

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ Wednesday, 11 February, 2026 UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Briefs

CHANDIGARH Pak-backed terror plot foiled

Punjab police on Tuesday claimed to have foiled a Pakistan's ISI-backed terror plot with the arrest of one accused person and recovered an RDX-based Improvised Explosive Device (IED) from his possession in Amritsar area. Director General of Police (DGP), Punjab, Gaurav Yadav said that the accused has been identified as Rahul Kumar alias Gaju, a resident of Chamrang Road in Amritsar. He works as an assistant in a salon in Amritsar. DGP Yadav said that preliminary investigation indicated that the accused was in contact with a foreign-based handler acting under the instructions of Pakistan-based handlers.

KOLKATA Kabir's family faces ₹10 cr asset seizure

Suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Humayun Kabir's family faces Rs 10 crore property seizure two days ahead of 'Babri Masjid' construction. Following the court's order in connection with a drug trafficking case, the state police have attached the property worth Rs. 10 crores linked to Shariful Islam, father-in-law of Kabir's daughter. According to a senior police officer, they are investigating the sale of drugs across the porous international border and properties acquired using the proceeds of such activities and also that such properties will be put up for auction.

PATNA Row over Nitish's Rabri 'girl' barb

Bihar Legislative Council witnessed pandemonium on the second consecutive day on Tuesday as a senior JD (U) member and minister Ashok Choudhary and an RJDM MLC Sunil Singh over chief minister Nitish Kumar addressing former chief minister and leader of the opposition in the upper house as a girl. Amid uproar over CM's remark against Rabri Devi in the house during debate on the growing incidents of rape in the state and the use of objectionable language against a Dalit minister (Choudhary), chairman Awadhesh Narayan Singh marshalled out opposition members from the House for the day. The upper house turned into a turf war as soon as proceedings for the day began.

PATNA Pappu Yadav gets bail but no release yet

Independent MP from Purnia, Rajesh Ranjan aka Pappu Yadav, was granted bail by the MP-MLA court on Tuesday in a 31-year-old fraud and forgery case but he was not immediately released from jail. Yadav's advocate Shivnandan Bharti said that his client was granted bail in the alleged fraud case, but hearings for bail in two separate cases linked to Buddha Colony and Kotwali police station would be heard on Wednesday. He was produced before the court from Beur Model Central Jail under tight security for the bail hearing. He was seen sitting in the court on a wheelchair. His lawyer was about to file for bail on Monday, but the court received a bomb threat and all legal work came to a halt.

LOGJAM | Oppn leaders strategise on Rahul Gandhi's speaking rights & demand debate on India-US trade deal

INDIA bloc decides to continue with protests

NEW DELHI

Floor leaders of several of the INDIA bloc of Opposition parties met in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge to discuss the ongoing standoff with the Treasury benches over several issues during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament.

From the Congress, the meeting was also attended by LOP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, party general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh and Deputy Leader of the party in Rajya Sabha Pramod Tiwari.

The other prominent leaders who attended the meeting included Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant, Samajwadi Party MP Ramgopal Yadav, TR Baalu of DMK and John Brittas of CPI(M).

In the meeting, the INDIA bloc leaders discussed the



Congress and other opposition MPs suspended last week for "unruly behaviour", stage a protest at Parliament premises, in New Delhi on Tuesday -PTI

ongoing logjam in Parliament and decided to continue with their protests against the denial of opportunity to Gandhi to speak in the Lower House.

Subsequently, when the Lok Sabha convened, the Opposition members again resorted to slogan shouting and disrupted the proceedings leading to the Chair adjourning the proceedings.

Earlier in the day, Congress Lok Sabha MP Manish Tewari moved an Adjournment Motion notice to demand a discussion on the framework of the India-United States Interim Trade Agreement. In the notice, he spoke about the need to discuss issues such as India's purchase of Russian oil and concession on tariffs on US agricultural goods.

Book row escalates

New Delhi: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday asserted that former Army chief General MM Naravane had himself confirmed the existence of his book, titled 'Four Stars of Destiny', when he had tweeted its link. Gandhi, who had last week tried to read in the House some extracts from the memoir and an article related to it, but was prevented from doing so by the Speaker under Rule 349 after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had claimed that it was an "unpublished" memoir, had on Monday also criticised the minister for making false claims around the book not having been published.

NEW DELHI

Describing the Budget as an "underwhelming" and a "squandered opportunity", Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday likened it to rearranging air bags on a crashing car while assuring the passengers that the chassis is sturdy and they will feel better afterwards.

Initiating the debate in Lok Sabha on the Union Budget, Tharoor quoted Mirza Ghalib's famous Urdu couplet -- 'Dil ko khush rakhne ko yeh khayaal achcha hai' -- to attack the government and said the real weakness of the budget lies in implementation as rhetoric is not matched by reality.

"This is headline management -- where promises are loud like that horn, budgets are grand, but delivery is conspicuously absent. The Budget this year has landed with a thud, not because of what it contains, but because of what it omits. Behind claims of fiscal



'Ugly scenes' averted: Rijiju

New Delhi: Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday said "very ugly scenes" could have taken place had the BJP MPs been allowed to confront the Congress members. Commenting on the video that showed opposition women MPs coming to the treasury benches on February 4, Rijiju asked if anyone could justify the behaviour of the opposition members. He said the direction from the BJP leadership was very clear that members belonging to the ruling alliance must maintain the dignity of the House and no MP of the ruling party should get into physical confrontation with the "rude opposition MPs".

BJP women MPs repose faith in Om Birla

NEW DELHI: Countering the contents of the letter written by the Congress women MPs to Speaker Om Birla, women lawmakers from the Bharatiya Janata Party wrote to him on Tuesday demanding action against those opposition MPs who had surrounded the chair of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi in the House on February 4. The letter signed by over a dozen BJP MPs recalled the "heinous acts" of that day. Noting how the Opposition MPs, who had been protesting in the House, had acted in an "unfortunate and regrettable" manner. While the Congress women MPs

had in their letter accused the Speaker of making "false, baseless, and defamatory allegations" against them regarding their posing a threat to the PM, the BJP lawmakers' letter lauded the role of the Speaker in upholding and protecting the dignity, decorum, and sanctity of the Lok Sabha.

Birla steps aside as Speaker

New Delhi: Speaker Om Birla will not preside over Lok Sabha proceedings till the issue pertaining to his removal from the office is settled citing moral grounds, sources said on Tuesday. Separately, Article 96 of the Constitution bars a speaker or a deputy speaker to preside the House sitting while a resolution for his removal from office is under consideration. He has, meanwhile, directed Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh to examine the notice served by the opposition for moving a resolution to remove him from office, the sources said.

Rahul skips signing notice

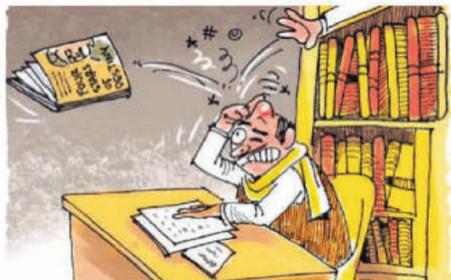
New Delhi: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, did not sign the notice of no-confidence motion against Speaker Om Birla, as it is not proper for the LoP to sign a petition for the removal of the Speaker in a parliamentary democracy, sources said on Tuesday. According to the no-confidence motion notice shared by Congress MP Manickam Tagore on X, Opposition MPs alleged "blatantly partisan" conduct and that leaders of Opposition parties were not allowed to speak. The notice cited four incidents in which the Speaker allegedly took partisan stand.

Both Houses take up discussion on budget

NEW DELHI

Both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday took up the discussion on the Union Budget 2026-27 during which some Treasury members termed it "an important step in the journey towards creating a developed India" while some Opposition described it as "directionless" and "loud in slogans, soft in solutions."

The taking of the discussion in the Lok Sabha also signaled the end to a deadlock between the two sides which had led to disruptions all through last week. It was at 2 p.m. after two adjournments that the Lok Sabha took up the discussion. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor while initiating the discussion



described the Budget criticised the Centre for reducing spending and for not being able to increase the revenues. Insisting that the Budget has put additional burden on individual tax payers, he said it was akin to a "squandered opportunity like rearranging

the airbags in a crashing car while assuring passengers that the chassis is intact". Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee criticised the Budget as promoting a model of "subscription based federalism". He accused the Centre of

favouritism saying the Finance Minister had not referred to some Opposition-ruled states such as West Bengal even once in the Budget speech while naming others like Uttar Pradesh.

Banerjee insisted that the Constitution promises equality among states but this Government practises preference in which "allies are funded while opponents are starved". Therefore, he charged that "this is not a model of cooperative federalism; this is a model of subscription-based federalism." He also remarked that while the Centre talks of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" from every podium, he comes from "an India where Bengal is not given her dues to the tune of Rs 1,90,000 crore".

IndiGo ready for new pilot norms as exemption ends

MUMBAI

IndiGo concluded its 68-day temporary reprieve from stricter Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms on Tuesday. As the exemption granted by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) expires, the airline has assured regulators and the public that it now maintains an "optimum pool" of pilots to sustain smooth operations starting Wednesday.

The transition marks a critical turning point for the airline, which suffered a massive operational meltdown in December 2025, leading to around 5,689 flight cancellations and a record penalty of Rs22.2 crore. The DGCA in December had provided an exemption from a few provisions of the new FDTL rules to the airline till February 10. The revised rules increased the weekly rest hours for pilots and reduced night duty hours and permissible maximum night landings.

In January, IndiGo had claimed that it has adequate pilot availability against the projected operational requirement for stable operations after February 10. According to the figures, the airline claimed that it has 2,400 Airbus captains against the requirement of 2,280 and 2,240 first officers against the requirement of 2,050 personnel for its daily operations.



On Tuesday, IndiGo said that it has integrated the new set of rules in their crew rosters and planning and is maintaining enough pilots to run the operations smoothly. "We have already integrated the new set of rules in our crew rosters and planning. As assured to the regulatory authorities earlier, we are maintaining an optimum pool of employees, including pilots, to ensure stable operations across our network," said the airline's spokesperson. According to data submitted to the DGCA, the airline has moved from a "lean" staffing model to a more resilient structure by having surplus crew over minimum operational requirements.

5 of family found dead, mass suicide suspected

LUCKNOW

Five members of a family were found dead after allegedly consuming poisonous substance in Khapparpur village under Mahavan tehsil of Mathura district on Monday, police said.

The deceased were identified as 35-year-old farmer Manish, his wife Seema, their two daughters Hani and Priyanshi, and their two-year-old son Pankaj.

Police said the family was living in a separate house in the village. Manish was married to Seema about eight years ago and she was a resident of Madnai Sadabad. Manish had two brothers who live in separate houses in the same village.

On receiving information, local police rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. All the bodies were taken into custody and sent for post-mortem examination. A suicide note was recovered from the house. Police also found a message written on a wall inside the house which read that the family was ending their lives of their own will.

Senior police officers reached the village and reviewed the situation. Forensic teams collected samples from the house as part of the investigation.

Bodoland Accord Day: Leaders hail 24 years of peace journey

KOKRAJHAR

As the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Accord completed 24 years on Tuesday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary jointly underscored the themes of unity, peace and development at a large public gathering in Kokrajhar.

Addressing thousands of people from across communities at the Green Field near the BTC Secretariat, Sarma said Bodoland today stands as a powerful example of how dialogue and cooperation can replace conflict. "More than two decades after the signing of the BTC Accord, Bodoland has emerged as a symbol of peace and mutual understanding," he said, extending greetings to the people of the region and paying tribute to Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and Bodofa Upendranath Brahma, the chief architect of the Bodoland movement.

Recalling the signing of the tripartite accord on February 10, 2003, under then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Union Home Minister L K Advani, the Chief Minister said the creation of BTC gave Bodoland an institutional framework for self-governance and development. He noted

that under the leadership of Hagrama Mohilary, the region witnessed steady progress, reflected in the establishment of Bodoland University, the Central Institute of Technology, Kokrajhar Medical College and other key infrastructure projects.

Referring to recent tension between Bodo and Adivasi communities, Sarma praised the people for choosing dialogue over confrontation. "Even when I was in Davos, I was assured that peace had been restored through understanding and discussion. This reflects the maturity and unity of the people of Bodoland," he said.

HC halts FIR against Sambhal former DSP Anuj Chaudhary

LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday stayed the order of the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court directing registration of an FIR against former Sambhal DSP Anuj Chaudhary and 22 other police personnel in connection with the violence reported during the survey of Sambhal Jama Masjid, granting them interim relief till the

petition against the CJM court order.

After hearing the matter, the High Court granted interim protection to Chaudhary and the other officers by staying the lower court's direction. The court said further proceedings would be taken up on the next date of hearing. With the stay in place, no FIR will be registered against the police personnel till the matter is heard

DGCA orders safety audits of 14 major charter operators

MUMBAI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has launched a special audit of all non-scheduled operators (NSOPs) in a decisive move to overhaul safety standards in the non-scheduled aviation sector. The regulator will audit 14 large operators in the first phase with other operators to be included in the second phase.

The move comes after the fatal crash of Learjet 45 in Baramati on January 28 which killed Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and four others. The aircraft, registered as VT-SSK, was operated by Delhi-based VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd.

The audit started from Monday and is expected to conclude by February 25. The regulator has asked all the teams to submit the audit report to DGCA headquarters within 10 days from the date of completion of the audits. A total of 14 large NSOPs have been included in the first phase. The list includes Air Charter Services, A R Airways, Arrow Aircrafts Sales & Arrows, Chipsan Aviation, Deccan Charters, Global Vectra Helicorp, and Indo Pacific Aviation.



scope in animal husbandry is expanding rapidly due to rising global demand for high quality, protein rich products and India's strong livestock base. Key export commodities

include frozen and deboned poultry products, dairy products, honey and processed leather.

Major export destinations include the United States, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and several countries in the Middle East, with significant scope for further expansion.

The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration between the government and private sector to boost exports from the state.

UP targets global exports via animal husbandry ventures

LUCKNOW

The export potential of Uttar Pradesh's animal husbandry sector and opportunities for public private partnerships were discussed at a stakeholders meeting organised by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairy Development in association with the Indo American Chamber of Commerce. Officials said the export

Disruption Before Governor Address a Violation of Democratic Norms: Dr. Rajeshwar Singh

Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly budget session began on Monday, with the state budget scheduled to be Presented on February 11. The session began with disruptions from the opposition. Even before the Governor address, Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA disrupted the Proceedings by raising Slogans in the House and Protesting against the Yogi Government. MLA Dr. Rajeshwar Singh from Sarojini Nagar Strongly reacted to this incident. He stated through his social media Platforms that the disruption by opposition Parties during the Governor address in the Assembly is reprehensible and contrary to democratic norms. The Governor address is a



constitutional Process and disrupting it without even listening to it undermines Parliamentary tradi-

tions and the Dignity of Democracy. Dr. Rajeshwar Singh further said that Protesting is the constitutional

right of the opposition, but this Protest should be through debate, arguments and facts, not through noise, dis-

order and disrupting the Proceedings of the House.

A Protest without listening cannot be called

constructive Politics in any sense, rather, it reflects a negative mindset. Dr. Singh said that the Legislative Assembly is the highest democratic institution, funded by the taxpayers' money. Disrupting its proceedings is a misuse of taxpayers' hard-earned money and an insult to Public trust. He urged the opposition to Play a Positive role, stating that a responsible and constructive opposition is essential for a healthy democracy. Such an opposition should listen first, then understand and only then challenge the government within constitutional limits.

The Politics of disruption does not strengthen democracy, rather, dialogue and meaningful debate are the true Strength of Democracy.

Chief Minister Reviews Preparations for Kumbh Mela 2027



Dehradun

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami held a review meeting on at the Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Auditorium in the Secretariat regarding the preparations for the Kumbh Mela 2027 in Haridwar. During the meeting, the Chief Minister instructed officials to complete all Kumbh-related preparations by October. He also directed that all construction work, keeping in mind the requirements of the Kumbh, should be completed within the stipulated time. Special attention should be paid to the quality of all construction work. No work or file related to the Kumbh should remain pending at the government level. Accountability will be fixed for any delay in work. The Chief Minister said that the state government priority is to ensure a grand, magnificent and successful organization of the Kumbh Mela. The Chief Minister instructed the Secretary, PWD, to appoint technical officers for the Kumbh Mela within the next 24 hours. He said that all bridges in the Kumbh area should be audited. He also directed that all ghats in the Kumbh area should be beautified and renovated as needed. He said that bathing facilities should be provided for devotees at Har Ki Pauri and all other Ghats. The Chief Minister said that a detailed action plan should be prepared for sanitation in the Mela area. Toilets and drinking water facilities should be available at all major locations. Adequate security forces and water Police should be deployed. Drones, CCTV cameras and other modern equipment should also be used for security purposes. He said that a separate detailed action plan should be prepared for law and order, parking and crowd management during the fair. The Chief Minister said that land allocation to various akhadas (religious sects) in the Kumbh Mela area should be done on time. The Mela Officer should personally monitor this. Coordination should be maintained with all akhadas, monasteries, saints, organizations, committees and local people. The preparations for the fair should be made in accordance with their suggestions. The Chief Minister said that a large-scale anti-encroachment drive should be conducted in the Kumbh area so that people do not face difficulties in commuting during the Kumbh. The Chief Minister said that permissions related to forest matters should be obtained quickly. The Chief Minister instructed officials to coordinate with other states as well. He said that all development work related to the fair should be visible not only on paper but also on the ground. The Chief Minister directed that preparations for accommodation and the tent city be completed on time and that arrangements be made for temporary hospitals, ambulances and mobile medical teams in the fair area. The Chief Minister said that the Kumbh Mela is a major religious event for our culture, faith and millions of devotees. It is the duty of all of us to make this event a success. Every devotee who comes to the state should leave with a positive experience. Present at the meeting were Cabinet Minister Subodh Uniyal, MLA Madan Kaushik, Adesh Chauhan, Renu Bisht, Anupama Rawat, Ravi Bahadur, Vice Chairman of the Uttarakhand Infrastructure Monitoring Council Vishwas Dabar, Chief Secretary Anand Vardhan, DGP Deepam Seth, Principal Secretaries L. Fanai and RK Sudhanshu, Secretaries Shailesh Bagoli and Nitesh Jha, Kumbh Mela Officer Sonika Singh and other Officials.

FIR to be filed against companies that fail to Provide water supply to 100 Percent of households within 30 days: Swatantra Dev

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Water Resources Minister Swatantra Dev Singh has given clear instructions to complete the work of Providing water supply to all households in the Bundelkhand and Vindhya regions within 30 days. Reviewing the progress of the Jal Jeevan Mission Projects in Vindhya and Bundelkhand at the Lucknow office of the Water Corporation (Rural) today, the Water Resources Minister issued an ultimatum to the companies working on the Project, stating that if the work is not completed within 30 days, FIR Will be filed against the Companies. The Water Resources Minister expressed displeasure over the slow Pace of work by BGCC and L&T in

Vindhya and Bundelkhand. He said that if the work is not completed within the stipulated time, an FIR will be registered against the company owners and they will be sent to jail. Speaking to the media after the review meeting, the Water Resources Minister said that all the Projects in the Bundelkhand and Vindhya regions were reviewed. Except for 4-5 schemes, 100 percent of the work has been completed in all the schemes. Water supply is being Provided to 100 Percent of households in most villages. He informed that in about three percent of the villages, regular water supply has been affected due to damaged pipelines or other reasons. Instructions have been given to rectify these issues immediately. During the



meeting, Additional Chief Secretary Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply Department Anurag Srivastava, MD of Water Corporation Rural Dr. Rajasekhar and Executive Director of State Water Supply and Sanitation Mission Prabhaskar were Present. In the review meeting, the Water Resources Minister

instructed the Executive Engineers and officials of all the districts to keep the Public representatives informed about every situation. He instructed them to Provide complete information about the work being done under the Scheme. The Water Resources Minister also directed that action be taken against officials who fail to do so. He also instructed the Executive Engineers and other officials of the district to visit the villages and resolve the problems faced by the villagers. In the review meeting, the Water Resources Minister instructed that in the villages where 100 percent of households are receiving water supply.

A water festival will be celebrated in all those villages

from March 8th to 22nd. Following the instructions of the Jal Shakti Minister, the State Water Supply and Sanitation Mission has started preparations to celebrate the water festival in approximately 22,000 villages across the State. During the review meeting, the Jal Shakti Minister launched the Jal Sarthi app for the quick resolution of water supply-related problems. This app will Provide information about every village connected to the Jal Jeevan Mission. Through the app, villagers will be able to get complete information about the water supply situation in their village, the expenditure on the project, and the status of ongoing projects. The names and contact numbers of officials will also be available.

Being tech-savvy is crucial for girl students in the modern era: Municipal Commissioner

Ghaziabad

Municipal Commissioner Vikramaditya Singh Malik inaugurated an AI and Digital Lab at the Municipal Corporation school located in Bhopura Kuti. The Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Saraswati Vidya Mandir Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation Kuti Bhopura school has 238 girl students and for their bright future, the Municipal Commissioner facilitated a CSR initiative through Adama India Limited. Under this initiative, a lab was established in the School, equipped with a large LED screen, 20 computers, internet access, Chairs and tables. The AI and Digital Lab for the students was inaugurated by the Municipal Commissioner by cutting the ribbon. Present on the occasion were Principal Seema Srivastava, Nawab Singh Pawar, Suraj Sharma, R.B. Malik, Amit from Adama India Limited, and others. The team from the collaborating NGO, Nirman Organization, was also present, as was Councillor Ompal Singh. The inauguration ceremony of the lab at the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation school in Kuti Bhopura was a grand event. The Municipal Commissioner lit a lamp and encouraged the girl students to move forward in the modern era, emphasizing that being tech-savvy is crucial for them. He



instructed the principal to start computer classes in the school and encouraged both the students and teachers to adopt and learn high-tech methods through the AI and Digital Lab. He motivated the students and teachers Present at the event and Praised the preparations for the program. He also commended the attractive selfie point created by the students using broken benches as part of the 'Waste to Best' initiative. Seeing the talent and artistry of the students, the Municipal Commissioner praised their efforts and encouraged them to excel further in the field of art using computers. The Municipal Commissioner stated that similar labs have been started for girl students in other schools under the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation. He emphasized that it is crucial for girls to be tech-savvy to keep pace with the modern era. He also

mentioned that girl students from the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation are making a name for themselves in the field of sports. The Municipal Commissioner urged the students to be aware of cleanliness and to encourage their parents to be equally conscious of hygiene. Those present at the event took selfies at the selfie point made from recycled waste. The Municipal Commissioner thanked all the students, the principal, teachers, Parents and local residents Present. He also specifically thanked the company that carried out the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiative. At the end of the program, the Municipal Commissioner toured the entire school and inspected the seating arrangements, drinking water facilities, toilets and the open-air gym for the Students.

I commend the Development Work undertaken by the PM across the country, including in Kashi: A.K. Sharma

Lucknow

Legislative budget session, members of the Samajwadi Party staged an inappropriate Protest inside and outside the House, including against the reconstruction work at Manikarnika Ghat in Kashi. In this regard, Urban Development and Energy Minister A.K Sharma strongly condemned the opposition actions, stating that the attempt by Samajwadi Party MLA to Prevent the Governor from speaking by shouting slogans in the House on the first day of the session was highly reprehensible and unfortunate. This act is not only contrary to the dignity of a constitutional office but, especially given that it was directed at a female Governor, it is a blatant violation of democratic norms. He expressed his gratitude to the Governor, saying that despite all the disruptions, she completed her address with great Patience, which reflects her respect for Parliamentary traditions. Opposition to the



Development of Kashi, including Manikarnika Ghat, is an attack on Sanatan Dharma: Minister A.K Sharma Urban Development and Energy Minister A.K Sharma said that the protest by Samajwadi Party MLA against the construction and development work at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi on the first day of the session reflects their negative Politics. He clarified that improving the facilities at Manikarnika Ghat is a neces-

sity. Given the growing population and the increasing number of people coming for last rites, the expansion and streamlining of facilities are essential. Minister Sharma said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi deep faith in Sanatan culture and his respect for Lokmata Rani Ahilyabai Holkar are well-known. The naming of institutions after Ahilyabai Holkar and the grand celebrations of her 300th birth anniversary across the country are Proof

of this. He said that those who lack any substantive issues are the ones who oppose every development project. Whether it is the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor or the development of Manikarnika Ghat—all these projects are strengthening the cultural glory of Kashi. He wholeheartedly commends the unprecedented development taking place across the country, including in Kashi, under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Administration tightens its grip on land mafias, action will be taken under the Goonda and Gangster Acts

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The administration has taken a tough stance against land mafias in Prayagraj district, signaling an intensification of action. A review meeting of the Anti-Land Mafia Task Force was held at the camp office on Tuesday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma. During the meeting, the DM gave clear instructions to ensure strict action against identified land mafias under the Goonda Act, Gangster Act, and other legal provisions. The District Magistrate directed the Sub-District Magistrates and Assistant Police Commissioners to identify land mafias active in the district and take prompt and effective action against them, ensuring no criminals escape the law. He said that individuals against whom repeated complaints of illegal occupation of government or public land have been received should be identified as land mafias in accordance with govern-



ment orders. The District Magistrate directed all Sub-Divisional Magistrates to convene a meeting of the Anti-Land Mafia Task Force at the tehsil level within 15 days. He also stated that government land encroached by land mafias should be freed on a priority basis. In the meeting, the District Magistrate directed all departments, including the Municipal Corporation, District Panchayat,

Prayagraj Development Authority, Basic Education Department, and Public Works Department, to immediately provide a detailed list of any illegal encroachments on their departmental land and ensure action is taken to free it. Furthermore, all departments were instructed to provide a certificate confirming that their land is free of any illegal encroachments. The DM

also stated that details of identified land mafias should be uploaded to the designated portal and updated periodically. He emphasized the need for a special campaign to remove encroachments from government lands. Those identified by the administration as land mafia include Waqar Ahmed (Rasulpur Kashipur, Police Station Puramufti), Arvind Kumar Kesarwani

(Preetam Nagar, Dhoomanganj), Jasim Ahmed (Alka Bihar Colony, Bamrauli), Pramod Kumar Keswani (Chayal Pipri, Kaushambi), Zaid Khalid (Alka Bihar Colony, Bamrauli), Rahil Siddiqui (Puramufti), Mahmood Akhtar (Chafri Atrapur, Nawabganj), Abu Zaid (Alka Bihar, Bamrauli Poghat), Dilshad (Mariadih, Tehsil Sadar), Dharendra Pratap Singh, Vikas Singh

(Village Sarbhuja, Bhojpur Bihar) and Amit Kumar Shukla (Sohbatiyabag). SP City Manish Shandilya, Additional District Magistrate (Nazul) Sanjay Pandey, Additional District Magistrate Administration Pooja Mishra, Additional District Magistrate Supply along with all Sub-District Magistrates, Tehsildars and officials of the concerned departments were present in the meeting.

Children were administered Albendazole on National Deworming Day



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Manda, Prayagraj. On Tuesday, as part of National Deworming Day, a special campaign was launched in the Manda area to administer Albendazole to school children. Dr. Vijay Kumar, Medical Officer at the Community Health Center, Manda, began the campaign by administering the medicine to students at the Higher Primary School, Bharatganj. On this occasion, Dr.

Vijay Kumar stated that a healthy body is the foundation for a bright future. He explained that intestinal worm infections adversely affect children's physical and mental development, making it crucial to take medication regularly. He advised children to practice hygiene, wash hands before meals and after defecation, and pay special attention to cleanliness. Health workers informed the children about the benefits of Albendazole and its administration.

There was an atmosphere of excitement in the school campus regarding the campaign. The school's acting headmistress, Renu Dwivedi, assistant teacher Ashutosh Kumar, and other teachers were present at the event. The health department team played an active role in making the campaign a success. The campaign's objective is to raise awareness among children about prevention of worm infections and ensure their better health.

Workshop on Safe Internet Day, awareness created on AI and cybersecurity Held in Sangam Auditorium under the chairmanship of DM

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A workshop on Safe Internet Day was organized on Tuesday in Sangam Auditorium to prevent cyber-crime and use the internet safely. District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma chaired the workshop. During the workshop, officials, employees, women, youth, and the general public were made aware of safe options for smart technology and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). The workshop began with the Assistant District Information Officer providing detailed information on this year's Safe Internet Day theme: "Smart Technology, Safe Options, Safe and Responsible Use of AI." Through a PPT, he explained how prudent use of AI and the internet can ensure security at the individual, social, and government levels. Representatives from government offices, educational institutions, public service centers, and the private sector were made aware of the importance



of cyber hygiene. Experts answered questions posed by women and citizens present at the workshop. Information was provided about cyber threats such as AI voice cloning fraud, deepfake videos, AI chatbot impersonation, AI-generated phishing messages, and fraudulent investment schemes. Advice was also given to avoid sharing OTPs and confidential

information with anyone, to verify the authenticity of voice notes, photos, and videos, and to make payments only after verifying emergency payment requests. The workshop also emphasized the importance of downloading mobile apps only from authentic sources, using privacy settings correctly on social media and apps, and staying updated with official

cybersecurity alerts and awareness programs. Essential information was also provided to the public through banners and QR codes. City Magistrate Vinod Kumar Singh, Additional City Magistrate Digvijay Singh, Additional District Information Officer Pratima Mishra, and officials and employees from various departments were present on the occasion.

Children's voices resonated at the Children's Festival, narrating stories of success and change from the stage

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Children's Festival, "Towards Progress, Self-Respect, and Success 2.0," held on Tuesday at the District Project Office, Samagra Shiksha Campus, provided a vibrant platform for children's self-confidence, creativity, and expression. Children shared stories of positive changes in their lives from the stage, while posters and comics conveyed the message of equality and self-respect. The program was inaugurated by Chief Guest, DIET Principal Rajendra Pratap, by garlanding the statue of Goddess Saraswati. On this occasion, District Nodal and National Mentor for Girls' Education, Shatrunjay Sharma, stated that the National Education Policy 2020 places special emphasis on providing children with a platform to express



their views and showcase their talents. To this end, the Meena Manch is being conducted in council upper primary and composite schools, which promotes self-esteem, life skills, and gender equality in children. He explained that the objective of the "Pragati 2.0" program is to share the transformations and success stories of children through the Meena Manch and self-esteem activities. The event was based on interactive activities, in which students selected from the development block level participated. Five schools were selected from each block, and stories of transformation and comic books were compiled. The best participants were then selected at the district level. District Coordinator Santosh Tiwari stated that the jury included Dr. Janardan Singh, Dr. Poonam Singh of the State Institute of Education, and Dr. Veerbhadra

Pratap Singh of the Diet. In the "Story of My Change" category, Shraddha from Karchana, Urvashi from Kaudihar, Khushboo Patel from Kaundhiara, Anamika from Soroon, and Shivani from Saidabad were selected. In the poster-making competition, Sanskar from Bahadurpur, Shivani Pal from Jasra, Shivini from Bhagwatpur, Shashi from Pratappur, and Sanjana from the city area took first place. All selected students will have the opportunity to showcase their talent at the divisional level. District Basic Education Officer Anil Kumar honored 60 students participating in the program with certificates. Mementos were also presented to the children selected for the divisional level. The facilitators of the winning students were also honored. Anuragini Singh and Antariksh Shukla played a key role in the suc-

cessful organization of the program. Rashmi Pandey and Ramendra Saxena were in charge of the poster-making competition, while Rushda Naheed and Atul Kumar Jaiswal moderated the "Story of My Change" competition. Pushpa and Pratesh, students of Composite School, Rajpur, moderated the stage. Cultural presentations were given by Abha Rani and Shweta Nirmla, while rangoli was created by Mamta Gupta. Mastak Mani and Poonam Chaudhary handled the writing of the certificates. District Basic Education Officer Anil Kumar said that the students selected at the district level will now participate in the divisional level competition. This Children's Festival proved to be a meaningful initiative towards strengthening self-respect, creative thinking, and self-expression in students.

Editorial

Hypocrisy of Western media amidst ongoing anti-Semitic protests in the US

As the world witnesses anti-Semitic protests erupting across universities in the United States, numerous questions regarding Western media reporting have ignited among free thinkers. This isn't the first instance of the Western media's hypocritical behaviour coming to light; rather, it signals the onset of the worst credibility crisis the Western media has faced since its inception. With the advent of digitalisation and the rise of social media, previously unheard voices are now gaining prominence and challenging the established credibility of hegemonised media outlets. Numerous articles and books have been penned with the aim of exposing and debunking the orchestrated agenda of the Western media. The worst phase for the credibility of the Western media reached its zenith when it tried to create a perception regarding the possession of WMD (Weapon of Mass Destruction) in Iraq under the reign of military general Saddam Hussain without giving any evidence to their claims. There have been allegations in the Western media pertaining to the reporting of the possession of WMD by Iraq that it favoured the narrative that justified the NATO-led invasion of Iraq. The United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix said in January 2003 that Iraq had cooperated well with the investigation team, and after the completion of the investigation on whether Iraq possessed WMD, they did not find any evidence pertaining to the alleged claims of the presence of WMD. Was it the first instance or the last, when the United States and the Western media accepted its mistake and tendered an apology? The answer to this question is no. There have been several instances in history where the US acted as the aggressor and participated in the killings of innocents, more than what we know about Hitler-led Germany. In the context of India, there have been various instances in history when the Western media have shown hypocrisy in covering similar issues through two lenses and tried to present different perspectives catering to their interests. In the pandemic era, the Western media left no stone unturned to criticise India for the number of deaths due to COVID-19, labour migrants, vaccines, etc., ignoring all the efforts of the Indian government that micromanaged the crisis with a population of around 1.3 billion people (approximately). Similarly, during the Russia-Ukraine war, there was a huge influx of negative reporting in the context of India, especially when she abstained from voting in a UN General Assembly that condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the oil was purchased from Russia despite calls for sanctions on India. Assessing the level of anti-India reporting by the Western media, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said while addressing a joint press conference with his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock in December 2022, "Our trade with Russia is at a very small level—\$12–13 billion, in comparison to European countries." "I would urge you to look at these figures. There is a website called 'Russia Fossil Fuel Tracker' that would give you country-by-country data of who is really importing what, and I suspect that might be very, very helpful," he added. The statement was made during a period when the Western media sparked a controversy about India by asserting that it was providing financial support to Russia for the war.

The hypocrisy of Western media

Recently, more than 100 students and faculty members have been arrested in a pro-Palestine protest at the University of California, Berkeley, which is yet another centre of anti-Asian and anti-Semitic activities in the United States.



Why Uttarakhand forests are on fire this season?

This year forest fire has created mass destruction in Uttarakhand. Visitors touring the hill state are shocked by the sight of smoke coming out from the forest. The smoke has affected the air quality and visibility. The local people are looking at the sky and praying to the rain god to come for their rescue in controlling and defusing the forest fire. Forest fire remains a major problem for the Uttarakhand forest department, especially during summer. This year over one thousand incidents of forest fire have been reported from different parts of the hill state. The raging fire has affected 1,318 hectares of land (data till 8 May). The forest department assesses a loss of over Rs 29 Lakh due to forest fire. Heavy deployment of forest staff, local people and others has been made to help douse the flames. Even the Indian Air Force choppers are in operation. On the grave situation, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Dhami said, "Our government is working on every front to control forest fires. Along with taking the help of the army, forest officers have also been instructed to reach ground zero and control the forest fire. Our government is also ensuring strict action against the miscreants who are causing damage to forests by setting them on fire." The forest fire



is an annual phenomenon in Uttarakhand. Some years the loss is high and sometimes low. This year a record number of incidents have taken place and this again demands active involvement of the local community in controlling the forest fire.

Why do forest fires take place?

More than 99 per cent of the forest fires are man-made. Less than one per cent of fires take place due to natural reasons or accidentally. Like a power grid falling due to heavy storms and other odd instances. This year the forest fire is raging in Uttarakhand due to low rainfall received during winter. The grass is dry and due to low moisture the fire has become rampant in different areas. Many allege

that the forest department staff set fire to hide their failed plantation projects.

Why do villagers set fire?

Villagers set fire for many reasons. To get new grass in monsoon the dry bushes are burned. Local people also clear bushes from the village area to remove hiding places of leopards and other wild animals. Miscreants also set up fires for fun. Very recently three youths from another state were arrested at Gairsain (Chamoli) for promoting forest fire by shooting reel for social media. Many times the villagers set fire as a precautionary measure. They set fire near their village when they see the forest fire approaching their habitat area. This is done to avoid forest fires causing harm in

the village and clearing the dry grass in advance.

Role of local community

The role of the local community is big as even after receiving information about any fire the forest department staff will take some time to reach the affected area. On the other hand, local villagers can instantly reach the affected area and help in early intervention. Renowned environmentalist Chandni Prasad Bhatt says, "Forest department alone can't control forest fire. They need active support and cooperation from the villagers. Groups should be formed in the village and they should be provided all support. Awareness should be created at grassroots level about fighting forest fires."

High casualty this season

Four persons have lost their lives and four others have sustained high burns this forest fire season (till 8 May) in Uttarakhand. The state forest department claims that no loss of animal life was reported from any part of the state. Plantation in over 16 hectares of land was affected and 427 trees were destroyed in the forest fire.

Pine needles are considered to play a major role in spreading fire. Social activist Vijay Jardhari says, "Villagers should be involved and they should be provided equipment and other support. Only villagers can tackle forest fires as they understand their forest well. Efforts should be made to utilise the pine needles for power generation and making other products." It is generally observed that the forest fire gets controlled by occasional rains in Uttarakhand. Bageshwar and Pithoragarh districts received much awaited showers on Wednesday.

Most of the forest fires in these two districts were doused. The Indian Meteorological Department has predicted rainfall in many districts in Uttarakhand in the coming days.

People are praying for the weather forecast to turn true and extinguish the forest fire to turn their life normal.

With Taiwanese President set to assume office, China's woes will only exacerbate

Given that there is no let-up in either Taiwan's defence preparedness posture or the US' backing of the island, China is likely to dig into its coercive toolkit to respond to Lai's swearing in. Image: REUTERS With newly elected Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te set to assume office on May 20, there is intense speculation surrounding China's potential response to the event. In anticipation of an aggressive response, Tsai Ming-yen, Director-General of Taiwan's National Security Bureau, announced on May 1 that island authorities will be implementing measures to strengthen national critical infrastructure. Aiding the island's overall defence posture, on April 24, United States President Joe Biden has also

signed a bill to mobilise \$8 billion in defence aid to the Indo-Pacific in general and Taiwan in particular. With neither the US nor China backing down on their respective positions on the Taiwan issue, these developments add fire to the already deteriorating cross-strait dynamics.

US' proactive role worries China

During the recently concluded meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, Xi conveyed that the very first "red line" the US should not cross in its relations with China is the Taiwan issue. However, the US' decision to continue to provide political and military support to Taiwan is motivated by two key factors: shared values

and national security interests. While from a values-based perspective, the US sees its role in the Taiwan Strait as a defender of democracy and a provider of net security, from a national security interests perspective, it sees immense value in deterring China, preventing undue escalation, and securing supply chains in critical sectors such as semiconductor chips, wherein Taiwan plays a vital role. Hence, in the run up to Lai's assumption of the presidential office, the US has embarked on a mission to demonstrate commitment to Taiwan. In addition to quickly signing the above-mentioned Indo-Pacific Security Supplemental Bill into law, over the past week, the Biden administration has also engaged with counter-

Crime and cupid: Intriguing romance of criminals

After one of the most headline-grabbing and glitzy pre-wedding functions in the recent past (Anant Ambani and his soon-to-be wife Radhika Merchant) just a few days ago, a drastically different romantic union has captured the public's imagination in the past week or so: the nuptials of two of India's high profile criminals, Gangster Sandeep alias Kala Jathedi and 'history sheeter', Anuradha Chaudhary who also goes by the moniker 'Madam Minz', in Delhi's Dwarka. It was an unusual wedding with most of the baraatis/wedding guests being heavily armed policemen, including SWAT commandoes carrying hi-tech weapons, deployed to prevent the gangster from escaping and also to protect him from rival gangs' assassination attempts. Sandeep who is currently incarcerated at Tihar jail was granted parole between 10 am to 4 pm to complete his wedding rituals. A known associate of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, Kala Jathedi faces over a dozen cases of armed robbery, attempts to murder, murder and extortion in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. His lady love Anuradha Chaudhary is no shy bride, a 'history sheeter' herself currently out on bail, and facing several cases involving money laundering, abduction, and illegal

arms in Rajasthan and Delhi. The lovey-dovey twosome's romance reportedly started in 2020, when they were introduced through a mutual associate Vicky Singh in Indore. Delhi Special Cell proved to be quite the Grinch as they arrested our local Bonnie and Clyde-inspired couple from a dhaba on the Yamuna-Saharanpur expressway in July of 2021. The couple remained devoted to each other and finally married on Tuesday, 12 February. Though probably not an aspiration to most people, this unsociable and misanthropic love story is the stuff movie scripts and novels are made of. There is a word for it in the English dictionary: *hybristophilia*. It is defined as feeling romantic or sexual arousal for criminals or an act of crime by itself. Psychologists say, shared experiences or common tendencies and habits are often an emotional binding factor, so this could also be a reason for real-life criminal couples to fall in love with each other. As distasteful as this phenomenon might be, there are many such couples in history, their infatuation and intimacy ignited by a common passion for psychopathic/criminal behaviour. Some of the more high-profile precedents for such romantic unions are: Bonnie and Clyde: One of the most iconic outlaw couples of the 20th century Bonnie

Parker and Clyde Barrow were idolized for their dedication to each other through prison breaks, robberies and murder. They met each other at a mutual friend's place in West Dallas, USA, but their budding romance was quickly cut short when Clyde was imprisoned for auto theft, his crime just catapulting Bonnie's affection for him. Classic case of *hybristophilia*. Bonnie helped him escape by smuggling a gun into prison and the two soon descended into a life of crime, committing robberies, burglaries and murders for the next couple of years around Texas and the Midwest while they remained on the run. They were finally killed in a shootout when they were ambushed by law enforcement officials on the side of a highway in Louisiana in May, 1934. Their "love story" was further romanticised.

When the 1967 "Bonnie and Clyde" movie was released. The film received heavy criticism for its glorification of their heinous crimes, but their status in pop culture was firmly secured. Joseph and Jenny Carrier: They might have looked like your average rosy-cheeked suburban American married couple, but Joseph and Jenny robbed five banks in five states in USA in October, 2015. According to news reports, Jerry would enter the banks.

Government's outreach ties need renewed

India has enjoyed historical, cultural and civilisational links with Central Asia for several millennia. Brisk trade of goods, ideas and thoughts took place from India to Central Asia and beyond over the Silk Road from 3rd century BC to 15th century AD. Buddhism travelled to Afghanistan, Central Asia and western China from India over this route. India and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) viz. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan shared vibrant economic, people-to-people and cultural ties till recent times when the latter were a part of the Soviet Union. India has not been able

to take full advantage of its close ancient linkages with this region after their independence from the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1991 because it does not share a de facto land boundary with any of these countries (although de jure it shares a border with Tajikistan through the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir). To overcome this obstacle, several initiatives which have been in the pipeline for many years have now been fast-tracked. Two of the most significant are the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar port.

Evolution of relations

In current times, Central Asian

Republics constitute the extended neighbourhood of India. Peace and security in Central Asia is critical to peace and stability in India. This is intimately connected with peace and security in Afghanistan. Three Central Asian Republics — Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan — share borders with Afghanistan.

India and Central Asia need to collaborate with other regional powers like Russia, Iran, China and Pakistan as also with the US and the EU to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. The advent of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in August 2021 after the sud-

den and unceremonious withdrawal of the US and NATO troops has introduced further complications in promoting connectivity between India and Central Asia. In addition to the above, the region is also richly endowed with natural and mineral resources like oil, gas (Turkmenistan contains the world's fourth largest reserves of natural gas), uranium (Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium ore and has the world's second largest reserve of this mineral), lead, iron ore, coal, rare earths, water, etc. The region can contribute to India's energy security through fossil fuels and hydro-power.

Commissioner and DIG Issue Instructions to DM and Police Officials via Video Conference

Etah

With the objective of ensuring that the festival of Mahashivratri, the holy month of Ramzan and the forthcoming board examinations are conducted in a peaceful, safe and well-organized manner, Commissioner of Aligarh Division Sangeeta Singh and Deputy Inspector General of Police, Aligarh Range, Prabhakar Chaudhary on Monday held a video conference with District Magistrates and Senior Superintendents of Police/Superintendents of Police of all districts in the range. Several important guidelines were issued during the meeting. Emphasizing the safety of devotees and bathers, the officials directed that adequate water barricading be ensured at bathing ghats, danger signs be installed at deep-water locations and effective crowd control measures be implemented. Special instructions were issued for Kasganj district to prevent any mishap at the Ganga ghats by ensuring prior deployment of Flood PAC, divers and sufficient barricading. In view of past accidents during the Kanwar Yatra, strict instructions were given to completely prohibit the movement of heavy vehicles on Kanwar routes, implement traffic diversions and ensure a single-route system for Kanwariyas. Concerned departments were also directed to repair



potholes on roads, rectify electric poles and wires and maintain regular cleanliness at ghats. Coordination with organizers, camp and bhandara managers was emphasized, along with inspections of ghats and routes by District Magistrates and Police Chiefs. Special vigilance and deployment of adequate police force on 3 Kanwar routes were also directed. Identification of parking areas, traffic diversion points and holding areas to strengthen traffic management was stressed. At religious places and temples where Jababhishek rituals are scheduled, instructions were given to make optimal use of available resources and ensure adequate police arrangements. Strict monitoring was also ordered at hotels, dharamshalas, inns and crowded locations. To ensure the safety of Kanwariyas passing through police station areas, increased police patrolling and route adjustments of PRB-112 vehicles, as required, were also directed. Keeping in view the

month of Ramzan, the officials instructed heightened vigilance, strategic deployment of police force and early organization of meetings with religious leaders, organizers, clerics, peace committees, civil defense personnel and respected citizens. Greater emphasis was laid on strengthening foot patrolling during festivals. Regarding board examinations, instructions were issued to maintain peace, control noise levels and ensure smooth traffic movement around examination centers so that students are not adversely affected. Strict and immediate action was directed against anyone attempting to create disorder, spread rumors or disrupt law and order during examinations. The officers clarified that administrative and police officials in all districts will maintain continuous monitoring with mutual coordination to ensure that Mahashivratri, Ramzan and board examinations are conducted successfully in an atmosphere of devotion, Peace and security.

Internet from its inception to today

A K Rai

Today is the era of the Internet. Through it, new technological knowledge is rapidly reaching people. It is impossible to imagine a communication revolution without the Internet. The Internet has become both a necessity and a habit in our lives. The Internet is impacting our personal, social and professional lives. While the Internet is making it easier for us to complete tasks quickly, information from every sector of the world is readily available in the blink of an eye. We are completing our tasks easily and quickly through the Internet. The success of banking, shopping, data transfer and initiatives like Digital India all depend on the Internet. Today, through search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing, any information can be obtained in the blink of an eye. The idea of the Internet first began to develop in California, USA, in the year 1960. Leonard Kleinrock published his ideas in this direction on May 31, 1961, in his research article, "Information Flow in Large Communication Nets." Subsequently, in 1962, J.C.R. Licklider, Director of the Information Processing Technology Office, advanced the concept of an internal computer network. Inspired by these ideas, Robert Taylor played a key role in the network development. After several years of effort, the first network for special purposes was used by the US military in 1969, called the



Advanced Research Projects Administration Network. Later, the National Science Foundation named it NSF-Net, and in 1980, it was opened to the public. Currently, the Internet is divided into three main parts based on services: The first is the Surface Web, the part of the Internet that we access daily through search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing. This is the most widely used part of the Internet. The second part is the deep web, also known as the invisible web. It is not visible in search engines because it is a "no-index" website. It is used for government documents, scientific research, confidential data storage and secure communication. The third part of the internet, the "dark web," is an illegal and unlawful area of the internet, where access is prohibited. Information here is provided for informational purposes only. Thus, the internet is not the property of any one country or individual, but rather the result of the combined efforts of many countries, institutions, engineers and technical organizations. However, due to the predominance of American

institutions, America is considered to have greater influence on the internet. International telecom companies connect countries through undersea optical fiber cables (submarine cables). These telecom companies establish connections between websites and servers and charge a fee. Indian companies such as Airtel, Jio, Vodafone and Idea purchase data from international telecom companies. Undersea optical fiber cables (submarine cables) transmit 99% of internet data, while only 1% transmit via satellite. It's crucial to be cautious when using internet services, as cybercriminals are increasingly exploiting the internet to commit fraud. It is essential to exercise extreme caution when using the internet and never share personal or professional information with strangers. Never click on links from unknown numbers and never respond to calls asking you to share sensitive information under the guise of an ATM or KYC update. Never respond to calls from unknown numbers demanding money. Never share your information, such as OTP, Aadhaar, PAN or bank details, online with such individuals and avoid using public Wi-Fi. Furthermore, never scan QR codes or share OTP PINs to receive payments out of greed, as these could be cybercriminal tactics. In case of any cyber crime, immediately report it to Sancharsathi.gov.com so that legal action can be taken against the cyber criminals.

LJA Takes Strong Stand, Demands Journalist Safety Commission and Pension

Lucknow

The monthly meeting of the Lucknow Journalists Association was held in a dignified atmosphere in the capital city of Lucknow. The meeting saw serious discussions on burning issues such as the challenges faced by journalists, the expansion of the organization and the safety of journalists. In the meeting, National President Alok Kumar Tripathi infused new energy and provided clear



direction to the journalists with his insightful remarks. National

President Alok Kumar Tripathi said that journalism is a difficult, risky, and responsible profession, but bringing the truth to light is the greatest duty of a journalist. He stated unequivocally that the day journalists fall silent, society will not know what is happening in the country and society. He said that journalists expose the shortcomings of those in power, and therefore, there have been continuous attempts to weaken the fourth pillar of democracy, but the

unity of the organization is the biggest answer to this. Highlighting the achievements of the organization, he said that the Lucknow Journalists Association has now reached 28 districts of the state and is actively working in four states. Alok Kumar Tripathi expressed deep concern over the attacks on journalists. He said that by working honestly and intelligently, journalists can protect themselves to a great extent, but despite this, the formation of a

Journalist Safety Commission is the greatest need of the hour. He also emphasized a strategy of launching a campaign to submit memorandums to the Chief Minister through MLA and M regarding demands such as a journalist safety law, pensions for journalists, and medical facilities. He said that only when the organization is strong will the government listen to the organization demands. Senior journalist Ravi Sharma said that the unity of journalists

Mayor inspects progress of CM Grids Scheme in Sigra area, gives instructions to expedite it



Varanasi

Mayor Ashok Kumar Tiwari on conducted a site inspection of the ongoing development works under the Chief Minister Green Roads Infrastructure Development Scheme (CM GRIDS) near the fruit market in Sigra. The Mayor held detailed discussions with officials and representatives of the implementing agency on the pace and quality of work. Currently, construction work is progressing rapidly under this scheme from Tilak Murti to Bharat Sevashram in Sigra and from Ghanti Mill to near Sigra Police Station. The 610-meter-long road from Tilak Murti to Bharat Sevashram is being renovated at a cost of ₹11.61 crore. During the inspection, the Mayor informed that these major roads in the city are being equipped with modern facilities, including road resurfacing, underground utility ducts and stormwater drains. He expressed satisfaction that work on sec-

tions such as Ghanti Mill to Sigra Police Station and the Sundarpur Main Road is 40 to 47 percent complete. The Mayor directed the executing agency to complete the work within the stipulated timeframe and in a quality manner so that the public can get quick relief from dust and congestion. He clarified that the ongoing work in the Sigra area. The project is being equipped with amenities, including road resurfacing, underground utility ducts and stormwater drains. He expressed satisfaction that 40 to 47 percent of the work on sections such as the Ghanti Mill to Sigra Police Station and Sundarpur Main Road has been completed. The Mayor directed the executing agency to complete the work within the stipulated timeframe and in a quality manner so that the public can get relief from dust and traffic jams soon. He clarified that this model being implemented in the Sigra area will become a standard for other parts of the city.

Upper Caste Community Protests Against the Film 'Ghuskhor Pandit', Submits Memorandum

Ghazipur

Manoj Bajpayee upcoming film 'Ghuskhor Pandit' has landed in controversy even before its release. The film, which is scheduled to be released on Netflix, has now become embroiled in legal trouble. A petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court regarding the film title. It is alleged that the film title is insulting to the Brahmin community. Meanwhile, members of the Brahmin Raksha Dal and the Rashtrawadi Jan Sangrah Party have taken to the streets to protest against the film. Rajendra Pandey, the national president of the Rashtrawadi Jan Sangrah Party, has demanded that the filmmakers be immediately sent to jail. On Monday, while submitting a memorandum to the Kasimabad Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Prem Shankar Mishra, the



convener of the Brahmin Raksha Dal, said that the film's title and promotional material deliberately associate the word 'Pandit' with corruption and bribery. The film content is likely to be communally offensive and defamatory and is expected to cause widespread damage to the dignity and reputation of the Brahmin community.

He said that it is the government duty to control digital platforms and stop the streaming of content that harms social harmony. The use of the word 'Pandit' in the title deliberately links a well-known religious and social designation (surname) with corruption and bribery. This content targets a specific religious and social

group and violates Articles 14, 21 and 25 of the Constitution of India. Through the memorandum, it was demanded that the responsible team, including the film producer and director, be sent to jail. They also demanded that a Brahmin Atrocities Act be implemented with immediate effect.

Farhan Akhtar brings the curtains down

On the last day of the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Farhan Akhtar gave the audience a high-energy live performance at the iconic Asiatic Library Steps

As the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival 2026 came to a close, Farhan Akhtar made sure that he etched out a special memory in his fans' hearts. The actor unveiled his new collection of self-written English songs at the Asiatic Library Steps on the last day of KGAF.

Performing in front of a packed audience, the actor belted out a couple of songs from his album Echoes, much to the delight of his fans who cheered him on. RJ Rohini Ramanathan welcomed the singer-actor on the stage with a loud cheering, calling out his name "Far-haan, Far-haan!"

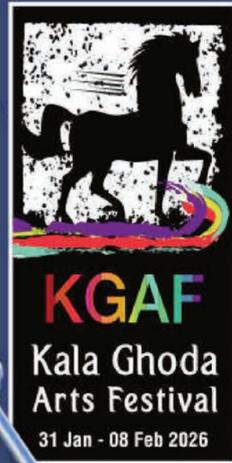
Farhan Akhtar commanded the stage with powerful vocals and emotional depth. The crowd sang along, clapped in rhythm and turned the concert into a shared celebration of music and expression. Farhan's performance took fans back to his Rock On!! days,

and people showed up in such large numbers that not a single seat was available at the Asiatic Library Steps.

Performing his self-written English compositions at the Asiatic Library Steps, Farhan brought passion to the stage. He blended the strong vocals with emotional storytelling, reaffirming why his music continues to resonate across generations.

"Nobody has heard these songs and it is special for me to be playing it for the first time here. The lyrics of these songs are a bit predictable, so you might be able to sing along," Farhan told the audience during his performance. He also sang tracks from Dil Chahta Hai and Rock On!!.

The evening offered the perfect end to the fabulous 26th edition of the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival; it was fitting highlight for the festival's cultural spirit and theme.



SNIPPETS

Rohit Shetty hits back

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty, who is working on his upcoming film Golmaal 5, was recently reported to be planning an adaptation of the classic Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor 1980 comedy Do Aur Do Paanch in the Golmaal format. Amid these reports, Rohit's team denied the claims, stating that legal action will be taken against any news shared without confirmation from the team. The statement read, "We wish to issue a strict clarification regarding certain

news reports currently circulating across online and digital media platforms claiming that Golmaal 5 is inspired by or based on the film 'Do Aur Do Paanch'. We categorically state that these reports are factually incorrect, misleading and completely untrue. We strongly request all media houses, publications, portals, and digital platforms to refrain from publishing or circulating unverified information." Further, the team stated that they expect cooperation in maintaining journalistic accuracy and responsibility.



Did Kim and Lewis make it official?

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian makes it to the headlines a lot because of her rumoured relationships. A few days ago, there were reports of Kim dating Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton. While the two were spotted a couple of times earlier, on February 8, 2026, the rumoured couple were clicked together at Super Bowl LX. Their video has gone viral on social media, with fans claiming that they did a hard launch of their relationship at the football match.

The Bollywood-RSS crossover

Singer Adnan Sami met Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat as the organisation celebrated its historic centenary. Several other Bollywood celebs also graced the event and visuals of them have flooded social media platforms.

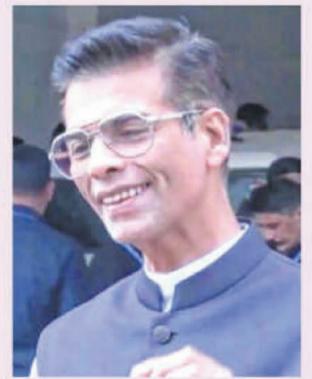
On Sunday (February 8), Adnan Sami shared a series of photos in which he is seen posing with Mohan Bhagwat. Actresses Shilpa Shetty and Rupali Ganguly can also be seen in the pictures. Along with the photos, the 'Lift Kara De' singer wrote, "Had an incredible afternoon with the legendary Sarsangchalak (Chief) of

RSS, Sri Mohan Bhagwat ji."

"It was delightful to hear him speak and there were so many myths & misconceptions that he so eloquently explained & cleared. An incredible gentleman & beautiful soul," he added.

Shilpa congratulated everyone as the Sangh completed 100 years and said, "I am a big fan of Mohan Bhagwat ji. He inspires a lot. I am a fan of his ideology and the way he has committed himself to serving the nation. The work he has done and the way he has united people for public and national interest truly inspire me. I learned a great deal today, and he has made my own resolve even stronger."

Karan Johar, who was also present there, spoke to IANS about Mohan Bhagwat, "I would like to say that I am very happy to be here at the 100th anniversary of RSS. I would like to thank Mr. Bhagwat for his words, words and thoughts. He gave us his time. Many people from the industry came here. I was touched by his words. I would also like to say that his sense of humour is amazing. His thoughts are amazing. His sense of humour entertained us. We laughed a lot and applauded him. We are very thankful for this event. We want to have such an event every year".



Disha turns up the heat

Disha Patani recently dropped a striking series of pictures on Instagram, showcasing her in a bold red two-piece ethnic ensemble that instantly grabbed attention. The outfit features a strapless corset-style blouse, gripping her silhouette while adding a modern, structured edge to the traditional look. The blouse stands out for its intricate floral embroidery, detailed with metallic threadwork that adds depth, texture, and couture-level finesse.



Talk of the town

Nazar na lage!

Sonam Kapoor recently dropped heartwarming moments from her baby shower, as she is expecting her second child with husband Anand Ahuja. She teamed the lehenga with a floral embroidered choli that complemented the outfit's intricate detailing. Keeping her styling minimal yet impactful, she wore her hair in a sleek bun with a small red bindi along with a statement gold necklace and multiple rings. The baby shower was attended by several celebrities including Kareena Kapoor Khan, Khushi Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Bhumi Pednekar, Anil Kapoor and other members of the Kapoor family. The fashion icon continues to flaunt her effortless maternity looks, soon after her bold outings at outdoor events went viral on social media.



Deepika, the 'Modern Butterfly'

Deepika Padukone turned heads at a high-profile gala in Dubai, stepping out in a striking custom Gaurav Gupta couture ensemble. The look featured a deep-neck, sharply tailored black jacket paired with a sleek, floor-length skirt, creating a powerful yet elegant silhouette. Her outfit was a reimagined version of Gaurav Gupta's iconic 'Starfall' silhouette, specially customised for Deepika. The original Starfall design debuted at Paris Fashion Week as part of the designer's The Divine Androgyne Spring/Summer 2026 couture collection. Deepika's version elevated the concept with precision tailoring and sculptural shoulder detailing, adding a commanding presence.

Foreign leaders congratulate Japan's Takaichi

No one will come to the aid of a nation that lacks the resolve to defend itself with its own hands. We will steadfastly protect our nation's peace and independence, our territory, territorial waters, airspace, and the lives and safety of our citizens. We will also enhance intelligence capabilities, prevent crises, and establish a system to strategically protect our national interests. (at press meet) **Thank you** very much, Prime Minister Narendra



Modi for your warm congratulations on the House of Representatives election. I look forward to continuing to work together with you to strengthen the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between Japan and India and to cooperate in realising a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

The potential of our alliance (with the US) is limitless (to Trump).

— **Sanae Takaichi**, Japan's Prime Minister after crossing the two-thirds threshold of 310 seats in the 465-member lower house.

Nikkei 225 crosses 57,000 for the 1st time

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 share index jumped 4.5% on Monday after Takaichi's party got a two-thirds supermajority in the election. Nikkei 225 crossed 57,000 for the first time before paring gains to close 3.9% higher at 56,363.94, while Topix notched a record high, closing at 3,783.94, up 2.3%. PM said she was ready to pursue policies to make Japan prosperous.



Lin Jian, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson

We urge those running Japanese gov't to take seriously rather than brush aside the concerns of int'l community, follow the path of peaceful development rather than return to militarism. If Japan's far-right forces miscalculate and act recklessly, they will be met by resistance from Japanese people and serious backlash from the international community.



Donald Trump, US President

Congratulations to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, a highly respected and very popular leader, and her coalition on a landslide victory in today's very important vote. Your decision to call an election has paid off big time. It is a historic two-thirds supermajority — the first time since World War II. It was my honour to endorse you and your coalition. I wish you great success in passing your conservative, peace through strength agenda.

Congratulation on the significant success achieved in the poll. Our nations are united by a deep

friendship and a strategic partnership that continues to grow stronger thanks to the relationship of sincere trust and constructive collaboration that we have been able to build over the years between our govts.

Giorgia Meloni, Italian Prime Minister



Mark Carney, Canadian Prime Minister

Congratulations Sanae Takaichi on your decisive victory in Japan's general election. I am looking forward to working with you to further elevate the strong partnership between Canada and Japan, to create more opportunities for both our peoples.

Congratulations Sanae Takaichi on your election win. Australia and Japan's friendship has never been closer. I look forward to strengthening it and deepening ties between our countries.

Anthony Albanese, Australian Prime Minister

An important win, an excellent result. We all need strong leadership so the world can return to stability and ultimately to peace. We value Japan is among those who provide principled support for the protection of our people, our lives, and Ukraine's independence.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

Briefs

PIO shot dead in Toronto

A 37-year-old Indian-Canadian died after being shot by unidentified men in the parking lot of a busy shopping centre in Toronto, Canada, police said. On Sunday, Toronto Police Service identified the victim as Chandan Kumar Raja Nandakumar of Brampton. On Saturday, at 3.31 pm, police responded to a call for a shooting in the parking lot of Woodbine Shopping Centre at Rexdale Boulevard and Highway 27. It found a man with gunshot wounds at the scene. The victim was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. The suspect, or suspects, fled the scene in a vehicle. The victim succumbed at the hospital. Nandakumar, originally from Karnataka, was an IT professional. The shooting marks Toronto's third homicide of the year. Images taken from the scene show a white SUV with bullet holes in the windshield and a shattered window on the driver's side, according to CTV News.

Scholarships for Indians

King's College London on Monday announced a third year of special scholarship scheme for PG students in India, aimed at removing cost barriers in the path of pursuing degrees leading to a positive impact on society. Vice-Chancellor's Awards will offer £5,000 in fee cuts for 40 students from India as they study full-time on campus at the leading London university from September 2026.

US men board oil tanker

US military forces boarded a sanctioned oil tanker in the Indian Ocean after tracking the ship from the Caribbean Sea, the Pentagon said on Monday. It did not say if the ship was connected to Venezuela. The Aquila II was one of at least 16 tankers that departed Venezuela last month after US captured Maduro, said TankerTrackers.com co-founder Samir Madani.

EPSTEIN FALLOUT | I decided to stand down to allow a new Number 10 team to be built, director of communications says

Starmer aide Allan quits

LONDON

Keir Starmer's director of communications **Tim Allan** resigned on Monday, a day after British PM's top aide Morgan McSweeney quit over his role in backing Peter Mandelson over his known links to Jeffrey Epstein. The loss of two aides comes as Starmer tries to draw a line under the crisis in his government resulting from Mandelson's appointment as the US ambassador.

"I have decided to stand down to allow a new No10 team to be built. I wish the PM and his team every success," Allan said on Monday.

Meanwhile, a stream of cabinet ministers publicly backed Starmer after Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar called on the PM to resign.

As Sarwar began telling reporters in Glasgow "the distraction needs to end, the leadership in Downing Street has to change", Chancellor Rachel Reeves said Starmer "is turning the country around" and former deputy Labour leader Angela Rayner urged MPs to "come together".



Earlier, when asked if Starmer would also quit, his spokesman said: "No. PM is concentrating on the job in hand."

ANDREW SENT SENSITIVE REPORTS? UK police said it is "assessing claims" former Prince Andrew sent confidential reports to Epstein. Thames Valley Police, which serves areas west of London, including Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's former home at Royal Lodge near Windsor Castle, said on Monday.

WILLIAM AND KATE 'DEEPLY CONCERNED' Prince William and Princess Catherine expressed concern for the victims of Epstein on Monday, the latest move by the British monarchy to distance itself from revelations about the former Prince Andrew's relationship with the convicted sex offender. Britain's most popular

royals say they were appalled by the contents. "I can confirm the Prince and Princess of Wales have been deeply concerned by the continued revelations," the palace said. "Their thoughts remain focused on the victims."

ZUCKERBERG, MUSK SEEN AT DINNER

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Space X CEO Elon Musk are the latest big names from the tech industry to appear in the Epstein files. The billionaire attended a dinner hosted by the convicted sex-offender in 2015. Interestingly, the photographer of the snap is not credited and is assumed to be either Epstein or his associate. It is also not sufficiently clear if the location is on the ill-famed Epstein Island or other property. The picture in the mail is captioned "sorry for all the typos". According to the DoJ's data, in an email later that month, Epstein wrote he

"had dinner with Zuckerberg, Musk, Thiel Hoffman, Wild," also mentioning LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman and Palantir chairman Peter Thiel. Thereby confirming the presence of these leaders at Epstein's organised Dinner. Jeffrey called the event "wild" in an email raising eyebrows.

AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY RESIGNS

A Norwegian ambassador involved in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts in the 1990s and recently served in Jordan has resigned as she faces scrutiny over her contacts with Epstein, foreign ministry said.

UBS BANKED MAXWELL FOR YRS,

Swiss wealth giant UBS opened accounts for Ghislaine Maxwell in 2014 months after JPMorgan Chase decided to end its relationship with Epstein and helped her manage \$19 million in the years leading to her sex-trafficking conviction, documents show.

Also on Monday, law-makers tried to interview Maxwell, but she invoked her 5th Amendment rights to avoid answering questions that would be incriminating. Maxwell was to be questioned during a video call to the federal prison camp in Texas.

HK publisher Jimmy Lai sentenced to 20-year jail

HONG KONG

Jimmy Lai, the pro-democracy former Hong Kong media tycoon and a fierce critic of Beijing, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in the longest punishment given so far under a China-imposed national security law that has virtually silenced the city's dissent.

Lai, 78, was convicted in December of conspiring with others to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security, and conspiracy to publish seditious articles. The maximum penalty for his conviction was life imprisonment.

His co-defendants, six former employees of his Apple Daily newspaper and two activists, received prison terms of between 6 years and 3 months, and 10 years on collusion-related charges.

Lai smiled and waved at his supporters when he arrived for the sentence. But before he left the courtroom, he looked serious, as some people in the public gallery cried.

JUDGES RULED LAI WAS THE MASTERMIND

In their ruling, three government-vetted judges wrote the starting point of Lai's sentence was increased because



they found him to be the mastermind of the conspiracies. But they also reduced his penalty because they accepted Lai's age, health condition and solitary confinement would cause his prison life to be more burdensome than that of other inmates.

DAUGHTER: LAI WILL DIE A MARTYR IN JAIL

The democracy advocate's arrest and trial have raised concerns about the decline of press freedom in what was once an Asian bastion of media independence. The government insists the case has nothing to do with a free press, saying the defendants used news reporting as a pretext for years to commit acts that harmed China and Hong Kong. Lai's sentencing could heighten Beijing's diplomatic tensions with foreign governments. His conviction has drawn criticism from the US and the UK.

US President Trump, who is expected to visit China in April, said he felt "so badly",

noting he spoke to Chinese leader Xi Jinping and "asked to consider Lai's release".

British PM Keir Starmer's government has called for the release of Lai, who is a British citizen. Lai's son, Sebastian, said the "draconian" prison term was devastating for our family and life-threatening for his father. "It signifies the total destruction of the Hong Kong legal system and the end of justice," he said.

His sister Claire called the sentence "heartbreakingly cruel". "If this sentence is carried out, he will die a martyr behind bars," she said.

Hong Kong leader John Lee said Lai's sentence demonstrated the rule of law, citing his serious crimes.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk deplored the sentence, saying Lai was punished for "exercising rights protected under international law" and the sentence must be quashed. The EU reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditional release, citing Lai's advanced age and health.

In Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said Lai was a Chinese citizen, calling him a major planner and participant in a series of anti-China destabilising activities in Hong Kong. The judicial cases are purely Hong Kong's internal affairs.

Venezuela's prosecutor orders Machado ally's arrest hrs after release



Caracas: Venezuela's top prosecutor said on Monday his office had requested the arrest of one of the closest allies of opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, less than 12 hours after his release from a detention facility as part of a government move to free those facing politically motivated accusations. The attorney general's

statement did not say whether **Juan Pablo Guanipa** was rearrested, or give indication of his whereabouts. The government had released him along with several other prominent opposition members on Sunday following lengthy politically motivated detentions.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab's office posted on social media it had "requested the competent court to revoke the precautionary measure granted to Juan Pablo Guanipa, due to his non-compliance with the conditions imposed by the aforementioned court."

Over 53 killed or missing as boat sinks off Libya

Cairo: Two babies are among at least 53 people dead or missing after an inflatable migrant boat sank off Libya, the UN agency said, the latest tragedy on a dangerous route for those seeking a better life in Europe.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration said the boat with 55 African migrants on board departed Libya's Zawiya shortly before midnight on Thursday. Six hours later, it began taking on water and capsized on Friday morning north of the town of Zuwara, it said.

Two Nigerian women survived the shipwreck and were rescued by Libyan authorities, IOM said.

IRAN ARRESTS LEADING REFORMISTS CLOSE TO PREZ

Tehran: The head of Iran's Reformists Front, the organisation instrumental in securing the election of President Masoud Pezeshkian has been arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in a move that will probably deepen the tensions over the handling of the recent street protests, The Guardian reported.

Azar Mansouri, the secretary general of the Islamic Iran People party, had expressed deep sorrow at protesters' deaths, and said nothing could justify such a catastrophe. She had not in public called for the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, to resign.

In what looked like a decisive roundup of the key



reformist figures outside government, Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, the head of the front's political committee, and Mohsen Aminzadeh, a deputy foreign minister under the former president Mohammad Khatami, were also arrested.

At least two other prominent figures in the Reformists Front, an umbrella group of as many as 27 reformist factions, have been ordered to appear at police stations this week.

'Toddler held by ICE nearly died in detention, denied medication'

Los Angeles: A toddler detained by US immigration authorities ended up in hospital with a life-threatening illness, but was returned to custody and denied medication, a lawsuit claims.

The child, identified simply as Amalia in the legal challenge, was detained along with her parents on December 11, amid an ongoing deportation drive by the Trump administration, NBC News reported.

Held at a facility in Dilley, Texas, she reportedly developed a fever of 104°F on New Year's Day, started vomiting, suffered diarrhoea, and struggled to breathe.

Her parents took her to the facility's medical clinic eight or nine times, but each time received only basic fever medication, the lawsuit



alleges. By mid-January, she was barely getting enough oxygen, and her blood oxygen levels had plunged to life-threatening lows, the case claims. Only then was she taken to hospital, where she and her mother were constantly supervised by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the suit says. It's alleged her father had to stay behind, unable to communicate with his wife and daughter.

Former Saddam officer executed for 1980 killing of Shia cleric

Baghdad: Iraq announced on Monday a high-level security officer during the rule of Saddam Hussein has been hanged for his involvement in the 1980 killing of a prominent Shia cleric.

The National Security Service said Saoudun Sabri Al Qaisi, who held the rank of major general under Saddam and was arrested last year, was convicted of "grave crimes against humanity", including the killing of prominent Iraqi Shia cleric Mohammed Baqir Al Sadr, members of the Al Hakim family, and other civilians.

The agency did not say when Al Qaisi was executed.

Trial against Meta focuses on dangers of child sex exploitation on social media

Santa Fe (US): A trial focused on the dangers of child sexual exploitation on social media and whether Meta misrepresented the safety of its platforms is set to start in New Mexico with opening statements on Monday.

It's the first stand-alone trial from state prosecutors in a stream of lawsuits against major social media companies, including Meta, over harm to children, and one that is likely to highlight explicit online content and its effects.

New Mexico Attorney General Raul Torrez sued Meta in 2023. His team built the case by posing as kids through social media accounts, then documenting the arrival of sexual sollicita-

tions as well as the response by Meta, the owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Prosecutors say they'll provide evidence and testimony that Meta's algorithms and account features enticed and addicted young people to social media, while also creating a "breeding ground" for predators who target children for sexual exploitation. Prosecutors allege Meta failed to disclose what it knew about those harmful effects, in violation of state consumer protection laws. Meta is accused of creating a public nuisance.

"Meta knowingly exposes children to the twin dangers of sexual exploitation and mental health harm," the lawsuit states.

Mosque shooter seeks to discard guilty pleas in NZ

Wellington: The man who killed 51 Muslim worshippers at two mosques in New Zealand's deadliest mass shooting told an appeals court on Monday he felt forced to admit to the crimes because of "irrationality" due to harsh prison conditions, as he sought to have his guilty pleas discarded.

A panel of 3 judges at the Court of Appeal in Wellington will hear five days of evidence about Brenton Tarrant's claim he was unfit to plead to the terrorism, murder and attempted murder charges he faced after the 2019 attack in the city of Christchurch. If his bid is successful, his case would return to court for a trial, which was averted when he admitted to the hate-fueled shooting in March 2020.

Israel's prez visits Bondi site, meets victims' kin



Melbourne: Israeli President Isaac Herzog started a state visit on Monday aimed at consoling grieving Australian Jews and improving bilateral relations by laying a wreath and stones at the site of an antisemitic attack in Sydney that left 15 dead.

Herzog met victims' families and survivors of the Dec 14 attack on a Jewish festival at Bondi Beach. He laid the wreath and two stones he had brought from Jerusalem at the rain-swept

Bondi Pavilion near the site of the massacre. The pavilion became an impromptu memorial in the days after the tragedy as flowers and cards were placed there.

The Israeli president said the stones would remain at Bondi in memory of the victims and as a reminder that good people of all faiths and nations "will continue to hold strong in the face of terror, violence and hatred, and that we shall overcome this evil together".

Briefs

NEW DELHI
'Pak will have advantage in Colombo'

India were always mentally prepared to face Pakistan in the T20 World Cup league game and the neighbouring country's recent decision to end its boycott has only firmed up the team's focus on cricketing matters, assistant coach **Ryan ten Doeschate** said on Monday. Pakistan had earlier announced that it would skip the February 15 contest against India in Colombo citing government directives, but over the weekend the PCB conveyed to the ICC that the team would take part in all its scheduled matches.

CHENNAI
NZ's Seifert, Allen blow UAE away

The New Zealand opening pair of **Tim Seifert** and **Finn Allen** went on a rampage against the UAE bowling attack to make short work of the 174-run target, firing the Blacks Caps to a 10-wicket win in the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday. The UAE did well to post 173 for six, their highest total in tournament history following fine fifties captain Muhammad Waseem (66 not out off 45) and Alishan Sharafu (55 off 4) at the top of the order.

NEW DELHI
Netherlands keep Super 8 hopes alive

Bas de Leede hit an assured 72 as the Netherlands kept their Super 8 hopes alive in the men's T20 World Cup with a confident seven-wicket win against Namibia in their Group A match here Tuesday, bouncing back from a painful defeat to Pakistan from a strong position. The Netherlands produced a tidy, disciplined bowling performance to restrict Namibia to a modest 156 for 8 in the clash between the associate nations despite a spirited middle-overs recovery.

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PREVIEW | England look to stamp authority against the mercurial West Indies

WC giants in exciting face-off

MUMBAI

Wankhede will witness the mercurial clash between two-time champions England and West Indies in the Group C encounter of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on Wednesday. Both sides met here in the league stage of the 2016 T20 World Cup, and Chris Gayle lit up the stadium with a 48-ball hundred to star in a thumping win.

England wicketkeeper batter **Jos Buttler** still remembers the game vividly. "Chris Gayle was one of the top T20 batters, and he took us apart. I remember Moeen Ali bowled well in the game until Gayle ruined his figures with three sixes," Buttler said at the pre-match press conference on Tuesday here.

Both sides later qualified for the final in Kolkata; it wasn't Gayle storm there, but Carlos Braithwaite's four sixes in the last over of Ben Stokes sank the English after Marlon Samuel anchored the chase. West Indies has fond memories of beating India here in the semifinal of the 2016 edition. England had lost all the first five games to West Indies in the T20 World Cups, until England pulled it back with two back-to-back wins in recent times.

The last time the T20 World Cup, Windies were bowled for a paltry 53, with Adil Rashid spinning a web. West Indies have been inconsistent in recent times, coming here after a 3-0 series loss to England and a 2-1 loss to minnows Nepal.

England, besides beating West Indies in a bilateral series, also won the series in New Zealand more recently. However, England survived a scare against Nepal in their opening match at the same venue, winning by just four runs thanks to Sam Curran, who defended ten



England's Sam Curran celebrates after winning the match against Nepal at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

Teams (from):

England XI: Harry Brook (c), Jos Buttler (WK), Tom Banton, Phil Salt, Jacob Bethell, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid.

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

runs in the last over.

That was an afternoon game and England may feel more comfortable in the evening game. Skipper **Harry Brook** and **Jacob Bethell** scored fifties in the last game, and they will want Buttler, Phil Salt, and Tom Banton to fire at the top. England bats deep. Trump bowler **Rashid** went wicketless against Nepal and will want to stamp authority with fellow spinner **Liam Dawson**.

Overton replaces Wood

England have already named their playing XI with **Jamie Overton** replacing **Luke Wood** for Wednesday's game. **Jofra Archer**, **Overton**, will like to support **Curran** in the pace department. **Shimron Hetmyer** scored a half-century for the West Indies in the previous game against Scotland, and they will want the likes of **Shai Hope** and **Brandon King** to contribute at the top.

Buttler on using walkie-talkie

MUMBAI

Senior batter **Jos Buttler** said cricket is relatively behind other sports in relaying messages to on-field players, after head coach **Brendon McCullum** was seen communicating with England captain **Harry Brook** through a walkie-talkie during drinks break in their T20 World Cup clash against Nepal here.

But in some sports like Formula 1, Race Engineers direct drivers in real-time via radio, covering strategy, engine settings, tire management, and safety info. In football, managers are allowed to communicate with players from the side-

lines. "I think so, there's (been) walkie-talkies for a while to be fair. But then the communication from top to bottom has always been really good in the group," Buttler told reporters when asked if the motive behind using walkie-talkie was way for McCullum to have a more hands-on approach.

"Baz can sit with his feet up and his sunglasses on and look very relaxed, but he's as sharp a coach as I've ever worked with. He doesn't miss a beat," Buttler said.

"I think also for cricket in general, actually, coaches are getting more involved in real-time in cricket? I've played in the IPL, at GT Ashish Nehra is very active on the boundary rope.

Wankhede has been kind to us: Sammy

WI head coach says team is in good space despite their off-field issues

MUMBAI

West Indies coach **Darren Sammy** won two T20 World Cups for West Indies in 2012 and 2016. During the 2016 T20 World Cup, they won an exciting high-scoring first match against England at the Wankhede and then defeated India at the same venue in the semifinals before going on to win the final in Kolkata.

Sammy is back here as West Indies head coach, and he wants to repeat that performance, countering plenty of off-field issues that were there during his captaincy also.

"2016 was a special year for us. We won, the ladies won (Women's T20 World Cup), and the U-19 team won as well. We had many issues (off-field) then, and circumstances remain the same. So, many battles to fight. But these players are dedicated, resilient, and a good bunch. There is confidence within the group of winning games. Our players have experience of playing in India," Sammy said at the pre-match press conference here on Tuesday.

West Indies beat Scotland in the opening match. "We started the tournament well. Mumbai has been kind to us in World Cups. We are taking one game at a time and looking forward to the game. The focus is on England tomorrow, and we will try to put our best foot forward," he added.

West Indies were at their peak between 2009 and 2016, with the likes of **Chris Gayle**, **Darren Bravo**, **Kieron Pollard**, **Marlon Samuels**, and **Sammy** known for power hitting. Now



2016 was a special year for us. We won, the ladies won (Women's T20 World Cup), and the U-19 team won as well.

Darren Sammy
West Indies head coach

they will rely on **Shimron Hetmyer**, **Rovman Powell**, and **Sherfane Rutherford** to hit big sixes.

"Our players were known for power hitting, but now other teams have caught up. We played many series against England in the last 3 years, I think there and there were some high scoring games.

The surface on Wankhede tells to put some good runs on the board. We might have to hit more sixes and be smart. Both teams have power; it will come to which team executes more with the ball," Sammy said.

The Caribbean team's head coach praised skipper **Shai Hope** and said the team is in good space.

Spin-heavy Australia start as favourites against Ireland

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood will be missed by the Aussies in the clash against the Irish

COLOMBO

Their recent form has been far from convincing and the loss of two lead pacers has only added to Australia's woes but the former champions will still start as overwhelming favourites in their T20 World Cup opener against Ireland here on Wednesday.

Pat Cummins, **Mitchell Starc** and **Josh Hazlewood** form one of most potent fast-bowling units of the modern game and Australia will miss their services in the showpiece event.

While **Cummins** and **Hazlewood** were ruled out due to injuries, left-arm pacer **Starc** has retired from the format internationally.

In their absence, **Nathan Ellis** is expected to lead the pace attack but even he has an injury cloud hovering over him and is yet to play a game since missing the Big Bash League (BBL) final with a hamstring issue.

Seasoned leg-spinner **Adam Zampa** is entering the



Teams (from):

Australia: Mitchell Marsh (c), Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Tim David, Ben Dwarshuis, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Matthew Kuhnemann, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Renshaw, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

Ireland: Paul Stirling (c), Mark Adair, Ross Adair, Ben Calitz, Curtis Campher, Gareth Delany, George Dockrell, Matthew Humphreys, Josh Little, Barry McCarthy, Harry Tector, Tim Tector, Lorcan Tucker, Ben White, Craig Young.

tournament after overcoming a groin issue, which made it possible for him to be available for the group stage.

Considering the conditions across the sub-continent,

Zampa will be critical to Australia's hopes in the tournament, which they last won in 2022. The team lost in the semifinals of the last edition to India.

Afghanistan look to bounce back against SA

AHMEDABAD

With only two teams slated to make the Super Eight stage from each group, Afghanistan find themselves in a must-win situation when they take on an in-form South Africa in their Group D match of the T20 World Cup, here on Wednesday.

South Africa are perched at the top, head and shoulders above the rest as their 57-run victory over minnows Canada bolstered their Net Run Rate to 2.850 along with two points.

On the other hand, a five-wicket defeat to New Zealand (+1.162) saw Afghanistan slip to third with a Net Run Rate of -1.162, which they would have to improve in order to advance to the next round.

Therefore, the competition in Group D can be expected to be intense in the coming days as Afghanistan are among the teams to beat in the tournament.

South Africa, the last edition's runner-up, and the resolute Kiwis will heat up the battle as Group D is set to witness some tension in the first round.

Farhan stars in Pakistan's clinical win over USA

Agha-led side won by 32 runs in the Group A clash

COLOMBO

Pakistan were powered by **Sahibzada Farhan's** half-century and some disciplined bowling as they beat USA by 32 runs to register their second victory of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) Ground, here on Tuesday.

Chasing a mammoth 191 for victory, USA could muster only 158/8 in 20 overs with **Shubham Ranjane's** 51 and **Shayan Jahangir's** 49 the only noteworthy knocks.

Scoreboard

Pakistan: S Ayub c Netravalkar b van Schalkwyk 19, S Farhan c Krishnamurthi b H Singh 73, S Agha c S Jahangir b van Schalkwyk 1, B Azam c M Kumar b M Mohsin 46, M Nawaz c S Jahangir b Netravalkar 5, S Khan c Gous b Van Schalkwyk 30, F Ashraf c Netravalkar b Van Schalkwyk 1, U Khan (run out) 0, S Shah Afridi (not out) 9, A Ahmed (run out) 0. Extras: (LB-2, NB-



Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan hits a six during the T20 World Cup match. PTI

Earlier, a power-filled fifty by opener **Farhan** lifted Pakistan to a healthy 190 in their Group A match.

Babar (46, 32b) and **Farhan** (73, 41b) added 81 runs for the third wicket as Pakistan recovered well from a slightly worrying 56 for two after the Power Play segment.

After being asked to bat first, Pakistan were initially cruising at 56 for no loss in five overs. But pacer **Shadley van Schalkwyk** (4/25) got rid of both **Saim Ayub** and skipper **Salman Agha** in the space of five deliveries.

S Shah Afridi 51, S Krishnamurthi b A Ahmed 0, H Singh c M Nawaz b U Tariq 6, M Mohsin b U Tariq 0, S van Schalkwyk (not out) 1, E Adil (not out) 1. Extras (LB-1, NB-1, W-3) 5. Total (For 8 wks, 20 overs) 158. Fall of wickets: 1-42, 2-58, 3-69, 4-123, 5-124, 6-152, 7-152, 8-156. Bowling: S Shah Afridi 4-0-42-1, S Ayub 1-0-11-0, A Ahmed 4-0-30-1, M Nawaz 3-0-21-1, S Khan 4-0-26-2, U Tariq 4-0-27-3

ICC-PCB

Thank ICC for this amicable solution to impasse: Shukla

NEW DELHI

BCCI vice-president **Rajeev Shukla** on Tuesday praised the International Cricket Council (ICC) for "finding a very good solution" that prompted Pakistan to withdraw its boycott of the T20 World Cup match against India.

The high-profile India-Pakistan match on February 15 in Colombo will go ahead as scheduled after Pakistan's government, following per-

suation from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, decided to withdraw its boycott call.

"I would like to thank the ICC chairman (Jay Shah) and its office-bearers on behalf of the BCCI for finding a very good solution. After discussions with the Pakistan Cricket Board and the Bangladesh Cricket Board, and after listening to all sides, this decision has been taken," Shukla told reporters.

"This decision is very important for cricket. Cricket must go and the

World Cup will now be a big success. This is a big achievement as far as ICC is concerned. Even Bangladesh Cricket Board has praised the ICC, so it has listened to all sides and arrived at the decision after taking into consideration the interests of everyone.

"Ultimately cricket is most important for everyone, international cricket is important for everyone," the veteran administrator, who is also a Congress leader, added.

It was clear that Pakistan would withdraw the boycott after Bangladesh Cricket Board chief **Aminul Islam** issued a statement in Dhaka urging the country to take the field for the greater good of the game.

Pakistan Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** also received a call from Sri Lanka President **Anura Kumara Dissanayake**, who too urged him to allow the team to play the match.

The government statement came after Pakistan Cricket

Board chief **Mohsin Naqvi** briefed **Sharif** about his dialogue with the ICC.

The ICC made some concessions on the issue by deciding not to impose any penalty on Bangladesh, which was forced out of the World Cup after refusing to play in India citing security concerns.

The Pakistan government's decision to boycott the India game was in support of Bangladesh after the country was replaced by Scotland on the tournament roster.

