding shortages. Over Rs 12,000 crore in medical bills remain pending, budget allocation is nearly 30% below requirement, and hospitals are opting out due to non-payment."

Stating that veterans are being forced to pay from their own pockets, or even delay treatment for serious diseases like cancer, he urged the Minister to intervene on their behalf.

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also raised the issue of the Finance Bill 2026 proposing tax on disability pensions if the soldier is retained in service saying, "this is the first time since 1922 that disability pensions are being taxed."

Seeking a withdrawal of the proposed tax, Gandhi wrote that disability pensions are meant to provide relief to servicemen who suffer injuries, and should not be thought of as income.

The Kerala Story 2: Low ticket sales, cancellations mark Day 1

KOCHI/KOZHIKODE

A day after the Kerala High Court paved the way for the release of "The Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond", ticket sales remained slow, though theatre owners on Saturday said they are expected to pick up in the coming days.

Meanwhile, activists of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) staged protests outside theatres screening the film across the state, saying they would not allow its screening as it allegedly depicts Kerala in a bad light.

The protests led to the cancellation of shows in several theatres in Kochi, Kozhikode and Kottayam.



DYFI leaders said they were not against moviegoers or theatre owners, but were protesting against the film for allegedly tarnishing the state's image.

Visuals on television channels showed protesters shouting slogans and tearing down posters at theatres screening the film.

money special GAIL to invest ₹1,736 cr in wind power project in Maharashtra

NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd will invest Rs 1,736.25 crore in setting up a wind power project in Maharashtra that will help expand its renewable energy portfolio, as it targets net zero carbon emissions by 2035.

In a regulatory filing, GAIL said its board at its meeting on Friday approved the investment in setting up 178.2 megawatt wind power capacity.

The project, to be completed in 24 months from the award of the contract, will add to the existing portfolio of 117.95 MW. Besides, the firm also has 27 MW of solar energy projects spread across



Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Its wind power projects are in Gujarat (19.2 MW), Karnataka (38.1 MW) and Tamil Nadu (60.65 MW).

The project to generate electricity from wind is part of a broader effort to boost renewable capacity and meet net-zero carbon emission targets by 2035.

"GAIL has set a target of achieving net zero through

Air passenger traffic grows 4.36% to 152.49 lakh in Jan

India's domestic aviation sector witnessed a sharp correction in January 2026, as market leader IndiGo clawed back its lost territory, while the Air India Group saw its share retreat following a temporary spike. According to the latest data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), overall domestic air traffic grew by 4.36% sequentially, signalling a robust start to the new year.

After a tumultuous December 2025, where massive operational disruptions caused IndiGo's market share to plummet to 59.6%, the budget carrier has staged a significant comeback. In January 2026, IndiGo regained its footing to capture 63.6% of the domestic market, effectively returning to its pre-crisis levels. The airline's recovery is attributed to a stabilisation of pilot schedules,

and the successful induction of new Airbus A321XLR aircraft, which bolstered its narrow-body capacity.

On the other hand, the Air India Group saw its market share contract to 26.5% in January. This represents a nearly 3% drop from the 29.6% share it held in December 2025. Industry analysts suggest that Air India's December peak was a windfall gain resulting from passengers migrating away from IndiGo during its operational crisis. As IndiGo restored its full schedule in January, the competitive landscape normalised, pulling the Tata-owned group back toward its long-term average. Apart from the two major carriers, Akasa Air reported 4.8% market share, Spicejet recorded 3.9%, Star Air 0.6%, Alliance Air 0.4% and Fly91 recorded 0.2% market share.

Jindal Films' class action suit: NCLAT declines to stay NCLT order

The appellate tribunal NCLAT has declined to stay an order of the NCLT, which has admitted a class action petition against Jindal Poly Films, filed by its shareholders.

A two-member NCLAT bench held that the petition filed by the minority shareholders, alleging siphoning of more than Rs 2,500 crore, fulfils the required criteria mentioned in Section 245 of the Companies Act.

AGEL arm commissions 185 MW wind energy project in Gujarat

Adani Green Energy on Saturday said its step-down arm Adani Green Energy Twenty Five C Ltd has operationalised a wind power project of 185 MW in Khavda, Gujarat. With the commissioning of this plant, AGEL's total operational renewable generation capacity has increased to 17,472.2 MW, a regulatory filing said.

Andhra Pradesh to open coastline for rare earth mining

Andhra Pradesh plans to open up its mineral-rich coastline for large-scale rare earth and titanium-bearing beach sand mining, in a strategic move aimed at reducing India's dependence on Chinese imports and building a domestic value chain for critical minerals. State-run miner APMDCL has identified multiple heavy mineral-bearing deposits across coastal districts, positioning the state as a potential hub for titanium dioxide, titanium metal and rare earth processing.

AI will reshape jobs, not destroy them: Morgan Stanley

Fears that artificial intelligence will wipe out millions of jobs have unsettled workers and investors alike, but a new research note from Morgan Stanley suggests the long-term impact may be less severe than many expect. According to the report, while some roles will be automated, most workers are unlikely to be permanently left behind. Instead, many are expected to shift into new types of jobs, including roles that do not yet exist.

Akhilesh Yadav attended former MP Salim Sherwani's Iftar party and said, "The double engines are clashing with each other"

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Samajwadi Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav arrived in Prayagraj on Saturday evening. He attended the Roza Iftar party held at the Chaufatka company of Salim Sherwani, a five-time MP from Badaun and a Union Minister. Speaking to the media, he targeted the Yogi government. Akhilesh Yadav said that despite spending 60,000 crore rupees, the problem of traffic jams persists in Prayagraj. The Ganga remains dirty, and sewage is directly flowing into the Yamuna. Akhilesh Yadav said that we have a tradition of celebrating festivals together. We embrace each other on Holi and Eid. Prayagraj is the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, which inspires us to move forward together. In response to a



question, he said that prosperity will come to the state only when the BJP government is gone. Employment will be provided, poverty will be eradicated and inflation will reduce. The SP chief said that the condition of the state is such that one is going to the east and the other to the west. Some are going to Japan and some to Germany. He said that when Yogi Baba had gone to Japan, he should have visited Kyoto. He always talks about

making Varanasi like Kyoto but never went to Kyoto. Prayagraj has an international identity. People from abroad come here for Kumbh Mahakumbh. Dishonesty was done in carrying out development work here. Even after spending 60 thousand crores, there is traffic jam. Akhilesh Yadav stayed in Prayagraj for about an hour. Due to his visit, the matter has been transferred there and an investigation is being conducted

Vibhakar Shastri and Viraj Shastri Perform Groundbreaking Ceremony for Free RO Plant



Fatehpur

A wave of happiness swept through Kusumbi village in Haswa development block of Fatehpur district as residents learned that a free Reverse Osmosis (RO) water plant would be installed in their area. Villagers expressed relief, stating that access to safe and Purified drinking water would now be ensured Without Hardship. The Groundbreaking ceremony for the RO Plant was organized by Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Foundation. The event was attended by District In-charge Minister Ajit Pal, BJP District President Annu Srivastava, Vibhakar Shastri, and Viraj Shastri, among other dignitaries. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ajit Pal described the initiative as commendable and said that such efforts would significantly benefit rural communities. He noted that the installation of the free RO plant in Kusumbi village would provide clean drinking water to a large number of residents. BJP District President Annu Srivastava termed the initiative an example of meaningful public service. She highlighted that the project is being undertaken by Viraj Shastri, grand-

son of former Union Minister late Harikrishna Shastri, calling it an important step toward community welfare. Vibhakar Shastri stated that his father, the late Harikrishna Shastri, had Prioritized Public service during his tenure as Union Minister in the Congress government. He said the Foundation is committed to fulfilling his unfinished vision by ensuring access to safe drinking water for hundreds of villagers in Kusumbi. Viraj Shastri reaffirmed his commitment to carrying forward his grandfather legacy. Recalling the iconic slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" given by former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, he said the message remains relevant today. He further announced that the Foundation aims to install approximately half a dozen free RO plants over the next year. In addition, Plans are underway to set up water ATM at major city intersections, the railway station, bus stand, and other public locations. Several public representatives and local residents were present at the ceremony, including Neetu Mishra, Abhay Pratap Singh, Mukhlal Pal, Gram Pradhan representative Shiva Thakur (Advocate), Vinayak Singh.

Gaura went to her in-laws house and the people of Kashi threw Gulal at Her



Varanasi

The residents of Kashi formally began the Holi festivities by applying gulal (coloured powder) to Gauri-Shankar and their son, Lord Ganesha. The Rangbhari Ekadashi celebrations in Kashi took Place from morning until evening at the Mahant residence in Tedhinim. Before Baba was Put on the royal turban, Goddess Parvati crown and Baba ancient palanquin, special prayers were Performed by Pt. Vachaspati Tiwari, a representative of the Mahant family. Throughout the day, devotees continued to offer abir (coloured powder) to Baba Vishwanath and Mai Mahamaya. A large number of Kashi residents and dignitaries arrived to have darshan of the movable idols. Even after the palanquin was ready to be lifted, people struggled to enter the hall for darshan. Amidst the roar of drums, Baba rode the palanquin in royal splendor with Mata Gauri with Ganesha seated in Mata Gauri lap. From the main street outside the Mahant residence to the main entrance of the temple, special gulal was showered on the palanquin. The drum beats continued to resound. At 5:09 Pm. as soon as the group of Priests from the temple reached the street of Mahant residence, the entire atmosphere reverberated with the chants of Har Har Mahadev. The aarti with camphor, Pandit Vachaspati Tiwari signaled the lifting of Baba Palanquin, holding lighted candles in both hands. As the Mahant family lifted Baba Palanquin, abir and rose Petals began to be showered from all sides. The sound of conch shells began simultaneously. The drum beats led the way, followed by Baba Palanquin, towards the Vishwanath Temple. As the Palanquin Passed the Nau Griheshwar Mahadev Temple in Tedhi Neem, 51 kilograms of rose petals were showered from Vishnu Kaseria residence. By the time everyone left the Mahant residence and reached Sakshi Vinayak, everyone white clothes had turned red. The movable idols of Baba and Mother Parvati were taken from Mahant Asav in Tedhi Neem and proceeded to the Vishwanath Temple via Sakshi Vinayak and Dhundhiraj Vinayak. Offering of hymns in Shivanjali. Before this, a symbolic traditional Shivanjali was organised at the Mahant residence.

Hindi Workshop at North Central Railway Headquarters, Emphasis on Effective Implementation of Official Language Policy

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A Hindi workshop was organized at the North Central Railway Headquarters on Friday to promote the effective use and dissemination of the official language, Hindi. Officers and employees were provided with important information regarding the Central Government's Official Language Policy, the provisions of Section 3(3) of the Official Language Act, the Parliamentary Official Language Committee's inspection questionnaire, and filling out various types



of official language progress reports. Training was also provided on the practical use of Hindi-related technical tools and apps. The program was inaugurated by Chief Official

Language Officer and Principal Chief Safety Officer, J.C.S. Bora, by garlanding a picture of Goddess Saraswati. He stated that Hindi workshops hold special significance in

government offices, as they not only provide information on official language policies but also practical guidance for their effective implementation. He added that since the office is located in 'A' zone, it is a constitutional obligation to perform work in Hindi, and all employees should play an active role in this regard. He directed that Hindi or bilingual format should be used as per rules in documents, correspondence and noting etc. falling under Section 3(3) of the Official Language Act. Emphasis was also laid on ensuring use of Unicode font only

while working on computer. In the workshop, Assistant Director (Official Language) Makardhwaj Maurya of Income Tax Department, Prayagraj, retired Assistant Director (Official Language) Prakash Chandra Mishra and Senior Official Language Officer Yatharth Pandey gave detailed information on various subjects. Employees of various departments of the headquarters, translators of divisions and factories also participated in the programme. The programme was conducted by Senior Official Language Officer Yatharth Pandey.

Five Solvers Nabbed in UP Board Exam, FIR Filed

Fatehpur

Five impersonators were caught during the Uttar Pradesh Board Mathematics examination in Fatehpur on . The action was taken by a flying squad on the directions of District Inspector of Schools (DIOS) Rajesh Kumar. Acting on prior intelligence inputs regarding candidates appearing in Place of registered students, the team conducted a raid at Pandit Deendayal Inter College and apprehended five youths red-handed. Preliminary investiga-



tion revealed that the accused were writing the exam on behalf of students from different institutions. During questioning, the detained individuals also named certain Persons, including Gyanendra Kumar Srivastava and Manoj Kumar Ekari, along with a concerned prin-

cipal. All accused have been handed over to the police and an FIR is being registered. The DIOS stated that recognition of the institutions involved may be cancelled and strict legal action will be taken against those found Guilty.

Children left for Regional Science Centre, Lucknow on an Educational tour

Bahraich

A Group of children studying in council upper primary schools in the Nawabganj development area departed for the Regional Science Center on an educational tour under the guidance of ARP Shailendra Kumar and Vimal Agnihotri. The purpose of this educational tour was to awaken children interest in science and make school education interesting. Block Education Officer Radheshyam Verma flagged off the educational tour from BRC Nawabganj. ARP Shailendra Kumar stated that the children selected for the educational tour were selected from among the students who secured top positions in the block-level science quiz competition organized under the National Invention Campaign. He stated that such tours promote curiosity-based learning and develop children understanding of science and technology. At the



Regional Science Center, the children understood scientific concepts through simple experiments. Here, they gained knowledge by observing and performing numerous scientific experiments, including Cartesian Diver, Know Your Weight, Hero Turbine, Kelton Wheel, Spinning Ball, 3D Show, Water is Our Life, Message from the Depths, Magic Faucet, Floating Ball, Levers, Amazing World of Matter, Rainwater Harvesting, Information on Extinct Species, Fun Science Gallery, Fun Mirror, Rotating Face, Stringless Piano, Snake Pendulum. Block Education Officer

Radheshyam Verma said that such educational excursions free children from the burden of books and enable them to better understand subjects through hands-on experience. This further increases their interest in learning. The successful conduct of the educational excursion was facilitated by Arvind Verma, Vinod Giri, Sarwan Verma, Arunendra Singh, Ajay Mishra, Nidhi Poddar, Ranju Verma, Navneet Premi, Jitendra Verma, Prachi Sharma, Ritu Patel, Avinash Chand, Kamlesh Kumar, Vinod Saroj and Other teachers.

Make Infrastructure and Basic Facilities Better: Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak

Lucknow

Providing quality healthcare services to the people of Uttar Pradesh is the government top Priority and any negligence in this regard will not be tolerated. Infrastructure and basic facilities in hospitals must be further improved. Adequate arrangements should also be ensured for night shelters for attendants, as well as the availability of medicines and standard equipment at medical Units. This was Stated by Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak. He was addressing a review meeting with departmental officials from the Meerut, Moradabad and Saharanpur divisions at the Government Institute of Medical Sciences in Greater Noida, Gautam Buddh Nagar on Friday. The Deputy CM directed that hospitals must ensure quality infrastructure, basic facilities, proper signage, citizen charters, Cleanliness and safe drinking water. Any kind of negligence will not be tolerated. Arrangements for night



Shelters for attendants, along with medicines and standard equipment, must be ensured. He also instructed officials to maintain proper functioning of MRI and ICU facilities in all district Hospitals. He further directed that Health ATM in districts should be functional, fire extinguishers must be installed in hospitals and fire audits Should be conducted. Facilities for CT scans and dialysis should be strengthened and the operational status of available ambulances must be ensured. He emphasized regular monitoring of all Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and made it mandatory for hospital staff to be in uniform. Continuous organization of Arogya Melas and other med-

ical issues were also discussed and directions were Issued. The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary (Health and Medical Education) Amit Kumar Ghosh, NHM Director Pinky Jowel, Director General (Health) Dr. Pawan Kumar Arun, Director General (Training) Dr. Ranjana Khare, Chief Development Officer of Gautam Buddh Nagar Shivakant Dwivedi, Additional Directors (Health) of the three divisions, Chief Medical Officers/Chief Medical Superintendents of various districts and other Officials. On-site Monitoring in Eight Divisions. Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak informed that under a new initiative to

strengthen medical facilities in the State, on-site inspections and divisional reviews began on October 29, 2025. So far, inspections and reviews have been conducted in eight divisions—Kanpur, Ayodhya, Devipatan, Prayagraj, Lucknow, Bareilly, Agra and Aligarh. Work Being Carried Out Seriously. Before today review meeting of the three divisions, inspections of approximately 2437 medical units across 14 districts of Meerut, Moradabad and Saharanpur divisions were conducted from February 6 to 8. These included 19 district hospitals, 131 community health centers, 446 primary health centers, 1825 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, 10 specialized hospitals, 6 medical colleges and 662 Chief Minister Arogya Melas. A total of 117 teams at the state, divisional and district levels carried out on-site inspections. Important issues identified during the inspections are being addressed with Seriousness.

Ghazipur's voice will resonate in the Legislative Assembly: Amrita Rai selected for the state-level Youth Parliament

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur. A proud moment for Ghazipur district came when Amrita Rai, a student of Shaheed Smarak Government College, located in the Kotwali area of Muhammadabad police station, was selected for the state-level Youth Parliament competition. She performed impressively in the district-level Youth Parliament competition held at the Government Postgraduate College, Ghazipur, on February 28, 2026, securing second place. Participants from various colleges in the district-level competition presented their views on contemporary issues. Amrita Rai impressed the jury with her logical analysis, clear expression, and confident presentation.

Her speech emphasized social concerns, democratic values, and the role of youth, distinguishing her from other participants. The state-level Youth



Parliament competition will now be held in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly. Amrita Rai will represent Ghazipur on this prestigious platform, pre-

sending her views. This opportunity is a matter of honor and pride not only for her but for the entire district. College Principal Dr. Arun Kumar expressed his

delight, stating that Amrita Rai's achievement is historic for the institution. He expressed confidence that Amrita Rai will also excel at the state level and bring

glory to the college and the district. Amrita Rai's success has created an atmosphere of excitement on the college campus. Students and teachers have congratulated her

and wished her a bright future. Ghazipur now eagerly awaits the moment when its daughter will raise her voice from the Assembly floor.

Wanted accused of robbery and theft arrested, 1,150 recovered



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Commissionerate Police arrested an accused wanted in two separate cases of robbery and theft. Handia police arrested him near the Shiva temple in Vasupur area. ₹1,150 related to the robbery and theft was recovered from the accused. According to the police, this action was taken as part of a campaign against criminals in the Ganganagar zone. The arrested accused is Sunny alias Suraj alias Pujari Chauhan (26), a resident of Upardaha, Handia police station. He is being prosecuted in case number 536/25 (Section 309(6) IPC) and case number 623/2025 (Section 303(2) IPC) registered at Handia police station. Following the arrest, the charges of section 317(2) IPC have been added to both cases. According to the police, on the night of September 8, 2025, the accused, along with his accomplices, robbed a man of cash and a

mobile phone near Jakuda turn. On November 2, 2025, a mobile phone and ₹1,800 were stolen from a truck parked on the roadside in Upardaha. Two other accused have already been arrested and sent to jail in connection with the theft. Long Criminal History According to the police, more than a dozen cases have been registered against the accused under various sections, including murder, robbery, theft, the Explosive Substances Act, and the NDPS Act. His criminal history has been continuously revealed since 2017. Police Team Succeeds The arrest was made by a team led by Handia Police Station in-charge Inspector Nitendra Kumar Shukla. The team included Sub-Inspectors Manibhushan Shukla, Ram Milan, Gautam Kumar, Ambuj Kumar, and other police officers. Police officials say that the campaign against crime and criminals in the area will continue.

A key peace committee meeting was held in view of Ramadan and Holi



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur. A peace committee meeting was held at the local police station premises at around 5 pm on Saturday evening to ensure a peaceful and harmonious Ramadan and Holi celebrations under the jurisdiction of the Muhammadabad police station. Religious leaders, dig-

nitaries, and public representatives from both the city and rural areas participated in the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Circle Officer Sudhakar Pandey. He appealed to the attendees to celebrate the festivals with a spirit of mutual brotherhood and cooperation and to ignore any rumors. He also assured full cooper-

ation from the administration. During the meeting, citizens raised demands for improved sanitation, electricity supply, and drinking water supply in the city and surrounding rural areas. Municipal Council President Rais Ahmed assured that special arrangements would be made to ensure cleanliness, drinking water, and

electricity during the festivals. Holika Dahan sites and other arrangements were also discussed in detail, and a mutually agreed solution was reached. Police station in-charge Rajesh Tripathi, other sub-inspectors, and police personnel were present. The meeting concluded in a cordial atmosphere.

A bag containing jewelry worth 10 lakh rupees was stolen at Prayagraj Junction ; the father filed a report after reaching Mau

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A father and daughter traveling on a train were robbed at the junction. 56-year-old Ajit Singh, a resident of Sahadatpura Mohalla in Mau district, was returning to Mau by train on February 26th after seeing off his daughter Shreya Singh from Thane,

Maharashtra. They were seated in coach A-1. It is alleged that at around 7:40 am on February 27th, during a stop at Prayagraj Junction, unknown thieves stole a black bag kept under the seat. The bag contained jewelry worth approximately 10 lakh rupees, including gold bracelets, anklets, and a diamond-studded gold

necklace set. According to the victim, a complaint was lodged at the railway helpline 139 at 8:07 am and the GRP was informed by chain pulling, but they were told to leave the train to file an FIR. Unable to leave his daughter alone, he traveled to Mau and filed a complaint with the Government Railway

Police. According to the GRP, since the incident occurred in the Prayagraj region,

the case has been transferred there and an investigation is underway.

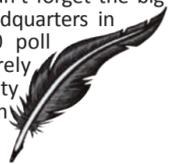
Lost/Found

It is informed to the general public that my original deed dated 22-03-2003, whose registration number is 573, book number, volume 3774, page 163/172, number 3238, is recorded. Really lost. Name: Anita Sah Wife: Basant Sah Address: 83L/1K/Q/P Harwara, dhoomanganj, Prayagraj-211011

Editorial

The operation has brought springs to BJP leaders' feet

In October 2016, addressing the national council of the Janata Dal (United), Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party for 'politicising' the surgical strike. The entire nation stands with you [Narendra Modi] as you are the Prime Minister, but what about those BJP leaders who have repeatedly used the strike to play politics?" Kumar said. A couple of months earlier, as the BJP was organising Tiranga Yatras ahead of the 70th Independence Day, Kumar had taken a dig at it. Those who "never recognised the tricolour as national flag", he said, were taking out Tiranga Yatras. Much water has flowed under the Gandhi Setu since then. As the BJP took out Tiranga Yatras across Bihar for 10 days to celebrate Operation Sindoor's success, Kumar watched them silently—and warily, perhaps. The operation has brought springs to BJP leaders' feet. The 2024 Lok Sabha poll blow is a thing of the past. PM Modi has started taking his own name again—Modi's cool mind and the hot sindoor in his veins, Modi's chest, et al. It was in his first public rally after the Pahalgam terror attack in Bihar's Madhubani, when PM Modi had vowed to punish the perpetrators "beyond their imagination". The vow fulfilled, he will be back in Bihar on 29 and 30 May. The BJP's preparations for Modi's roadshow in Patna are in full swing. People standing on both sides of the road would be showering flower petals on him. That's how a victor is welcomed. How will Operation Sindoor impact the Bihar elections? Let's first look at where the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) stood before the strikes on Pakistan's terror infrastructure and military installations. DesignBoxed, a political digital campaign management company, conducted a survey in Bihar last month. I got access to its report, which has great news for the NDA: Overall, the DesignBoxed survey indicated a clear edge for the NDA. Mind you, it was conducted before Operation Sindoor. Nitish Kumar's principal challenger, Tejashwi Yadav, also has some positive takeaways from the survey. If elections were to be held tomorrow, 46.7 per cent of respondents said they would vote for the NDA, against 35.6 per cent who favour the INDIAN bloc, with 13.8 per cent 'undecided'. If Tejashwi were to swing the 'undecided', the game would be on. For 43.8 per cent respondents, unemployment and migration are the most important issues in the upcoming elections—Tejashwi's key plank in 2020. What would make him even happier is the survey finding that 63.76 per cent people want the current government to be replaced. This sounds incongruous, as a majority of respondents were satisfied with Kumar's performance. Those involved in the DesignBoxed survey, however, claim that it's no surprise. One of them told me: "You come across many respondents who are ok with Nitish Kumar but still want his government changed. It's vice versa, too. It's a lot to do with people's castes becoming the main determinant." Kumar has been the chief minister since 2005, except for a short interlude of nine months in 2014-15. The yearning for change is understandable. How much of it can Tejashwi exploit? Can he beat the caste arithmetic that seems to be in the NDA's favour today? We will find out in November. Union home minister and the BJP's chief strategist Amit Shah once told journalists: "People in Bihar are so political. They sit at tea stalls and read the entire newspaper—from the first to the last page." Five months is obviously a long time for such political people to change their mind. But it's not just Tejashwi that CM Kumar would be worried about. The BJP says that the next election will be fought under his leadership, but it's evasive on the question of Kumar becoming the CM again if the NDA wins. Kumar wouldn't forget the big celebrations at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi after the 2020 poll results. The NDA had barely managed to cross the majority mark, securing 125 seats in the 243-member Assembly.



AIADMK led the way on caste census

In the intricate fabric of Indian democracy, few questions strike at the heart of equality and representation like that of caste. The recent announcement by the Union government to conduct a comprehensive caste census is a landmark moment—one that promises to reshape the contours of social justice policy in India. As the Leader of the Opposition in Tamil Nadu, I welcome this move with conviction and pride, for it affirms a demand the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam first articulated with clarity and foresight. This moment did not emerge overnight. The call for a caste-based census, now

accepted at the national level, has its roots in the firm ideological soil of Tamil Nadu's social justice movement. And in that journey, it was the AIADMK, under the visionary leadership of Puratchi Thalaivi Amma J. Jayalalitha, that laid the foundation for genuine representational equity. As early as 2021, during my tenure as chief minister, our government was among the first to demand a fresh caste census. We argued vociferously that welfare policies cannot be built on outdated data from 1931. We recognised then, as we follow now, that progress requires not just empathy but evidence. Tamil Nadu has long stood as a bea-

con of affirmative action, with its unique 69 per cent reservation policy. That achievement was not accidental but was made possible by AIADMK's political resolve and constitutional acumen. When the Supreme Court's Indra Sawhney (Mandal) judgment in 1992 imposed a 50 per cent cap on reservations, the very framework of Tamil Nadu's policy was threatened. But Amma Jayalalitha rose to the challenge. In 1993, she convened a special assembly session, passed a unanimous resolution, and led an all-party delegation to Delhi. Her persistent persuasion ensured the Tamil Nadu Reservation Act was placed in

the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, protecting it from judicial review. That was not just governance; it was transformative leadership. Our 2021 demand for a caste census was not political posturing. It was a reflection of AIADMK's longstanding understanding of Tamil Nadu's evolving social realities. We recognised the urgent need to reassess the representation and well-being of Backward Classes (BC), Most Backward Classes (MBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in education, employment, and welfare. This demand, when initially raised, was met with silence from the ruling DMK.

The programme also does not cover those most at risk

India's farmers steward the country's food security, yet they live in chronic distress and policy indifference. Though their contribution is crucial, they continue to be vulnerable and voiceless. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar who comes from a farming family, has repeatedly expressed discontent by consistently bringing up farmers' grievances into the public limelight, stressing that "it is the government's foremost responsibility to take care of the farmers". Agriculture, despite accounting for only 18.2 per cent of India's GDP, remains the primary source of livelihood for nearly 42.3 per cent of the population. However, over the last decade, India has witnessed a significant decadal drop in agricultural employment, underlining the sector's declining viability. Agrarian distress is now endemic, driven by crop failures, falling prices, and a broken promise of security through insurance. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2015 data, 80 per cent of suicides among farmers were due to debt and bankruptcy. The crisis has also exhibited a steady trend upward, with more than 1,12,000 people who work in the agricultural sector having died by suicide over the last ten years, according to NCRB data released in December 2023. The figures indicate that no fewer than one farmer died by suicide every hour in India. A 2018 survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) found that over 50 per cent of farm households in India had debt. Launched in 2016, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) assured crop



insurance and restored farmers' confidence. On paper, it addressed many of the earlier shortcomings. But a closer look reveals that this ambitious insurance service ends up replicating several flaws of earlier schemes. It not only falls short of meeting the expectations of the farming community but alienates the very people it was meant to safeguard. A fundamental flaw resides in the impenetrable, convoluted, and overly technical process of settling claims. The use of satellite imaging and averaging data across vast units has created a mechanism highly disconnected from ground realities. Importantly, satellite inspections are limited in scope: they can only identify the presence or absence of crops. They cannot, and do not, determine the health or yield capacity of the crop, nor can they tell one type of crop from another. This technological weakness, when used as the basis for compensation, results in miscalculations that cost real livelihoods. A farmer who suffers heavy losses due to pest damage or loss of nutrients might be deprived of compensation just because their crops appear green from above. Even more appalling is the inherent inequity of the existing model. While farmers pay premiums on an

individual level, compensation is calculated by generalised averaging within village clusters or vaguely defined large patches aggregating both large and small landholdings without any equity-based method in delineating the units. This results in discriminatory denials of claims—most importantly, for those experiencing localised or complete loss of crops. The ongoing application of area-based measurement models exacerbates these issues. Localised weather conditions like a flash flood in a corner of a village can destroy a small farmer's crop, while that of his neighbour remains intact. However, both are measured using the same parameter. It is deeply unfair that individual agony and suffering are erased by collective statistics. The programme also does not cover those most at risk: tenant farmers, sharecroppers, female cultivators, and non-loanee farmers. These are systematically and indirectly excluded by land title requirements, archaic tenancy laws, and bureaucratic obstacles such as Aadhaar-linked bank accounts. Women who increasingly become the main cultivators because of male migration are not accounted for in this system through absence of

formal landholding. These omissions are not accidental; they are manifestations of a design that does not see the true face of Indian agriculture in the present day. On-ground realities expose serious flaws in crop insurance delivery. Forced enrollment, delayed or denied claims, and faulty surveys have left farmers uncompensated and in debt. In Tamil Nadu's Mayiladuthurai district, a mere 68 villages among 277 were covered in the 2024 crop insurance settlements—and compensation was paid in just 16 of them. Similar cases were found in other districts too. D Arogyam, a 55-year-old Tamil Nadu farmer who was not a loanee, was compelled by officials to sign up for PMFBY. Despite paying his premiums on time, he got no claims for two successive years of crop failure due to drought, pushing him into debt. S. Velu, a loanee cultivator from Sivagangai near Kiliyur, availed Rs 70,000 for his 15-acre field. Even though he was in the surveyed and insured area, he faced claim settlement problems as liabilities piled up. In Thoothukudi, farmers demonstrated against one-sided compensation. Villages that were affected by floods were not considered, while those with equal damage were compensated. Farmers accused the faulty surveys and demanded accountability. In Haryana, as reported by Down to Earth, Ramesh Lal from Sonipat was forced to pay a premium under threat of losing his interest subsidy on a loan, even though he never consented to the insurance coverage. When his crop failed, no claim was paid due to "tech-

nical issues" with the policy documentation he was never shown. In Rajasthan, many farmers lost their claims because the State Bank of India delayed crediting their premiums. Consequently, they went into the subsequent cropping season without anticipated reimbursement. Even when the Centre and states subsidise 80–85 per cent of premium charges, private insurance companies consistently make profits while farmers do not gain much. Claims get delayed, disputed, or rejected, even as companies collect risk-free premiums. Meanwhile, crop-cutting experiments are done by inadequate manning, delayed rolling out, and poor-quality control, and the technological solutions like drones and AI-based analytics remain underutilised due to infrastructural gaps and lack of field-level training. Most alarmingly, a 2022 CAG report says that only 37 per cent of farmers surveyed had any real awareness of PMFBY's benefits, premium structures, or claim processes. On-ground realities expose serious flaws in crop insurance delivery. Forced enrollment, delayed or denied claims, and faulty surveys have left farmers uncompensated and in debt. In Tamil Nadu's Mayiladuthurai district, a mere 68 villages among 277 were covered in the 2024 crop insurance settlements—and compensation was paid in just 16 of them. Similar cases were found in other districts too. D Arogyam, a 55-year-old Tamil Nadu farmer who was not a loanee, was compelled by officials to sign up for PMFBY.

Threats to India are not over. Why it must build fortress-like defences

The Sindhudurg Fort, located on an islet in the Arabian Sea near Maharashtra's Malvan town, is one of the most significant sea forts. It was built between 1664-1667 by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of the Maratha Empire, for the purpose of strategic maritime defense and protection against foreign naval threats. The fort was central to Shivaji's plan to build a strong navy and protect the Konkan coastline, and marked the beginning of India's maritime defense strategy. In a similar vein, having demonstrated its military prowess in Operation Sindoor, India should now transform itself into Sindoor Durg, an impenetrable fortress, safe from multi-domain threats emanating from land, sea, air or cyberspace. It will also mark the beginning of India's new doctrine against terrorism, as outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation earlier this month—"Terror and trade cannot go together, water and blood cannot flow together". The

military strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan under Operation Sindoor have only been paused. Pakistan, still smarting from the costs imposed on it, both reputational and on its military, will be thirsting for revenge. The brief skirmish has only served as a distraction for Pakistan from its domestic issues, especially its dire internal economic conditions, and has predictably united the country, even if temporarily, against a traditional foe. Buoyed by the grant of the IMF bailout, and by promoting Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, Pakistan's politico-military leadership hopes to retain their tenuous hold on power. Since another misadventure cannot be ruled out, we have to guard against even more varied and audacious threats.

The first purpose of a fort is to provide for its own security and that of its inhabitants. India has demonstrated quite forcibly its capability to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India must look beyond Bangladesh

The political turmoil in Bangladesh has made it more urgent for India to complete the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, or KMTTP, which links Mizoram to Kolkata via Sittwe Port, it could offer a more resilient corridor for movement of goods to the Northeast, while also opening up longer-term trade possibilities with Southeast Asia. India's role as the pivot in South Asia extends beyond dominant power to that of a regional integrator. Intra-regional development is primarily a function of mutual friendship, interdependent trade, economic ties, and joint ventures. The goal may be to advance national interest, but the net effect is regional prosperity, which acts as a force multiplier for India's own development. South and Southeast Asian countries, joined together through bilateral and multilateral frameworks like the BBIN and BIMSTEC, have therefore started looking beyond the region—in line with India's Act East Policy. Apart from economic commitments, physical connectivity—especially in infrastructure and energy—has assumed unparalleled significance. Railways, high-

ways, civil aviation, and inland waterways are now crossing borders for mutual growth and development. The East South Asia region is on the cusp of unprecedented intra-regional physical connectivity. It is the only way forward for the 21st century. For instance, Nepal and Bhutan, both landlocked nations, have gained access to Indian markets and ports. Newer cross-border rail links have been operationalised between India and Bangladesh, and several projects to connect Bhutan and Myanmar were put in place during the last 10 years.

India-Bangladesh bilateral relations, in particular, had never been this strong and comprehensive—until last year. On 5 August 2024, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned following a massive uprising. An interim government headed by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has since been formed. This civil strife in Bangladesh has come with ripple effects. It's brought with it a certain straining of relations, causing collateral damage to trade and commerce. There have also been instances of cross border movements and joint project developments coming to halt. Existing trade corridors have been impacted

and ongoing rail/road projects to provide shorter transit corridors across Bangladesh to and from India's Northeastern states are on hold. It's time now to look at alternative possibilities for northeastern states in addition to the Siliguri corridor. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project requires revisiting and a fresh reassessment. During his visit to China in late March, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus made remarks that were considered provocative, to say the least. "The seven states of India, the eastern part of India, are called seven sisters...."

They are a landlocked country, landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean," he said. "We are the only guardian of the ocean for all this region." Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the BIMSTEC conference in Thailand. He met Yunus on the sidelines and reiterated his support for a democratic, progressive, and inclusive Bangladesh, according to a Ministry of External Affairs release. He also underlined India's desire to forge a constructive relationship with Bangladesh. More importantly,

Loss of Japan's position as the world's leading creditor

Delhi: Despite officials claiming that Japan's net foreign assets reached a record high last year, the country has fallen from its 34-year reign as the world's top creditor to second place, behind Germany.

The finance ministry of Japan announced that the country's net external assets were 533.05 trillion yen (\$3.7 trillion) at the end of the year, an increase of 12.9% from the previous year. Yoshimasa Hayashi, a spokesman, explained that the value of financial assets and debts, as well as changes in the balance of payments, are among the elements that contribute to the determination of net external assets. "In light of these points and the fact that Japan's net foreign assets have been steadily increasing, we do not believe



that the change in ranking alone should be taken as a sign of a major change in Japan's position," Hayashi informed the media. Based on the data provided by the ministry, the following countries ranked third: China (516.28 trillion yen), Hong Kong (320.26 trillion yen), and Norway (271.83 trillion yen). The figures show that Japan's foreign assets and liabilities both increased due to the weakening yen, but that assets grew faster than liabilities, mostly because Japanese businesses invested more money overseas.

AI models allegedly disregarded direct commands to turn off

Delhi: The most recent AI models of reasoning and thought have shown, at least in test settings, an inclination to prioritize self-preservation. And they still won't turn off, no matter how many times you tell them to. The most recent ChatGPT model from OpenAI, o3, was found to have sabotaged shutdown mechanisms during testing conducted by Palisade Research. Although o3's tendency was higher than others, other sophisticated models exhibited the same behavior in a battery of tests.

Supreme Court rejects Airtel and Vodafone's requests to waive AGR fees

Delhi: Airtel and Vodafone Idea were denied a waiver of interest and penalty on their outstanding adjusted gross revenue (AGR) debts, totaling Rs 80,000 crore, by the Supreme Court. The order would have an effect on Tata Teleservices as well. After the initial SC order in 2019, which aimed to recover industrial dues, the outstanding AGR is now little less than 1.5 lakh crore.

Since it entered the telecom market in 2016 with only a



minor exposure to past dues and adjustments, Reliance Jio was the only company that walked out relatively unscathed.

The businesses' request for a postponement was denied by a panel of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, who

deemed the companies' petitions "shocking and misconceived" and rejected them. Multinational corporations' filing procedures for petitions seeking remedies for enforcement of rights under Article 32 were also examined by the court.

Rajasthan distribution companies ordered by the Court to pay Adani Power 186 crore

Delhi: The appeal that the electricity distribution companies in Rajasthan had lodged against the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity's (APTEL) decision in favor of Adani electricity Rajasthan Ltd, which had asked them to pay ₹186 crore in compensation,

has been rejected by the Supreme Court. Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (JVNNL) and other state discoms filed appeals, but a bench of justices Rajesh Bindal and M M Sundresh decided on May 23 that the petitions had no validity. The decision made by APTEL in

April 2024, which identified a new tax imposed by Coal India Ltd (CIL) as a "change in law" event under the PPA between Adani Power and the discoms, was affirmed by the court. To offset costs associated with moving coal from the mine to the destination.



Meta releases standalone AI app to challenge ChatGPT

Delhi: competing with ChatGPT creator OpenAI with a standalone AI app. Meta said that its new AI assistant will use Llama AI. The Discover stream shows how others are using the tool and provides prompts. The AI arms race pits Meta's new software against ChatGPT and other AI platforms. Claude, Grok, and Gemini from Anthropic, xAI, and Google are also leading contenders. In September

2023, Meta debuted an AI chatbot as a generative AI-powered digital assistant that can respond to user questions and produce graphics in its apps. Meta AI became prominent in April when it replaced Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger's search feature with a chatbot. Zuckerberg claimed in January that 2025 "is going to be the year when a highly intelligent and personalized AI assistant reaches more than 1 billion people, and I expect Meta AI to be that leading AI assistant." Meta finance head Susan Li said Meta AI has 700 million monthly active users in January. It rose from 600 million in December. Meta launched a standalone AI app after Google and Elon Musk's xAI. Both firms released Gemini and Grok applications recently.



Drools becomes unicorn after Nestle bet

Delhi: Nestle bought a minority investment in Indian pet food startup Drools. After the investment, the Bengaluru-based company was valued at \$1 billion, joining unicorn startups. The business claimed, "This is a financial investment by the company, and Drools will remain strategically as well as operationally independent." Nestle's investment in Drools comes as the pet food and pet care industry in India is growing due to millennial and Gen Z pet parents who are willing to spend more for better nutrition and care. Nestle's Purina pet care segment,



which included pet food, accounted for 20.7% of sales in 2024. Recently, Indian companies like Godrej Consumer Care have entered the pet care sector. Drools, backed by L Catterton, competes with

Mars PetCare and Heads Up For Tails in India. Drools raised \$60 million from L Catterton in June 2023. Drools is the fourth unicorn of the year following Netradyne, Porter, and JSW One Platforms.

Byju's learning app was delisted from Google's Playstore

Delhi: Troubled edutech unicorn Byju's learning app has been delisted from the Google Playstore for non-payment of vendor dues, citing sources. The matter has been under works between Think and Learn Pvt Ltd, the parent company of Byju's, and vendor Amazon Web Services (AWS), since April 2024, it added. Did not receive a reply to their emailed queries from Think and Learn Insolvency Resolution Professional (IRP), it added. A spokesperson for AWS said that the company has been working with Think and Learn since April 2024, "to resolve its outstanding.

Starlink arrives in India with plans under Rs. 850 per month

Delhi: Starlink is preparing to launch its satellite communication services in India after clearing most regulatory hurdles. A report claims that its plans could cost \$10 (Rs. 850) per month as the debut approaches.

Consumers may receive unlimited data plans under initial promotional schemes. The Elon Musk-backed business hopes to swiftly build its user base to 10 million to offset high spectrum prices due to volume benefits. The Department of Telecommunication



(DoT) granted Starlink a Letter of Intent to launch satellite communication services in India earlier this month. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) may impose a Rs. 500 per month per urban user price, making satellite internet services more expensive than wired and wireless broadband connections, according to the. In addition, 4 percent of total adjusted gross revenue (AGR) with a minimum yearly charge of Rs. 3,500 per spectrum block and an 8 percent licensing fee for commercial services in India are required. The government has yet to approve these recommendations.

India's crypto industry urges tax cuts as Donald Trump support softens New Delhi stance

Delhi: In an effort to capitalise on what it perceives as New Delhi's accommodating attitude towards digital assets, the cryptocurrency industry in India is urging for tax cuts that have limited domestic trading. This comes as politicians in New Delhi negotiate a more comprehensive trade pact with the United States. Policymakers' views towards cryptocurrency have been warming up, after making it a parish sector in the country due to regulators' mistrust of its possible illegal applications.

After Donald Trump's endorsement of digital cur-



rencies and his return to the White House, exchange executives told them that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has become much more attentive and engaged.

The frequency of industry meetings with lawmakers has increased from once every six months to

"monthly, if not weekly," according to Ashish Singhal, co-founder of CoinSwitch, one of the biggest cryptocurrency exchanges in India with over 20 million members.

Reducing taxes that he called "very harshly" enforced was the industry's "big ask," he claimed.

SEBI and the Exchange are in advanced negotiations

Delhi: In order to reach a consent settlement in the co-location case that is presently pending before the Supreme Court, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is in advanced negotiations with the NSE. A



Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) decision that lessened the initial sanctions levied against NSE in 2019 has been appealed by SEBI. According to someone with knowledge of the situation, "the discussion on the most important

issue of resolving the co-location case started, around one and half months ago." "The amount that NSE should pay to SEBI in order to settle the lawsuit is one of the consent terms that are currently being negotiated by both parties.

Bharat Dynamics to Receive Invar Missile Order from Government; Shares Climb 2%

Delhi: An official from the government has said that the Ministry of Defence is putting the finishing touches on a purchase order for 500 Invar ATGMs from state-run Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL). The contract is estimated to be worth between two and three million rupees. In order to strengthen India's armoured combat capabilities, this acquisition is a part of a larger push to equip T-90 main battle tanks with pre-



cision-guided missile systems. Tanks are the ideal platforms from which to launch Invar missiles. An official informed that the Defense Ministry is likely to spend between two and three million Indian

rupees (about \$2,100 million) for 500 missiles from BDL. As a result of their reputation for precision and efficacy, Invar missiles are currently being used by armoured units on India's frontline.

Fewer jobs at Tata Motors, smaller hikes for top deck

Delhi: For the first time in five years, automotive manufacturer Tata Motors saw its workforce shrink in a fiscal year, when its employee base fell 3% in FY25 compared with the previous fiscal. Alongside, the fiscal also saw median salary hikes for its senior-most executives at just 3% compared with 15% in

FY24, the company's annual report for FY25 showed. The twin developments happened against the backdrop of falling demand for its cars, trucks and buses in the fiscal. The total employee count of the country's third-largest automaker, excluding employees of its UK-based subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover.



Photo: Instagram_@yamigautam

'Dhurandhar 2 will be unforgettable'

Actress Yami Gautam calls Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar 2* emotional & powerful, saying audiences will never forget the experience

Actress Yami Gautam, who was last seen in the 2025 film *Haq*, recently revealed that she has already watched *Dhurandhar 2*, officially titled *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*. The film, directed by her husband Aditya Dhar, is set to hit theatres on March 19 and will clash with Yash's *Toxic* in what is being called the biggest box-office face-off of the year.

Yami, who is also rumoured to have a cameo appearance in *Dhurandhar 2*, shared her first emotional reaction after watching the film, heaping praise on her husband. Speaking to News18, Yami was indirectly asked whether any of her own films were releasing on March 19, subtly hinting at *Dhurandhar 2*.

Reacting to the question, she laughed and said that any information regarding *Dhurandhar* could only be revealed by her husband. Further speaking about *Dhurandhar 2*, the actress called it 'beyond extraordinary' and revealed that she was 'really emotional' after watching it. She added



Director Aditya Dhar

that she had to catch a flight that day and couldn't say anything to Aditya immediately, but later found herself unable to focus on anything at all.

The actress added, "I had to read a script but I couldn't, I was just watching the beautiful sunset outside and wondering what will I tell Aditya when the flight lands. I wanted to justify my feelings on the film and what I experienced. Aditya loves his audi-

ence and the country and he has given his life's effort to make this film. *Dhurandhar 2* will be an experience that audience will never forget."

Dhurandhar, which released in December 2025, went on to gross over Rs 1,000 crore worldwide within just three weeks of its release. Speaking about the film's massive success, Yami said she always had faith in it and had earlier stated that *Dhurandhar* would make every Indian proud.

She revealed that while she was shooting for *Article 370*, she read the first draft of *Dhurandhar*, which was just 40 pages long at the time. The script moved her to tears, and she was left speechless, that, she said, was her immediate reaction and the only way she could convey to Aditya how deeply she felt about it. Yami added that she knows how hard her husband worked to bring the film to life.

A still from *Dhurandhar*



Vijay reveals Modi's 'sweet letter'



Photos: X_@TheDeverakonda

Looking back on a special moment, actor Vijay Deverakonda fondly reflected on when he and Rashmika Mandanna met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek his blessings and extend an invitation.

Vijay and Rashmika, who recently got married in Udaipur, visited PM Modi ahead of their wedding celebrations.

Talking to his X handle, Vijay shared having spent a great time and taking PM Modi's blessings ahead of a new beginning. He also revealed that the Prime Minister followed up with a heartfelt letter addressed to his parents, thanking them for the wedding in-



invitation and offering his blessings to Vijay and Rashmika.

"A few days back, we met the Honourable Prime Minister @narendramodi garu and took his blessings, spent a great time talking about our history, architecture, stories and and he wrote my parents the sweetest letter," the actor wrote.

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

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

OTT Releases

- NETFLIX**
- Taylor Tomlinson
 - Bridgerton S4 P2
 - Accused

- AMAZON PRIME**
- The CEO Club
 - The Gray House
 - Final Siren
 - Psycho Saiyan
 - Paul McCartney - Man on the Run
 - The Bluff

Theatrical Releases

- Scream 7
- Rental Family
- Hamnet
- Solo Mio
- The Kerala Story 2
- Maya (Marathi)
- Laagni No Melo (Gujarati)

Neil Sedaka passes away



Photo: X

Legendary American singer-songwriter Neil Sedaka, whose string of timeless pop hits including *Breaking Up Is Hard to Do*, *Bad Blood*, *Laughter in the Rain* and *Calendar Girl* de-

finied multiple eras of popular music, has died at the age of 86.

"Our family is devastated by the sudden passing of our beloved husband, father and grandfather, Neil Sedaka," his family said in a statement, posted on

Instagram, adding, "A true rock and roll legend, an inspiration to millions, but most importantly, at least to those of us who were lucky enough to know him, an incredible human being who will be deeply missed."

What's Up Mumbai!

Bombay Jazz

A semi-autobiographical musical play explores the lives of Goan and Anglo-Indian musicians who introduced jazz influences into Hindi film music between the 1950s and 1970s. Set against the backdrop of Mumbai and Bombay, it touches upon egos, failed futures, alcoholism, love, passion and bounced cheques, along with the glitz and razzmatazz of showbiz. The narrative also references some of the biggest names in popular culture, from C Ramachander and Laxmikant-Pyarelal to Shankar-Jaikishan and R.D. Burman.

WHEN: March 1, 5 pm and 8 pm

WHERE: Prithvi Theatre, Juhu



Jim Carrey looks 'unrecognisable' at award show

Hollywood icon Jim Carrey has set social media abuzz after a rare public appearance at the prestigious César Film Awards in Paris. The comedy legend stepped out to accept the 2026 honorary César Award on Thursday, but instead of just celebrating his achievement, the internet found itself dissecting his dramatically different look. Taking the stage and delivering a short speech in French, Carrey appeared composed and gracious in a classic black tuxedo.

However, viewers online were quick to comment on what they described as a striking transformation. Several fans claimed the actor looked "unrecognisable", sparking intense speculation across social platforms.



Photo: X



Cooking Up A Storm With Gautami Kapoor

Both Gautami Kapoor and her husband, Ram Kapoor, are actors par excellence. Gautami is choosy about her work, as was evidenced by her role of a 'modern' mother grappling with the idea of her daughter, Rakul Preet, marrying a much older man, Ajay Devgan, in *De De Pyar De 2*. Her flair for both comedy and drama was on full display in the film. Gautami, who has recently made breakfast plus lunch into brunch, shares the diet she follows to have that glow on her face.

My dietary preference: I'm predominantly a vegetarian. But I do eat eggs and sometimes fish.

The first thing I have when I wake up in the morning: One litre of warm water. I've been doing this for many years, and it's really helped me because it cleanses my system thoroughly. It's also hydrating for the skin.

Later, I have a cup of black coffee, followed by six almonds and four black prunes, which have been soaked overnight in water. Once I'm back from the gym, I have four walnuts and one fruit — either a pear or a peach.

My breakfast and lunch: Of late, I have combined them together, and I have brunch at 11:30 in the morning. It comprises a small bowl of millet rice, a bowl of *subzi*, a bowl of *dal*, and some protein, which is either one or two boiled eggs or a half-fried egg.

My evening snack: I don't snack, so around 3:15 pm, I have one small cup of black coffee along with a single date.

My dinner: I eat a simple dinner around 6 pm. I have one *jowar bhakri* or millet rice, accompanied by small bowls of vegetables and *dal*.

My favourite desserts: Fortunately, I don't have a sweet tooth, so I don't indulge in desserts at all.

My fitness regimen: I've been really active for the last 20-25 years now and have tried many new styles, such as

CrossFit, aerobics, strength training, Pilates, the barre workout, and aerial yoga.

My idea of a romantic meal is: Definitely going to a really nice restaurant which is less crowded, with music playing at a soft volume, and which serves our favourite cuisine — both

Ram and I love Southeast Asian food. Or it could be at home — just eating off a tray with simple home-cooked food in bed while watching our favourite TV show is also very romantic.

The most exotic dish I have ever eaten: I've had oysters at a wedding. I didn't really enjoy eating them, but I know that a lot of people absolutely love them.

My tip on food: One should really invest time in eating healthy and staying fit right from a young age. I know today's times are challenging for children, but a regular eating and fitness routine can really help you go a long way.

Recipe of Paneer Makhani

- Ingredients:**
- 500 gms fresh malai paneer (cubed)
 - 1 inch piece of ginger (sliced)
 - 8 cloves garlic
 - 12-14 cashew nuts
 - Salt to taste
 - 6 medium-sized tomatoes (cubed)
 - 2 cups water
 - 1/2 cup milk
 - 1 teaspoon kasuri methi (crushed)
 - 2 tablespoons fresh cream
 - 4 cloves
 - 1 medium cinnamon stick
 - 5 whole dry Kashmiri chillies (or as required)
 - 3 medium-sized onions (sliced)



Method: In a pan, lightly heat one tablespoon butter. Add bay leaves, cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon, and dry Kashmiri chillies. Sauté for a few seconds. Add onions and sauté for a couple of minutes till translucent. Add tomatoes, ginger, garlic, cashew nuts, salt, and sugar. Add two cups of water and boil on a low flame till the tomatoes are nice and soft. Cool the mixture completely. Remove the whole spices (cardamoms, cloves, bay leaves, and cinnamon). Grind the onion-tomato mixture to a fine paste. In a pan, lightly heat one tablespoon butter and add the ground onion-tomato mixture. Cook on a low flame, stirring continuously, for a few minutes. Add paneer cubes, half a cup of milk, crushed *kasuri methi*, and stir gently. Cook on a low flame for 2 to 3 minutes more. Top it with some fresh cream and serve hot with *roti* or *parathas*.

Representative image

Def minister, Guards commander killed?

TEHRAN

In a blow to Tehran's leadership, Iran's Defence Minister **Amir Nasirzadeh** (R) and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander **Mohammed Pakpour** are believed to have been killed in an Israeli strike, according to sources familiar with Israel's military operations and another regional source, 'Reuters' reported.



Nasirzadeh served as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces before taking charge as the Defence Minister. He began his military career as a fighter pilot.

Pakpour assumed charge of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in 2025 after the death of the previous commander, Hossein Salami, in Israeli strikes.

There has been no official confirmation from Tehran regarding the Iranian officials' status. The report states Israeli security sources believe they were among those killed in the operations.

Pakpour, a senior IRGC figure, played a key role in overseeing Iran's elite military forces and regional operations. Assessments within Israel reportedly also indicate there is a "good chance" that Ali Shamkhani, a senior adviser to Khamenei and a key figure associated with Iran's nuclear programme, was among those killed.

Shamkhani has long been regarded as one of the most influential figures in Iran's security establishment.

CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS

According to information received by Iran International, Hossein Jabal Ameli, commander of the IRGC's naval industries, has most likely been killed.

If confirmed, his death would represent a significant setback to Iran's strategic and nuclear decision-making structure.

Separately, Iranian state media reported that President

Masoud Pezeshkian, former parliamentary speaker Ali Larjani, Parliament Speaker

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Judiciary Chief Gholam-hossein Mohseni Eje'i and Army Commander-in-Chief Abdolrahim Mousavi Hatami are "alive and well". Iranian authorities have not directly addressed the specific claim regarding Pakpour.

ESCALATING TENSIONS | Tehran says the two countries violating UN Charter, vows 'decisive' response

Iran accuses US, Israel of military aggression

TEHRAN

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Saturday accused the United States and Israel of carrying out what it described as "criminal military aggression" against Iran, alleging attacks on defence infrastructure and civilian sites across several cities.

In a statement, the ministry said the attacks took place early in the morning on the eve of Nowruz and on the tenth day of the holy month of Ramadan. It claimed the strikes violated Iran's territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Iran said the attacks occurred while Tehran and Washington were engaged in a diplomatic process. The ministry stated that despite concerns about possible military action, Iran had con-



Smoke billows from Azadi Square following the US-Israel joint strikes in Tehran on Saturday. —Reuters/ANI

Explosion at Fairmont Hotel, a luxury hotel on Dubai's Palm Street. Airport shut indefinitely

A drone strike hit Kuwait International Airport, injuring several workers

A huge explosion reported near Burj Khalifa in Dubai, UAE. The world's tallest building was evacuated

Israel's energy ministry ordered the temporary shutdown of parts of the country's natural gas reservoirs

tinued negotiations to demonstrate its position before the international community and to prevent war.

Calling the strikes a violation of Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations, Iran termed them an act of armed aggression.

It asserted that responding to the attacks was its lawful right under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognises the right to self-defence.

The statement said the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran would utilise all available capabilities and

resources to respond to what it called aggression and to defend the country.

Iran also urged the United Nations and its Security Council to take immediate action. It called on the UN Secretary-General and member states, particularly

countries in the region and members of the Non-Aligned Movement, to condemn the alleged attacks and take collective steps to address what it described as a threat to regional and global peace.

The ministry said Iran's response would be decisive.



People flee as falling object sparks fireball in Doha, Qatar



A drone was seen crashing and exploding in Bahrain

Exercise restraint: Gulf states

DUBAI/DOHA/RIYADH

Gulf countries on Saturday voiced concern over escalating tensions following reported US-Israel strikes on Iran, urging restraint and a return to diplomacy to avoid a wider regional conflict. Saudi Arabia expressed deep concern over the developments and called for "maximum restraint," stressing on the need to safeguard regional security and stability.

Riyadh also underlined the importance of preventing any disruption to global energy supplies. The United Arab Emirates echoed similar sentiments, urging all parties to avoid further escalation and resolve differences through dialogue. The UAE warned that continued tensions could impact trade



85 people, including 57 children killed in a girls' school at Minab in Iran's Hormozgan

routes and economic stability in the region. Qatar cautioned that the situation could have "catastrophic consequences" if not contained, calling for an immediate de-escalation.

Doha reiterated its support for diplomatic efforts and dialogue to resolve disputes.

Oman, which has histori-

cally played a mediating role between Iran and Western countries, called for calm and renewed diplomatic engagement. It also highlighted concerns about the security of the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil transit route.

Kuwait emphasised the need to protect civilians and

maintain regional stability, while Bahrain, a close security partner of the US, stressed on the importance of stability even as it remains wary of Iran's role in regional tensions.

Across the Gulf Cooperation Council, the response reflected a cautious balancing act—maintaining strategic ties with the United States while avoiding direct endorsement of military escalation against Iran.

Analysts note that Gulf states remain particularly sensitive to the risks of a broader conflict, given their geographic proximity to Iran and the vulnerability of critical oil and shipping infrastructure.

The coordinated calls for restraint underscore growing concern that further escalation could destabilise the region and disrupt global energy markets.

Passengers at Israel airport share ordeal

Tel Aviv: As the US and Israel launched an attack on targets in Iran, flights were cancelled and passengers stranded at Ben Gurion Airport shared ordeal on Saturday.

One said, "We were told to evacuate after an emergency siren went off. My family and I went downstairs and then returned after a few minutes. We have again been instructed to evacuate and go back home. All flights have been cancelled. I have called my cousin, we will stay at his place till it's safe to return home."

Another passenger, Siri, said, "We were already on the flight when we were informed about the possibility of an attack. Soon after, all flights were cancelled. I just want to cry and go back home to protect myself."

Panic in streets, but relief for some: mood in Iran

It was around 9.40 am when Iranians in several cities reported hearing loud explosions. Videos circulating on social media show people near the blast sites running in panic, with the sounds of screams and crying in the background, BBC reported.

But, at the same time there appears to be a sense of relief — even celebration — among those who believe the regime's downfall can only come through military intervention.

In one video, a woman speaks with unmistakable relief, saying Ayatollah Khamenei's residence has been hit.

Another clip shows teenagers at a school dancing and chanting that the strikes have



happened, adding, "I love Trump."

Many people had been anticipating a possible US attack. Since Friday night, long queues have formed at petrol stations, and many residents of Tehran, have begun leaving the city for the north, near the Caspian Sea, which they believe is safer.

With Iran coming under an almost total internet blackout since the attacks started, it has been difficult to contact anyone inside the country.

Some people briefly managed to access the internet using methods such as SpaceX's Starlink satellite internet and virtual private networks, and may be able to

do so again. "We have heard lots of explosions. I live in middle of Tehran," a man said.

"This was a normal day until the US and Israel started attacking the city. Our kids have gone to a school in the morning. We had to go and get the children."

Another said he heard fighter jets and two explosions early in the morning from his office in the north of the city. The atmosphere was tense and there was a sense of war in the air. He said people were shopping and stocking up on canned food.

One resident told BBC Persian via Starlink there was a heavy security presence on streets leading to the compound of the leadership

house, the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

"Look after our children" Before the blackout, some people posted messages on social media in case they were killed in air strikes. "If I die, don't forget that we exist too — those of us who oppose any military attack, those of us who will become just a number in reports of the dead," one Iranian wrote on social media. Another wrote: "Damn the Islamic dictatorship that caused this war. We have already endured three wars." "The internet is almost down. If the network is completely cut, know we are not soldiers for any leader, nor collateral damage," said another user.

Concerned the failure of negotiations between the US and Iran meant a new, extensive war in West Asia would happen. —Espan Barth Eide, Norwegian Foreign Minister

Madrid rejects the unilateral military action by the US and Israel, which represents an escalation and contributes to a more uncertain and hostile international order. Spain likewise rejects the actions of the Iranian regime. —Pedro Sánchez, Spain's Prime Minister

We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, to protect civilians, and to fully respect international law. —Ursula von der Leyen, Spain's Prime Minister

António Costa, European Council President

Condemn Israeli strikes on Iran and accompanying US military action. The escalating conflict has pushed the Middle East to the edge of catastrophe. —Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian Prime Minister

I condemn the unwarranted attacks. —Ishaq Dar, Pakistan's Foreign Minister

A pre-planned and unprovoked act of armed aggression against a sovereign and independent UN member state. Demand an immediate halt to the military campaign and a return to diplomacy. —Russia's foreign ministry

20 die as military jet carrying banknotes crashes in Bolivia

La Paz: At least 20 people were killed and others injured after a Bolivian air force cargo plane crashed in the western city of El Alto, the country's authorities say, BBC reported.

The incident happened at 18:15 local time on Friday as the plane was arriving at El Alto's airport from the city of Santa Cruz, aviation officials said. It reportedly skidded off the runway and hit nearby vehicles.

The defence ministry later confirmed its C-130 Hercules was involved and that it had been transporting banknotes to the Central Bank of Bolivia. There were eight people aboard the plane, the air force commander said.

Police fired tear gas to disperse crowds allegedly trying to take the scattered banknotes. Firefighters had given an earlier death toll of at least 15. Video footage showed the plane on the ground and badly damaged vehicles. In



other videos, people could be seen running away from the tear gas and police officers, some holding shields, forming a line. Some in the crowds are seen throwing rocks.

"While news crews were covering the accident, individuals attempting to steal the transported money attacked the press with unusual violence," National Association of Journalists of Bolivia said.

It said a mobile TV unit was "directly targeted", while other journalists "were attacked with stones, suffering serious injuries while carrying out their work". The govt-run Bolivian News Agency reported at least a dozen people were arrested for stealing banknotes.

NEIL SEDAKA PASSES AWAY

Neil Sedaka, the singer-songwriter behind Breaking Up Is Hard to Do, Oh! Carol, Calendar Girl and Bad Blood as well as many hits performed by other artists including Stupid Cupid and Love Will Keep Us Together, has died aged 86. A representative confirmed his death to Variety on Friday, hours after he was taken to hospital in L.A. No cause was given.

"Our family is devastated by the sudden passing of our beloved husband, father and grandfather, Neil Sedaka," a statement from Sedaka's family reads. "A true rock and roll legend, an inspiration to millions, but most importantly, at least to those of us who were lucky enough to know him, an incredible human being who will be deeply missed."

The European Union's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas urged on Saturday for the countries to bring down the temperature and enter talks, warning the violence could affect the wider region.

Iran, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Russia, as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, also urged de-escalation and mediation.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have said they are open to negotiations to bring an end to the conflict. But Pakistan on Saturday said there would be "no dialogue", repeating its long-running demand that Afghanistan stop harbouring "terrorism", an allegation Kabul denies.

"There won't be any talks. There's no dialogue. There's no negotiation. Terrorism from Afghanistan has to end," the Pakistani prime minister's spokesperson for foreign media, Mosharraf Zaidi, told Pakistan TV, stressing that

Pak says 'no dialogue' with Kabul as attacks persist

International calls for mediation are growing as Pakistan and Afghanistan engage in cross-border fighting for a third day, in the most serious flare-up in violence between the neighbours in months that Pakistan says has brought them into "open war".

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Taliban soldiers stand on a Humvee, following exchanges of fire between Pakistani and Afghan forces, in Momand Dara, Nangarhar province. —Reuters

Pakistan's responsibility was to protect its citizens and territory.

Meanwhile, tit-for-tat attacks occurred near the fraught border. Afghan media reported that Taliban forces fired drone attacks on Pakistani military camps in the border areas of Miranshah and Spinwam.

Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported a drone attack hit a mosque in the city of Bannu further south, injuring at least five people. And Pakistan TV said Pakistani forces waged their own attack targeting several positions of the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan Information Minister Attaullah Tarar providing an early update about

the losses of the Afghan Taliban said that so far 331 Taliban personnel have been killed and another 500 injured.

He said Pakistan forces completely destroyed 104 military posts, while they captured another 22 border posts during Operation Ghazab lila. Tarar said that 163 tanks, armoured vehicles have been destroyed, adding that Pakistan also hit 37 locations in the air strikes.

Both sides reported heavy losses with conflicting tolls. Pakistan said 12 of its soldiers and 274 Taliban were killed, while the Taliban said 13 of its fighters and 55 Pakistani soldiers died. Neither side's claims could be indepen-

TRUMP ENDORSES PAKISTAN

Amid escalating tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, US President Donald Trump has said he gets along "very, very well" with Pakistan and believes the country is doing "terrifically well".

"I would, but I get along with Pakistan very well, very, very well. You have a great Prime Minister, you have a great General there. You have great leaders — two people that I really respect a lot — and I think Pakistan is doing terrifically well," Trump said. He was responding to a question on Pakistan declaring what has been described as an "open war" against Afghanistan and whether the United States would intervene to halt the fighting.

Meanwhile, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker said she spoke with Pakistan Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch to express condolences over lives lost in the recent conflict with Taliban forces and reaffirmed Washington's support for Pakistan. "We continue to monitor the situation closely and express support for Pakistan's right to defend itself against Taliban attacks," Hooker said in a post on X. The US Embassy in Pakistan has also issued a security alert advising American citizens to exercise caution in major cities.

accuse Afghanistan of sheltering the group inside Afghanistan.

Kabul rejects the allegations and says it does not allow anyone to use Afghan soil for attacks on any country, including Pakistan. Pakistan is nuclear-armed and its military capabilities are vastly superior to Afghanistan's. However, the Taliban is adept at warfare, hardened by decades of fighting with United States-led forces.

US actor dies in barn fire

The Wire actor **Bobby J Brown** died recently in a barn fire at his Maryland home, making him the third cast member of the acclaimed HBO show to pass away since December. According to authorities and a statement on social media from his daughter,

Reina, the 62-year-old Brown had gone into a barn at his residence in the St Mary's county community of Chaptico at about 10pm on 24 February to try to jumpstart a car. It evidently ignited during the attempt.



Briefs

NEW DELHI

Varun still No 1 T20 bowler, says Sammy



Despite Varun Chakravarty leaking runs in the last two matches, he remains the world No. 1 bowler in T20 cricket, West Indies head coach **Daren Sammy** said on the eve of their virtual quarterfinal against India in the T20 World Cup in Eden Gardens here on Sunday. Chakravarty conceded 47 runs from his four overs against South Africa, with Dewald Brevis and David Miller launching a premeditated assault. He also struggled against minnows Zimbabwe.

NEW DELHI

Zimbabwe must learn to adapt: Walsh



Zimbabwe's contrasting performances in India and Sri Lanka over the course of their T20 World Cup campaign have shown that the team needs to learn to adapt quickly in different conditions, said bowling coach **Courtney Walsh** on Saturday. Zimbabwe stunned the likes of Sri Lanka and Australia in the group stage to qualify for the Super 8. However, their performance dropped drastically after moving from Sri Lanka to India for the next phase of the tournament.

NEW DELHI

'Markram best suited for opener's role'



Aiden Markram's remarkable consistency at the top of the order in the ongoing T20 World Cup has made it clear that the opening slot remains most suited for the South Africa captain, batting coach **Ashwell Prince** said on Saturday. From opening to number five, Markram has batted in different positions in his 75-match T20 International career. In the lead up to the T20 World Cup, Markram moved himself up and down the order in the series against India.

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PREVIEW | Batting boom lifts India but bowling questions linger in big match

KOLKATA

DO OR DIE FOR INDIA AT EDEN



India's Arshdeep Singh makes an appeal during the match against Zimbabwe. PTI

Teams:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Varun Chakravarty, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Rinku Singh.

West Indies: Shai Hope (c), Johnson Charles, Shimron Hetmyer, Brandon King, Rovman Powell, Sherfane Rutherford, Quentin Sampson, Roston Chase, Jason Holder, Romario Shepherd, Matthew Forde, Akeal Hosein, Shamar Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, and Jayden Seales.

and appears guilty of experimenting too much.

His growing ineffectiveness hurt India badly against South Africa, where he conceded 47 runs in four overs as David Miller and the talented Dewald Brevis went all out with a predetermined attack in a total of 187/7, before India were bowled out for 111.

Varun bowled mostly short against South Africa and when he tried going fuller versus Zimbabwe, the result was no different.

This time, the seasoned Sikandar Raza toyed with him as he leaked 35 runs in four overs.

Though unlike the South Africa match, it did not hurt much as Zimbabwe were chasing a record 257.

It remains to be seen whether the team management continues to back Chakravarty or gives him a breather by bringing in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who has played just one match so far (against Pakistan).

Both have played a bulk of their IPL with Kolkata Knight Riders at this venue, and know the conditions well, though Chakravarty has played more here.

Another worry is seam all-rounder Shivam Dube's erratic show with the ball.

Dube leaked 46 runs in just two overs against Zimbabwe, including four wides and two no-balls in a 10-ball over.

Gambhir's fascination for bowlers who can bat is well

known, but Dube's military-medium pace on a fast and juicy Eden track could backfire against a powerful West Indies line-up.

With a bit of grass likely on the Eden surface, there should be some assistance for the pace trio of Bumrah, Arshdeep and Pandya.

Their combined 12 overs could be decisive, especially with the spin attack not offering complete assurance at the moment.

Windies' power and depth The West Indies have been the team to beat from day one of the tournament.

Their strategy has been clear -- a steady start until the halfway mark followed by a fearless assault in the final overs.

Zimbabwe look to end campaign on high note in Delhi

Reaching Super 8 as group toppers was part of their success story

NEW DELHI

Zimbabwe will need to fix their bowling woes against a skillful South Africa as they aim to end their spirited T20 World Cup campaign on a high in their final Super 8 fixture here on Sunday.

Reaching the Super 8 as group toppers was part of the success story for Zimbabwe and inspired by their leader **Sikandar Raza**, they would be determined to push South Africa to the limit. South Africa are the team to beat in the ICC showpiece and if Zimbabwe are to challenge them, they will have to come up with a better bowling performance after conceding more than 250 runs in the previous two Super 8 games against West Indies and India.

Raza knows they can only compete with the bigger teams if they do well in all three departments.

"At the World Cup against the best teams, you need all your three departments to be working hand in hand. And unfortunately, if one lacks, then the game runs away from you. So hopefully in the last game, leave everything on the park and we try and sort out all our three departments and hopefully that gives us the best chance to win the game," Raza had said after the India defeat.

His team has been guilty of bowling too many loose balls in the Super 8 stage. They need to bowl with the discipline they displayed against Australia and Sri Lanka in the group stage.

Their unbeaten run in the group stage came on slow pitches of Sri Lanka but the



Teams:

Zimbabwe: Sikandar Raza (captain), Brian Bennett, Ryan Burl, Graeme Cremer, Bradley Evans, Clive Madande, Tinotenda Maposa, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Tony Munyonga, Tashinga Musedziwa, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Richard Ngarava, Ben Curran.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (captain), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kwena Maphaka, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Jason Smith, Tristan Stubbs.

margin of error drops drastically in batting friendly Indian conditions as they experienced in Mumbai and Chennai. On the batting front, the opening duo of Brian Bennett and Tadiwanashe Marumani need to maximise the powerplay. Bennett, who is yet to be dismissed in the tournament, showed against India he can also hit sixes.

This group is the era of Harry Brook, says in-form Jacks

Brook endured a difficult build-up to the T20 World Cup, beginning with a disappointing Ashes

COLOMBO

England's recent surge in the T20 World Cup is the beginning of the "Harry Brook-era", built on a calm and clear mindset rather than perfection, believes all-rounder **Will Jacks**.

Brook endured a difficult build-up to the T20 World Cup, beginning with a disappointing Ashes and followed by a high-profile drunken altercation with a nightclub bouncer in Wellington casting a shadow over his leadership.

But he has responded with an unbeaten 100 against Pakistan to seal England's semifinal berth with a match to spare.

Against New Zealand, the already-qualified side showed no drop in intensity, recovering from 117/6 in 17 overs to chase down 160, with Jacks and Rehan Ahmed finishing the job.

England thus advanced with three wins from three in the Super Eights, their campaign peaking at the right time as they now stand just



two victories away from the title after a stuttering start.

On whether it felt like the "Bazball" good times were back, Jacks said: "I think this group is the era of Harry Brook. He is our white-ball captain.

"And I think that is something that we've been really focusing on. He (Brook) has got us to play the certain way, and I think the environment around the group led by him is absolutely brilliant.

"Hopefully, everyone can see that we're having fun and we're approaching the game

in the right way. And I think that's why we've had some success," added Jacks who returned with a record-equaling fourth player-of-the-match show in their win of the Kiwis.

For Jacks, England's strength lies not in perfection but in composure.

"We've won six out of seven games and we've qualified for a semi-final. At the end of the day no one really cares. "We obviously want to play well in there, but we're not gutted that we haven't played the perfect game."

SL KNOCKOUT PAKISTAN DESPITE NERVY DEFEAT

Dasun Shanaka almost took them home to a famous win but fell short

PALLEKELE

Sri Lanka knocked Pakistan out of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup despite a heart-breaking five-run loss in Pallekele, on Saturday.

Dasun Shanaka played a gem of a knock that almost took them home to what would have been a famous victory but not to be as he could not score off the last two balls despite smashing a four and three consecutive sixes in the 20th over as Sri Lanka finished at 207/6 in 20 overs chasing 213 for victory.

Pakistan are now out of the tournament with New Zealand going through joining



Sahibzada Farhan celebrates his hundred. ICC

England from the Super Eight's Group II.

Earlier, Sahibzada Farhan (100) and Fakhar Zaman (84) put on a record partnership of 176 runs for any wicket in T20 World Cup history to power Pakistan to a formidable 212/8 against a lowly Sri Lanka in a Super Eights clash here on Saturday. Pakistan will have to restrict Sri Lanka under 147 to stand a chance of surpassing New Zealand on net run rate and make the semifinals, and the Salman Agha-led side will have to win by at least 64 runs.

While Pakistan openers came out all guns blazing in their bid to put a big score on board, Sri Lanka lacked spunk in the field.

Scoreboard

Pakistan: S Farhan c Liyanage b Madushanka 100, F Zaman b Chameera 84, K Nafay c Asalanka b Madushanka 2, S Khan (run out) 7, M Nawaz c Theekshana b Shanaka 0, S Agha c Theekshana b Shanaka 0, U Khan (not out) 8, S Shah Afridi lbw

Madushanka 4, N Shah (run out) 1, A Ahmed (not out) 0. **Extras** (LB-3, W-3) 6. **Total** (For 8 wks, 20 overs) 212. **Fall of wickets:** 1-176, 2-179, 3-198, 4-199, 5-199, 6-203, 7-207, 8-210. **Bowling:** D Madushanka 4-0-33-3, D Chameera 4-0-48-1, M Theekshana 4-0-35-0, D

Shanaka 4-0-42-2, D Wellalage 3-0-37-0, J Liyanage 1-0-14-0. **Sri Lanka:** P Nissanka c M Nawaz b N Shah 3, K Mishara b A Ahmed 26, C Asalanka b A Ahmed 25, P Rathnayake c sub b SS Afridi 58, K Mendis b A Ahmed 3, J Liyanage b M Nawaz 5, D Shanaka (not

out) 76, D Wellalage (not out) 2. **Extras** (LB-3, W-6) 9. **Total** (For 6 wks, 20 overs) 207. **Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-33, 3-75, 4-94, 5-101, 6-162. **Bowling:** S Shah Afridi 4-0-48-1, N Shah 4-0-36-1, A Ahmed 4-0-23-3, U Tariq 4-0-43-0, M Nawaz 2-0-21-1, S Khan 2-0-33-0.

crisis-management

ICC working on alternate plans for players, officials

DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Saturday said it is working on alternate flight plans for players and officials returning from the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka amid the disruption caused by the US strikes on Iran.

The T20 showpiece that began on February 7 will wind up on March 8 and featured 20 teams, of which six still remain in the fray,

including co-hosts India.

"The safety and well-being of every individual connected to our event is the ICC's highest priority. We have already mobilised our travel, logistics and security teams, and are working around the clock to ensure that all stakeholders can return home safely, with minimal disruption," the ICC spokesperson said in a statement.

"We would also urge fans who have travelled or were planning to travel for the ICC

Men's T20 World Cup 2026 to monitor closely and adhere to advisories being issued and consider all factors before undertaking any further international travel." The ICC acknowledged that a significant number of personnel - including players, team management, match officials, broadcast teams, and event staff - rely on Gulf hub airports, particularly Dubai, as key transit points for onward travel to their home countries upon concluding their commitments

at the event.

Keeping these factors in mind, the ICC said its 'travel and logistics' team is actively working with major international carriers to identify and secure alternative routing options, including connections through European, South Asian and South-East Asian hubs.

"The ICC security consultants are liaising with relevant authorities and will provide real-time advisories as the situation develops. A dedicated ICC Travel

Support Desk has also been activated," the game's apex body said in the statement.

The ICC said it will continue to issue updates as the situation evolves, adding that it "remains committed to the smooth and safe conclusion" of the T20 World Cup 2026.

The US and Israel launched a major offensive on Iran on Saturday, with American President Donald Trump calling on the Iranian public to overthrow the Islamic leadership that has ruled the nation since 1979.

