

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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## Briefs

### PATNA 1st wife files plaint against Udit Narayan

Popular Bollywood playback singer Udit Narayan's first wife, Ranjana Narayan Jha, has lodged a complaint at Supaul Women's police station, accusing him of removing her uterus without consent. An FIR has been registered against the singer, his two brothers and his second wife, alleging marital fraud, criminal conspiracy, and mental and physical harassment. Ranjana said she married him on December 7, 1984. She alleged she underwent a hysterectomy in Delhi without being informed and learned about it years later. "I only want the status and respect of a wife from him," she said. Udit Narayan has not responded.

### KOLKATA Babri replica construction kicks off

Suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Humayun Kabir on Wednesday started construction of a replica of the Babri Masjid in Murshidabad. Speaking to the media, Kabir said the effort is for Islam and to please Allah. "By Allah's grace, our Babri Masjid will be complete within two years. I am not imposing anything on anyone. Those who are opposing this Babri Masjid should not do it as everyone is free to build temples, churches and follow their own religion," he said. He also announced a February 14 agitation, calling the property seizure a "political conspiracy."

### CHANDIGARH Punjab drive: 3,260 arrests in three days

Punjab Police arrested 3,260 accused, including 135 proclaimed offenders (POs), during a three-day statewide drive against gangsters. Sharing details, Special DGP (Law and Order) Arpit Shukla said police recovered 47 weapons, 4.8 kg heroin, 3.6 kg opium, 42,797 intoxicant pills, 68 kg poppy husk and Rs 30 lakh drug money. DGP Gaurav Yadav said the 72-hour operation exceeded expectations and "Gangstran Te Vaar" will continue till Punjab is free from gangsters. Meanwhile, under "Yudh Nashian Virudh", 164 drug smugglers were arrested on Wednesday, taking the total to 49,129 in 347 days.

### KANPUR Lamborghini: New 'driver' appears



The Kanpur Lamborghini hit-and-run case took a sharp U-turn on Wednesday as a man named Mohan surrendered, claiming he was driving when the car mowed down six people on VIP Road. The injured complainant, Mohammad Tausif, told the court he had reached a compromise and identified Mohan as the driver. Police, however, said CCTV, eyewitnesses and electronic evidence show Shivam Mishra was the lone occupant. Prosecutors opposed the "new version," and the court refused to accept a different accused, rejecting the plea and keeping the Lamborghini in police custody.

## BOOK ROW | Union minister tells oppn leader not to behave like children, not right to use national security as political weapon

# NARAVANE'S MEMOIR: RIJJU SLAMS GANDHI

NEW DELHI

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Wednesday lashed out at Leader of Opposition (LoP) Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi amid the ongoing row over former Army Chief General MM Naravane's memoir, asking him not to use national security as a "political weapon".

Taking a dig at Rahul Gandhi, Rijju asked him not to "behave like children". Speaking to reporters outside the Parliament, the Union Minister said, "I cannot teach lessons to Rahul Gandhi. I can't understand what world he lives in. What ideology drives his actions? Senior members of Congress should explain to him that Parliament cannot function like this. Don't behave like children here. Our country is huge, and security is a significant issue. It's not right to use our security as a political weapon and undermine any-



Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijju arrives as suspended Lok Sabha MPs stage a protest in New Delhi on Wednesday

one's dignity." However, Congress MP KC Venugopal maintained that Gandhi's remarks in the Lok Sabha were true. "I don't understand how scared they are showing on this issue. Why are they afraid of all these things? We are not afraid. Whatever they want to do, let them do it. Whatever we said in and outside parlia-

ment is clear and accurate. We are on it completely," Venugopal said. A political row erupted after Rahul Gandhi attempted to cite General Naravane's memoir, titled 'Four Stars of Destiny', in Lok Sabha, bringing in the 2020 standoff against China into the discussion during the Budget Session.

## 'MPs abused the Speaker'

New Delhi: Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Wednesday claimed that between 20 and 25 Congress MPs had entered the chamber of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and abused him in the presence of senior Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and K.C. Venugopal. Making the sensational claim while speaking to the media in Parliament complex, Rijju said, "This is not how a House runs. I also went there. I can't tell you the way they abused and misbehaved with the Speaker." Lamenting that senior Congress leaders did not stop their MPs from misbehaving, the minister said. -Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

## Congress corners Anil Ambani, Hardeep Puri

### EPSTEIN FILES

NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition (LoP) and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday questioned why industrialist Anil Ambani was not in jail, alleging in Parliament that his name appeared in the Epstein-related files.

Raising the issue during his speech in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi also referred to Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, claiming that Puri knew who introduced Anil Ambani to Epstein.

"There is a businessman Anil Ambani, I want to ask why is he not in jail? The reason is that his name is in the Epstein Files. I would also like to ask Hardeep Puri, who introduced him to Epstein. I know who introduced him, and Hardeep Puri knows who introduced him," he said. Following his speech on the Union Budget, the Congress leader reiterated his allegations while speaking to reporters in Delhi, claiming that the Prime Minister was under "direct pressure".



### Purispeak

New Delhi: Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri Wednesday said his interactions with the convicted paedophile and human trafficker Jeffrey Epstein had nothing to do with the latter's criminal activities. Puri claimed he was "ambushed" into meeting the billionaire American financier in the first instance. Puri, whose name has appeared in Epstein's emails, records of which have been released by the US Department of Justice, said he had only "three or four meetings in eight years" with Epstein. "I never went to Epstein's island," Puri told a press conference here. "Half the world that interacted with him had no clue of his past." —Informist

I have said I'll authenticate the data. There are US DoJ files on Epstein files naming Hardeep Puri and Anil Ambani. In an ongoing case against (Gautam) Adani, summons have been issued. Gol has not responded for 18 months. There is direct pressure on the PM.

## Power, bank staff to join strike today

NEW DELHI

A joint forum of central trade unions has given a nationwide strike call on Thursday to protest against the 'anti-worker' policies of the government, which may partially affect services like banking, insurance and transport.

According to trade unions, 30 crore workers from various sectors are likely to participate in the agitation.

A group of trade unions, on January 9, announced the nationwide strike to show their "resistance to anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national pro-corporate policies of the central government".

"Services in electricity, banking, insurance, transport, health, education, gas and water supply will be affected due to the nationwide strike call on February 12," All India Trade Union Congress General Secretary

Amarjeet Kaur told PTI. She informed that all bank unions will not participate in the strike as their united front has already observed a strike on January 27. However, bank workers' unions such as AIBE, AIBOA and BEFI will participate in the protest.

Besides, Kaur said, the mining and gas pipeline sectors are also expected to see the impact of the agitation.

Insurance sector workers will protest against the government's decision to allow up to 100 per cent FDI (foreign direct investment) in the sector and the implementation of new labour codes.

Besides, a large number of workers of private and state transport utilities will participate in the protest, she said.

She exuded confidence that this time, "not less than 30 crore workers" will participate in the strike, and around 600 districts are expected to face the impact.

## Sarma hails SC Assam forest eviction order

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday termed the Supreme Court's judgment allowing the state to carry out evictions in reserved forest areas after clearance by a specially constituted committee as "landmark", saying it will streamline anti-encroachment drives.

He said over 1.25 lakh big-ha of forest land have been cleared of encroachments, with another 20 bighas still under illegal occupation.

"This is a landmark judgment in the history of our forest department? The state government has won a historic case which gives it the full right to evict in forest land. The apex court even said that if the forest comes under panchayat areas, it cannot be an excuse for not evicting," Sarma said at a press conference here.

## Alliance with Cong intact, no scope for power sharing: Stalin

CHENNAI

Amid some apparent strains in ties with the Congress over power-sharing, ruling DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday asserted that the alliance was "intact," but firmly ruled out accommodating allies in the cabinet.

Congress MP from Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar, Manickam Tagore, a vocal proponent of power-sharing, said that it was up to the people to decide whether it was single party or coalition government.

Actor Vijay-led TVK said allies being denied cabinet representation was "against social justice" as they play a key role in the alliance's victory.

Stalin maintained that the alliance with the grand old party was free from confusion. In the past months, this is



the first time the chief minister has asserted that there is no possibility of sharing power, a concept alien to Tamil Nadu's political history that has been dominated by the Dravidian parties since 1967.

Amid a war of words between a section of leaders from the DMK and the Congress over power-sharing and increased seat allotment, the ruling party chief also asserted that the alliance was going strong.

To a question on the Congress demand for a share in power in Tamil Nadu, he

said: "We also know that it will not work in TN; they (Congress) know it too. It is a problem created by some people. They are deliberately conspiring to see if there will be a rift in the alliance. We are not worried about it. He (Rahul Gandhi) is not worried either." The CM made it clear that his party's ties with the Congress continued to be cordial and blamed a section of the media for claiming the contrary.

"Rumours of confusion in the alliance are being spread deliberately. Beyond politics, I look at Rahul Gandhi as a brother..." he said at the India Today Roundtable conference here.

"The DMK-Congress alliance is in harmony. What others are expecting (split) will not happen." The CM's remark assumed significance in the wake of the Congress party expressing displeasure over seat-sharing talks.

## Minister: Vande Bharat fares much lower than other countries

New Delhi: The fare of the Vande Bharat AC chair car for a 300-400 kilometre journey is around Rs 2.19 per kilometre, which is much lower than the fares for similar services in countries such as China, Japan and France, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written statement in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

According to Vaishnaw, the fares in these countries range from Rs 7 to Rs 20 per kilometre.

"The Ministry of Railways, while deciding the fare structure of various types of passenger services, gives due consideration to aspects like the cost of service, value of service, type of services and facilities offered, affordability, competition from other competing modes and socio-economic considerations," Vaishnaw said while responding to questions regarding fare structure of Vande Bharat trains. -PTI

## EC orders transfer of Bengal officials

KOLKATA

The EC has directed the transfer of senior West Bengal government officials and police officers who have been serving in the same post or district for more than three years, a senior official of the poll body said on Wednesday.

According to the directive, the order will apply to officials such as district magistrates, additional district magistrates, block development officers, sub-divisional officers and other district-level administrative authorities, he said.

The instruction also covers senior police officers, including IGS, DIGs, SPs and additional SPs.

"The Election Commission (EC) has decided that officers who have completed over three years in a particular district or post must be transferred to ensure free and fair elections," the senior EC official said.

However, officials posted at the state headquarters will be exempt from the transfer directive, sources added.

The commission has communicated the instructions to the chief secretary for immediate compliance.

The EC also stated that officers who were posted as district magistrates, returning officers or inspectors in a particular district during the last Assembly elections should not be posted in the same district for the upcoming polls.

## Police probe controversial AI video targeting 'Miyas'

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said police have registered a case based on a complaint filed by Congress leaders over a controversial AI-generated video that briefly appeared on the official X handle of BJP Assam Pradesh before being deleted.

Addressing a press conference, Sarma said a separate complaint has also been filed by a BJP worker in connection with the same issue. "The Congress had filed a case and it has been registered. In fact, one of our BJP men has also registered a case over it," he said. The now-deleted video,

uploaded on the evening of February 7, allegedly showed Sarma taking aim with a rifle and firing at two individuals — one wearing a skull cap and another with a beard — with the caption "point-blank shot". The post triggered sharp political backlash, following which it was removed.

Congress MLAs Sibamoni Bora and Diganta Barman lodged a complaint at Dispur police station on February 10 against the state BJP over the video. State Congress president Gaurav Gogoi accused Sarma of "inciting genocide" through such content and urged the police to take suo motu cognisance.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi also filed a complaint with Hyderabad

Police on February 9, seeking criminal action against the Chief Minister.

Sarma had earlier said he was not aware of the video. On Wednesday, he asserted that neither he nor the BJP harbours any ill will towards Assamese Muslims. "We are not against Assamese Muslims but against Bangladeshi Muslims, Miya Muslims. That photograph should have made the difference clear between Bangladeshi and Indian Muslims," he said.

"If any case has been filed against me, arrest me. I don't have any objection. I am ready to go to jail. I will always stick to my words. I am opposed to Bangladeshi infiltrators and will always remain so," Sarma said.

## Tiger deaths surge: MP High Court seeks report from govt

Jabalpur: Taking a serious view of the alarming spike in tiger fatalities, particularly over the past few months, the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Wednesday directed the state government and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to submit a detailed report on the matter by February 25.

The court issued the order while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Bhopal-based wildlife activist Ajay Dubey, who has

raised concerns over the death of 54 tigers — the highest in a single year in the country — in 2025, and the nine fatalities of big cats reported since January this year in Madhya Pradesh.

Senior advocate Aditya Sanghi, who presented detailed data regarding the deaths of tigers in the state, told IANS that the court also issued a stringent direction to the Field Director of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR), Sanghi said.

investigative report by February 25.

"The state government and the NTCA were supposed to submit their reply on the matter today; however, they requested more time. During the hearing, I submitted before the court that in the first month of 2026 alone, nine more tigers were killed in suspicious circumstances, most of them under the jurisdiction of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR)," Sanghi said.

## Delhi biker death probe: Court seeks status report

New Delhi: A Delhi court has directed the city police to file a detailed status report in an FIR registered in the death of a 25-year-old biker who died after falling into an uncovered DJB pit.

On the intervening night of February 5-6, Kamal Dhyani, a bank employee, fell into a 15-foot-deep pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board in West Delhi's Janakpuri.

Judicial Magistrate First Class Harjot Singh Aujla, while hearing the applica-

Investigating Officer in the case to file a detailed status report on February 13.

The same day, the court granted interim protection to two contractors against whom arrest warrants were issued in connection with the case.

The court granted anticipatory bail to Himanshu Gupta and Kavish Gupta, against whom arrest warrants were issued on Monday, and ordered no coercive steps be taken against them till the next date of hearing.

## PM set to land on highway: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to land on a highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) in Assam's Dibrugarh district on Saturday, with IAF fighter jets staging a mega airshow to mark the opening of the facility, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"The PM will be flying from New Delhi to Chabua Air Force base on Saturday morning. From there, he will take a flight and land at the Moran ELF in the district," he said.

The prime minister will then witness an airshow featuring around 16 IAF aircraft either landing or flying overhead within about 30 minutes.

"Rafael, Sukhoi and other IAF aircraft will take part in the airshow, and many of the fighter jets will also land at



the strip. This will be the first such elaborate exercise on an ELF," Sarma added.

Modi will fly out from the ELF for Guwahati for his next leg of the day-long trip to the poll-bound state, the CM said.

Sarma had earlier said the ELF will give a boost to national security and disaster preparedness.

The Moran ELF, constructed under the Dibrugarh-Moran NH project in coordination with the IAF, has been developed in a strip of 4.2 km of the national highway between Moran and Demow, he said.



## Father-in-law and brother-in-law arrested in dowry murder case



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** The Phulpur police station arrested two wanted accused in a dowry murder case on Wednesday. Police took necessary legal action against both and sent them to court.

This action was taken as part of the ongoing campaign against criminals, initiated on the instructions

of the Police Commissioner. Case number 50/2026, registered at the Phulpur police station in the Ganganagar zone, covers sections related to dowry harassment and dowry murder. A police team led by the station in-charge arrested Ramesh Kumar Pal (33) and Samla Devi (50), residents of village Chak Abdul Karim alias Bhulai Babuganj, near

the Narai culvert. Both are accused of harassing a married woman for dowry and being involved in her death. According to the police, the investigation is ongoing and a search is underway for other accused. The arresting team included Sub-Inspector Suraj Rathi, Female Sub-Inspector Priya Tripathi, and Head Constable Ramdevar Saroj.

## Solar Consumers Honoured Under PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

Etah

With the objective of creating public awareness and promoting effective implementation of the Prime Minister Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, a felicitation ceremony was organised on Friday in the Collectorate office chamber. During the programme, District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh honoured five consumers associated with the education sector who have installed grid-connected (on-grid) rooftop solar power plants at their private residences in Etah district, by distributing certificates of appreciation. The honoured beneficiaries included Ravi Singh (Shridham Colony, Kasganj Road), Shiv Kumar Dwivedi (Sunhari Nagar), Richa Agrawal (Gandhi Market), Monika Paliwal (Chitragupt Colony, Agra Road) and Ranjana Sharma (Hindu Nagar). While sharing their experiences, the beneficiaries stated that they had installed solar power plants of 3 kilowatt capacity at their homes, after which their electricity bills have become zero. They also informed that they are no longer receiving electricity bills even through tablets. Describing the scheme as extremely beneficial, the beneficiaries appealed to the residents of the district, especially teach-



ers, to connect with the scheme and take advantage of its benefits. On this occasion, District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh informed that so far 1,325 beneficiaries in Etah district have been covered under the Prime Minister Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, reflecting growing public awareness and the continuous efforts of the administration. He said that this is an ambitious, public welfare and environment-friendly scheme of the Central Government, which is receiving special focus from the administration. The District Magistrate further stated that through the NEDA department and registered vendors, citizens are installing solar power plants at their private residences and reducing their electricity bills by 80 to 100 percent. Many beneficiaries are also earning

additional income by selling surplus electricity generated to the power department. The In-charge Officer, NEDA, informed that the district administration is organising felicitation ceremonies every week to honour beneficiaries of the scheme, which is inspiring other citizens to join this public welfare initiative. He appealed to district residents to avail government-provided subsidies and loan facilities by contacting the NEDA department and applying as per the prescribed procedure. The programme was attended by Sub-Divisional Magistrate/Project Officer NEDA Piyush Rawat, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Anwar Rashid Farooqui, Rajkumar Maurya other district officials, vendor representatives and beneficiary Consumers.

## Land Mafia Grab on Pond: Revenue Negligence and Alleged Protection Put Village Water Source at Risk

Lucknow

An alleged attempt to fill and sell a decades-old village pond in Behta village, under Bijnor pargana of Sarojini Nagar tehsil has triggered serious allegations of revenue department negligence and official protection. The matter is becoming increasingly serious, with claims that land mafias were facilitated to encroach upon the pond land. The case pertains to Khasra No.1053, measuring 2.5290



hectares, which has existed as a pond for the past 50-60 years.

Villagers state that the pond is the primary water drainage source for the entire village and has long been used for water chestnut cultivation and fish farming. According to revenue records, the land was recorded as a pond in Fasli year 1359, registered in the name of Bihari Kahar. Old khataunis also clearly show the land usage as a pond. However, it is alleged that in the current khatauni, the land was erroneously recorded as "transitional land

(Sankramaniya)", creating confusion. Taking advantage of this incorrect entry, three sale deeds were executed on August 18, 2025. Subsequently, the buyers allegedly began dumping debris into the pond to fill it. The complainant Prashant Srivastava, along with his advocate Ajit Srivastava, alleged that "The entire operation is being carried out under the protection of concerned officials. Instead of protecting the pond, support was extended to sell the land and fill

it with debris. Had timely intervention not occurred, the village main water source would have been destroyed." Following the complaint, the area Lekhpal reached the spot and immediately stopped the illegal encroachment and filling work. A written complaint was also submitted during the Samadhan Diwas held at Sarojini Nagar tehsil. The complainant has demanded that the pond be restored and protected in its original form, the legality of the sale deeds.

## Anti-Corruption Team Caught Electricity Department Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Red-Handed Accepting a Bribe of 10,000 Rupees

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** On Wednesday, the Anti-Corruption Organization (ACO) team arrested the Electricity Department Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) red-handed while accepting a bribe of 10,000 Rupees. A case is being registered against the accused officer at the Khuldabad police station. According to information, Jitendra Kumar, a resident of Khuldabad, filed a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Organization on February 9th. He alleged that Sub-Divisional Officer Sanjeev Kumar Srivastava was demanding 10,000 Rupees in



exchange for rectifying his electricity connection meter and protecting him from litigation and heavy fines. After investigating the complaint, the Anti-Corruption Team planned a trap. Around 12 noon on Wednesday, a 13-member team led by Inspector Anjali Yadav raided the Electricity Sub-Divisional Officer's office in Khusrobog. The team caught SDO Sanjeev Kumar

Srivastava red-handed while accepting 10,000 Rupees from the complainant. The accused is said to be a resident of Ghazipur district and was currently posted at the electricity subdivision office in Khusrobog. Following his arrest, legal action is being taken against him under the Corruption Act. The Anti-Corruption Organization has appealed that if any government official or employee demands a bribe, a complaint should be immediately filed with the organization's control room number at its Prayagraj division or headquarters in Lucknow, so that prompt action can be taken.

## Administration Adopts Zero-Tolerance Policy for Copy-Free Board Exams

Etah

In order to ensure that the Board Examinations-2026 conducted by the Board of Secondary Education are held smoothly, fairly and completely free from malpractice, an important review meeting was organised on Monday at the Janeshwar Mishra Auditorium. The meeting was held with zonal, sector, static and centre superintendents and was jointly chaired by District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police Shyam Narayan Singh. Addressing the meeting, District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh said that conducting the board examinations in a copy-free and transparent manner is a collective as well as moral responsibility of all concerned. He instructed that every officer and employee must discharge their duties with complete honesty, vigilance and sensitivity. Any negligence at any level will be taken seriously and the concerned individual will be held personally accountable. The District Magistrate



informed that, in accordance with the directions of the Chief Minister, stringent measures have been taken at the government level to put a complete stop to cheating and Etah district has been placed in the highly sensitive category. Issuing a clear warning, he said that no one should even think of indulging in copying or using unfair means. Under the Unfair Means Prevention Act-2025, those found guilty may face imprisonment of up to 10 years along with a fine of up to 1 crore. On this occasion, Senior Superintendent of Police Shyam Narayan Singh stated that elaborate security arrangements have been made to ensure copy-free examinations. Continuous

monitoring of suspicious activities will be carried out through surveillance.

All examination centres will remain under CCTV camera surveillance and adequate police force will be deployed at each centre. He further informed that candidates will be allowed entry into the examination halls only after thorough checking by the internal flying squads and no unauthorised or external person will be permitted inside the examination centres. He emphasised that the dignity of the state and the district is associated with the board examinations and maintaining it is the responsibility of all.

District-level external

observer nominated by the government, Vijay Pratap Singh also stressed the need to maintain purity and transparency in the examination process. District Inspector of Schools Dr. Indrajeet informed that a total of 92 examination centres have been established in the district. For smooth conduct of the examinations, 6 zonal magistrates, 17 sector magistrates and 92 static magistrates have been appointed. All centre superintendents and static magistrates will remain stationed at their respective centres and will be fully responsible for ensuring fair and transparent examinations. The meeting was attended by Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Satya Prakash, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Yogendra Kumar, Sub-Divisional Magistrates Piyush Rawat and Rajkumar Maurya, Labour Enforcement Officer Rajbaboo, Block Development Officer Ajit Kumar, along with all centre superintendents, sector and static magistrates and other concerned Officials.

# DM conducts surprise inspection at Collectorate, directs speedy disposal of pending cases

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma conducted a surprise inspection of various offices located in the Collectorate premises on Wednesday. During the inspection, he reviewed administrative procedures, record maintenance, pending case resolution, and public hearing arrangements, and issued necessary guidelines to officials. The DM directed that the name, designation, and list of responsibilities of the concerned employee be clearly displayed on all desks. He emphasized transparency, timeliness, and quality in administrative work. He also emphasized cleanliness, lighting, and systematic file management in offices.

## Inspection of DDC Office and Court Rooms

The inspection began at the DDC office. Instructions were given for cleanliness and proper file management. The DM stated that the Additional District Magistrate (Supply) would oversee related work until the appointment of the DDC. The DM expressed displeasure over the disorganization of lighting and records in the Additional District Magistrate (Civil Supply) Court. He directed that the lighting system be immediately repaired and files be kept in order. Reviewed the files of



sealing cases pending since 2013 and directed them to resolve them on priority through regular hearings.

## Prepare a list of pending cases and take action

Upon learning of 121 cases older than five years in the Additional District Magistrate's Finance and Revenue Court, the DM directed that all pending cases be listed and resolved expeditiously through regular

hearings. Instructed to expedite the weeding process of old files, make proper entries in the register, and keep pending and resolved cases separately. Instructions were also given to send reminders regarding the proposed new record room.

## Effective Monitoring of Public Complaints

The DM reviewed complaints related to IGRs and Janta Darshan. He stated that each

complaint should include the complainant's name and mobile number, and feedback must be obtained. Repeated complaints related to the same issue should be recorded in a separate register and monitored specifically. Instructed that complaints regarding encroachment on government land should be resolved only after submitting a final report.

## Excise and other offices also

## inspected

During his inspection of the Excise Office located in the Collectorate complex, the DM directed an effective ban on drinking alcohol in public places outside liquor shops.

He also inspected the Arms Office, CRA, ERK, Judicial Archives, Protocol Section, and Record Room and issued necessary instructions. He directed employees to ensure punctual

attendance and update movable and immovable property details on the Human Resource Portal. On this occasion, Additional District Magistrate City Satyam Mishra, Additional District Magistrate Finance and Revenue Vinita Singh, Additional District Magistrate Nazul Sanjay Pandey, Additional District Magistrate Civil Supply Vijay Sharma, and other officials were present.

## Hajj pilgrims will be vaccinated at three centers on February 12th



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Vaccination arrangements have been made for selected pilgrims going on Hajj 2026 on February 12th. The district administration has instructed all Hajj pilgrims to arrive at the designated e-facilities centers on time for vaccination.

District Minority Welfare Officer Krishna Murari stated that the vaccination

program will begin at 10:00 AM on February 12th. Three centers have been set up for this purpose in the city and rural areas. The vaccination centers include Arnelaz Higher Secondary School, 134/B-1 Nurullah Road (near Palki Guest House), Madrasa Imamia Anwarul Uloom, 39 Mirza Ghalib Road, and Madrasa Khadijatul Kubra Lilbanat, Handia. He advised that all selected pilgrims

should ensure they arrive at the designated center on time, carrying their medical screening documents and other necessary documents. For any information, Hajj Nodal Officer Mohammad Amjad can be contacted. The administration has appealed to all pilgrims to get vaccinated on the scheduled date so that the Hajj pilgrimage process can be completed in a timely manner.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** Karaili police station has arrested an accused in connection with a road dispute involving assault and forced carjacking of a youth. Police have taken legal action against the accused and sent him to court. According to police, Shau Ping Chay, a resident of the Karaili police station area, filed a complaint stating that on February 9th, some people assaulted him following a dispute over giving way. It is alleged that the miscreants forced him into a car, beat him, and then abandoned him on the road and fled. Upon receiving information about the incident, police registered a case under relevant sections and formed a team to arrest the accused. On Wednesday, based on a tip-off, police arrested Majid (25), a resident of village Bhati, Airport police station, on the road from Bakshi Modha to Alina City. During interrogation, the accused



revealed that on February 8th, an altercation occurred in front of Malviya Samosa, C Block, regarding giving way to a car. The incident took place the next day due

to this rivalry. According to the police, several criminal cases have been registered against the accused in the past. The arresting team included Sub-Inspectors Ajit

Kumar Maurya, Ishiaq Ansari, Ramesh Kumar Singh, Shivam Singh, and other police officers. The police are searching for other absconding accused.

## Municipal Commissioner Inspects Swachh Survey, Displeases Legacy Waste at Baswar Plant

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

**Prayagraj.** As part of preparations for the Swachh Survey, Municipal Commissioner Sai Teja inspected the waste disposal plant, bio-CNG plant, and Kashiraj Nagar area of Kidganj on Wednesday. He directed the concerned officials to improve the arrangements. Deficiencies Found at Baswar Plant During the inspection of the Baswar plant, excessive legacy waste and damaged pillars of the



monsoon shed were found. The Municipal Commissioner directed the executing agencies, Eco Stand

and BVG, to expedite the work and ensure immediate disposal of legacy waste. He also directed them to

repair the pillars of the monsoon shed and submit a report on inert sales over the past three months. Instructions on Foul Odor at Bio-CNG Plant During the inspection of the bio-CNG plant, a foul smell of gas was detected in the premises. Following this, the Municipal Commissioner directed the development of a green belt within the plant premises and the installation of an odor-causing machine to prevent the odor from spreading to surrounding

areas. Cleanliness in Kashiraj Nagar The inspection of the Kashiraj Nagar and Mahaveeran Road areas of Kidganj reviewed the sanitation system. The Commissioner instructed sanitation workers to wear cleaning kits and regularly clean drains. He directed shopkeepers to place dustbins outside their shops and to take action against illegal encroachment on the roadside. Barricading of excavated pits is mandatory. The Municipal Commissioner took a firm stance when the sewer and

water supply departments failed to barricade the pits dug for repair work. He gave clear instructions to the General Manager and Chief Engineer to immediately barricade all pits to prevent any loss of life. Additional Municipal Commissioners Rajiv Shukla and Arvind Rai, Assistant Municipal Commissioners Deepshikha Pandey, Zonal Officers Sanjay Mamgai and Akhilesh Tripathi, along with other officials, were present during the inspection.

## Editorial

### Buying Russian oil, misreading Trump—3 points will define India's next energy strategy

India's crude oil trade has evolved from a purely economic exchange into both a geopolitical test of strategic autonomy and a measure of the constraints in its energy policy. Over the past three years, India has gone from being a marginal buyer of Russian crude to one of its largest importers, carefully balancing ties with the US, Europe, and shifting global energy markets. That balance is now under pressure from Donald Trump's 50 per cent tariff offensive, aimed selectively at India and leaving little ambiguity about his objectives—and in Trump's world, what he wants, he usually gets. Yet the national debate has taken too many assumptions for granted. It is worth applying a deconstruction approach to India's famous oil bargains with Russia—a decision once hailed as tactical brilliance, but one now risking entanglement in overlapping economic and diplomatic challenges. While public commentary has focused heavily on Trump, tariffs, and New Delhi's indignation, the more pressing task is to interrogate the rationale behind these choices. To navigate the road ahead, India must revisit three fundamentals: why it embraced Russian oil, how it misread Trump's European recalibration, and where future India-Russia energy engagement should head. Clarity on these three points may well define the next chapter of India's energy strategy. Despite close political ties and deep defence cooperation, India and Russia were never bound by energy dependence. Even with India's heavy reliance on imports—currently 88 per cent of its daily crude requirement of 5.5 million barrels—its primary suppliers have traditionally been Gulf countries. The earlier chapter of India capitulating to Trump 1.0's sanctions on Iran and Venezuela is well known; today, however, the challenge is starker. Russia entered India's energy equation only after the geopolitical earthquake of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. That act shattered the European order painstakingly built since the Second World War and crystallised after the Soviet Union's collapse. Central to this upheaval was Putin's weaponisation of energy: Europe's decades-long dependence on cheap Russian oil and gas became a vulnerability. In response, Europe diversified away from Russia, while the G7 imposed a \$60 per-barrel price cap on Russian crude in December 2022. The logic was clear: as one of the world's top three oil producers, Russia could not be cut off overnight. The aim was instead to squeeze Moscow's revenues, which were funding its war machine, while keeping prices stable and securing alternative supplies for Europe. India saw opportunity in this upheaval. With vast import needs, it began rerouting Russian oil at supposedly lower prices, rejecting G7 sanctions and arranging direct and indirect deals through intermediaries. Early reports spoke of a "free on board" discount of 30 per cent, though never confirmed.

Brent crude fell from \$86.51 in January 2022 to \$80.92 in December, peaking briefly at about \$90 in June 2023 before sliding again. While some credit India's purchases with stabilising prices, Russian oil for India almost always remained way above the \$60 price cap. The critical question is whether India ever bought below that threshold. Reports suggest an average discount of only \$5 per barrel—hardly transformative—and potentially offset by hidden costs and surcharges. Even so, large volumes (peaking at over 2 million barrels per day before dropping to 1.5 million) meant cumulative savings. But if cheap oil was the goal, why not join or informally align with the price cap, securing crude closer to \$60 without the complications of shadow fleets and sanctions risks?



## Restoring J&K's statehood won't be enough. Kashmiris need to be treated like other Indians

Late one night in 1978, in a nation illuminated by the end of the Emergency, police dragged Ghulam Nabi Patel out of his home in Srinagar's Batamalloo, and into the city's Central Jail. Leviathan still cast a long shadow in this corner of the republic, it became clear. The head of the Kashmir Motor Drivers Association, it later emerged, had campaigned for the Janata Party in the just-concluded elections. This action enraged then-Prime Minister Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah enough to make the trade union leader the first victim of Kashmir's just-legislated preventive detention law, the Public Safety Act. The High Court ordered Ghulam Nabi's release, but that wasn't quite the end of the story. In 2018, the elderly politician, battling cancer and on a trip home to arrange his daughter's wedding, was shot dead by terrorists. This time, the parties he'd served for decades—the Congress and the People's Democratic Party—denied their association with him, so they would not have to condemn the assassins. A last bit of the story remains. In 2020, Ghulam Nabi's children were served notice by the government, ordering them to vacate the premises they were provided to protect them from terrorist attack. This week, the Supreme Court is scheduled to resume hearing petitions seeking the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, an issue it elided over after 32 paragraphs of elegant prose, in return for a promise from the Solicitor General. The decision to hear



the issue is an important one, but it also evades a critical issue. The demotion of Kashmir to a Union territory isn't the only issue that needs to be discussed, as India moves forward to reimagine its constitutional relationship with the once-was-a-state. Kashmir has never been, in any sense of the world, allowed to be a normal state, with normal politicians and normal citizens. The state might have been the first to get rural radio sets, scholar Navnita Chadha Behera notes, but authorities were careful to disable their tuners with wire, so as to ensure only Radio Kashmir could be heard. There were elections to a constituent Assembly in 1951, true, but politician Syed Mir Qasim observed notices posted on walls, ordering people not to discuss politics. Thus, Kashmir was bound to the republic with terror and blood, not ideas or culture. For this, the long jihad Pakistan unleashed against Kashmir in 1947-1948, and has since continued without interruption, must be held responsible. Like many other regions in India, from the adivasi heartlands in central India to parts of the Northeast, democracy

has struggled to grow in exceptionally harsh conditions. All blame, though, does not lie across the Line of Control. Elections that served to undermine democracy, the state-enabled subversion of the political system through corruption, the use of coercion unconstrained by law: All these, the story of Ghulam Nabi Patel should remind us, were Indian inventions. Today, the challenge isn't just to restore statehood in Kashmir. The task Indians need to embrace is to build a state that is Indian, an unremarkable part of our republic. Eighty years ago, Prime Minister Abdullah had promised that a utopia would be built from the ruins of Partition and war. The Naya Kashmir manifesto—which, Andrew Whitehead reminds us, liberally helped itself to text from the 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union—held out promises to redistribute feudal landholdings to the peasants, to uphold the rights of women, and introduce universal access to healthcare and education. The communist couple Freda Houlston and her husband Baba Pyare Lal Bedi wrote the manifesto with Abdullah's encouragement,

though it is unclear if his commitment to communism was ever serious. To the great Kashmiri poet Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, it seemed Abdullah was leading the region out of the darkness: "The ranges of the mountains shall yield gold," he gushed, "Pearls shall emerge out of the Wular lake." Less than five years after Independence, though, the poet had encountered disillusionment. The reality of 'New Kashmir', it turned out, was one-party authoritarianism, electoral malpractice, and communalism. "Freedom being of heavenly birth, can't move from door to door," he avidly wrote, "You'll find her camping in the homes of a chosen few alone." How did this come about? The story has something to do with bad luck, scholar Aijaz Ashraf Wani has written, in an excellent survey of the roots of misadministration in Kashmir. Two successive bad harvests, in 1949-1950 and 1950-1951, created enormous rural discontent. Forced levies of crops from farmers, imposed in a desperate effort to stave off famine, sharpened the resentment, while shortages of food in the cities grew to alarming levels. The National Conference succeeded in dominating the Constituent Assembly, winning all 75 seats in the 1951 elections. This was only possible, though, because 45 out of 49 candidates of the Hindu-nationalist Praja Parishad party were barred from contesting, mainly on frivolous technical grounds, Behera has observed. The media was muzzled, and opponents

were intimidated and imprisoned. Less than five years later, though, the relationship between Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdullah had begun to break down. The Praja Parishad, denied electoral space, started a mass movement seeking the full integration of Kashmir into India. Abdullah, in a 10 April 1952 speech in RS Pura, suggested it was becoming impossible to "convince the Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow them up." The threat of war with Pakistan was alive, Nehru could not countenance this rebellion. "I am afraid Kashmir is heading in an adverse direction," Nehru warned in a 28 June 1953 letter. The new regime of Prime Minister Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad came to power on the back of a unanimous vote of confidence from Jammu & Kashmir's Constituent Assembly, many of whose members were released from prison that very day. Early in 1954, the Union government restricted Kashmir's special status by passing constitutional amendments that cut back the state's autonomy. Long before Kashmir's special status ended, 260 of the 395 Articles in the Indian Constitution were already applicable in Jammu & Kashmir; the remaining 135 were identical provisions found in the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir. Like his predecessor and incarcerated friend Abdullah, Bakshi hoped development would subsume the urge for political agency and dialogue.

### Good politician, bad statesman — what Muhammad Yunus' one year in power reveals

If Sheikh Hasina had her way, Muhammad Yunus would have been dunked into the Padma River by now. Not once but twice. But it has been a year since the ousted Bangladeshi prime minister hasn't had her way. In that time, not only has Yunus avoided a plunge into the Padma, but also dashed Hasina's dreams of returning to Bangladesh, all while sitting pretty in the chair she was forced to vacate. In the one year since Yunus took over as the caretaker to the interim government of Bangladesh on 8 August 2024, the accidental politician has proved himself a consummate one. Detractors who had claimed he won't last three months are now worried if he will even vacate his chair. Not only has Yunus deftly navigated the choppy waters of Bangladeshi politics, he has even turned foes into friends. Plunged into chaos after Hasina's hasty exit on 5 August 2024, Bangladesh, though, is in desperate need of a statesman. There has been no love lost between Sheikh Hasina and Muhammad

Yunus, much before the latter replaced the former as Bangladesh's premier last year. On 18 May 2022, Hasina had allegedly said, "He (Yunus) stopped funding for a project like the Padma Bridge because of one managing director post. He should be given two dunks in the Padma River, but lifted up so he doesn't die. Then maybe he will learn a lesson." Hasina had said this while blaming Nobel Peace Prize winner, economist Dr Muhammad Yunus, for blocking the World Bank's funding of the Padma bridge project. That's not all. As recently as 1 January 2024, a court in Bangladesh had sentenced the Nobel laureate to six months in jail for violating Bangladesh's labour laws. Yunus' supporters said the case was politically motivated. The acclaimed economist and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom—one of the firms Yunus founded—were found guilty of failing to create a welfare fund for their workers. I call for the Bangladeshi people to speak in one voice against injustice.

### Dharali floods a wake-up call for IMD, NDMA to buck up

The deadly flash floods and landslides in Uttarkashi on 5 August, in which 16 people were killed, highlight the problems of illegal riverbank constructions and inadequate warning systems. Videos of submerged villages, ravaging floods sweeping up buildings and cars in their tide, and stranded people have become an annual occurrence now in the Himalayan region. Dharali's floods struck in the absence of any weather warning, and authorities are still confused about the actual cause. While the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority called it a cloudburst, the India Meteorological Department could not confirm it with the available data. Uttarkashi district recorded 12.7 cm of rain in 8 hours on 5 August; it is still lower than districts such as Haridwar and Dehradun, which got 15-30 cm of rain on the same day. In a state that sees frequent cloudbursts and floods during the monsoon, and has been explicitly marked as a 'high vulnerability zone' for landslides by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the damage from the Dharali floods is not merely nature's fault. The blame also rests squarely on building norms, mass road construction and mining projects, and other anthropogenic activities that have exacerbated Uttarakhand's fragility. The floods should be another wake-up call for the IMD and the NDMA to buck up and ensure the safety of people and ecology in the Himalayas. Dharali is a small hamlet 2,680 metres above sea level, situated 18 km from Gangotri, and is a common stopover for tourists and pilgrims going to one of the Char Dhams of Uttarakhand. It is dotted with hotels, restaurants, and homes built precariously close to the banks of the Kheerganga River that runs through the village. On Tuesday afternoon, a barrage of water descended upon the village and

damaged houses, roads, and the one bridge connecting Dharali and Hershil, another area affected by the landslide. Satellite images from ISRO now show that deposits of mud and sediments from the floods cover all of the village. Alongside civilian settlements, an Army camp near Hershil too was impacted by the floods, although the number of people missing there hasn't been reported. The IMD had issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in all of Uttarakhand, including the Uttarkashi district, from 1 August onwards. But compared to other districts, Uttarkashi's rainfall during this monsoon was still pretty low. From 1 to 5 August, Uttarkashi's recorded rainfall was 6 per cent lower than the average rainfall it gets during this period. Over the monsoon season so far this year in the state, Uttarkashi has recorded 7 per cent lower rainfall than average. If there was indeed a cloudburst—100 mm of rain falling in one hour in a small area—then the IMD is not aware of it. The closest Automatic Weather System (AWS) station that could record this cloudburst is 7 km from Dharali, and it did not catch a cloudburst. But experts say that even without a cloudburst, the possibility of heavy rainfall, causing this disaster is not unfounded. Dharali's location and slope explain it. "The 'cloudburst' may have happened much higher at 12,000 ft above sea level, and Dharali is at 8,000 ft. Even this slope of 4,000 ft makes a huge difference to the intensity of the water flow," Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, told ThePrint. "The canal is very narrow, and a lot of trees and mud could have been uprooted and swept along with the water." If extremely heavy rainfall can cause such damage without a rare event like a cloudburst, it should leave the system working toward.

### Bank nationalisation will be a blow to India's mixed economy, lead to totalitarianism: Phiroze Shroff

Every now and then we hear the cry that banks should be nationalised. The taking over of banks by the State is urged on various grounds, namely, that it is necessary in order "to mobilise resources" for the economic development of the country, "to prevent the concentration of economic power", "to check malpractices in the working of banks" and to put a stop to profiteering" by banks. All these arguments will be found to be untenable on a dispassionate scrutiny of the issues involved. The primary function of banks

is to mobilise resources for economic development and that is exactly what the banks in our country have been doing. They have been working to attract deposits from those who have funds to spare on [a] long or short term basis. They have been making loans for industrial as well as agricultural expansion in accordance with numerous legislative requirements. During recent years, they have opened numerous branches in order to extend credit facilities to people even in remote areas, even though the banking business

in several branches has proved unremunerative. They have invested more than Rs 600 crore in Government securities. They have been broadening their capital base and increasing their reserves in accordance with statutory requirements. The enormous increase in their deposits during recent years bears testimony to the confidence which the public have in their working. By undertaking the foreign exchange business, our banks render considerable help in promoting exports. An occasional appearance of a black

sheep in the sphere of banking, as in any other sphere, does not detract from the value of the service which the banks as a whole are rendering to the country. What is regrettable is that though the Reserve Bank is invested with extensive powers to prevent malpractices, in one or two cases it failed to exercise them to protect the interests of the depositors as well as shareholders. Ninety-five per cent of bank advances in India are secured loans. The corresponding figures for the USA, is only thirty per cent.

## A Group of trainees from the DIET Departed for Rajgir on an Educational Tour



**Ghazipur** A group of 170 trainees from the 2023 Batch of the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Saidpur, Ghazipur, enthusiastically departed for the historical and educational city of Rajgir (Bihar) on February 9th for a three-day educational tour. The purpose of this tour was to provide the trainees with a firsthand experience of historical, cultural and Educational sites and to enhance their knowledge and experience. On this occasion, DIET

spokespersons—Abhay Chandra, Nidhi Sonkar, Archana Singh, Rajwant Singh, Alok Tiwari, Rakesh Yadav, Brijesh Kumar, Naval Gupta, Hariom Pratap Yadav and Alok Kumar- Provided necessary guidelines to the trainees regarding discipline, safety and adherence to educational objectives during the tour. The coordinator of the educational tour, Dr. Sarvesh Kumar Rai, spokesperson, DIET Saidpur Ghazipur, said that through such educational tours, trainees

get the opportunity to acquire practical and experiential learning along with bookish knowledge, which makes it possible to develop their personality and teaching skills holistically. On the first day of the tour, the tomb of Sher Shah Suri was visited. The trainees showed special enthusiasm and curiosity about this educational tour. The Principal of the institute, Prakash Singh, wished the trainees a successful and safe tour and wished them a bright future.

## Indian Overseas Bank Opens Six New Branches on its 90th Foundation Day



**Varanasi**

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) marked its 90th Foundation Day with the inauguration of six new branches across Eastern Uttar Pradesh, further strengthening its presence and customer outreach in the region. New branches were opened at Bhatat, Taramandal, Gorakhnath and Sahjanwa in Gorakhpur District, Pharenda in Maharajganj District and Padrauna in Kushi Nagar District. The expansion reflects the Bank

commitment to enhancing banking access, Promoting financial inclusion and delivering quality services to customers across emerging and high-potential locations. The branch inaugurations were carried out under the guidance and leadership of Rajnish Kumar Gaurava, Chief Regional Manager, Varanasi. Gaurava has played a pivotal role in the Bank regional growth initiatives. Speaking on the occasion, Gaurava highlighted the significance of IOB continued expansion in

Uttar Pradesh and reiterated the Bank dedication to offering customer-centric digital and traditional banking solutions. He expressed confidence that the newly opened branches would cater effectively to the banking needs of local residents, traders, farmers and small businesses. With the addition of these six branches, Indian Overseas Bank further accelerates its mission of empowering communities and supporting socio-economic development as it enters its 90th year of service to the Nation.

## Bantra Police Conduct Awareness Campaign in Radhe Kheda under Mission Shakti 5.0



**Lucknow**

Under the Mission Shakti 5.0 campaign, the Bantra Police team of the Lucknow Police Commissionerate organized a women safety and awareness program in Gram Panchayat Radhe Kheda. The main objective of the program was to promote legal awareness and cyber safety among women, girls and the general public, while spreading the message of a safe society and empowered women. On this occasion, women and girls were informed in detail about cyber security, police helpline numbers related to women and child assistance, women help desks, pink booths, cyber crime prevention and the usefulness of the UP COP mobile application. The police team also explained measures to prevent online fraud and appealed to the public to remain vigilant and immediately contact the police in case of any emergency. During the program, women were educated about Good Touch-Bad Touch, the POCSO Act, legal provisions related to women harassment and various women welfare schemes run by the government. They were also made aware of which actions and behaviors fall under the category of crime and how the law supports and protects them in such situations. Information was shared about important helpline numbers such as 1076, 1090, 112, 181, 1930, 102, and 108, enabling women to seek immediate assistance whenever required. The program saw active participation from Woman Sub-Inspector Gulabkali, Woman Sub-Inspector Neha Yadav and Sub-Inspector Ramesh Chandra of Bantra Police Station. Police officials stated that under Mission Shakti 5.0, Mission Shakti Centers have been established at all 54 police stations of the Lucknow Commissionerate, ensuring prompt redressal of women grievances.

## DM-SP Inspect Temples Ahead of Mahashivratri

**Fatehpur**

With the objective of ensuring the smooth, safe and Peaceful conduct of the upcoming Mahashivratri festival, District Magistrate Ravindra Singh and Superintendent of Police Anoop Kumar Singh carried out a joint inspection of Tambeshwar Temple under Kotwali Police station area and Thwaishwar Temple under Lalouli Police station area on Tuesday. During the inspection, the senior officers reviewed the overall arrangements, including security deployment, crowd management, traffic regulation, barricading, lighting, cleanliness, drinking water facilities, first-aid services and emergency preparedness. The officials directed the concerned departments and station in-charges to



ensure adequate police force deployment in view of the expected heavy footfall of devotees and to prevent any kind of inconvenience or disorder.

District Magistrate Ravindra Singh emphasized that the convenience and safety of devotees is the top priority. He instructed the municipal

body and the health department to ensure proper sanitation, uninterrupted power supply, availability of drinking water and toilet facilities. He also

directed that special cleanliness drives be conducted and medical teams remain on alert during the festival. Superintendent of Police (SP) Anoop Kumar

Singh instructed officials to strengthen crowd control measures through barricading, CCTV surveillance, active control rooms and the support of volunteers to maintain smooth traffic movement. He further stressed the need for immediate action on any suspicious activity and special attention to the safety of women devotees. Additional District Magistrate and Additional Superintendent of Police were also present during the inspection and provided necessary suggestions after reviewing the arrangements. The officials concluded by stating that ensuring the successful and harmonious celebration of Mahashivratri across the district is the administration priority and all departments will work in coordination to achieve this Goal.

## Police Unravel Murder Case. Three Accused Arrested, Including a Bounty Captured

**Ghazipur**

Kasimabad Kotwali Police, uncovering a murder case, arrested a criminal carrying a reward of fifty thousand rupees, along with his two accomplices. After completing legal proceedings, they handed them over to the court. Deepak Rajbhar was shot dead by unknown assailants in Belsari village on January 11th. The deceased family filed a case against two villagers, accusing them of murder due to a personal grudge. During the investigation, the police discovered a different motive for the murder and they began investigating. Locals revealed that Deepak had eloped with a young woman from the same village a few months earlier. The incident had brought the two families



to blows, leading to a fight. The investigation revealed the names of the criminal carrying a reward of fifty thousand rupees and his accomplices. Police continued to track them down. In the same sequence, during a checkpoint in Todar village late on Monday, February 9th, a police team arrested Vishal Yadav alias Chhotak, son of Harikesh Yadav, a resident of Shankarpur village, Dullapur police station, Ghazipur district and his accomplice, Saurabh Yadav, son of Santosh alias Chhedi, a resident of Kauwabhari village, Bikapur police station, Kotwali district,

Ghazipur, carrying a reward of fifty thousand rupees. On Tuesday, February 10th, the Police arrested Dhananjay Rajbhar, son of Madhav Rajbhar, wanted in the above case from his home in Belsari. Based on the accused information, the Police recovered the .32 murder along with two live cartridges, two mobile Phones and a stolen motorcycle. Fifteen criminal cases are already registered against Vishal Yadav, five against Saurabh Rajbhar. During interrogation, the accused revealed that they, along with other associates, had murdered.

## Awareness Workshop Organised at Collectorate on 'Safer Internet Day'

**Fatehpur**

In line with the Government guidelines and under the directions of District Magistrate Ravindra Singh, an awareness workshop was organised on Tuesday at the Gandhi Auditorium in the Collectorate premises to mark 'Safer Internet Day'. The programme was conducted by the District Informatics Officer. During the workshop, officials, employees, students and members of the public were made aware of the objectives of Safer Internet Day and were provided detailed information on the safe use of the internet and measures to prevent cyber crimes. Speakers highlighted that while the internet has become an essential and convenient tool in the digital



age, its misuse has also led to a rise in cyber fraud, data theft, phishing, hacking and online harassment, making caution and awareness extremely important. Participants were informed about key cyber safety practices, including the use of strong passwords, avoiding sharing OTP and personal informa-

tion, staying away from suspicious links or calls, maintaining privacy on social media Platforms and reporting cyber crimes immediately through the 1930 helpline or the Cyber Crime Portal. The District Informatics Officer stated that the objective of Safer Internet Day is to make every

section of society digitally safe, enabling people to use technology responsibly and securely. He especially advised students to exercise caution and responsibility while using social media and online platforms. District Inspector of Schools, Additional District Informatics Officer,

officials and staff from various departments, a large number of students, social workers and other dignitaries were present at the programme. The participants described the session as informative and emphasised the need to spread awareness on cyber safety among the General Public.

# Salman, Ajay back Rajpal Yadav



Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn extend financial support to Rajpal Yadav amid legal trouble; bail hearing scheduled today

Several Bollywood celebrities have rallied behind Rajpal Yadav as the actor faces legal trouble in a long-standing cheque bounce case linked to a Rs 9 crore debt. Yadav recently surrendered and was sent to Tihar Jail after a Delhi court directed him to do so. In an earlier statement, the actor had said he had "no friends" in the industry. However, following his incarceration, several prominent names from Bollywood have stepped forward to offer financial support. In an interview with Screen, Rajpal Yadav's manager, Goldie, revealed that many well-known personalities have reached out to help the actor during this difficult phase.

## Film industry extends support

"A lot of people have reached out to help Rajpal Yadav. Actors like Sonu Sood, Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn have extended their support. I was just on a call with David Dhawan — he too reached out. Ratan Jain, Varun Dhawan... many people are coming forward to help him this time, which Rajpal has deeply appreciated," Goldie said. While the manager chose not to disclose whether Yadav had sought assistance before surrendering, he stated that the industry has stood by him as the situation intensified. "Everyone has made commitments, but such transactions don't happen overnight. Mentally, the family has to remain strong. Rajpal Bhai himself is very strong, and that strength runs in the family. There are also several celebrations lined up at home, with family functions scheduled later in February. Everyone wants Rajpal Bhai to be out by then. Hopefully, he should be released by tomorrow," he added.

## FWICE urges Industry

Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) also came forward to appeal to the film and TV industry to stand by Yadav during his "challenging phase of his life." According to a release, FWICE appealed to "all producers, directors, artists, technicians, associations, and well-wishers to extend their moral and financial support to help Rajpal resolve his liabilities and regain his freedom, dignity, and peace of mind." "Members and well-wishers willing to offer monetary assistance may contribute directly to Rajpal Yadav or route their support through FWICE. The Federation assures complete transparency and any funds received will be responsibly consolidated and handed over to assist him in settling his dues at the earliest," the release further stated.

## Rajpal to be out of jail on Feb 12?

Goldie further shared that Rajpal Yadav's bail hearing is scheduled for today and expressed hope that the court will grant him relief and allow him to return home.

## 69-yr-old ex-Miss India setting the internet on fire

Original Ramba Ho girl Kalpana Iyer's Miss World India 1978 video goes viral



2026

A throwback moment has taken social media by storm as a video of Kalpana Iyer, Miss India 1978, dancing to the iconic track *Ramba Ho* at a wedding, went viral. At 69, Kalpana proves that age is truly just a number, as she sets the dance floor on fire with the same confidence and infectious energy that once made her a sensation on screen. Now several videos of her from her Miss World India journey are pouring on the Internet. The video, originally shared by Kalpana herself on Instagram, quickly caught the attention of netizens, who couldn't stop praising her effortless moves. Many were left amazed, with comments pouring in about how gracefully she continues to own the stage decades later.



1978

## What's Up Mumbai!



## Flipperachi to perform in Mumbai in March

Globa rap sensation Flipperachi will make his Mumbai debut this March. The concert promises an immersive hip-hop experience with high-energy visuals and fan-driven moments. His popularity in India soared after *Dhurandhar* became a hit from the film, going viral on social media and turning into a nationwide party anthem.

WHEN: March 13, 2026

WHERE: Phoenix Marketcity, Mumbai



## Spectrum 2026: A festival of dances from all over

Spectrum 2026, A festival of dances from around the world, is presenting its annual showcase bringing together Indian classical traditions and contemporary international works. Take a look on Saturday for the Odissi and Kathak-Rasa.

WHEN: Saturday, February 14, 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: Tata Theatre, NCPA

## Alia Bhatt goes effortlessly white

Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt looked absolutely breathtaking in an all-white custom Farshi *sahwar* set by Karan Torani, effortlessly radiating grace and timeless beauty. The *kurta* featured delicate tonal embroidery and fine lacework along the neckline. The Farshi *sahwar* brought a royal, Mughal-inspired drama to the look, creating a beautiful contrast with the upper silhouette. She accessorised with custom

Hanut Singh pearl chandelier earrings that elevated the aura of the ensemble. Styled by celebrity stylists, Ami Patel and Anushka Damani, her sheer dupatta with scalloped lace borders was draped effortlessly over her shoulders. Her makeup was kept soft and luminous with a natural base and her hair was styled in a sleek, pulled-back low ponytail.



Photos: Instagram, @stylebyami



Photos: Paresh Bhojane

## The many faces of Amruta Khanvilkar

Amruta Khanvilkar recently visited *The Free Press Journal/Navshakti* office and interacted with *FPI's* Neelima Kulkarni. During the course of the video interview, our cameraman captured her in various avatars — from silent and composed to animated and expressive.

# A mesmerising ride which peels back the fog of Punjab



**K**ohrra 2 peels back the fog in the town of Dalerpura, revolving around the murder of a woman (Pooja Bhamrrah), whose body is found in her brother's (Anurag Arora) barn. Assistant Sub-Inspector Amarpal Garundi (Barun Sobti) begins anew, far from his roots in Jagrana, under a new commanding officer, Sub-Inspector Dhanwant Kaur (Mona Singh). So who did it? The brother? Her husband (Rannvijay Singha)? The house-help? *Kohrra 2* shows us how it takes a village to

cover up a crime. It is a series which mixes the inherent problems and celebrations of Punjab—alcoholism, high tempers, Christian conversions, *Lohri* and the *chardi kala* attitude—and blends them together to give you an engaging, realistic murder investigation. You feel the ache of missing loved ones during the festival of *Lohri*. A father turning into a shell after the loss of his son. A wife spending each night trying to track down her alcoholic husband.

Credit for all of the above should obviously go to Gunjit Chopra, Diggi Sisodia and Sudip Sharma, who have cre-



**TITLE:** *Kohrra 2*  
**DIRECTOR:** Sudip Sharma and Faisal Rahman  
**CAST:** Barun Sobti, Mona Singh, Rannvijay Singha, Pooja Bhamrrah, Anurag Arora and Prayrak Mehta  
**WHERE:** Netflix  
**RATING:** ★★★★★

ated and written the series. **Actors' performances** This series presents us with a set of actors whom you would rather not describe, because

you don't feel like they're acting. There aren't any histrionics—these people have become their characters. Still, for the sake of formality, I shall point out a few. Firstly, I would go off the beaten path here and, instead of starting with the lead actors, point out the actor playing the poor dhaba waiter searching for his missing father, who is the most convincing in his role. Rannvijay was well cast as the NRI husband, with his own secrets. Barun's empathetic cop is back, and he also helps in showcasing the incredible pressure under which the police work, as well

as the extremely complicated family dynamics he is faced with. Mona Singh, who shall forever be Jassi for some of us, is the matter-of-fact cop dealing with an alcoholic husband, and she also effectively portrays her aggressive side on the job. No one can match Ekta Sodhi in her 'forever' expression as someone just really disappointed with life and who has mostly lost hope. Muskan Arora, who plays Barun's wife, would end up making all the Punjabi boys want a partner like her.

But here's the thing: when you have a cast like *Kohrra 2*, it's just not possible to name all the actors, because they've

been so aptly chosen. **Music** As far as the music is concerned, one thing which definitely should be mentioned is a chase sequence with the background music of *Tare Gin Gin* by Sukhbir, which weren't expecting at all. It's a song we usually associate with dances at Punjabi weddings and parties, or pubs once the customary English numbers are done with.

Do you like intense, intelligent thrillers which are as much a mystery as they are an investigation into our humanity? If yes, then *Kohrra 2* is for you.

## Briefs

## 6 IS militants, 3 cops die in Turkiye clash

Islamic State militants clashed with police in Turkiye on Monday, leaving three police officers and six militants dead, Turkiye's interior minister said. At least eight other police officers and a night guard were wounded. The shooting occurred in Elmali district in Yalova province, south of Istanbul, as police stormed a house where the militants were hiding. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the operation in Yalova was one of over a hundred simultaneous raids carried out against IS suspects in 15 provinces in the country.

## Boy, 5, dies as arm trapped in travelator

A boy has died after becoming trapped in a moving travelator at a ski resort in northern Japan, media said. Hinata Goto, 5, died on Sunday after his right arm became trapped in the walkway's winding mechanism during a family skiing trip to Otaru, a city on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido.

Firefighters had freed the unconscious boy, who was wearing ski wear and boots, from the mechanism about 40 minutes after receiving an emergency call from his mother, the Asahi Shimbun said, adding, he was pronounced dead after being taken to hospital.

## Midair copter collision kills both pilots

A midair collision between two helicopters in New Jersey, US, on Sunday left both the pilots dead, prompting a probe into the cause of the crash, CNN reported. The incident occurred around late morning near Hammonton Municipal Airport, where two Enstrom helicopters were flying at the time.

## Strip activist of citizenship, says UK oppn

Political opposition leaders in the UK have called for a human rights activist to be stripped of his citizenship over past social media posts allegedly containing violent and antisemitic language within days of the dual national returning to Britain after years in Egyptian prisons. Conservative and Reform parties leaders sought the deportation of Alaa Abd el-Fattah following the discovery of tweets from over a decade ago in which he allegedly endorsed killing "Zionists and police".

## South Korean Prez returns to palace

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Monday commuted to Cheong Wa Dae, country's traditional presidential palace, for the first time since taking office in June, over 3 years after his ousted predecessor Yoon Suk Yeol moved the presidential office to the Defence Ministry compound. It was the first time a president had commuted to Cheong Wa Dae since May 9, 2022. Yoon opened Cheong Wa Dae to public as a tourist site, which drew millions of visitors.

## North Korea tests missiles

North Korea said on Monday it fired long-range strategic cruise missiles into the sea to test the country's nuclear deterrence, days after it showed apparent progress in the construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

## FLORIDA MEET | US offered 15 years: Ukrainian leader

## Zelensky seeks 50-yr security guarantees

WASHINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday said US President Donald Trump had informed him of a 20-point peace proposal for Ukraine that Trump had discussed with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

During the meeting with Trump in Florida, Zelensky said he pressed for long-term security guarantees extending over the next 50 years (the US offered 15 years), and clarified that any engagement with Russia would only be possible if Trump and European leaders reached consensus on formalised documents.

Outlining Kyiv's position on the proposed peace framework, Zelensky said Ukraine wants national security advisers from Ukraine, the US and Europe to meet in the coming days. He added Ukraine hopes security guarantees would be delivered at the moment the peace plan is formally signed.

He said the peace plan should be signed by Ukraine, the US, Russia and Europe,



## 'Russia wants to see Ukraine succeed': Zelensky reacts to Trump's claim

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appeared to raise an eyebrow during a peace summit in Florida when his host Donald Trump remarked Russia wanted Ukraine to succeed. Zelensky smiled and nodded when the US president acknowledged the claim sounded 'a little strange'. Trump said a draft agreement to end the Russia-Ukraine war was nearly '95% done' and the leaders signalled progress towards a US-Ukraine security agreement, but they acknowledged lingering disagreements on territorial disputes. Zelensky did not expressly comment on Trump's assessment of Vladimir Putin's intentions. During the press conference, he repeatedly thanked Trump and paid tribute to his US team.

noting a technical group may be required to carry out its implementation. Zelensky said Ukraine remains open to all formats of communication with Russia and proposed that the peace plan be put to a referendum in Ukraine.

To facilitate such a referen-

dum, Zelensky said a ceasefire of at least 60 days would be necessary, adding, details of ceasefire monitoring would be outlined within the security guarantees. He said discussions would take place on establishing a free economic zone in the Donbas region.



90% of the 20-point peace plan has been agreed.

US security guarantees for Ukraine are 100% agreed, these are key to lasting peace.

Any decision on territory must be approved by the Ukrainian people, possibly through a referendum or parliamentary process, in line with Ukraine's constitution.

The future of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant remains a sticking point, with no clear agreement announced.

US and Ukrainian teams could meet again as early as next week to finalise remaining points.

## Hadi's party gives 24-day ultimatum to Yunus regime

Sharif Osman Bin Hadi's party, Inqilab Moncho, has given a "24-day ultimatum" to the Muhammed Yunus-led interim government to complete the trial in the murder of 32-year-old youth leaders and bring the guilty to justice.

With the situation still tense in Dhaka, Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of Inqilab Moncho, on Facebook said, "The trial of the entire killing squad, including the killer, the mastermind, the accomplices, those who aided the escape, and those who provided shelter, must be completed within 24 days."

The party also asked the Yunus regime to suspend the work permits of Indians



## BNP leader Tarique Rahman files his nomination for the upcoming election in Segunbagicha on Monday.

residing in Bangladesh, 'The Daily Star' said. "To protect the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh, the work permits of Indians must be suspended," Jaber said.

The party also asked the government to file a case

## 16 older residents perish in blaze in retirement home

MANADO

A fire at an Indonesian retirement home killed 16 older people on Sunday evening, police said. The fire in the single-storey house in Manado, Indonesia's North Sulawesi Province, started while the residents were asleep, police said.

"The team on the ground has confirmed that the death toll currently is 16," North Sulawesi police spokesperson Alamsyah Hasibuan said. "Fifteen of them were burned to death, while one victim's body remains intact."

There were 15 survivors who were treated at two hospitals in Manado, Hasibuan said.

## Iran cent bank guv quits after protests over currency drop

Tehran: The head of Iran's Central Bank resigned on Monday as protests erupted in Tehran and other cities after the country's currency plummeted to a new record low against the US dollar.

The resignation of Mohammad Reza Farzin was reported by state TV, as hundreds of traders and shopkeepers rallied in Saadi Street in downtown Tehran as well as in the Shush neighbourhood near Tehran's main Grand Bazaar.

Merchants at the market played a crucial role in the 1979 Islamic Revolution that ousted the monarchy and brought Islamists to power.

The official IRNA news agency confirmed protests. Witnesses reported similar rallies in Isfahan in central Iran, Shiraz in the south and Mashhad in the northeast. In Tehran, police fired tear gas to quell the crowd. Witnesses told AP traders shut shops and asked others to do so. The semiofficial ILNA news agency said businesses stopped trading even though some kept shops open. Iran's rial on Sunday fell to 1.42 million to the dollar. On Monday, it traded at 1.38 million rials.

## China begins drills in Taiwan Strait



BEIJING

The Chinese military on Monday started new major drills in the "middle areas" of the Taiwan Strait amid rising diplomatic tensions with Japan over Taiwan that Beijing claims as its territory.

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command is employing fighters, bombers and unmanned aerial vehicles in coordination with long-range rocket fires to conduct drills in the waters and airspace in the middle areas of the Taiwan Strait on Monday," state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Focusing on striking mobile ground targets, the drills intend to test the troops' capabilities of precision strikes on key targets, it said. China

claims the self-governing Taiwan as part of its mainland and vows to integrate it.

Taiwan condemned China's joint military drills around the island, disregarding international norms and using military intimidation to threaten neighbouring countries.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said on X rapid response exercises were underway, with forces on high alert to defend the island.

In a separate statement, it said it had deployed appropriate forces in response, conducting combat readiness drills. "The Chinese Communist Party's targeted military exercises further confirm its nature as an aggressor and the biggest destroyer of peace," it said.

Further, Taiwan's aviation authority said over 100,000 air travellers will be hit.

## Mexico train derails, kills 13, hurts dozens



MEXICO CITY

Officials said a train accident in Mexico killed at least 13 people and injured dozens, halting traffic along a rail line connecting the Pacific Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico.

The Interoceanic Train linking the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz went off the rails on Sunday as it passed a

curve near the town of Nizanda. "The Mexican Navy has informed me that, tragically, 13 people died in the Interoceanic Train accident," Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said in a post on X, adding, 98 people sustained injuries, five of them were critical.

Officials said 241 passengers and nine crew members were on the train at the times.

## T'gana women die in US crash

WASHINGTON

Two women from Telangana were killed in a road accident in US's California. Pulakhandam Meghana Rani, 25, was from Garla in Mahabubabad and Kadiyala Bhavana, 24, from Mulkanur.

Reports said the accident took place on Sunday at 4pm. Meghana and Bhavana were travelling with friends for sightseeing to Alabama Hills. Eight friends were touring in separate cars. While taking a curve, Meghana and Bhavana's car lost control, went off the road, and plunged into a valley. Bhavana and Meghana moved to the US 3 years ago for higher studies. They completed Master's recently, and were looking for a job.

## China, Cambodia and Thailand envoys meet Beijing seeks stronger role in feud

HONG KONG

Foreign ministers from Cambodia and Thailand convened with their Chinese counterpart on Monday as the Beijing government, building on its expanding presence in global diplomacy, sought to play a stronger mediating role in the violent border dispute between the two Southeast Asian countries. "We haven't resolved everything, but we are making progress in the right direction, and we have to keep up the momentum," Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said after the meeting in Yunnan. He said the chief priorities are to ensure a sustained ceasefire and continue rebuilding trust.

The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and, in particular, its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows into an economic and political force globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third



party in diplomatic matters.

China's Wang Yi called for joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability and development, language typical for China in such situations. "Allowing the flames of war to be reignited is absolutely not what the people of the two nations want and not what China, as your friend, wants to see. So, we should resolutely look ahead and move forward," Wang said.

Cambodian minister Prak Sokhonn said he believed the ceasefire would last and create an environment for both nations to resume previously agreed-upon ways to settle differences. Sihasak also expressed hopes for peace with neighbouring countries.

## My target was just to take gun: Hero

Ahmed al-Ahmed, who disarmed one of the Bondi gunmen before being shot five times, says he knows his bravery saved many lives but is sad for those who were killed in the attack.

In an interview with CBS News, Ahmed said he "didn't worry about anything" except for the lives he could save as he disarmed Sajid Akram on December 14. The act was



## BONDI SHOOTING

caught on camera and shared around the world.

"My target was just to take the gun from him, and to stop him from killing a human

being's life and not killing innocent people," he said. "I know I saved lots, but I feel sorry for the lost."

Akram was shot dead by police during the attack on a Hanukah event where 15 people were killed. His son, Naveed Akram, was wounded by police, and he was later charged with 59 offences.

Footage from the attack shows Ahmed leaping from

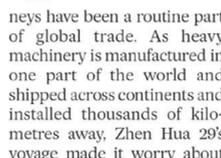
behind a parked car to grapple with Sajid Akram, whose gun was knocked to the ground in the struggle. Ahmed picked it up and pointed it at the gunman, who retreated to his son on a nearby footbridge. "I jumped in his back, hit him. I hold him with my right hand and start saying a word, you know, like to warn him, 'drop your gun, stop doing what you're doing.'"

## Ship's long detour to deliver cranes

An 800-foot cargo vessel travelled 19,700 nautical miles to deliver just 5 giant ship-to-shore cranes. The ship, Zhen Hua 29, departed Shanghai on June 20, heading west through the South China Sea before crossing the Indian Ocean.

After over three months at sea and crossing three oceans, the vessel docked at the Port of Kingston in Jamaica in October. The cranes it carried, built in China, were destined for ports in Jamaica and the US Gulf Coast.

For decades, such long jour-



## 3 MONTHS, 37K KM

neys have been a routine part of global trade. As heavy machinery is manufactured in one part of the world and shipped across continents and installed thousands of kilometres away, Zhen Hua 29's voyage made it worry about the ultra-long shipping routes, 'The Washington Post' said.

Both Republican and Democratic governments in the US have raised concerns about relying on cranes made in China, saying it could be risky to depend on them, hinting they may be a threat to national security. US officials say around 80% of the ship-to-



## 3 MONTHS, 37K KM

shore cranes at American ports are made by China.

The White House is now seeking US ports to source cranes from countries other than China and revive domestic crane manufacturing. However, that change is not easy. For almost 20 years,

Chinese cranes have been the cheapest and easiest option.

In fact, the fastest way from Shanghai to Mississippi would normally take about a month, sailing across the Pacific Ocean and through the Panama Canal. But the cargo it was carrying made it impossible to pass through the canal.

But the cranes' long arms, known as booms, stick out from the ship's sides, and canal authorities do not allow overhanging cargo that could damage locks and other infrastructure. As a result, the ship had to take the long route.

## Nepal crackdown against cross-border bride matchmaking by Chinese brokers

Beijing: Nepalese authorities have intensified a crackdown against illegal cross-border matchmaking following revelations that brokers and online intermediaries marketed Nepali women as potential brides for Chinese nationals, a Chinese media report said.

The crackdown against "bride buying" intensified after Nepal's immigration offi-

cials last month found young Nepali women living in rented houses with Chinese nationals in Kathmandu. The Chinese men admitted to filming the women and sending the clips to friends in China and sharing them on social media, though they did not explicitly state the purpose of the recordings, the Hong Kong-based 'South China Morning Post' reported.

Authorities deported four Chinese nationals for visa violations, saying there was insufficient evidence to file criminal charges over allegations the women were being coerced into marriages in China.

Chinese Embassy issued a New Year's travel advisory cautioning its citizens against what it described as "bride buying", urging them not to trust mat-

chmaking agencies and brokers blindly, and stressing deceptive or profit-driven cross-border matchmaking is illegal under Chinese law. "Fully understand the legal, cultural, property division and child custody risks involved in cross-border marriages. Don't easily believe in cross-border matchmaking. Stay away from illegal marriage brokers," the notice said.

## Pak YouTuber attacked inside court premises in Karachi

Karachi: A famous Pakistani YouTuber was attacked on Monday inside a court in Karachi. Rajab Butt appeared at the Karachi Sessions Court to get bail in a case filed against him for allegedly hurting religious sentiments.

According to his lawyer, Butt was physically manhandled in the court building premises, and his shirt was also torn off. Butt was

attacked by lawyers who kept on beating him despite pleas to stop their attack. Butt has 8 million subscribers. In recent days, he has been facing legal proceedings in many cases.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's former PM Imran Khan and wife Bushra Bibi on Monday filed separate pleas in a high court, challenging their 17-year jail term in Toshakhana-2 case.

## US vows \$2b for UN humanitarian aid

Geneva: The US on Monday announced a \$2 billion pledge for UN humanitarian aid as President Trump's gov continues to slash US foreign aid and warns UN agencies to "adapt, shrink or die" in a time of new financial realities.

## Briefs

**DHAKA**  
‘Players, BCB decided to skip T20WC’



Bangladesh's sports advisor **Asif Nazrul**, who had insisted that the country's refusal to play its T20 World Cup matches in India was driven by his government's security concerns, now says that the decision was taken by the Cricket Board and the players to "protect national dignity". Bangladesh were replaced by Scotland after the ICC declined the country's request of shifting its share of games to Sri Lanka. However, the world body has decided against penalty.

**COLOMBO**  
**Farhan says Ind-Pak a normal match**



Pakistan batter **Sahibzada Farhan** has played down the hype surrounding Sunday's T20 World Cup clash against bitter foes India, calling it a "normal match" although the mindset of his team will be "different" from previous games. Pakistan sit atop Group A with back-to-back wins over the Netherlands and the USA. Even though the victory against the Dutch team was a narrow one, Pakistan looked quite assured in their 32-run triumph over the Americans.

**NEW DELHI**  
**Surya and I can be anchors: Tilak Varma**



Known for his attacking batting, the returning **Tilak Varma** on Wednesday said he can drop anchor if needed along with India skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Tilak Varma has successfully returned to action for India ahead of the mega event after recovering from injury. India lost six wickets quickly in their tournament opener against the USA on February 7 before rallying to emerge comfortable winners. "Head coach (Gautam Gambhir) has asked us to play cautiously if wickets fall in a cluster like it did against USA. Surya bhai and I can

## Gutsy Nepal face debutants Italy in clash of minnows

Nepal, who pushed England to the brink, favourites against Italy

MUMBAI

Nepal will be the favourites against Italy when the two sides meet in a Group C encounter of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. Both have lost their opening games and would like to open their account in the tournament.

Nepal came to the event confident after a series win over West Indies at home, and they came close to defeating England in the Group C opening encounter, but couldn't finish it off. They needed ten runs in the last over but ended up losing by four runs.

The Rohit Kumar Paudel-led side has World Cup experience and lost to South Africa by just one run in the 2024 T20 World Cup. With such performances, the Nepal Cricket team has built a good fan base, so when they take on newcomers, Italy, in their second match at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday, expectations will be to come out triumphant this time.

"The win (over the West Indies) gave a lot of confidence to the boys. We came close against England, one of the tournament favourites, but couldn't win. We need to learn to stand up in pressure situations," skipper Paudel said in the pre-match press conference.

"Italy is a good side, and we are looking forward to it. You can't take any team lightly in this tournament," he added.

Paudel scored 39 in the first game against England, while opener Kushal Bhurtel gave them a good start. Dipendree Singh Airee top scored with 41, and Lokesh Bam (39 not



The win (over the West Indies) gave a lot of confidence to the boys. We came close against England, one of the tournament favourites, but couldn't win.

**Rohit Paudel**  
Nepal captain

out) took the near but couldn't hit a boundary in the last over. They will want someone to stay long and score more than half century.

KC Karan will lead the seam attack, while experienced Sandeep Lamichhane will be key among the slow bowling options.

Paudel rued the fact that they haven't got much exposure after the 2024 T20 World Cup despite a thrilling clash against the Proteas. "We did not get enough exposure after the 2024 World Cup. Testing our skills against Test nations would have made us better. If Australia, England, and India come, our cricket will grow," he added.

**BIG FIGHT** | WI spin trio later wrecked England to defend 196, win by 30 runs

## Rutherford powers Windies

MUMBAI

West Indies spin trio picked six wickets between them to rattle England and set up a 30-run win in the Group C match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Wankhede Stadium here on Wednesday.

Gudakesh Motie (3 for 33), Roston Chase (2 for 29), and Akeal Hosein (1/32) spun a web over England after a brisk start by Phil Salt and Jacob Bethell. Sam Curran (43 not out) tried his bit, but the required rate was beyond his reach. England were all out for 166 in 19 overs.

Big-hitting Sherfane Rutherford enabled West Indies to put a challenging score of 196/6 on the board with a blazing half-century. Jason Holder also hit 33 in 17 balls as the duo shared a 61-run stand for the sixth wicket in 32 balls. Experienced England leg-spinner Adil Rashid continued to enjoy bowling against the West Indies by ending with impressive figures of 2/16 in his four overs. West Indies hit 13 sixes, and Adil conceded no boundaries.

Rutherford scored 76 in 42 balls, studded with two boundaries and seven sixes. The left-hander also shared a 51-run stand with Rovman Powell (14) for the fifth wicket to give West Indies acceleration from the eleventh over after tight five overs in the middle, four of that by Rashid and Jamie Overton (2/33). Rashid broke the partnership in the 15th over to bring England back in the game. But the leggie dropped Rutherford on his own bowling after he skied one to short mid on. Archer and Overton went for plenty in their last overs as Rutherford finished with a flourish.

Salt took Jason Holder apart for 24 runs in the second over of the England chase.



West Indies' Sherfane Rutherford plays a shot during the match against England at the Wankhede Stadium. PTI

### Scoreboard

**WEST INDIES:** B King c Salt b Curran 1, S Hope c Banton b Archer 0, S Hetmyer c Curran b Overton 23, R Chase lbw Rashid 34, S Rutherford (not out) 76, R Powell c Overton b Rashid 14, J Holder c Banton b Overton 33, R Shepherd (not out) 1. **Extras:** (LB-4 W-10) 14. **Total:** (For 6 wks, 20 overs) 196.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-8, 3-55, 4-77, 5-128, 6-189. **Bowling:** J Archer 4-0-48-1, S Curran 3-0-36-1, W Jacks 2-0-32-0, J Overton 4-0-33-2, A Rashid 4-0-16-2, Dawson 3-0-27-0. **ENGLAND:** Salt c Rutherford b Shepherd 30, Buttler c Powell b Chase 21, Bethell b Motie 33, Banton c King b Motie 2, Brook c & b Motie 17, S Curran (not out) 43, Jacks lbw

Chase 2, Overton c Powell b Hosein 5, Archer (run out) 6, L Dawson (run out) 1, Rashid (not out) 0. **Extras** (LB-1, W-5) 6. **Total** (For nine wks, 18.5 overs) 166. **Fall of wickets:** 1-38, 2-74, 3-85, 4-90, 5-131, 6-134, 7-141, 8-151, 9-161. **Bowling:** Hosein 4-0-32-1, Holder 2-0-34-0, Shepherd 1-0-7-1, Joseph 3.5-0-30-0, Chase 4-0-29-2, Motie 4-0-33-3

Romario Shepherd dismissed Salt for 30 runs in 14 balls, but there was no relief for West Indies as Bethell (33 in 23 balls) maintained the tempo. Jos Buttler was quiet at the other end as England scored 67 for 1 in the powerplay overs.

Buttler (21) holed out to Powell as off-spinner Chase tasted first success, and left-arm spinner Motie dismissed Tom Banton and Bethell in his successive overs, putting a

check on England's scoring, who were reduced to 93/4 at the halfway mark. The boundaries dried up, and just when England were starting to get into the groove again, Motie induced a leading edge of Brook (17) and caught him on his own bowling. Will Jacks was trapped in front by Chase, and Hosein sent back Jamie Overton to leave England 55 runs to win of last four overs.

Both sides made one

change from their previous games. Roston Chase came in for Matthew Forde for the West Indies. Overton came in for Luke Wood.

West Indies had a slow start, but Shimron Hetmyer (23 in 12 balls) gave initial impetus after England won the toss and elected to field.

West Indies had a disastrous start to their Innings as skipper Shai Hope cut straight to Tom Banton off Jofra Archer in the first over to get

out for a duck. His opening partner, Brendon King, holed out to Phil Salt at deep point as Sam Curran struck on his first ball to reduce West Indies to 8/2 in seven balls.

The first boundary from the bat came from Hetmyer in the third over. Hetmyer hit Curran for a flat six and a boundary to give momentum to the Innings. Will Jacks was greeted with three boundaries by Roston Chase, and Hetmyer swept over fine leg.

## South Africa pip Afghanistan after two Super Overs

AHMEDABAD

In a T20 World Cup game for the ages, South Africa somehow managed to get past a plucky Afghanistan after two wildly oscillating Super Overs here on Wednesday.

Ryan Rickelton (61 off 28) and Quinton de Kock (59 off 41) put together a brilliant century stand with quickfire fifties to power South Africa to 187 for six.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (84 off 42) then singlehandedly kept Afghanistan in the run chase before some lusty hitting from the lower-order



South Africa cricketers celebrate the win over Afghanistan. AP

helped them tie the game in regulation time.

What followed was an incredible sequence of two Super Overs with fortunes

swinging either way after every ball. In the first Super Over, Azmatullah Omarzai struck Lungi Ngidi for two fours and a six.

### Scoreboard

**SOUTH AFRICA:** A Markram c Nabi b F Farooqi 5, Q de Kock c I Zadran b R Khan 59, R Rickelton lbw R Khan 61, D Brevis c Nabi b A Omarzai 23, D Miller (not out) 20, T Stubbs c Mujeeb b A Omarzai 1, M Jansen (not out) 16. **Extras** (B-1, W-1) 2. **Total:** (For 6 wks, 20 overs) 187. **Fall of wickets:** 1-12, 2-126, 3-127, 4-155, 5-159,

187-6. **Bowling:** F Farooqi 4-0-32-1, M Rahman 3-0-30-0, A Omarzai 4-0-41-3, M Nabi 2-0-20-0, R Khan 4-0-28-2, N Ahmad 3-0-35-0. **AFGHANISTAN:** R Gurbaz c G Linde b K Maharaj 84, I Zadran b L Ngidi 12, G Naib c and b L Ngidi 0, S Atal c M Jansen b K Rabada 0, D Rasooli (run out) 15, A Omarzai c T Stubbs b L Ngidi 22, M Nabi c A Markram b G

Linde 5, R Khan c D Miller b M Jansen 20, M Rahman (run out) 0, N Ahmad (not out) 15, F Farooqi (run out) 0. **Extras:** (LB-1, W-11, NB-2) 14. **Total** (all out, 19.4 overs) 187. **Fall of wickets:** 1-51, 2-51, 3-52, 4-121, 5-121, 6-139, 7-164, 8-169, 9-175. **Bowling:** L Ngidi 4-0-26-3, M Jansen 4-0-42-1, K Rabada 3-4-0-38-1, Linde 3-0-39-1, Maharaj 4-0-27-1, A Markram 1-0-14-0.

## ‘Nothing to lose, pressure is on India’

NEW DELHI

Namibia all-rounder Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton believes that pressure will be on defending champions India on their home turf and that his team has nothing to lose in their T20 World Cup match here on Thursday.

Minnos Namibia are coming into the match after losing their opening game against the Netherlands here on Tuesday, while India had beaten the USA in Mumbai in their campaign opener.

"Playing India in India is massive, pressure is on India to be honest, home crowd advantage, home ground advantage as well. We are going in with nothing to lose to be honest.

We are going there to showcase our talents and abilities, hopefully it comes up on that day," Loftie-Eaton told PTI Videos on Wednesday.

"We just gotta back our skills given our day and we have done our homework, lot of tactical talks going around. We just have to back our skills on the given day. T20 is a funny game anything can happen."

## Ellis blows away Ireland in two overs as Australia win

Adam Zampa polished off the middle and lower-order with Ireland innings ending at 115 for 9

COLOMBO

Pacer Nathan Ellis set the tone with a three-wicket burst in his opening spell as an under-strength Australia demolished Ireland by 67 runs in their opening group B fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

If Ellis (4/12 in 3.5 overs) blew away the top-order, leg-spinner Adam Zampa (4/23 in 4 overs) polished off the middle and lower-order with Ireland innings ending at 115 for 9 in 16.5 overs in pursuit of



Australia's Nathan Ellis celebrates the wicket of Ireland's Ross Adair. PTI

a challenging score of 183. Veteran Paul Stirling was retired hurt and didn't come out to bat.

With Mitchell Marsh all but out of T20 World Cup with a groin injury and none among Mitchell Starc (retired), Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood (injuries) in the current squad, Ellis manfully shouldered the responsibility as the lead pacer. While Ross Adair got one that was fast and low and rocketed into the stumps, Ben Calitz found pace and bounce generated by Ellis too hot to handle.

### Scoreboard

**AUSTRALIA:** T Head (run out) 6, J Inglis c Stirling b Dockrell 37, C Green c Dockrell b Adair 21, M Renshaw b Humphreys 37, G Maxwell c Tucker b Tector 9, M Stoinis c Calitz b Adair 45, C Connolly (not out) 11, X Bartlett (not out) 11. **Extras** (LB-1, W-4) 5. **Total** (For 6 wks, 20 overs) 182. **Fall of wickets:** 1-7, 2-56, 3-69,

4-88, 5-149, 6-159. **Bowling:** M Humphreys 4-0-33-1, M Adair 4-0-44-2, B McCarthy 3-0-37-0, G Delany 2-0-12-0, G Dockrell 4-0-31-1, H Tector 3-0-24-1. **IRELAND:** P Stirling (retired hurt) 1, R Adair b Ellis 12, H Tector c Green b Kuhnemann 0, L Tucker c Connolly b Zampa 24, C Campher c Green b Ellis 4, B Calitz b Ellis 2, G Delany c Inglis b Zampa

11, G Dockrell st Inglis b Zampa 41, M Adair c Connolly b Zampa 12, B McCarthy c Green b Ellis 2, M Humphreys (not out) 3. **Extras:** (LB-3) 3. **Total:** (For 9 wks, 16.5 overs) 115. **Fall of wickets:** 1-13, 2-13, 3-17, 4-27, 5-43, 6-89, 7-110, 8-111, 9-115. **Bowling:** X Bartlett 2-0-22-0, M Kuhnemann 4-0-29-1, N Ellis 3.5-1-12-4, A Zampa 4-0-23-4, C Connolly 3-0-26-0.

## Preview

# Team India look to consolidate against Namibia

NEW DELHI

**Abhishek Sharma's** stomach infection poses a bigger threat to India than their World Cup opponents Namibia.

After a stuttering batting performance on a tacky Wankhede track in the opener against the USA, the Indian batting line-up would like to go all guns blazing on a Feroz Shah Kotla track that could be called a better for quality teams.

### Teams:

**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Kuldeep

Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Mohd Siraj, Washington Sundar, Varun Chakravarthy, Rinku Singh. **Namibia:** Gerhard Erasmus (captain), Jan Balt, Zane Green (wk),

Malan Kruger, Dylan Leicher, Lauren Steenkamp, Jan Frylinck, Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton, William Myburgh, JJ Smit, Jack Brassel, Max Heingo, Bernard Scholtz, Ben Shikongo, Ruben Truempelmann.

looked up to scratch against fellow Associate nation the Netherlands at this very ground.

To be fair to India, the match against Namibia is

more of an extended warm up tie where they would like to bat first and let the line-up get a good hit during the match.

The gulf in quality is such that Namibia's bowling line-up could be sent on a leather-hunt every day of the week by any of the middle level Indian state teams plying their trade in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

For India, Abhishek's hospitalisation with a stomach infection and viral fever is concerning.

