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

Briefs

KOLKATA

Mamata slams BJP, honours MP

On International Mother Language Day, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee extended global greetings while slamming the BJP for allegedly attacking Bengali speakers in other states. Addressing a Kolkata event, she accused the Centre of attempting to "capture Bengal" by force through electoral roll revisions. Despite the political friction, Banerjee shared the stage with BJP Rajya Sabha MP Anant Maharaj, conferring upon him the state's prestigious Bangabihushan award for his contributions to the Rajbanshi language.

PATNA

Tejashwi slams Bihar's law and order

A fierce political slugfest erupted on Saturday as RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav released a "crime bulletin," accusing the NDA government of shielding rapists. Yadav claimed law and order has collapsed, with horrific crimes against minors rising under the "double-engine" regime. The NDA hit back, with JD(U) dismissing the allegations as "social media drama" born from the frustration of defeat. BJP Minister Dilip Jaiswal maintained that the rule of law prevails and refused to take Yadav's remarks seriously.

BENGALURU

NIA nabs absconding terrorist

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday arrested Arshad Khan, a terror suspect who had been absconding for two years after obtaining bail. Khan was allegedly part of an eight-member gang plotting serial blasts across Karnataka. The module was reportedly coordinated by Nasir, a Bengaluru serial blast accused, from within prison. During the initial 2023 raid, police recovered grenades and explosive materials from Khan's residence.

PATNA

Bihar-born UK Min lauds progress

Bihar-born UK Minister Kanishka Narayan hailed the state's technological growth during a visit after 20 years. Meeting JD(U)'s Sanjay Jha, he discussed AI cooperation and shared strategic priorities. Jha noted that Bihar is ready to leverage AI in agriculture, health, and services to match global advancements.

BLAME GAME | HM claimed the Congress avoids deporting illegal immigrants to secure their support during elections

Infiltrators to be out of country in 5 years: Shah

GUWAHATI

Asserting that if India can be free of Naxals, it can also be free of infiltrators, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said that the illegal immigrants would be removed not only from the electoral rolls but also from the country in the next five years.

Shah was addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone for a new campus of the Assam Police 10th Battalion, which he said would be constructed on land freed from encroachments by infiltrators.

Attacking Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Shah said that the Congress leader had once said that infiltrators would be removed, but the "Congress can't do so as illegal immigrants are its votebank."

"It is not enough to just evict infiltrators from encroached lands, they must also be sent out of India," he said.

The Election Commission is conducting a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and it is obvious



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the 87th Raising Day Parade of the CRPF, in Guwahati on Saturday

Naxalism to be eliminated from India by March 31: Min

Guwahati: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said Naxalism would be eliminated from the country by the March 31 deadline set by the government. Naxalism had spread across 12 states and countless districts of the country, and when the Centre resolved to uproot the menace, the CRPF and CoBRA force personnel played the most crucial role in the effort, he said. The home minister noted that such a huge, complex and difficult task was completed in just three years.

that the infiltrators will be identified, but "Rahul Gandhi is protesting against the exercise, and hurling bomb after bomb but these do not make

sounds of even firecrackers".

While SIR is underway in several other states, Special Revision (SR) is being conducted in Assam.

Will free 5 lakh bighas: Himanta

KAMRUP

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the BJP will free five lakh bighas of illegally encroached land in the next five years, after it forms the government for the third consecutive time in the state. Ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the BJP will make "illegal Bangladeshis" leave the state. Addressing the foundation-laying ceremony of the 10th Battalion of Assam Police Headquarters, the CM recounted the state government's work in the run-up to the polls, and said that they have evicted encroachers from 1.5 lakh bighas of land in the last five years.

India-Brazil aim for \$20b trade in 5 years

MUMBAI

India and Brazil on Saturday set a target of raising bilateral trade to USD 20 billion annually within five years and signed a key pact on cooperation in critical minerals, following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The two leaders also agreed to deepen cooperation in defence, energy, healthcare and digital infrastructure, stressing the need for stronger strategic ties in a fragmented global order.

Addressing the media, Modi said both countries shared a firm stand against terrorism. "India and Brazil are unanimous that terrorism and its supporters are enemies of humanity," he said, adding that reform of global institutions was essential to tackle emerging challenges.

Lula is on a five-day visit to India from February 18 to attend the India AI Impact Summit and hold bilateral talks.

Modi noted that Brazil is India's largest trading partner in Latin America. Bilateral trade stood at USD 12 billion in 2024-25, including USD 6.77 billion in Indian exports and USD 5.43 billion in imports.



- **Rare earth minerals:** Tech access, investment boost
- **Postal cooperation:** E-commerce and services strengthened
- **MSME, crafts:** Global market access boost
- **Digital partnership:** India Stack, tech collaboration boost
- **Traditional knowledge:** AYUSH recognition push
- **Drug regulation:** Pharma cooperation strengthened
- **Mass communication:** Student and faculty exchange boost
- **Film institute:** Media collaboration expanded
- **10-year visa:** Easier business travel
- **Mining cooperation:** Steel supply security boost

He described the critical minerals agreement as vital for building resilient supply chains. Both sides also signed agreements on digital partnership, mining, MSMEs, healthcare and traditional knowledge.

reflects deep mutual trust, and we will continue to strengthen this partnership," Modi said, adding that India and Brazil would work together to advance the priorities of the Global South through dialogue and diplomacy.

Chirag rules out mother's political entry



PATNA

Union minister Chirag Paswan dismissed speculations about his mother Reena Paswan contesting the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls, noting that she wants to stay away from politics.

Paswan, whose LJP (Ram Vilas) does not have any representation in the Rajya Sabha, made the statement when reporters asked him about the speculations on Friday night.

"Let me make it very clear that my mother is not a claimant for any of the five Rajya Sabha seats for which elections have been announced. She may have appeared in public in her capacity as a mother or as a wife, but she wants to stay away from active politics," he said.

"But, I must add, that all five seats will be bagged by the NDA," he said.

The elections to 37 Rajya Sabha seats, including five from Bihar, will be held on March 16.

At present, two of these five seats are held by the JD(U), two by the RJD, and one by the RLM.

SIR: Bengal judges' leave cancelled

KOLKATA

The Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court on Saturday ordered cancellation of leave of all judicial officers posted in different courts of West Bengal till March 9, to ensure compliance with directions passed by the Supreme Court for completion of special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state.

As per the direction of the Supreme Court, the High Court's Chief Justice Sujoy Paul held a meeting with various top officials of the central and state governments.

A notification issued by the high court's registrar general said that all leaves, except under medical emergency, granted earlier to any judicial

officer, stand cancelled till March 9, and those already on leave were directed to join their respective courts and offices by February 23.

The high-level meeting of the Chief Justice was attended by West Bengal's chief electoral officer, and the state's chief secretary, home secretary, DGP, advocate general, additional solicitor general representing the Centre and the registrar general at the high court premises on Saturday afternoon.

The notification said that the Chief Justice directed that all judicial officers, posted as district and sessions judges/chief judges, additional district and sessions judges, as well as those posted on deputation, are refrained from taking any leave with immediate effect till March 9.

480 companies of CAPF to be deployed in Bengal polls

KOLKATA

Ahead of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections, the Election Commission will initially deploy 480 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) across the state beginning March 1.

According to sources, initial 240 companies of central forces will come to the state on March 1 and the remaining 240 companies will

come on March 10. The sources also mentioned that the central forces will give guard to the EVMs in the strong rooms and will also guard the counting centres during the election process.

Meanwhile, following the Supreme Court's order DGP Peeyush Pandey, Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty, and Chief Election Officer Manoj Agarwal visited Calcutta High Court to hold a meeting with the Chief Justice.

Raj loses 31L voters under SIR

JAIPUR

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls has resulted in the deletion of 31,36,286 voters in Rajasthan. The Election Department published the final voter list after the SIR for 199 assembly seats on Saturday. After the release of the final SIR of the voter list, the state now has 51.5 million voters, compared to 54.6 million voters before the SIR that began on October 27, 2025.

As many as 41.84 lakh voters were deleted in the draft list published in



December last year, and since then, according to the data released by the Election Department, 12.91 lakh new voters have been added, while 2.42 lakh names have been removed from the voter list.

The sex ratio in the final voter list has improved by 2 points, with the number of female voters increasing. At the time of the draft list, the

sex ratio, i.e., the number of female voters per thousand male voters, was 909, which has now increased to 911. The sex ratio has increased by 7 points in the Jaipur district, while Kota has reported a 6-point increase. Ajmer, Sirohi, Dungarpur, Bundi, Jhalawar, and Baran saw a 4-point increase.

The number of young electors (18-19 years age group) increased by 4,35,061 (0.82%) between draft and final publication. Notable district-wise increases include Jaipur (1.30%), Barmer (1.26%), Bharatpur (1.22%), Phalodi (1.18%), and Bundi (1.09%).

PM launches new chip project

New Delhi: The Prime Minister performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the HCL-Foxconn Joint Venture project, India Chip Pvt Ltd, in Uttar Pradesh, via video conferencing.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the semiconductor chip market in the 21st century, noting India's growing partnership in its supply chain.

He further stated that "India has so far approved 10 semiconductor fabrication and packaging projects under its Semiconductor Mission, adding that "four of these units are set to commence production very soon."

Scuffle over school name, MLA booked

Dehradun: A scuffle broke out on Saturday at the Directorate of Elementary Education here between its director and supporters of BJP MLA Umesh Sharma alias 'Kau' over changing of name of a school, leaving the official with injuries.

A video of the incident has also surfaced on the internet.

Police said an FIR under sections 121(1) (causing hurt to a public servant), 191(2) (unlawful assembly), 324(3) (loss or damage to property), 351(3) (criminal intimidation), 352 (provoking breach of peace) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered at Raipur police station against the MLA and other unknown people.

PIL demands probe into misuse of funds

CHANDIGARH

A PIL seeking judicial intervention over alleged irregularities in the grants under central rural development schemes including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been filed in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The petitioner, Sanjiv Kumar, a resident of Mukerian town of Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, alleged that there is no transparency or supervision of the funds management of the panchayats in Punjab.

Referring to his application

filed under RTI Act in October last year seeking the records relating to the usage of funds of Musahibpur village, he alleged that he did not get any response to his queries asked in the application nor through its appeals under the RTI Act for the same so far.

However, the panchayat records show various irregularities in bills and works, he alleged and added that he had also filed a complaint with the vigilance bureau, Punjab, but to no avail.

Seeking time-bound inquiries into the grants' utilisation, the petitioner also sought directions for immediate RTI compliance.

Bus service trial via Dhaka starts

AGARTALA

The operator of the India-Bangladesh bus service connecting Agartala with Kolkata via Dhaka, which has been suspended for a year following political turmoil in Bangladesh, began a trial run on Saturday for resumption of the service, an official said.

No fresh permission is needed to recommence the service as the agreement between the governments has not been cancelled. Tripura CM Manik Saha welcomed the initiative to resume the India-Bangladesh bus service.

money special

US SC order to give immediate relief to Indian exporters

NEW DELHI

Indian exporters are set to receive immediate relief following the US Supreme Court's ruling on the US administration tariffs, according to Manoj Mishra, Partner at Grant Thornton Bharat.

The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday struck down a huge chunk of President Donald Trump's far-reaching tariff agenda, delivering a major rebuke of the president's key economic policy. The majority ruled 6-3 that the law undergirding those import duties "does not authorize the President to impose tariffs." However, in a swift response, Trump announced a sweep-



ing new 10% global tariff across all trading partners, marking what he signalled as the next phase of his trade strategy after the SC blocked his previous tariff authority.

The president also defended the India trade arrangement, calling it fair and reiterating that the United States will not face duties under the pact. Mishra said, "Indian exporters will get immediate relief, and they will not be required to pay that 25% reciprocal tariff. Even if

we would have entered into a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), it would have been reduced to only 18%. So I would say it is very good news for consumers in the US as well as exporters in India."

He acknowledged that in the long run, India would miss the slight advantage it had under the BTA, where it was supposed to pay only 18% reciprocal tariff versus 25% for competitors from other labeling countries. "That will be a little disadvantage for us, but overall, since the product cost will go down in the USA and in a price-sensitive market, our MSMEs and products like textiles will get an advantage. It will be like a lifeline for them," Mishra explained.

SEBI suspends GM Singh in shocking vigilance scam

MUMBAI

Market regulator SEBI has slapped immediate suspension on one of its own General Managers — in a "sensitive vigilance matter" that has exposed deep rot inside the watchdog's Corporate Finance Department (CFD), Businessworld reported.

According to an official Office Order No. 08/2026 issued on February 20, 2026, the GM Achal Singh has been placed under suspension with immediate effect under Regulation 86(1)(a) of the SEBI (Employees' Service) Regulations, 2001, as disciplinary proceedings are now contemplated against him. Singh had crossed over from the income tax department to SEBI.

The order explicitly bars the suspended GM from entering

any SEBI office premises without prior written permission from the Chief General Manager, HRD. He will draw only subsistence allowance during the suspension period.

Sources reveal the explosive trigger The case centres on C2C Advances Systems — the controversial SME IPO that even a former full-time SEBI member had desperately tried (and failed) to stop. Singh is accused of directly interfering in an ongoing CFD department investigation into the company and misusing his official position to allegedly extort money from it.

This is the latest in a string of damning CFD-related scams that have repeatedly rocked SEBI in the past — raising serious questions about how deep the malaise runs inside the regulator's key market wing.

RBI likely to go for a prolonged policy rate pause

The odds of a monetary policy rate hike are quite low given benign core inflation, according to ICICI Bank Global Markets. As a result, it said, it expects a prolonged pause going into 2026-27, with focus on injecting durable liquidity regularly to ensure monetary transmission remains in place.

The report argued that any inflation upside shocks also seem unlikely, given the recent core inflation print in the new series. The recent increase in oil prices also works in favour of a rate pause.

The minutes of the monetary policy meeting that was held earlier this month showed that members expressed a more optimistic outlook on growth as reflected in various High Frequency Indicators and the recent trade deals with the US and the EU.

IMC hosts seminar on MSME Financing and Credit Support at MahaBharat Int'l Trade Expo 2026

IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IMC) conducted a seminar on "MSME Financing and Credit Support" at the MahaBharat International Trade Expo 2026 at MMRDA Grounds, BKC, Mumbai. The panel discussion focused on themes such as market access, credit growth, creation of an entrepreneurship ecosystem, advance technology and skilling, commercial credit, support to MSMEs for import exports and more. Pravin Mulye, Deputy General Manager, Rural MSME Department, NABARD, highlighted NABARD's role and mandate in financing, credit and agriculture and mentioned the importance of development of entre-

preneurship ecosystems and NABARD's re-finance and support mechanisms. Open to visitors from 14th to 23rd February 2026 between 12:00 noon and 9:00 p.m. at MMRDA grounds, BKC, Mumbai the MahaBharat International Trade Expo 2026 has brought together participation from 20 Indian States and 5 countries, presenting a diverse showcase of regional products, sectoral innovations, industrial capabilities, handicrafts, textiles, agro-based products and emerging enterprise offerings. The Expo offers vibrant shopping, business interaction and direct support to MSMEs from across India and abroad.

Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas: DM-SP heard complaints, 9 out of 47 cases resolved on the spot

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Bhadohi. In accordance with the government's intention, "Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas" was organized in all tehsils of the district on Saturday. Administrative and police officials jointly heard complaints to ensure prompt resolution of complaints, ensuring on-the-spot action in many cases. In Tehsil Aurai, District Magistrate Shailesh Kumar and Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik heard complaints. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Santosh Kumar Chak and other officials were present. In Tehsil Gyanpur, Additional District Magistrate (Judicial) Vijay Narayan Singh, SDM Bhan Singh, and the Police Circle Officer resolved complaints, while in Tehsil Bhadohi, SDM Arun Giri and other officials conducted hearings. During the hearing in Tehsil Bhadohi, a total of 47 applications were received, of which 9 cases were resolved immediately by a joint team. In the remaining cases, revenue and police teams were formed and directed to resolve them in a timely manner. Emphasizing inter-departmental coordina-



tion, the District Magistrate directed that a district officer be designated as a team leader for each revenue and police team. He directed that the team leader should conduct a field inspection and submit a report on the same day. He clarified that paperwork will not be acceptable in resolving complaints. Communication with the

complainant should be ensured through transparent and quality resolution, otherwise action will be taken against the concerned person. Awareness and beneficiary-oriented camps were also organized by various departments on the occasion of Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas. Information was provided to the public through

Child Development Nutrition, Ayushman Golden Card, Family Planning, Old Age Pension of the Social Welfare Department, Mission Shakti Scheme of the Women Welfare Department, and the Revenue Department's help desk.

The DM stated that if complaints are

resolved satisfactorily at the tehsil level, complainants will not need to complain at higher levels. Police and revenue officials were instructed to conduct joint field inspections and ensure fair resolution. He stated that the government is committed to prompt and quality resolution and no negligence will be tolerated.

Court orders FIR against Shankaracharya Avimukteshwarananda and disciple, says decision welcomed

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Additional District Magistrate (ADJ) Rape and POCSO Special Court has directed the Jhansi police station to register an FIR and investigate allegations of sexual abuse against Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwarananda Saraswati of Jyotish Peeth. The court has also ordered the investigation to be conducted against Shankaracharya and his disciple Swami Mukundanand Giri. Reacting to the court's order, Shankaracharya said he welcomes the court's decision. He said that only after the case is filed will the investigation and testimony process begin, which will reveal the truth. He called the allegations baseless and termed them a conspiracy against him. Shankaracharya said that he has been raising issues like cow protection, which is why he is being targeted. He also alleged that the complainant is a history-sheeter and a disciple of another religious saint. Meanwhile, following the court's directive, the police administration has begun preparing for further legal action in the case. Officials say that the investigation will be conducted in accordance with the court's order.

Allegations of illegal occupation of school land in Ghatwa, appeal to administration made

Prayagraj. The issue of illegal occupation of land belonging to Shrunji Rishi Inter College, located in Ghatwa village of the Karchana area, is gaining momentum. The school family has filed a complaint with the tehsil administration, seeking justice. Allegations are that the school's boundary wall was demolished to encroach upon the land, and illegal constructions were made on the campus, and shops were set up there. Principal Dr. Santosh Kumar Singh, along with teachers, submitted a complaint to SDM Bharti Meena, stating that most of the school's land has been encroached, leaving insufficient space for sports and other educational activities. This is affecting the school's academic environment. The school administration alleges that the encroachers demolished the toilets for boys and girls, promising to build new ones. However, no construction work has begun yet. Due to the lack of toilets, especially girl students are facing huge inconvenience. The Principal says that due to lack of basic facilities, the studies of the students are getting affected. It is also affecting the attendance of girl students, due to which the parents are angry. SDM Bharti Meena said that instructions have been given to investigate the matter and revenue officials were sent for site inspection. However, the school family alleges that on the spot the team tried to return by talking about a compromise. The school family has demanded immediate action from the administration to remove the encroachment and reconstruct the toilet, so that the students can get basic facilities and studies can go on smoothly.

Dispute erupts over land worth crores along the highway, case filed against four people

Prayagraj. A dispute over land worth crores of rupees located along the Prayagraj-Mirzapur Highway in Haujaktorwa Bastar village, under the Bhirpur outpost of the Karchana police station, is deepening.

Tractor collision leads to tragic death of elderly man, village plunges into mourning

Utran. A 65-year-old man died on the spot in a tragic road accident on Saturday evening in Barethi village, under the Uttaran police station area of Prayagraj. The deceased has been identified as Ranjeet Singh, son of the late Yashwant Singh, a resident of Barethi. According to reports, a Mahindra tractor carrying green wood was heading from Balipur towards Jagatpur. Ranjeet Singh was walking home at Barethi intersection when the



speeding tractor struck him and crushed him, killing him on the



spot. Upon receiving information about the incident, police arrived at the scene, took possession of

the body and sent it for post-mortem. Police have seized the tractor and detained one person and begun questioning. It is reported that the deceased were three brothers, two of whom have already passed away. Their family includes their wife Nirmala Devi, son Pankaj, and daughter Vandana, who is married. Due to this incident which happened around 7 pm, there is an atmosphere of mourning in the entire area.

Meja Urja Nigam (P) Limited distributed 482 assistive devices to 348 Divyang (persons with disabilities) under its CSR initiative Meja

Meja

On 20 February 2026, M/s Meja Urja Nigam (P) Limited took a significant and commendable step towards social inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. In collaboration with Aarogya Hospital and Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), MUNPL distributed a total of 482 assistive devices to 348 Divyang beneficiaries from nearby rural areas. The objective of this special drive was to promote self-reliance among persons with disabilities, reduce the challenges they face in daily life, and integrate them into the mainstream of society. The distributed assistive devices included motorized tricycles, hand-operated tricycles, wheelchairs, hearing aids, smart sticks, and other essential aids. These devices were identified and provided based on the individual needs of the beneficiaries to enhance their mobility, communication abilities, and confidence. Modern devices such as motorized tricycles and smart sticks, in particular, will enable beneficiaries to move independently and perform daily activities with greater ease. The program was inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Chief Guest Shri G. Srinivasa Rao, CEO, MUNPL, and Smt. Kavitha Rao, President, Aparajita Mahila Samaj. In his inspiring address, the CEO, MUNPL stated that the initiative goes beyond mere distribution of



equipment; it is a mark of respect for the dignity and self-esteem of specially-abled individuals who have faced life's challenges with determination, courage, and confidence. He emphasized that physical challenges cannot limit a person's dreams, talents, or capabilities, and with proper support and opportunities, they can significantly contribute to nation-building. Smt. Kavitha Rao appreciated the CSR initiative, calling it a true example of compassion and social responsibility. She stated that persons with disabilities are an integral part of society, and providing them support, respect, and equal opportunities is a moral responsibility for all. Such assistive devices not only make life easier but also pave the way for self-dependence and renewed confidence. The CEO further added that a strong nation can only be built when every section of society—especially persons with disabilities—receives dignity, equal opportunities, and access to resources. He urged everyone to actively participate in building an inclusive society and to foster sensi-

tivity and support toward Divyang individuals. Senior officials including Shri Pankaj Kumar Gupta (Chief General Manager, Engineering), Shri Narendra Nath Sinha (General Manager, Operation & Maintenance), Shri Ashok Kumar Samal (General Manager, Maintenance), Dr. A.K. Chaudhary (Chief Medical Officer), Shri Angshu Barua (Chief Finance Officer, MUNPL), Shri Vivek Chandra (Additional General Manager, HR), Shri Anil Kumar (Vice Chairman), department heads, ALIMCO representatives, and a large number of rural residents were present on the occasion. During the program, beneficiaries expressed their gratitude and shared that these assistive devices would bring positive transformation to their lives. This initiative will not only improve their quality of life but also strengthen the values of social inclusion, equality, and humanitarian commitment. MUNPL reaffirmed its commitment to continue such welfare initiatives for regional development and social upliftment in the future.

Children gave melodious performances at the annual function at Rudra Prayag Vidya Mandir

Children were encouraged with the Saraswati Gyan Award. Today's children will be the future of tomorrow - Chief Guest - Dheeraj Kumar

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Phaphamau/Prayagraj

The annual function for the children was held with great pomp and show at Rudra Prayag Vidya Mandir, a renowned school in the field of education, located on the Ganga bank of Phaphamau/Prayagraj district. Like every year, this year too, the annual function was held with great pomp and show. Gauri Dwivedi, Principal and main coordinator of the program, explained that this school, which began in 2006, has continued to grow and continue to grow, and today, celebrating its 20th anniversary, is celebrating its annual function. The children, who have excelled in academics and sports, were honored with the Saraswati Gyan Award, encouraging



them. The program began with the lighting of lamps and a prayer service. Following this, the chief guest was DIG Dheeraj Kumar of the CRPF Group Center, Padila, and Deputy Commandant Neeraj Kumar of the 101st Battalion, RAF, Shantipuram, who served

as special guests. They were honored with robes and mementos. The children's program began with a Ganesh Puja performance, in which they presented the victory of Dharma over Adharma from the Mahabharata. There were

also patriotic performances. CRPF Group Center, Padila, DIG Dheeraj Kumar, who served as the chief guest, stated that this school is a temple of education and values, and that today's children will be the future leaders of tomorrow and will continue to proudly uphold the nation's name.

Present on the occasion were school administrator Satyendra Dwivedi, members of the school family, including Shailesh Tiwari, Jyoti Pandey, Jyoti Ojha, Sarvdev, Amit Singh, Gyan Prakash, Swati Tripathi, Diksha Tripathi, Shikha Shukla, and the entire school staff. The children's melodious performances captivated everyone, and everyone present cheered and cheered the children on with applause. The program was well-conducted by Suvarna and Kuldeep.

Farmers will surround the Divisional Commissioner's office on March 14th to raise farmers' issues, a Mahapanchayat will be held under the leadership of Tikait

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A Kisan Kranti Mahapanchayat will be held at the Divisional Commissioner's office on March 14th, 2026, to address various farmers' demands. This decision was taken at a meeting of the Bharatiya Kisan Union held at the Patthar Church complex. The Mahapanchayat will be led by farmer leader Chaudhary Rakesh Tikait. Officials at the meeting stated that a



large number of farmers from Prayagraj and surrounding areas will

attend the Mahapanchayat and strongly present their

problems to the administration. Youth State President Anuj

Singh stated that farmers' rights will not be compromised and the

movement will continue until their demands are met. Issues raised at the Mahapanchayat include fair compensation as per the current circle rate during land acquisition, ending the practice of setting low compensation rates, preventing fertile land from being declared green belts, protecting crops from stray animals, and addressing other local issues. Organization officials said that farmers are united to fight for their rights and will fight decisively to protect water, forests and land.

Peace Committee Meeting at Suriyawan Police Station Regarding Festivals, Appeal to Maintain Harmony



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Gopiganj (Bhadohi). In view of the upcoming Holi festival, Holi, Eid ul Fitr, Navratri, and Ram Navami, a Peace Committee meeting was held on Friday at the Suriyawan Police Station premises. Religious leaders from various communities, village heads, prominent citizens, and digital volunteers participated in the meeting.

The meeting was organized under the direction of Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik and the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police Shubham Agarwal. In the presence of Circle Officer Bhadohi Ashok Kumar Mishra, Tehsildar Bhadohi, and Station House Officer Suriyawan, people were interacted with, their problems were heard, and suggestions were

taken. Officials appealed to those present to celebrate all festivals peacefully and harmoniously. It was clarified that no processions or religious processions would be held without permission. Religious events that obstruct roads were also prohibited. Special emphasis was placed on following the guidelines issued by the government. Police officials stated that strict action will be taken against antisocial and unruly elements.

Anyone who notices any suspicious activity should immediately inform the relevant police station so that necessary action can be taken in a timely manner. The meeting also stated that special monitoring is being maintained on social media. Strict legal action will be taken against those who post any objectionable, misleading, or rumor-mongering content.

A tearful farewell to martyr Agniveer Dheeraj Gupta, thousands of people including MP, DM, SP paid tribute



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Gopiganj (Bhadohi). When the mortal remains of martyr Agniveer Dheeraj Kumar Gupta, a resident of Jethupur village in Aurai development block, arrived in the village on Saturday, the entire area was plunged into mourning. Public representatives, administrative officials, and thousands of people gathered to offer wreaths and bid farewell to the brave son. The martyr's body was brought from Jammu and Kashmir, wrapped in the tricolor,

with full state honors by soldiers from his battalion. The army and police personnel saluted with their weapons lowered to the national anthem. During this, the atmosphere reverberated with slogans of "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Martyr Dheeraj Gupta Amar Rahein." On this occasion, MP Dr. Vinod Kumar Bind, District Magistrate Shailesh Kumar, Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Manglik, along with other public representatives and officials, paid tribute by offering wreaths



to the martyr's mortal remains. Officials met with the martyr's family—brother Neeraj Kumar, mother, and other family members—to console them and assure them of all possible assistance. The martyr's mother was presented with a tricolor with state honors. The funeral procession was taken to Bhogaon Ghat, about five kilometers from the martyr's home, and a large crowd gathered. People showered flowers along the way to pay tribute. At the funeral site, the military and police forces

conducted the last rites with full state honors. Additional Superintendent of Police Shubham Agarwal, Additional District Magistrate Kunwar Virendra Maurya, Sub-District Magistrate Aurai Shyam Mani Tripathi, Circle Officer Rajiv Kumar Singh, along with a large number of public representatives and local residents were present. All paid tribute to the martyr's supreme sacrifice and stated that his sacrifice always inspires the nation.

Despite the no-entry rule in Naribari market, overloaded trucks are running rampant, raising the risk of accidents

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Despite the no-entry rule in the Naribari market area of the district, overloaded trucks continue to operate. According to local residents and eyewitnesses, heavy trucks loaded with

sand and gravel ply the main road of the market throughout the day, posing a danger to the public. It is reported that the administration has implemented the no-entry rule due to the congestion in Naribari market, to restrict the movement of heavy vehicles and prevent accidents. Despite this, transporters

are ignoring the rules and operating heavy vehicles. Many trucks are also reported to be overloaded, which increases the risk of road accidents and road accidents. Local shopkeepers say that the market is crowded with customers throughout the day. In such a situation, trucks suddenly passing at high

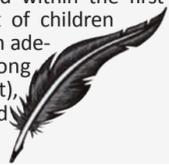
speed can cause a major accident. According to eyewitnesses, several minor accidents have occurred in the past, resulting in injuries. While no major incidents have occurred so far, the situation remains concerning. Villagers allege that the responsible personnel posted at the Naribari no-

entry point are not taking the necessary action to stop trucks. If strict action is not taken in time, a major accident could occur in the future. Residents have demanded that the administration strictly enforce the no-entry rule and take immediate action against overloaded vehicles.

Editorial

Revamp anganwadi model for Viksit Bharat. Workers should be seen as frontline educators

Integrated Child Development Services Scheme — the Anganwadi Services Scheme was launched in 1975 as an innovative experiment to address maternal and child health, nutrition, and early childhood development. Aligned with the objectives to improve children's health, nutrition, and development, reduce mortality, morbidity, and dropout rates, and empower mothers through counselling, the ICDS framework is designed to nurture holistic development. Through a lifecycle approach, it targets children aged 0-6 years, pregnant and lactating mothers, and adolescent girls, delivering supplementary nutrition, immunisations, health check-ups, non-formal pre-school education, and nutrition counselling. Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are the focal points for delivering ICDS services, and Anganwadi workers (AWWs) and helpers are the fulcrum of rendering these vital services through AWCs and home visits. Today, through a strong network of more than 1.4 million Anganwadi centres (AWCs) covering 100 million particularly vulnerable mothers and children, ICDS has emerged as the largest service delivery program for mother care and child development. As ICDS celebrates 50 years this year, it presents a valuable opportunity to celebrate its achievements, reflect on the gaps and challenges, and propose a way forward to align with the futuristic needs of Viksit Bharat. Since this launch, ICDS boasts a robust framework that enables it to adapt and evolve meaningfully in the future. Its evolution to currently Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, combines schemes Poshan Abhiyaan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, and Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi, emphasising holistic development and real-time monitoring. Today, all AWCs and over 101 million beneficiaries are registered on the Poshan Tracker, enabling real time tracking of service delivery and outcomes. Over the years, ICDS has played a crucial role in equitably addressing malnutrition, early childhood care, and maternal health across India. India is moving in the right direction toward achieving the SDG 2030 targets for maternal and child mortality. Research has demonstrated that early childhood interventions targeting nutrition, education, and health can substantially enhance human capital, especially in developing countries. An IFPRI study published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation highlighted improvements in both equity and coverage of ICDS from 2006 to 2016, with increased service utilisation (58 per cent to 71 per cent), especially among Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Another study examining the linkages between utilisation of ICDS and underweight among children aged 6-59 months from 2015-16 to 2019-21, attributed improvements in ICDS utilisation to 9-12 per cent of the observed reduction in underweight children. A peer-reviewed study in The University of Chicago Press Journals found that children who were exposed to ICDS during the first three years of life completed 0.1-0.3 more grades of schooling than those who were not. As India advances towards Viksit Bharat, ICDS must not only strengthen its existing interventions but also embrace transformative paradigm shifts to effectively address emerging challenges, harness new opportunities, and align with the evolving aspirations of society. Firstly, the pace of improvement in nutrition needs to be accelerated. Malnutrition rates remain high—stunting among children under five is 36 per cent, underweight at 32.1 per cent, and anaemia prevalence at 67 per cent, especially in comparison to global benchmarks. Sub-optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, where only 42 per cent of infants are breastfed within the first hour, and only 11 per cent of children aged 6-23 months receive an adequate diet. Anaemia among pregnant women (52 per cent), children (67 per cent), and women of reproductive.



Religious autonomy isn't absolute. Imarat-e-Shariah protest in Patna sidelined



Imarat-e-Shariah, a strong socio-religious group with a big influence on a section of Indian Muslims, organised a huge protest on 29 June at Patna's Gandhi Maidan. The rally, named 'Waqf Bachao, Samvidhan Bachao — Save Waqf, Save the Constitution' — quickly gained momentum, with thousands of Muslim protesters from Bihar and nearby states vocally condemning the Waqf Act amendment as a violation of both constitutional rights and religious freedom. This was not just a protest; it was a firm declaration against a law perceived as an infringement on fundamental freedoms—freedoms that many believe must be protected at all costs. Speakers at the rally claimed that the Waqf Amendment Act crushes not only the Islamic principle of Waqf (charitable endowment) but also assaults the very core of religious autonomy. Faisal Wali Rahmani, head of Imarat-e-Shariah, made it clear: the Act is a dangerous overreach that jeopardises the community's ability to govern its own affairs. "This conference," he declared, "is a peaceful, constitutional demand to roll back this draconian legislation." His words rang out as a challenge to those who would allow such overreach to stand unchecked. I fully agree that every Indian has

the right to free speech and peaceful protest, as guaranteed by our Constitution. But the argument surrounding religious autonomy is far more complicated than it seems. This notion of autonomy isn't about personal religious practice—it's about collective and organisational control. The idea that a religious group should have the unrestricted right to manage its own affairs raises some troubling questions. First, does this imply that such a group is somehow separate, not truly a part of the larger nation? Second, is there not a risk in projecting this image of self-containment—as though the community exists outside the national fabric? The implications are far more profound than they may appear. What if every community or tribe starts to argue that no one has the right to interfere in their affairs, claiming that their practices and core values are above the reach of national laws or human rights? Imagine a community that argues the gov-

ernment should have no say in child marriage, defending it as a matter of religious or cultural tradition. Would such a stance be accepted simply because it aligns with the idea that each group should be able to uphold its own values? Surely, we would not accept such practices under the guise of religious freedom. At what point do we draw the line between protecting religious rights and ensuring that these practices don't violate basic human rights or endanger individuals? The core issue is whether any belief or practice—no matter how deeply rooted in religion or culture—can be allowed to override the fundamental principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. When leaders of the Muslim community, or any religious group, invoke the Constitution, they often present it as though it grants them an unfettered right to religious freedom—one that allows them to manage their affairs without interference from the state, its leg-

islature, or its judiciary. But what is overlooked is that this right to religious freedom is not absolute or separate from other constitutional values. It exists within a broader framework that includes human rights, equality, and justice for all citizens. The Constitution, in its design, ensures religious freedom—but it does so with the understanding that such freedom must never come at the expense of the dignity or rights of others. This means that the Constitution's values—those of equality and justice—must always take precedence over any individual or collective religious right when they begin to infringe on these fundamental principles. Once we are clear on this, we can oppose Waqf amendments that we believe infringe upon our rights. The idea that any community has the inherent right to manage its own affairs solely under the umbrella of constitutional rights is a dangerous one. As I make this distinction, it is crucial to point out some things. While the Patna protest may be framed as a defence of constitutional rights, the very organisation leading it—Imarat-e-Shariah—operates a parallel system within the Muslim Personal Law framework despite lacking formal judicial authority. The argument often put forward is that these bodies deal with matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and Waqf when all parties involved consent to the process. However, we all know the reality of social pressure within Indian Muslim society. In practice, these institutions often function without any regard for constitutional values that guarantee equality and human rights for all citizens, particularly women. This contradiction is visible when they invoke the Constitution to protect their own interest but fail to understand the very values it stands for. The Constitution is not just meant to protect religious autonomy and the collective religious right of a community; it is also supposed to protect the fundamental rights of every individual, regardless of their religion or background. Moreover, such protests and gatherings only represent a section of Indian Muslims — not each and every one of us. These events are led mostly by elite Ashraaf Muslims, with Pasmandas being utilised as mob followers. It is disheartening to see how these institutions, controlled by Ashraafs, continue to use Pasmandas as pawns in their own power negotiations while claiming to represent the community as a whole.

Karnataka's fake news bill won't survive a court challenge

Karnataka's proposed Misinformation and Fake News (Prohibition) Bill, 2025, is poorly drafted and replete with structural infirmities. It is also at odds with existing central laws and its constitutional validity is questionable. Let's see how. The bill deprives social media intermediaries of their statutory immunity from state persecution for user-generated content, a legal protection commonly referred to in internet law as 'safe harbour'. India's nodal Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) provides for safe harbour protections and allows social media companies to host user content with conditional immunity, within a clearly defined legal framework. In contrast, Karnataka's fake news bill proposes to hold social media companies accountable for violating any provision of the proposed law. The bill envisions a government-appointed Fake News on Social Media Regulatory Authority, with sweeping

powers to preemptively block or ban content it deems illegal. However, it does not clarify how these powers will sync with the safe harbour protections under the IT Act. Without safe harbour protections, social media companies could face a deluge of criminal penalties for content that is difficult to monitor and filter, such as superstitions or unscientific claims, both deemed illegal under the bill. The Authority's blocking powers create a parallel mechanism to the content-blocking procedures already prescribed under the Centre's IT Act. The lack of standard procedural safeguards, such as the need to notify penalised parties or offer them a fair hearing, further disregards the minimum standards set by the IT Act. That law limits content blocking to specific grounds such as public order, sovereignty, and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign states, or preventing incitement to an offence — all of which correspond to the restrictions.

Indian Muslims must face the truth—Muslim countries don't care about them

West Asia has ever been on the boil, and its tumultuous events perturb Indian Muslims no end. Their attitude toward international affairs, particularly events in Muslim countries, is determined more by their religious identity and extraterritorial loyalty than by their national identity and the country's interests. Since the establishment of the Mughal rule in 1526, Muslim rulers of India stopped swearing allegiance to any foreign entity, as was the practice during the Sultanate period (the reason why that period came to be known by this name), when the Sultan tacitly recognised the suzerainty of the Abbasid caliphate, which, after the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongol army led by Halagu Khan in 1258, moved to Cairo where it resided until 1527. Later, the caliphate was transferred to the Ottoman rulers of Turkey. In the political lexicon of Islam, Sultan means an autonomous governor of the caliph. The Mughals didn't recognise the new Ottoman caliphate in Turkey, and called themselves Padshah (king) instead of Sultan. However, so long as India was under Muslim rule, it didn't really matter whether the caliph was recognised or not. But with the termination of the titular Mughal sovereignty in 1857, the Muslim ruling class found itself stranded. In order to find an ideological mooring for their adrift theo-politics, they anchored themselves in the theocratic institution of the Ottoman caliphate. The Muslim ruling class had so maintained its foreign character that this transfer of allegiance to a new overlord outside India seemed normal and caused no consternation. Rather, this instinctive reaction was understood as a default action. The first stirrings of the newly incubated pro-Turkish sympathies became visible during the Russo-Turkish War of

1877-78. Unsurprisingly, the newly established Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College in Aligarh, the precursor to Aligarh Muslim University, chose the Turkish dress, with the distinctive Fez — the red hat with black tassel — as its uniform. This trend of associating with the Ottoman caliphate matured during the Khilafat Movement, which, in the Muslim mind, forever subordinated Indian nationalism to pan-Islamism, and also to a great extent made the Indian foreign policy sensitive to the extraterritorial loyalty of the Muslims. India's Muslim ruling class had cultivated a sense of identity that made it easier for them to associate with their foreign co-religionists than the native compatriots. Therefore, it was inevitable that Muslims diverged into pan-Islamism when the national movement emerged in India. It's true that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had been wary of the pan-Islamist ideas, and opposed its propagation by the peripatetic preacher, Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1897). But his opposition was because of pan-Islamism's anti-British edge — and Sir Syed was a British loyalist.

— rather than any thought for Indian nationalism, which he had contested. What's known as global Islam or Ummah today was, in the late 19th and early 20th century, termed pan-Islamism. Contrary to what the terminology conveys — an ideology encompassing and shared by the entire Islamic world — it actually denoted the political attitude of Indian Muslims who, though domiciled in India, sought the meaning of their existence in belonging to the global Muslim community. India was incidental to their worldview. They were born here, but belonged elsewhere. What affected them the most.

Success to failure, UPSC is a family affair

A couplet by Mirza Ghalib could well serve as the unofficial motto of UPSC aspirants: Ragon mein daudte phirne ke hum nahin qayal; jab aankh hi se na tapka to phir lahu kya hai — I'm not impressed by blood that runs in the veins; if it doesn't spill from the eyes, what kind of blood is it? After all, aspirants live, for lack of a better description, a suspended life built on the edifice of junoon (passion) and self-doubt. But sometimes, it all comes together. The result is announced, and the aspirant's name appears on the list. Those who succeed are elevated to near-mythical status. Their photos decorate news-

paper pages and coaching centre hoardings, and they are invited for felicitations and motivational talks. But what is not celebrated is the silent effort of an entire support system—a quiet, unpaid workforce made up of family members, friends, and partners. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. Cliched but true. The same holds for success in the UPSC exam. If UPSC is the Everest of Indian competitive exams, and the topper is the climber, then their family members are the sherpas who make the ascent possible. The mother, often a school dropout herself, becomes the

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Xbox, sales, and other businesses face Microsoft's worst layoff in years

Delhi:

Microsoft is cutting off 9,000 workers, its second huge layoff in months and largest in over two years. Microsoft announced layoffs in its Xbox video game business and other departments. A memo to state officials listed 830 Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft employees as laid off. Microsoft called the layoffs "organizational changes" needed to operate in a "dynamic marketplace" and will affect numerous teams worldwide, including its sales business.

The corporation won't specify how many layoffs it had, but it was approximately 4% of its personnel a year earlier. Xbox CEO Phil Spencer wrote to gaming division staff Wednesday that



the changes will position the company "for enduring success and allow us to focus on strategic growth areas." Xbox would "follow Microsoft's lead in removing layers of management to increase agility and effectiveness," Spencer stated. MS had 228,000 full-time employees in June 2024, its last annual report. According to Microsoft, the latest layoffs would remove less than 4% of that staff. However, it has had at least three layoffs this.

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

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

Embark on the InvIT expressway with Gadkari's invitation to investors

Delhi: Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) will offer units valued at 25,000 crore in its infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) issue this fiscal year to retail investors. The state-run road builder is now pursuing ambitious goals, including the completion of over 50,000 crore worth of highway assets and the construction of 10,000 km of roadways. This ambitious endeavor aims to entice small investors to the highways. In its pursuit of higher-quality consultants, NHA will also forgo



the habit of going with the lowest bidder when preparing highway detailed project reports (DPR). After all, a separate cadre would be formed by the NHA subsidiary responsible for border road construction. According to Gadkari, the objectives

of the new regulations were to reduce India's logistics costs, which are currently over ten percent, and to construct infrastructure that meets international standards. "I am confident that with the work we have done to improve mobility in the country.

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

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

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

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



NCLAT reduces penalty on Google to 216 crore in Play Store matter

Delhi: Appellate tribunal NCLAT upheld the order passed by fair trade regulator CCI against Google for abusing its dominant position with respect to Play Store policies, however, reduced the penalty on the tech giant to ₹216 crore from 936.44 crore. A two-member bench comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Technical Member Barun Mitra said Google "has abused its dominant position and has violated Section", however in some sections, violation was "not proved, but penalty was still leviable on proof of violation".

Small savings program interest rates unchanged

Delhi: For the fifth quarter, 2025, the government maintained interest rates on PPF and NSC. The rates of interest on various Small Savings Schemes for the first quarter of FY 2025-26, starting on 1 April 2025 and ending on 30 June 2025, would stay unaltered from those notified for the fourth quarter of a finance ministry notification. The notification states that Sukanya Samridhi deposits will earn 8.2% interest, while three-year term deposits will earn 7.1%. Popular Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposit scheme interest rates remain at 7.1% and 4%, respectively. Kisan Vikas Patra investments mature in 115 months at 7.5%. National Savings Certificate (NSC) interest rates will stay at 7.7% for April-June 2025. Like the current quarter, investors will earn 7.4% from the Monthly Income Scheme. Small savings programs, mostly run by post offices and banks, have had the same interest rates for the sixth quarter.

Minimum age for cab aggregator vehicles is 8 years

Delhi: All vehicles, including cars, buses, three-wheelers, and motorbikes, must be at least eight years old before aggregators like Rapido, Ola, and Uber may board. In updated regulations for aggregators, the road transport ministry stated that they must also adhere to goals established by state governments for the proportion of electric and zero-emission vehicles in their fleet. A driver's license and vehicle permit must be prominently placed on the back of the front seat next to the driver, as stated by the government, so that passengers may easily view them.



Although some jurisdictions already let private motorcycles and three-wheelers use aggregators, the regulation has been updated to explicitly include these vehicles in order to clarify things, as certain states do not permit bikes on these platforms.

According to the rules, aggregators must verify that "they are fit to be on-boarded" by conducting a psychological evaluation of the drivers. It was stated that aggregators have no authority to forbid or limit on-board drivers from using

PSBs may waive minimum balance fines

Delhi: After conversations with the finance ministry about the declining share of current and savings accounts in total deposits, public sector banks are reconsidering the requirement for minimum savings account balances. Since Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, and Indian Bank have eliminated this rule, customers who fail to maintain the required amount will not be penalized. Finance ministry authorities may have questioned banks about penalizing clients



who don't keep minimal balance in a recent meeting. Slowing low-cost current and savings account deposits raised concerns. RBI's financial stability report stated that "banks' liability profile is changing with the share of higher-cost term deposits and CDs growing compared to low-cost current account and savings

account (Casa) deposits" Jan Dhan data reveals that many of these accounts were originally dormant, but balances climbed steadily, lenders said. Traditional public sector banks had lower balance requirements than private banks and waived Jan Dhan account requirements. Private banks waive minimum balance requirements on pay accounts and accounts with a 'relationship value' threshold, which covers fixed deposits and other assets, in addition to Jan Dhan accounts.

Center permits aggregators to use white board bikes for passenger rides

Delhi: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' Motor Vehicles Aggregator Guidelines 2025 aims to establish a light-touch regulation framework while addressing user safety and driver welfare. The guideline suggested that the state government allow aggregators to share non-transport motorcycles for passenger travel, reducing traffic congestion and vehicular pollution and providing affordable passenger mobility, hyperlocal delivery, and livelihood opportunities. The guideline states that the State government may allow passengers to travel on non-transport motorcycles under sub-section (3) of Section 67 of the Act. "The State government may, under sub-section (3) of Section 67 of the Act,



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

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

impose fees on the aggregator for issuance of authorisations permitting non-transport motorcycles to undertake journeys through

such aggregator, on a daily/ weekly/ fortnightly basis, as may be determined by the state government," noted.

GST compensation fund likely to have 95k cr surplus

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



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

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

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

Jindals considered a reverse merger with Akzo to list paints

Delhi: After acquiring Dulux Paints, billionaire Sajjan Jindal aims to reverse combine JSW Paints with listed Akzo Nobel India to take it public. The Jindals will control the combined business, which will also include private equity investors and public stockholders. The Rs 13,336-crore Akzo Nobel India transaction was financed by private equity funds. Once listed, Jindal will have six publicly traded firms worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore. Jindal also plans to list JSW Cement (Shiva



Cement is already listed. "It (Akzo Nobel India) is a structured transaction where, at the time of the reverse merger, and based on the performance of the merged entity, their (private equity investors') capital would get converted to a stake in the merged entity," Parth Jindal, CEO of JSW

Paints, said. The transaction will be financed by JSW Paints internal accruals and promoter contributions of one-third each, in addition to private equity. Akzo will move JSW, which entered the decorative paints industry in 2019, to fourth after Kansai Nerolac, Berger Paints, and Asian Paints.

Personal, small biz loans prop bank credit growth

Delhi: Credit to small businesses and advances in the personal loans segment have helped keep the year-to-date growth in bank credit in positive territory. According to data on sectoral deployment of bank credit as of May 2025 released by Reserve Bank of India, overall bank credit grew 0.2% from end March 2025 levels. The growth over 12 months (year-on-year) was 9%. The sluggish growth in credit was

because credit to large industries shrinking by 3.8% Rs 26.8 lakh crore - a drop of Rs 1.06 lakh crore from end March levels. Year on year credit to large industries was up 1% compared to 7.1% growth a year ago. Similarly, credit to the services segment fell by 1.4% to Rs 50.9 lakh crore, a drop of Rs 75,800 crore from end-March 2025. This was largely because of a 4.5% drop in bank credit to non-banking finance companies.

'Haven't said anything against her'

Photos: Instagram



Kangana Ranaut

Actress Taapsee Pannu recently opened up about her alleged feud with fellow actress Kangana Ranaut. The two were involved in a war of words on X a few years ago after Kangana's sister, Rangoli Chandel, labelled Taapsee a 'sasti copy' of Ranaut, a remark many believed strained the equation between the two actors. However, neither of them directly addressed each other on a public platform.

Taapsee on feud with Kangana

Reacting to the controversy, Taapsee told Shubhankar Mishra on his podcast that she does not recall ever fighting with Kangana. She added that a fight happens when two people clash, and she never clashed with her. "Have I ever said even a single line against her? Her sister called me a 'cheap copy'. She said that since I don't earn as much money here, that makes me cheap. If she is such a brilliant actress, I have no problem being called her copy. You can take out any statement of mine, I haven't said anything against her."

Bollywood actress Taapsee Pannu says she's open to friendship with Kangana Ranaut despite the 'sasti copy' remark

There wasn't any fight from her side: Taapsee Taapsee and Kangana are both outsiders in the film industry, and when asked whether she believes their feud indirectly benefited star kids during the nepotism debate, Taapsee said that she does not know who may have benefited. However, she feels that someone, somewhere, must have gained from the situation. She maintained that from her side, there was never any fight with Kangana. Taapsee also added that there may have been people who did not want them to collaborate or come together, as it might have been anticipated that if they had joined forces, something truly amazing could have happened.

Taapsee open to friendship with Kangana

When asked whether she would be open to a friendship with Kangana, Taapsee said, "Absolutely. I've always said that if I ever see her around, I will definitely go up to her... technically, she is my senior. Why wouldn't I go up to her and respectfully say hello? What her response would be, I can't guarantee. I can only guarantee my own behaviour. Honestly, I don't have anything in my heart against her."



Taapsee Pannu

Cooking Up A Storm With Kalpana Iyer

The popular '80s and '90s dancer-actress of the Hindi film industry, Kalpana Iyer, cooks up a storm each time she enters the kitchen. More recently, the Dubai-based Kalpana has whipped up a storm on her professional front too. This year, Kalpana's snazzy song from *Armaan* (1981), *Rambha Ho Sambha Ho*, was successfully reprised in the music score of the blockbuster *Dhurandhar*. Kalpana danced to the song once again after 45 years at a family friend's son's wedding in Siliguri, India. When she posted a reel of her dance on Facebook, little did she realise that she and her family would soon be reeling under the impact her viral video left on social media. An interview with the flavour of the year, Kalpana Iyer.

My dietary preference: I am a strict vegetarian.
The first thing I have when I wake up in the morning is: A small glass of warm water, followed by a cup of strong South Indian filter coffee.
My breakfast is normally: Very light; two idlis/rava upma/sabudana khichdi/poha.
For lunch, I usually have: A cup of boiled rice, dal or sambar; one vegetarian dish, and a cup of yogurt or a glass of chhaas.
My evening snack is: Normally light because I have an early dinner. It can be a sandwich, bhel, or toast.
For dinner: I usually have roti and sabzi, vegetable soup, or a light pasta salad.

My favourite dessert is: Difficult to pick because I don't have a sweet tooth.
But I

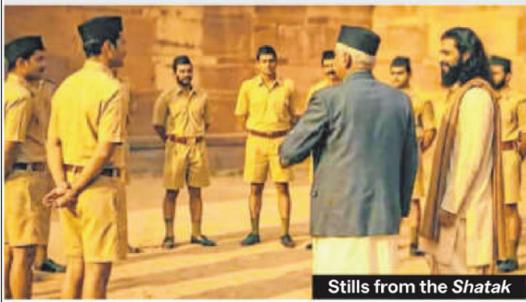
make an exception for *semiya payasam*.
My fitness regime is: I go for a walk early morning as well as late evening.
My favourite restaurants in Dubai are: Tresind Studio, Jamavar, Pin Code, Atrangi, Bombay Borough.
My favourite restaurants in Mumbai: The Table in Colaba, Bombay Canteen in Lower Parcel, Madras Cafe in Matunga, Elco in Bandra, Prakash in Dadar.
My favourite cuisine is: Tam-Brahm vegetarian food.
My favourite dishes which I cook very well are: Sambar, aavial, vangi bhath, mor kuzhamba (kadhi), curries, and vegetables in Tam-Brahm style.
My favourite cook in my family: Is, was, and will always be my Amma. She used to cook everything spot on.
My childhood memories of food are: Of my dadi and her typical Palakkad Iyer-style cooking.
Food I consciously have: All watery vegetables and dahi.
I avoid: Fried foods and cold foods for health reasons.
My idea of a happy dinner with my family is: Any place that serves simple, light meals in a quiet setting.
The weirdest food that I have had: I do not indulge in experimenting with food.
My favourite beverage is: Coffee.
I feel guilty after: Having a sweet dish.

A food-related memory during the making of a film: During the making of Rajshri Productions' *Hum Saath Saath Hain*, epic vegetarian tiffins were served, which in my memory are unmatched and drool-worthy.
In Dubai, if I were to take some-body food shopping: I would take him/her to LULU.
Tip on food: Eat small portions and simple meals, don't skip meals, and drink lots of water.



Did Nehru invite RSS for R-Day parade in 1963?

Shatak: Sang Ke 100 Varsh, marking 100 years of the RSS, hit theatres on Friday. Directed by Aashish Mall and narrated by Ajay Devgn, it highlights the organisation's journey and revives claims that Jawaharlal Nehru invited RSS volunteers to the 1963 Republic Day parade.



Stills from the Shatak

Shashank Nair

The film *Shatak: Sang Ke 100 Varsh* hit the big screens on Friday as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is celebrating its 100-year journey. The film, which is the first part of the series of movies, documents the crucial phases of RSS' 100-year-long journey from its inception to the existential challenges it faced during the Emergency.

The film appears heavily dependent on AI tools to narrate the RSS' history during pre- and post-Independent India and its contribution to nation-building, which has not been talked about much in the past.

The film also narrates anecdotes which would be hard to believe in the current day and age. One such story shown in the film, which has been a point of contention for a long time, is of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, under whose government the RSS was banned after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948, had invited RSS for the Re-

public Day parade.

What is claimed in the film?

The film shows that Nehru did not quite like the RSS, but was impressed with the organisation's efforts during the Indo-Sino 1962 war, where RSS volunteers had donated blood to the Indian armed forces and set up medical camps. The film shows Nehru was impressed by this and thousands of RSS volunteers were invited to march in uniform during the 1963 Republic Day parade.

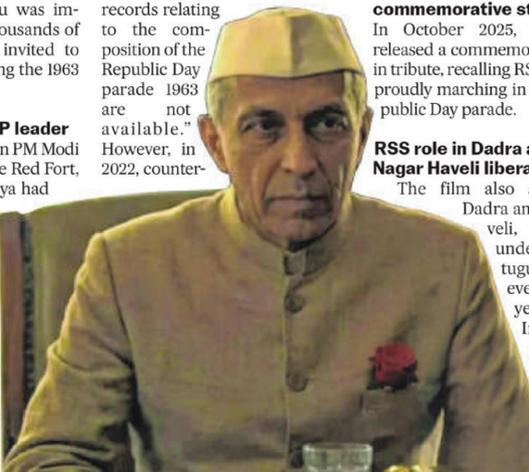
Earlier claims by BJP leader

On 15 August 2025, when PM Modi had hailed RSS from the Red Fort, BJP leader Amit Malviya had taken to X and said, "In 1963, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to join the Republic Day parade and called it "an organisation of patriots." As the RSS marks 100 years, it is fitting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentions it from the

Red Fort. India's public discourse today is shaped by RSS ideology — while the Congress is detached not only from the realities of our times but also from Nehru himself."

Did Nehru really invite RSS?

According to an RTI response filed by India Today in 2018, the defence ministry said, "It is informed that records relating to the composition of the Republic Day parade 1963 are not available." However, in 2022, counter-



ing the RTI report, senior RSS leader J Nandakumar had said that RSS participation in the parade was a well-documented one and it was published by the newspaper Hindustan at that time. The photographs of the volunteers were also published, he added.

Centre releases commemorative stamp

In October 2025, the Centre released a commemorative stamp in tribute, recalling RSS volunteers' proud marching in the 1963 Republic Day parade.

RSS role in Dadra and Nagar Haveli liberation

The film also shows how Dadra and Nagar Haveli, which was under Portuguese rule even many years after India's Independence, was liberated with the efforts of RSS and its volun-

teers. In 1954, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) volunteers, led by Sudhir Phadke, played a key role in liberating Silvassa (Dadra and Nagar Haveli) from Portuguese rule. Legendary singer late Lata Mangeshkar supported the cause by performing a fundraiser concert in Pune, which provided funds to purchase weapons for the liberation fighters.

Over 100 Swayamsevaks, alongside the Azad Gomantak Dal, organised an armed, coordinated attack to drive out the Portuguese on August 1-2, 1954. The rebellion forced the Portuguese to surrender and the Indian tricolour was hoisted in Silvassa on August 2, 1954. The Dadra and Nagar Haveli Liberation episode is an important chapter of India's history which continues to remain unknown to many.

The film ends with a "to be continued" message indicating a second part of the film. The film is directed by Aashish Mall. Cast: Sahidur Rahaman, Subrat Dutta, Shashi Bhushan, Nalnees Neel. The narration of the film is done by Ajay Devgn. The film is currently running in theatres.

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



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

OTT Releases

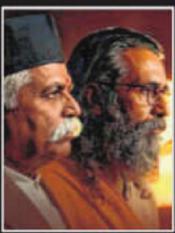
- NETFLIX**
- The Night Agent S3
 - Strip Law S1
 - Sommore - Chandelier Fly
 - Being Gordon Ramsay
 - The Swedish Connection
 - Firebreak
 - The Orphans
 - Chatha Pacha

- ZEE5**
- Kennedy

- AMAZON PRIME**
- 56 Days

Theatrical Releases

- Do Deewane Seher Mein
- Assi
- Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die
- Goat



Legends reunite after decades

Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth reunite after 47 years for a film directed by Nelson

Two of the biggest superstars of the Tamil film industry are all set to share screen space in a movie directed by Nelson. Well, we are talking about none other than Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth. Yes, you read it right! The *Ulaganayagan* and *Thalaivar* are coming together in a film, and the announcement video was shared on Saturday.

Haasan took to X to share the announcement of the film. He tweeted, "A Special reunion with my friend @Rajinikanth. Every great journey deserves another chapter! My best to @NelsonDilpkumar and @AnirudhOfficial - and to @RedGiantMovies for powering this collaboration. #KHXRK #RedGiant7 (sic)." The announcement video is of 3 minutes 46 seconds, and well, it keeps us hooked throughout. The aura of Kamal and Rajinikanth is just awesome in the announcement video. While Nelson is directing it, Anirudh Ravichander will be composing music for the untitled film. In the announcement video, the makers have revealed that the shooting of the film will start soon.

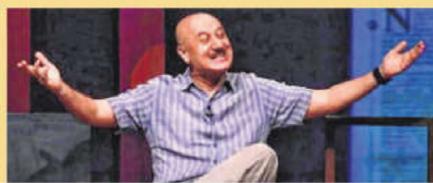
What's Up Mumbai!

Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai!

Anupam Kher takes you on the journey of a man who should have been a failure; but he manipulated his destiny and forced it to become a success. Never, in the history of theatre, has the autobiography of an actor been dramatised on stage, especially when he is still practising his craft.

WHEN: February 22, 6:30 pm

WHERE: Tata Theatre, NCPA



Poems without words

Tazim Sheikh Collective brings their new tour, "Poems without Words". Expect a fusion of Jazz, Indian Classical and Progressive music in an instrumental avatar - mostly Tazim's originals along with some rearranged jazz standards.

WHEN: February 22, 11:00 am

WHERE: Prithvi Theatre, Juhu



Recipe of Rava Dosa

INGREDIENTS: (SERVES 3-4)

- 1 cup rava (sooji/semolina)
- ½ cup rice flour
- ¼ cup maida
- 3 to 4 cups water (basically very thin batter)
- 1 teaspoon jeera (cumin seeds)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 finely chopped green chillies (or as per taste)
- 1 teaspoon finely grated ginger
- Finely chopped coriander leaves
- Few curry leaves (chopped)



- Salt to taste
- Sufficient oil or ghee for cooking the dosas

METHOD:

In a bowl, mix rava, rice flour, maida, salt, and jeera. Gradually add water and mix well. The batter should be very thin and watery. Add green chillies, ginger, finely chopped onions, coriander, and curry leaves. Let the batter rest for 20 minutes. Heat a non-stick or iron tawa well. Lightly grease the tawa with some oil. Pour a ladleful of the rava batter from a little height in a circular motion. Do not spread the batter like a normal dosa. Lower the flame. Drizzle oil or ghee around the edges. Cook on a medium flame till golden and crispy. Serve hot with coconut chutney and sambar.

Briefs

Prez Trump's China visit from Mar 31

US President Trump will travel to China from March 31 to April 2 for a meeting with top Chinese leaders, 'Reuters' reported. The visit, which would be his first to China since 2017, was confirmed by a White House official before the SC dealt a setback to Trump by overturning tariffs. There was no formal announcement.

Murdoch's ex-wife Anna dies at age 81

Anna Murdoch-Mann, writer and ex-wife of media baron Rupert Murdoch, has died at the age of 81 at her Florida home. Married to the media mogul for 31 years, she played an influential role on the board of his publishing giant, News Corp. She was mother to three of Murdoch's kids.

Lebanon kill 8 Hezbollah members

Israeli airstrikes on eastern Lebanon have killed eight Hezbollah members, including local officials. The Lebanese Health Ministry put the toll at 10, but did not distinguish between militants and civilians. Hezbollah officials said the eight militants were killed in strikes near Rayak village in Lebanon on Friday.

Truck driver charged with hate crime

A driver rammed a pickup truck into Brisbane Synagogue in Queensland, Australia, narrowly missing a person, as per a footage released on Saturday. The clip shows a Toyota Hilux backing up into the gate of the Queensland state capital's largest synagogue, while a person on the other side of the gate moves out of the way. Police arrested a 32-year-old man.

In US, Hindus top educated religious grp

Hindus are the most highly educated religious group in the US, followed by Jews, as per a new analysis by the Pew Research Centre which examined educational attainment across major faith communities. Washington-based think tank Pew Research Centre said the findings of 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study are one of the most comprehensive surveys of religion and public life. Seven in 10 Hindus (70%) and 65% of Jews have a minimum bachelor's degree or more education; as compared to US adults (35%).

4 die as truck explodes



At least four people were killed and 17 injured when a truck transporting liquid gas overturned and exploded in Santiago, Chile. Officials said the driver lost control before the crash and became a fatality. The blast occurred in Santiago commune of Renca, near a busy highway and industrial area. The impact was felt within a 200 metre radius.

Tourist bus crash kills 8

A bus with Chinese tourists plunged through the ice on Russia's Lake Baikal, killing eight. One of the Chinese tourists fled the bus, crossing the frozen lake. The bus plunged into a 3-metre-wide ice crevasse.

TRUMP TARIFFS | Another plaintiff, small toy manufacturer wants money back

Lead plaintiff, the small wine importer, who risked business

WASHINGTON

When President Donald Trump announced plans to raise the US's tariff rate, most CEOs were silent. **Victor Schwartz**, the owner of small New York-based wine importer VOS Selections, took a giant step up.

Schwartz became the face of the fight to overturn Trump's most sweeping tariffs — and he won. Initially, he was hesitant to take on such a prominent role, CNN reported. "It was one thing to join the case, but then to be the lead plaintiff really gave me pause," Schwartz said.

The Liberty Justice Centre, a libertarian-leaning non-profit public-interest law firm, preparing to challenge the unprecedented use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to unilaterally impose the tariffs spoke to numerous small businesses and selected Schwartz as the lead plaintiff.

Schwartz said he felt like the "last line of defence" in putting a stop to the tariffs he viewed as a grave violation of executive powers and a threat to his family-run business.

On April 14, 2025, the Liberty Justice Centre filed the case titled VOS Selections, Inc v Trump. It was consolidated with similar cases by 12 states and Learning Resources, an educational supply company. He was victorious in the end, with the Supreme Court ruling Trump's sweeping emergency tariffs are illegal. But Schwartz's win came at a personal cost. "I am under constant attack through text, email and I can't stop it," he said. "It's a little ugly. I guess it could be uglier. We keep our doors locked at the office."

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NIH's Bhattacharya to lead US CDC also

Washington: The Trump administration has appointed **Jay Bhattacharya** to lead the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention on an acting basis, 'The New York Times' reported. This is the latest leadership change at the Department of Health and Human Services Under US President Donald Trump and Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr ahead of the mid-term elections.

The Kolkata-born physician will continue in his role as director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) while taking over leadership of the CDC. He replaces Jim O'Neill, who had been serving as the agency's acting director.

The CDC is responsible for protecting Americans from health threats and issuing guidance on vaccines and public health measures. As acting director, Bhattacharya will



'WE CAN'T JUST RAISE OUR PRICES'

Schwartz's business imports wine and spirits from 16 countries. He is no stranger to the nation's complex tariff code and how quickly rates can change, especially when Trump is in office. For instance, at one point last year, Trump threatened a 50% tariff on products from the EU.

"The economic environment now, especially in my industry, certainly is very unhealthy," he said. "We had to go through every item in our book over since 'Liberation Day.' I think, at least four times." (Trump coined April 2, 2025, the day he unveiled his now-overturned tariffs, as "Liberation Day.") "We can't just raise our prices, and we just can't pay it, unlike big companies that can just write a check," he added. Since April, he estimates he's had to pay at least six figures in tariffs.

The victory for Schwartz could mean he and other importers may be due hefty refunds totalling at least \$134 billion, according to US Customs and Border Protection tariff revenue data as of December 14.

Schwartz said he's worried about the other tariffs Trump could impose, but at least they would be much more restricted in scope and have time limits. The risk of going up against the world's most



powerful man wasn't lost on Schwartz. "We try to tamp down our fear but still recognise the challenges of what's out there," Schwartz said.

Similarly, **Rick Woldenberg**, (R) has taken a lot of pride in challenging the Trump tariffs. "The math was simple: I could not afford the tax that they wanted to hit me with," Woldenberg said. Unlike Schwartz, he's had to cover his own legal fees, which totalled "seven figures."

"I wanted my name in this lawsuit. I didn't do anything wrong," Woldenberg said. Rick Woldenberg is the owner of the Chicago-based small toy manufacturer, Learning Resources.

The Learning Resources and Hand2Mind CEO said, "I don't take a position for Mr Trump or against Mr Trump, nor do I offer him advice on how he should do his job. In fact, I encourage him to do the best that he can, because we need him to. But that, notwithstanding, it's not political. It's about taxes and they owe us money. I expect the government to give me my money back with interest, and as soon as they do we'll start spending it. So, because that's what we do and right now I'm trying to guide the company back to normalcy, which is a state of mind, not a condition. And so, we want to run our company again."

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Indian-origin lawyer Neal Katyal led blow

MUMBAI

At the heart of the landmark US Supreme Court verdict striking down President Donald Trump's sweeping global tariffs stands **Neal Katyal**, an Indian-origin lawyer whose courtroom arguments reshaped the limits of presidential power and reaffirmed the primacy of the Constitution.

Katyal, the son of Indian immigrants and former Acting Solicitor General under President Barack Obama, successfully represented a group of small American businesses that had challenged the tariffs as unconstitutional. Moments after the verdict on Friday, Katyal posted a single word on X: "Victory."

Reflecting on the judgment, Katyal described it as a powerful affirmation of the American legal system. "One of the great things about the American system is what just happened today," he said in an interview with MSNBC.

"The son of immigrants was able to go to court and say on behalf of American small businesses, 'This president is acting illegally.' I presented my case, faced tough questions, and at the end of it, they voted and we won."

He called the ruling extraordinary, emphasising it demonstrated how the system could hold even the most powerful accountable. "You might be the most powerful man in the world, but you still cannot break the Constitution. That is what today is about."



Born in Chicago in 1970 to a paediatrician mother and engineer father who had emigrated from India, Katyal has built a formidable career in constitutional law. A graduate of Yale Law School, he clerked for Justice Stephen Breyer of the US Supreme Court and Judge Guido Calabresi of the US Court of Appeals. He later served as National Security Adviser in the Justice Department and went on to become Acting Solicitor General.

A partner at Milbank LLP in Washington and a professor at Georgetown University Law Centre, Katyal specialises in appellate and complex litigation. He has argued more than 50 cases before the Supreme Court, making him one of the most prominent advocates of his generation.

He has taught at Harvard and Yale and received the Justice Department's highest civilian honour, the Edmund Randolph Award. Katyal said, "The SC stood up for the rule of law. Its message was simple: Presidents are powerful, but our Constitution is more powerful still. Only Congress can impose taxes on the American people."

Harjit's deportation: US lawmaker leaves his guest seat empty

Washington: A Democratic lawmaker has left his State of the Union guest seat empty to honour a 73-year-old Indian grandmother who was detained and deported by US immigration authorities. Congressman John Garamendi said he was dedicating the seat to his former constituent, Harjit Kaur, who was deported to India last year.

"I am dedicating my State of the Union guest seat to my former constituent, 73-year-old grandmother Harjit Kaur. She is unable to attend as she was cruelly deported to India in the dead of night," Garamendi said. President Trump is scheduled to deliver the State of the Union Address on February 24.

CHAGOS ISLANDERS' DEPORTATION BLOCKED
A judge has issued an order to

temporarily block the deportation of four Chagossians who travelled to the Chagos Islands to protest against a deal to hand over the territory to Mauritius, BBC reported.

The Chagossians arrived on a remote part of the archipelago on Monday after sailing from Sri Lanka, to establish a permanent settlement on their "homeland". British officials served the four men with eviction papers, warning them they could face fines or jail if they did not leave.

Meanwhile, a woman adopted as a toddler by an American war veteran, who he found in the 1970s in an Iranian orphanage and raised as a Christian, is being threatened with deportation to Iran, dangerous for Christians. She is one of thousands adopted from abroad never granted citizenship. —IANS/AP

Trump to target Khamenei, son?

MILITARY STRIKES
US President Donald Trump has been presented with military options that reportedly include the targeted killing of Iran's Supreme Leader **Ali Hosseini Khamenei** and his son **Mojtaba Khamenei** (R).

According to a report by 'Axios', which cited senior administration sources, "They have something for every scenario. One scenario takes out the ayatollah and his son and the mullahs," said a senior Trump adviser, referring to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and his son Mojtaba, who is seen as a potential successor. Trump is, however, yet to take the final call. "The President hasn't decided to strike yet. I know that because we haven't struck. He might never do it. He might wake up tomorrow and say, 'That's it,'" he added.

Of the military options laid out before Trump, there is no clarity yet on what he chooses to go ahead with. "What the

president chooses no one knows. I don't think he knows." The adviser said the Pentagon had presented a range of possible courses of action for Trump to consider. A second source confirmed to Axios a plan to kill Khamenei and his son was floated to Trump several weeks ago.

"Trump is keeping his options open. He could decide on an attack at any moment," the report said quoting another Trump adviser. "The media may continue to speculate on the president's thinking all they want, but only President Trump knows what he may or may not do," White House spokesperson Anna Kelly said.

Chinese explosive test tied to push for N-arsenal

US intelligence agencies believe China is developing a new generation of nuclear weapons and has conducted at least one covert explosive test in recent years as part of a broader push to completely transform its nuclear arsenal into the world's most technologically advanced, as per sources.

The US assessment of China's intention to radically advance its nuclear weapons is fueling debate inside the intelligence community and beyond over whether there has been a shift in Beijing's thinking on nuclear strategy, the sources said. The investment in its nuclear arsenal is pushing China closer to peer status with Russia and the US

and could yield technical capabilities neither of the two dominant nuclear powers currently possess, CNN reported.

China secretly conducted an explosive nuclear test in June 2020 at the Lop Nur facility, in the northwest, despite a self-imposed moratorium on such activity that has been in place since 1996, and was planning to do more in the future, as per sources and recent statements from US officials. While the 2020 test was disclosed publicly by US State Dept this month, its purpose has not been previously revealed.

Evidence has led US officials to conclude the test was motivated by China's pursuit of next-generation nuclear weapons, they said.



Fine if they took it all: US envoy on Israel taking over West Asia
The US ambassador to Israel, **Mike Huckabee**, has told podcaster Tucker Carlson Israel has a biblical right to big portions of West Asia and suggested it would be acceptable if the nation took the entire region, NDTV reported.

"It would be fine if they took it all," Huckabee said during an interview with Carlson posted on Friday. The former Arkansas governor was responding to Carlson's questions about interpretations of Old Testament scripture that are influential within the US Christian nationalist movement.

During the conversation, Carlson cited a biblical passage in which God promises Abraham that his descendants will inherit land stretching "from the wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates

Fine if they took it all: US envoy on Israel taking over West Asia

— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites".

Carlson noted that, mapped onto the modern world, the territory described would amount to "like, basically the entire Middle East". "The Levant ... Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon — it'd also be big parts of Saudi Arabia and Iraq," Carlson said.

Huckabee replied, "I'm not sure it would go that far, but it would be a big piece of land."

He added, "Israel is a land that God gave, through Abraham, to a people that he chose. It was a people, a place and a purpose." When Carlson pressed him on whether Israel therefore has a right to that land, Huckabee reiterated, "It would be fine if they took it all."

US, UK warnings on Ukraine war went unheeded: Report

In the months before Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the US and the UK became increasingly convinced war was coming. Yet many European governments, even Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, remained sceptical, 'The Guardian' reported.

The Central Intelligence Agency and MI6 had detailed and accurate information about Russia's invasion plans long before the attack took place. However, many countries did not believe their warnings. Many European officials refused to believe that a full-scale war could happen in Europe in the 21st century.

It all started with a phone call in 2021. US CIA head William Burns met Russian President Vladimir Putin. At the time, US intelligence agencies had gathered information suggesting Putin might be

planning to invade Ukraine. Biden dispatched Burns to deliver a message to Putin they would face severe economic sanctions and political consequences from the US and allies.

Because of Covid restrictions, much communication took place on phone. Burns warned of repercussions. But Putin changed the topic and focused on own concerns. He said Russian intelligence had told him an American warship was in the Black Sea and he believed Russia was at risk.

At the time, US intelligence had gathered troubling evidence suggesting Moscow was preparing for military action.

By mid-Nov 2021, Biden sent Avril Haines, director of national intelligence, to Brussels. She attended a meeting of intelligence chiefs from Nato members. She presented the US assessment: there was a serious and real possibility

Russia could launch a massive invasion of Ukraine. She was supported by Richard Moore, the head of Britain's MI6.

However, officials were sceptical. Some did not believe Russia would launch a full-scale invasion. US and British officials believed Russia would be fully ready to attack within two months.

As per NSA Jake Sullivan, the Americans believed the evidence was overwhelming. "It's not like we held back something that, if only they had seen it, would have made all the difference," he said.

In Oct 2021, CIA and MI6 sent memos to Kyiv outlining new alarming assessments, which suggested Russia was preparing to invade Ukraine. Eric Green, one of the US officials, told Kyiv, "We will follow up. You'll see the intel. This is not a normal warning; this is really serious. Trust us."

Girls, 14, forced into sex to clear debts in London

Women and girls, some as young as 14, have been subject to forced sex by criminal gangs in London, a report said. Most of them said they were raped multiple times as a form of "payment" for unpaid drug debts, BBC reported. Others were pressured, manipulated and in cases, groomed before sex.

One victim, pseudonym Kelly, said she was groomed by three men in London who slowly drew her into a world of drugs and sexual exploitation. She revealed she was struggling financially and emotionally, but the situation worsened, and she was pressured into having sex. "I had no money, felt neglected and saw an opportunity to feel part of something. Before long, I was selling drugs on the streets."

She alleged she was pressured into having sex, sometimes to settle drug debts.

WARREN BUFFETT BUYS STAKE IN NYT



Berkshire Hathaway, the investment firm led by **Warren Buffett**, has acquired a 3% stake in The New York Times Company, purchasing over 5 million shares worth over \$350 million. This new investment comes as 'The New York Times' reports strong financial results, with digital-only subscription revenue up 13.9% and digital advertising revenue climbing 24.9% in the fourth quarter.

Berkshire Hathaway's investment in NYT is seen as a vote of confidence in the media company's ability to navigate the shifting media landscape and capitalize on growth in digital subscriptions

and advertising. The move also highlights the continued importance of trusted news sources as AI-generated content becomes more prevalent.

During the fourth quarter of 2025, Berkshire Hathaway established a new position in NYT, acquiring over 5.1 million shares. This stake represents 3% of the company, which has a market capitalisation of more than \$12 billion. The investment was likely made by one of Berkshire's investment lieutenants, either Todd Combs or Ted Weschler, rather than directly by Warren Buffett himself.

Berkshire Hathaway acquired the stake in NYT during the fourth quarter of 2025. "The New York Times" reported strong financial results for the fourth quarter of 2025, with digital-only subscription revenue up 13.9% and digital advertising revenue climbing 24.9%.

Maryam under fire over luxury jet acquisition

Lahore: Pakistan Punjab's CM **Maryam Nawaz** has come under severe criticism over her government's acquisition of a luxurious aircraft worth PKR 117 billion crore for her personal use. Punjab government has acquired a new, 2019-manufactured Gulfstream G700-G500 aircraft for their VIP transport role, says the Stratcom Bureau.

It says the price for the aircraft is \$42 million (PKR 117 billion). Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari said the Maryam Nawaz administration has acquired the 19-seater VIP jet under the proposed "Air Punjab" fleet. Opposition PTI and Jammal lambasted Maryam Nawaz, former PM Nawaz Sharif's daughter, for using public money for her own luxurious lifestyle. —PTI



Briefs

DHAKA
Bangladesh asst coach slams Nazrul



Bangladesh assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin has hit out at former sports adviser **Asif Nazrul**, alleging that he misrepresented facts and shifted his position regarding the national team's participation in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Salahuddin added that it was extremely difficult for the players to come to terms with their exclusion from the tournament, claiming that two members of the squad were left mentally shattered.

NEW DELHI
'ICC's revenue model counterproductive'



The International Cricket Council's existing commercial model that distributes majority of the revenue to the Test playing nations is counterproductive for associate members like the Netherlands, its board member **Rashid Shah** told PTI. Roughly 40 per cent of ICC's revenue, an estimated USD 231 million per year, will go to India in the 2024-2027 cycle with the cricketing powerhouse generating majority of the global body's revenues driven by media rights.

AHMEDABAD
SKY rebuts questions on Sharma's form



Suryakumar Yadav was cheeky and sarcastic at the same time when the inevitable query on Abhishek Sharma's hat-trick of ducks came up ahead of India's T20 World Cup game against South Africa on Sunday. "About Abhishek's form, I worry for the people who are worried about Abhishek's form. I worry about them. Why are they so worried about Abhishek's form?" Surya, the protective skipper, who walks the talk when it comes to team ethos "All For one and One For All", said dismissing the query.

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India's spin trouble remains a concern ahead of Super 8s

Defending champions hope Abhishek Sharma regains form

AHMEDABAD

India's struggles against wrist spinners have carried over from Test cricket to T20 cricket.

Left-arm spinners **Mitchell Santner** and **Simon Harmer** troubled the Indian batters during the home Test series loss against New Zealand and South Africa. Ajaz Patel and Keshav Maharaj also played key roles in those triumphs.

Now the defending champions, who entered the ICC Men's T20 World Cup as overwhelming favourites, have struggled to play fearless cricket; they are known for it, due to their struggles against finger spinners on sluggish pitches, especially at Wankhede and Ahmedabad.

The crucial call for dropping ODI and Test skipper **Shubman Gill** for 'two wicket-keepers' in the playing XI hasn't worked so far. He could have been handy on these pitches, but India chose aggression over method.

Sanju Samson hasn't capitalised on the chances and doesn't seem to be in the team's plans for playing XI now. He played a game in this tournament only against Namibia after **Abhishek Sharma** missed out. However, the inclusion of **Ishan Kishan** in the World Cup squad after an impressive show in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy has proved to be a master stroke.

Abhishek entered the maiden ICC tournament in prime form as the World No 1 T20 batter. But he has failed to open his account in three league games. Bowlers seem to have figured out his weak-



SANJU OUT OF FORM TOO

Sanju Samson hasn't capitalised on the chances and doesn't seem to be in the team's plans for playing XI now. He played a game in this tournament only against Namibia after **Abhishek Sharma** missed out.

ness, and he has been dismissed playing across the line in the last two games to finger spinners.

He was dismissed first ball by USA seamer **Ali Khan** in the first match and missed the game against Namibia due to a stomach bug and was hospitalised. His comeback was ordinary as he fell to off-spinners **Salman Ali Agha** of Pakistan and **Netherlands' Aryan Dutt**.

The prolific opener with a monstrous strike rate of 192-plus is enduring a sudden lean patch, and slow pitches haven't helped his bat swing either. But the coaching staff, including batting coach **Sitanshu Kotak** and bowling coach **Morne Morkel**, have defended him and trusted his abilities, and the lanky left-hander can be one hit away to get his confidence back.

PREVIEW | The 2024 finalists open their Super Eights campaign in Ahmedabad

India face South Africa test

AHMEDABAD

Defending champions India will start its Super Eights campaign in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup against South Africa at Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday. It is a mouth-watering clash between the 2024 T20 World Cup finalists, who topped Group A and D, respectively, in the initial stages.

India has remained unbeaten but was tested by the USA and the Netherlands. They though were clinical against Namibia and Pakistan. The top-ranked T20I side in ICC rankings, India, has won 12 consecutive T20 World Cup games and will like to add to that record in the Super Eights.

South Africa will be the first major test for India in this campaign. The **Aiden Markram**-led side had a major scare against Afghanistan, where they kept their nerves to prevail after two super overs as the match had ended in a dramatic tie.

Both India and South Africa played in the warm-up game before the tournament, which India won at DY Patil Stadium, **Navi Mumbai**. India also defeated South Africa 3-1 in the five-match T20I series in December 2025, with one match abandoned in Lucknow. The last match was high scoring in Ahmedabad, which India won by 30 runs.

Abhishek Sharma scored 34 runs in that T20I game and also 24 in the warm-up game. But the big-hitting opener has struggled in the World Cup so far, which has meant India haven't unleashed their full firepower so far in the tournament.

India played against the Netherlands on Wednesday and has been camped here since. They better know the conditions and would like to



Indian captain **Suryakumar Yadav** (right) with **Ishan Kishan** and **Rinku Singh** during a training session. PTI

Squads

INDIA: **Suryakumar Yadav** (c), **Abhishek Sharma**, **Tilak Varma**, **Sanju Samson**, **Shivam Dube**, **Ishan Kishan**, **Hardik Pandya**, **Arshdeep Singh**, **Jasprit Bumrah**,

Mohammed Siraj, **Varun Chakaravathy**, **Kuldeep Yadav**, **Axar Patel**, **Washington Sundar**, **Rinku Singh**.

SOUTH AFRICA: **Aiden Markram** (c), **Corbin Bosch**, **Dewald Brevis**,

Quinton de Kock, **Marco Jansen**, **George Linde**, **Keshav Maharaj**, **Kwena Maphaka**, **David Miller**, **Lungi Ngidi**, **Anrich Nortje**, **Kagiso Rabada**, **Ryan Rickelton**, **Jason Smith**, **Tristan Stubbs**.

exploit it. **Abhishek** will like to unleash his bat swing finally, and **Ishan Kishan** will hope to continue his form. **Tilak Varma** and **Suryakumar** would like to consolidate on the start before **Rinku Singh**, **Shivam Dube**, and **Hardik Pandya** can go big in the death overs.

India's spinners **Varun Chakaravathy** and **Axar Patel** will be the key. Home boy **Axar** is expected to come back for **Arshdeep Singh**.

Washington Sundar is likely to keep his place on a sluggish Ahmedabad wicket. **Jasprit Bumrah** and **Pandya** will lead the pace attack with **Dube** for support.

Proteas have spinners in **George Lende**, **Keshav Maharaj**, and **Markram**. However, **Lungi Ngidi**, has been the standout for them with variations on sluggish wickets. **Kagiso Rabada** reserves his best for the big games, and he will be itching

to put up a show in front of the expected packed house at the stadium.

Last time these two sides played an exciting final in Barbados, with South Africa choking in the end. A lot has changed since in both teams with the retirements of **Virat Kohli**, **Rohit Sharma**, **Ravindra Jadeja**, and **Heinrich Klaasen**. **Quinton De Kock** also announced his retirement before reversing it to add to South Africa's firepower at the

top, which also includes **Aiden Markram**, **Dewald Brevis**, **David Miller**, **Ryan Rickelton**, and **Tristan Stubbs**.

India will have to play out of their skins to beat the ram-paging and resilient South Africans.

The Proteas would be aiming to avenge their 2024 World Cup final loss to India and make a statement in front of over one lakh Indian fans in the world's biggest cricket stadium.

Pak-NZ match abandoned

Incessant rain played spoilsport as two teams share a point apiece



A large screen announces a delay in the start of New Zealand and Pakistan match due to rain in Colombo. AP

PALLEKELE (SL)

New Zealand and Pakistan shared a point after incessant rain forced the abandonment of the opening T20 World Cup Group 2 Super Eights match here on Saturday.

Amid a slight drizzle, Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat first.

But the steady droplets soon transformed into relentless pouring, forcing the officials to call off the match without a ball being bowled.

Before the skies opened up, Pakistan made one change to their eleven, bringing in **Fakhar Zaman** in place of **Khawaja Nafay**.

New Zealand made three changes with skipper **Mitchell**

Santner back after missing the last match against Canada due to a stomach issue and **Lockie Ferguson** and **Ish Sodhi** also found a place in the XI.

But all those calculations and combinations will have to wait for another day, as Pakistan will now face England here on February 24.

New Zealand will make a light travel to Colombo to face

home side Sri Lanka on February 25. The washout has also placed both the Kiwis and Pakistan in a relatively tighter place ahead of their remaining two Super Eights matches.

A similar result in any of the following matches, a possibility considering Sri Lanka's weather pattern, or a defeat can put their semifinal ambitions in serious jeopardy.

Battle for spin bowling supremacy on cards

England look to draw inspiration from their recent series whitewash of Sri Lanka when the two clash



PALLEKELE (SL)

A battle for spin-bowling supremacy is on the cards as England look to draw inspiration from their recent series whitewash of Sri Lanka when the two sides clash in a Super Eight match of the T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

England had beaten Sri Lanka 3-0 in their T20I series here earlier this month and they would be happy to return to the island nation for the Super Eight match, having played all their group games in India.

The two-time champions are, however, yet to convince at this T20 World Cup, with

three nervy victories against associate nations and a loss at the hands of former champions West Indies.

Co-hosts Sri Lanka began with wins over Ireland and Oman, and were at their best against Australia, whom they beat by eight wickets while chasing 182 here. The Lankans, however, lost their momentum, losing to giant-killers Zimbabwe in their last group match in Colombo on Thursday.

It will a fresh start for both the sides with Sri Lanka looking to cash in on the home advantage while England would be looking to pick up steam in the tournament at a place where they had done

Squads

ENGLAND: **Harry Brook** (c), **Tom Banton**, **Jos Buttler**, **Ben Duckett**, **Phil Salt**, **Jacob Bethell**, **Sam Curran**, **Liam Dawson**, **Will Jacks**, **Jamie Overton**, **Rehan Ahmed**, **Jofra Archer**, **Adil Rashid**, **Josh Tongue**, **Luke Wood**.

SRI LANKA: **Kusal Mendis**, **Kamil Mishara**, **Pathum Nissanka**, **Kusal Perera**, **Pavan Rathnayake**, **Dasun Shanaka** (c), **Charith Asalanka**, **Dilshan Hemantha**, **Janith Liyanage**, **Kamindu Mendis**, **Dushmantha Chameera**, **Dilshan Madushanka**, **Pramod Madushan**, **Maheesh Theekshana**, **Dunith Wellalage**.

well less than a month back.

For Sri Lanka, **Pathum Nissanka** would be looking to continue his top form at the venue where he had hit 100 not out.

plainspeak

We underestimated a few sides in our group: Brook

PALLEKELE (SL)

England captain **Harry Brook** on Saturday admitted underestimating some teams in their group and promised to dish out stronger performances in the Super 8 stage in the T20 World Cup.

England, the two-time champions of the tournament, have been far from convincing thus far with three nervy victories against associate nations and a loss at the hands of former cham-

pions West Indies. They nearly lost to lowly Nepal before scraping to a four-run win, suffered a comprehensive 30-run defeat to former champions West Indies, before beating Scotland and Italy to reach the Super 8s.

They face co-hosts Sri Lanka in their first Super 8s match here on Sunday.

"It was obviously a niggly start to the competition. We probably underestimated a few of the sides and they put up a really good fight and yeah, look, we came here to

get through that stage and thankfully we have, so we're here in the Super 8s and that's our main focus now," Brook said during the pre-match press conference.

"We see it as a new competition now. Obviously with the no carrying over of points or anything like that, it's a completely fresh start and we can see it like that as well. "Just a few people haven't fired yet but hopefully with the competition we're about to come up against, them boys can start to fire

and have some good match-winning performances." England registered a 3-0 T20 series whitewash of Sri Lanka at the same venue earlier this month as a tune-up to the T20 World Cup.

"We obviously had a very good series against them here and on this particular ground as well, so we can take a lot of confidence having played here and experience on this surface and this ground.

"We're really looking forward to taking them on. And

yeah, hopefully we can play our best cricket and really put them under pressure." Brook also conceded that his side had been "slightly too careful with the bat" in the group games and indicated that they would look to be more aggressive going forward. "We've been slightly too careful with the bat. We can probably be a bit more brave in certain situations and having more faith in the guys behind us to be able to go out there and put a decent score on as well."

