

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Sunday, 22 March, 2026

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

Briefs

BHUBANESWAR

BJD suspends six MLAs for cross-voting

The Biju Janata Dal on March 21 suspended six MLAs for cross-voting during the recent Rajya Sabha elections in Odisha. The decision was taken at the party's Political Affairs Committee meeting led by Naveen Patnaik. The legislators had been issued show-cause notices on March 17, but their replies were found unsatisfactory. In the biennial polls, the BJP won two seats, while the BJD and an independent candidate backed by the BJP secured one seat each. Cross-voting by BJD and Congress MLAs was reported.

NEW DELHI

Surjewala slams police action at UNI

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala on March 21 criticised police action at news agency UNI's Delhi office, alleging a pattern of targeting the media by the BJP-led Centre. He cited past instances involving NDTV, BBC and The Quint to support his claim. The UNI premises were sealed following a Delhi High Court order over land allotment. UNI termed the move an attack on press freedom, while police said due process was followed and denied any wrongdoing.

BHOPAL

Woman dies as car catches fire on h'way

A woman was charred to death after a moving car caught fire on the Sagar-Damoh highway in Madhya Pradesh on March 21, police said. The victim, Seema Kurmi, wife of a doctor, was trapped inside the vehicle as flames spread rapidly. Her husband and two others escaped. The incident occurred near a toll plaza. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation, suspecting a short circuit or collision as the possible cause of the fire.

MALKANGIRI

Odisha MLA, 36 escape bus fire mishap

An Odisha MLA and 36 other passengers had a narrow escape after a bus caught fire following a tyre burst in Andhra Pradesh on March 21, police said. The incident occurred near Ramabhadrapuram when the vehicle was travelling from Bhubaneswar to Nabarangpur. All passengers were safely evacuated without injuries. The bus was gutted in the fire. Police said the driver's prompt action helped avert a major tragedy. An investigation into the cause of the fire is underway.

GEOPOLITICS | From battlefield to cyberspace, warfare evolving Threat to energy security part of warfare: Rajnath

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday that present-day warfare transcends borders, with national security encompassing economic, digital, energy, and even food security.

Virtually addressing the Raising Day celebrations and the Diamond Jubilee of Sainik School, Ghorakhal in Uttarakhand, the Defence Minister said that the nature of conflicts has undergone a paradigm shift as a nation can today be weakened through economic, cyber, space and information warfare, which demands every citizen to remain vigilant and prepared at all times.

He underscored the need for a robust military supported by prepared citizens capable of standing shoulder-to-shoulder to protect the nation under any circumstances.

Rajnath Singh said that while the Government, under the leadership of Prime



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh being welcomed by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on his arrival, in Udhampur on Saturday -PTI

Minister Narendra Modi, is leaving no stone unturned to equip the defence forces with niche weapons and technologies, the citizens, especially the youth, need to develop mental toughness and intellectual clarity through discipline.

Highlighting the need for determination to help the nation tackle any and every situation, he referred to the concept of VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) challenges and

exhorted students to develop their own version of VUCA - Vision, Understanding, Courage and Adaptability, to navigate modern challenges.

Highlighting the steps taken by the government towards ensuring that a larger number of youth imbibe the values essential for nation-building, Rajnath Singh stated that recently a decision was taken to establish 100 new Sainik Schools across the country in the Public-Private Partnership model.

'Dhurandhar' CM Dhami

Haldwani: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday underscored the achievements of the "double-engine" BJP government in Uttarakhand across sectors such as tourism, infrastructure, employment, women empowerment and welfare of servicemen, while praising Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami for his leadership. "He is not a normal Dhami but a 'Dhakad' Dhami, and now he should be known as 'Dhurandhar' Dhami," he added. Praising Dhami's tenure, Singh said, "No one could have imagined that a government would be able to do so much work in such a small state as Uttarakhand. Today, Uttarakhand has achieved several milestones in various fields."

Consular demands rise amid global crises: Tharoor

NEW DELHI

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Friday said demands on consular systems have grown in both scale and sensitivity due to geopolitical tensions, public health crises, travel disruptions, and complex migration patterns.

Addressing an event held in the capital to mark Consular Day, Tharoor said consular work plays a key role in maintaining global connections even during uncertain political conditions.

"From geopolitical tensions to public health crises, from disruptions in travel to the complexities of migration, the demands placed upon consular systems have grown, both in scale and in sensitivity," the Thiruvananthapuram MP said. He said consular work serves as both a stabilising force and a bridge that helps sustain international connections.

"It contributes quietly but significantly to the resilience of global relationships," he said.

Make water a people's movement

BY C R Patil, Union Minister of Jal Shakti

On World Water Day, observed on 22 March, I extend my greetings to all citizens. This occasion is a reminder of the central role water plays in our lives and of our shared responsibility to conserve and protect it for the future.

Water sustains life, ecosystems, and economic activity. Yet, pressures on this vital resource are rising. India is home to nearly 18 percent of the world's population and livestock, but has access to only about 4 percent of global freshwater resources. Rapid urbanisation, rising demand, and climate change make efficient and responsible water management a national priority.

Recognizing this challenge, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has adopted an integrated approach to water governance. The creation of the Ministry of Jal Shakti brought diverse aspects of water management under a single



framework, marking a decisive shift towards holistic planning.

This approach addresses water across its full cycle—focusing on conservation and groundwater recharge; strengthening storage with dams and reservoirs; enabling balanced distribution via river interlinking; expanding access under programmes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission and modernised command area development; improving quality under initiatives like Namami Gange; and building resilience with research, innovation, and awareness. Together, these efforts reflect a comprehensive vision for long-term water security.

Mathura tense following cow vigilante's death in 'accident'

MATHURA

Mathura witnessed tension and sporadic violence after the death of a local cow vigilante, popularly known as 'Farsa Wale Baba', triggered protests and stone pelting on the Delhi highway in the Chhata area.

According to officials, angry crowds blocked the highway early in the morning, leading to long traffic snarls and panic among commuters. Despite police intervention, the situation flared up repeatedly, keeping the area on edge for several hours.

The administration said the incident stemmed from a road accident amid dense fog. A truck carrying metal wires with a Rajasthan registration allegedly rammed into a con-

tainer from behind. The impact proved fatal for the vigilante, who died on the spot. The truck driver was injured and the vehicle sustained heavy damage.

However, tensions escalated after allegations surfaced that the victim had been deliberately run over by cattle smugglers. The claim quickly spread among locals, intensifying anger and leading to large-scale protests.

Officials said the deceased, known in the region for his cow protection activities, was reportedly inspecting a container with his associates following a tip-off about cattle smuggling. The container, bearing a Nagaland registration, was later found to be carrying goods such as soap, phenyl and shampoo, ruling out the presence of cattle.

Eid celebrated across UP

Lucknow: Eid was celebrated across Uttar Pradesh on Saturday with prayers, greetings and tight security arrangements in major cities. In Lucknow, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav visited the Aishbagh mosque to greet people, where a large crowd gathered and briefly turned unruly as supporters raised slogans in his favour. Leaders from multiple political parties were seen sharing space at the venue, reflecting a show of outreach on the occasion. -Biswajeet Banerjee

Muslims stage protests against attacks on Iran

JAIPUR

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr (Eid), Shia Muslims staged protests against attacks on Iran across several districts of Rajasthan, including Jaipur, Sikar, and Ajmer. Eid prayers were offered, wearing black armbands as a mark of protest. Black flags were hoisted over mosques, and slogans were raised against the U.S. and Israel during these events.

Women and children from both the Shia and Sunni Muslim communities in Amer, Jaipur, took to the streets and raised slogans condemning the United States and Israel. The protesters said that their religious leader was killed through deceit, and their Eid festivities have been turned into an event of mourning.

Govt adds to litigation backlog, says SC judge

NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice B V Nagarathna on Saturday flagged the government as the single largest generator of litigation, underscoring a stark paradox — it laments judicial backlog while simultaneously fuelling it through routine appeals.

Speaking at the Supreme Court Bar Association's first national conference on "Reimagining Judicial Governance: Strengthening Institutions for Democratic Justice", she said the State has failed to act as a model litigant and instead carries disputes to the final stage.

"The pattern produces a paradox. The government publicly expresses concern about judicial backlog while simultaneously feeding that

backlog through relentless litigation. The State becomes both the complainant and the cause," she said, as reported by Live Law and Bar & Bench.

She pointed out that government officers often file appeals as a precaution, fearing audit objections, vigilance scrutiny or political repercussions if disputes are settled.

"The result is predictable. Appeals become routine rather than rare. Cases that should end in lower courts continue through successive layers up to the Supreme Court," she said.

She noted that the trend is particularly pronounced in service and taxation matters, and stressed that better administrative training and adherence to principles of administrative law could significantly reduce litigation.

Bihar Dy CM in focus after RBI chief meets him

PATNA

A day after RBI governor Sanjay Malhotra met deputy chief minister and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary at his residence, speculations over appointment of Choudhary as the next chief minister in the new NDA government gathered momentum on Saturday.

The RBI governor was in Patna in connection with the 622nd meeting of the central board held in Patna on Friday.

The governor after meeting chief minister Nitish Kumar also called on Choudhary at his residence, being construed in the political circles that after Nitish, the Centre has also started giving subtle messages that it will appoint him as the next chief minister of the state.

Vaishno Devi yatra cancelled

Jammu: The pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi was suspended on Saturday due to heavy rush at the Bhawan, as 39,000 devotees offered prayers till late afternoon, officials said.

The rush has increased due to the ongoing Chaitra Navratri, which began on March 19 and will end on March 27. The shrine board is expecting a heavy rush of devotees from across the country during this period.

"The yatra has been suspended temporarily due to heavy rush at Bhawan," a shrine board official said.

Jaishankar speaks to Iranian counterpart

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday talked to Iran's counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi and conveyed greetings for Nowruz and Eid.

Notably, this is the fourth time the leaders have talked since the ongoing conflict began. During the discussion, they talked about recent developments and their wider regional impact.

"Spoke this evening to FM @araghchi of Iran. Conveyed greetings for Navroz and Eid. Our conversation was on the latest developments regarding the conflict. And its impli-

cations for the larger region," he wrote on X.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a discussion with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, extending greetings on the occasions of Eid and Nowruz and expressing hope for peace, stability, and prosperity across West Asia.

During the conversation, PM Modi strongly condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, warning that such actions threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains.

Punjab minister Bhullar resigns

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Transport and Jails Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar on Saturday resigned from the state cabinet hours after Gagandeep Singh Randhawa, Amritsar district manager of the State Warehousing Corporation, died by suicide after alleging severe harassment by the minister.

Randhawa died by suicide on Friday evening. A video later surfaced on social media in which he said that he had consumed Cephos and accused Bhullar of harassment and intimidation.

Modi is biggest infiltrator: Mamata

KOLKATA

Attending an Eid event at Kolkata's Red Road area, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday called Prime Minister Narendra Modi "biggest infiltrator".

Mamata also mentioned that the SIR exercise was part of a larger effort to influence upcoming Assembly elections.

"BJP hatao, Desh Bhachao. Modi and his party leaders are the biggest infiltrators. Those who are targeting Bengal will go to hell. I have been to the Supreme Court to move against the exercise.

5 detained in lift death case

Kolkata: A senior police officer on Saturday said that police have detained five people in connection with a death due to lift malfunction on March 20 at Rf Kar hospital. Based on the complaint made by the deceased's father, police registered an FIR invoking sections related to culpable homicide. The police also mentioned that those who are detained are connected to the maintenance of the elevator in which the incident took place.

money special

PFC appoints merchant banker for proposed merger with REC

Power Finance Corp. Ltd. has selected merchant banker for the proposed merger with REC Ltd., a senior company official said. "We had floated the tender and we have selected the banker to handle the merger," the official told Informist. The state-owned financier had issued the tender on Mar. 6. Interested merchant bankers had time till Mar. 13 to submit their bid. The official, however, refrained from naming the selected merchant banker.

In the Union Budget for 2026-27, the government had proposed restructuring PFC and REC to achieve scale and efficiency in public sector NBFCs.

FPIs pull out ₹35,475 cr this week from Indian markets, March outflows hit ₹88,180 cr

MUMBAI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued their selling spree in the Indian equity markets this week, with net outflows standing at ₹35,475 crore amid ongoing military conflict in West Asia, according to data from National Securities Depository Ltd.

The data showed that the highest selling during the week was recorded on Monday, with net outflows of ₹10,827 crore. This was followed by selling of ₹9,406.78 crore on Tuesday and ₹4,376.02 crore on Wednesday. Thursday was a settlement holiday due to the Gudi Padwa festival, while on

Friday FPIs sold equities worth ₹10,965.74 crore.

Overall, the continued selling pressure reflects cautious sentiment among foreign investors amid geopolitical uncertainty and rising global risks. So far in March, total net selling by FPIs has reached ₹88,180 crore, making it the highest monthly outflow recorded in 2026.

The figures include selling in stock exchanges after adjusting for investments in primary markets and other segments.

Market experts said that persistent global concerns, particularly due to tensions in West Asia and elevated crude oil prices, have weighed on investor sentiment.

HDFC Bank fires 3 senior officials for gaps in client onboarding at its DIFC branch

HDFC Bank has terminated the services of three employees for gaps in client onboarding at its Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) branch. According to sources, HDFC Bank has fired three senior executives over the alleged mis-selling of Credit Suisse's additional tier-1 (AT-1) bonds.

Following the allegations of mis-selling, the local regulator -- Dubai Financial Services Authority -- barred HDFC Bank from onboarding new customers at its DIFC branch last September. When approached for a comment, the bank said in a statement that it has identified certain gaps in client-onboarding requirements at its DIFC branch in the UAE and completed a detailed and objective review of the matter.

Mahatransco's Digital Stall draws huge crowd at BES in New Delhi

The Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (Mahatransco) received an overwhelming response for its innovative and eco-friendly digital stall at the Bharat Electricity Expo (BES 2026) in the national capital. Union Power Minister Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, Union Minister of State for Power Shri Shripad Naik, and Maharashtra's Minister of State for Energy Smt. Meghana Sakore Bordikar visited the stall and appreciated Mahatransco's initiatives. The four-day event, held at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, witnessed participation from



leading power sector organizations from across India and abroad. Mahatransco's stall, designed using advanced digital technologies, emerged as a major attraction for visitors. The stall was conceptualized under the leadership of Chairman and Managing Director Dr. Sanjeev Kumar (IAS), with guidance from Director (Operations) Satish Chavan and Additional Collector & Executive Director (HR) Suchita Bhikane.

Mahagenco aligns Vision 2035 with Viksit Bharat @2047 goals

The Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Ltd. (Mahagenco) pavilion at the ongoing Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, being held at



Yashobhoomi in New Delhi, continues to attract an enthusiastic response from visitors and industry stakeholders. On March 20, the MoS for Energy, Meghana Sakore Bordikar, visited the pavilion and closely reviewed the initiatives on display. She was given a detailed presentation on Mahagenco's Vision 2035, which is aligned with the national Viksit Bharat @2047 goals. The presentation outlined the company's strategic roadmap for a sustainable energy trans-

sition, featuring a range of forward-looking and environmentally friendly projects. Radhakrishnan B. (IAS), Chairman and Managing Director of Mahagenco, along with Abhay Harne, Director (Operations and Projects), also visited the pavilion. They conveyed their best wishes and appreciated the effective presentation of the company's vision. They conveyed their best wishes and appreciated the presentation of the company's vision.

Micro Food Industries Get New Momentum Under Leadership of Dy.CM Keshav Prasad Maurya

Lucknow

Under the leadership and guidance of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, the implementation of the Prime Minister Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme in Uttar Pradesh has reached the top Position in the country. The effective execution of the scheme has infused new energy into micro food Processing industries across the state and significantly accelerated employment Generation. According to the latest Progress report, term loans worth over 2,000 crore have been sanctioned by various banks in the state, reflecting growing confidence in industrial establishment. In the current financial year, Uttar Pradesh has recorded the highest number of approved proposals under the scheme, achieving a remarkable 98% strike rate—an outstanding Performance at the national level. Under the scheme, the average approval time is 100 days, the average term loan is 10 lakh and the average subsidy Per unit is 4 lakh—figures that are among the best in the country. To



Promote industrial establishment, District Resource Persons (DRP) have been appointed in every district by Chief Development Officers. DRPs receive an incentive of 20,000 Per unit for assisting in setting up enterprises, ensuring strong support and guidance for Entrepreneurs. In the financial year 2025–26, an expenditure of 267.25 crore has already been incurred, indicating efficient and timely implementation of the scheme. At the national level, Uttar Pradesh has achieved a notable milestone by securing the first Position with 7,340 approved proposals under the PM FME scheme, followed by Bihar with 7,293 proposals and Maharashtra with 5,695 proposals. It is noteworthy that under the PMFME scheme, a

credit-linked subsidy of 35% of the Project cost (up to a maximum of 10 lakh) is Provided for the upgradation of unorganized food Processing units. Self-Help Groups (SHG), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) and cooperatives are eligible for up to 3 crore (35% credit-linked subsidy) for common infrastructure. Additionally, working capital of 40,000 Per member is Provided to SHG engaged in food Processing and up to 50% assistance is given for branding and marketing of Products. So far, more than 24,197 units have been approved for subsidy under the PM FME Scheme. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya stated that the state government is fully committed to strengthening micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and through the PMFME scheme, continuous efforts are being made to promote self-reliance, value addition and employment generation in the food Processing sector. He also directed officials to ensure transparent and timely delivery of scheme benefits to all eligible Beneficiaries.

The Goal of the Sangh is to Impart Values: Dr. Manoj



Bahraich

On the occasion of Nav Varsh Pratipada (New Year Day) and the Nav Samvatsar (New Era) A Program was organized by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) at the city Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College. Manoj Tripathi, the Co-District Sanghchalak (Chief Organizer) attended the event as the keynote speaker, while the Proceedings were anchored by Shivam, the City Karyavah (Secretary). Addressing the gathering, keynote speaker Dr. Manoj Tripathi stated that the six festivals observed by the Sangh constitute an integral Part of its methodology. The ultimate objective of this entire methodology is to instill the value—the samskara—that "I am one with society." The festivals celebrated by the Sangh are, in essence the

traditional festivals of Hindu society. Today also marks the birth anniversary of the Sangh founder and first Sarsanghchalak (Supreme Chief) the revered Dr. Saheb. We all offered our salutations (Pranam) to the first Sarsanghchalak—not merely as an individual, but in recognition of the Profound unity he embodied. Just as there is a duality between a devotee and God or between an individual and their ultimate ideal, Dr. Saheb identity was so completely merged with his mission that we offered our salutations to that very unity. He further remarked: "Our culture is eternally ancient, yet perpetually new." Remembering immutable, eternal principles—the Sangh methodology is inherently complete in its approach to fostering a continuously evolving social structure.

A Pledge to Enhance Greenery on World Forestry Day

Lucknow

On the occasion of World Forestry Day today, a departmental workshop and Public dialogue were



organized at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan auditorium. During the event, a collective Pledge was taken to increase forest density within the state, Provide natural habitats for wildlife and ensure that water and environmental conservation efforts remain conducive to human Well-Being. Addressing the workshop held at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan on World Forestry Day, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that the very fabric of human existence is contingent upon environmental and water conservation: indeed, this ecological structure forms the bedrock of human survival. Consequently, it becomes the collective duty of us all—working together in coordination—to undertake massive tree-Plantation drives and actively conserve wildlife, thereby Preserving the intrinsic significance of both nature and Humanity. Minister for Forest and Environment, Dr. Arun Kumar Saxena, remarked that through Public dialogue and coordination, the state forest cover is being expanded in a systematic and Planned manner. Furthermore, citizens are being encouraged to Plant trees in vacant spaces and to take measures to Protect them. He highlighted that special campaigns are currently underway for tree, bird and water conservation to ensure that the environment and water resources remain conducive to human life. Minister of State for Forests K.P. Malik stated that effective efforts are being made across the entire state to transform the land into a lush green landscape by accelerating tree-Plantation drives through organized and systematic Initiatives. During the event, specially invited dignitaries—including Sanjeev Srivastava (Advocate and President, Mahamana Malaviya Mission, Awadh), Somesh Vardhan Singh,

Gangster Act Invoked Against Brother-in-Law Duo for Land Fraud; Action to Follow on Assets Worth Crores

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Taking strict action against a brother-in-law duo accused of swindling lakhs of rupees from people under the pretext of arranging land, the police have registered a case against them under the Gangster Act. Both are alleged to have formed an organized gang, using forged documents to dupe people and misappropriating large sums of money in the name of advance payments. According to the police, this action has

been initiated against Rajesh Tripathi (alias Rajesh Tiwari), a resident of Panna Lal Road within the Georgetown police station limits, and his brother-in-law, Ambrish Tripathi, a resident of Kakra Dubawal in the Sarai Inayat area. Considering their criminal history, the Georgetown police prepared a 'gang chart' and registered the case following approval from the Police Commissioner. **Fraud Perpetrated Using Forged Documents**

According to the Georgetown Inspector, the accused Rajesh leads an organized gang that, in collaboration with his associate Ambrish, used to fabricate forged land documents. Subsequently, they would mislead customers and extract large sums of money from them as advance payments. There are also allegations that they intimidated and threatened victims who raised objections. **Cases Registered Across Multiple Police Stations** Several criminal cases are already registered against

both accused individuals. In 2023, a case of fraud was registered at the Georgetown police station. Prior to that, in 2022, a case involving forgery and cheating surfaced within the limits of the Colonelganj police station. Furthermore, in 2015, a case was registered at the Civil Lines police station on charges of assault, verbal abuse, and criminal intimidation. Charge sheets have already been filed in all these cases. **Arrest Imminent; Investigation into Assets**

Begins Police officials state that, following the invocation of the Gangster Act, efforts to apprehend the accused have been intensified. Simultaneously, details regarding their illegally acquired assets are being gathered to facilitate subsequent proceedings for the attachment (seizure) of their properties. The Station House Officer of Georgetown stated that both accused individuals would be arrested shortly, and the entire network would be exposed.

Expenditure Monitoring Strengthened in Tinsukia, Assam. Observer Reviews Preparedness

Assam

In view of the upcoming Legislative Assembly Election 2026, a review meeting on election expenditure monitoring was held today in Tinsukia, Assam under the Chairmanship of Expenditure Observer for Makum, Digboi and Margherita LAC, Raghuraj Singh, IRS. Returning Officers appointment for Makum, Digboi and Margherita LAC, Sanghamitra Baruah, ACS, ADC Tinsukia,

Pankaj Nagbonshi, ACS, ADC Tinsukia and Rahul Doley, ACS, Co-District Commissioner, Margherita respectively attended the meeting. The assisting Officers of the Expenditure Monitoring Team Maomenla AO, ACS and Alokesh Bordoloi, ACS were also Present along with the Accounting Teams of the concerned LAC. Reviewing the preparedness, the Expenditure Observer directed all officials to

strictly adhere to the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India regarding election expenditure monitoring and ensure effective implementation at all levels. Detailed instructions were issued for effective field-level functioning of Flying Surveillance Teams, Static Surveillance Teams, Video Surveillance Teams and Video Viewing Teams with emphasis on ensuring that each team member clearly understands.

Khelo India Asmita Swimming League

Assam

The Opening Day of the Khelo India Asmita Swimming League (Northeast Zone) witnessed an impressive participation of nearly 200 women swimmers, setting a competitive tone at the Dr. Zakir Hussain Aquatic Complex in Sarusajai, Guwahati, Assam. Out of a total of 40 scheduled events, 20 events were successfully completed on Day 1 amid high-level competition. The meet has drawn participation not only from all eight Northeastern states but also from teams representing Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal, reflecting its growing national significance. According to Assam Swimming Association Publicity secretary Mukuteswar Goswami, the league is Providing a strong competitive Platform for emerging women



swimmers across Regions. Top four finishers in each event will earn qualification for the national-level Asmita Swimming Championship to be held in Ahmedabad. The competition was formally inaugurated by Bhaskar Ranjan Das, Vice President of the Swimming Federation of India and General Secretary of the Assam Swimming Association. In his address, he emphasized the importance of increasing women participation in sports and highlighted the Asmita League as a key initia-

tion in that direction. The day events were conducted smoothly under the supervision of Tournament Director Chandan Jyoti Phukan. Winners were felicitated with certificates by senior officials including Pranab Barthakur and Kamrup District Swimming Association Secretary Nabajyoti Gogoi, among other distinguished Guests. The league is rapidly emerging as a significant platform for empowering women swimmers in the Northeast, fostering both talent and competitive Excellence.

Kaushambi

Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Keshav Prasad Maurya, while addressing the Program "Gaurav Pratima Unveiling" held at the bus depot Premises in Manjhanpur, Kaushambi, said that commendable work has been done to make Manjhanpur a center of social harmony, which is inspirational for the entire state. The government is committed to "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" and ensuring employment for all. While distributing tractor-operated mobile units to beneficiaries under the Chief Minister Youth Entrepreneur Development Campaign Scheme, he said that the government has brought employment opportunities right to people doorsteps. He appealed to the residents of the district to take full advantage of this Scheme. The Deputy Chief Minister stated that nine years of governance have been completed, and these years have been full of achievements. During this Period, there have been no riots in the



state and significant development work has been carried out. Around 900,000 people have been Provided government jobs. He said the double-engine government is working to uplift the Poor and make them prosperous. The honorarium of Shiksha Mitras has been Increased. He further mentioned that Pensions for destitute women, the elderly and Persons with disabilities, which were earlier 300 Per month, have been increased to 1,000 and will be further raised to 1,500 Per month. The government is working for the development of all without discrimination. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana, housing has been Provided to those who did not have homes. Free LPG con-

nections have been Provided under the Ujjwala Yojana. Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, nearly 650 million people across the country have opened bank Accounts. He added that under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, about 100 million farmers receive 6,000 annually directly into their bank accounts. Under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, free treatment up to 5 lakh is being Provided. Electricity has been ensured in every household. A grand Ram Temple has been constructed in Ayodhya. He urged women to join self-help groups, stating that employment opportunities will be Provided through them. He emphasized the goal of making India and Uttar Pradesh fully developed

by the year 2047. He said that Kaushambi district and Manjhanpur are also witnessing all-round development. The construction of the Ram Van Gaman Path is underway, which will connect Ayodhya to Rameshwaram. A four-lane road from Prayagraj Airport to Kaushambi is also under construction. Law and order in the state are strong and strict action is being taken against criminals. The government is also working to honor great Personalities. On this occasion, MLA Pooja Pal, BJP District President Dharmaraj Maurya, District In-charge Avashesh Gupta, former MLA Shilata Prasad alias Pappu Patel, Sanjay Kumar Gupta, Lal Bahadur, Member of the UP SC/ST Commission Jitendra Kumar, Chairperson of Nagar Palika Parishad Manjhanpur Virendra Fauji and Bharwari Kavita Pasi, Chairpersons of Nagar Panchayats Ajuha Shanti Devi and Sirathu Bhola Yadav, Chairman of District Cooperative Bank Shivmohan Maurya, Anita Tripathi, Neetu Kanaujia, Sanjay Jaiswal, Bhole Shankar, Block

"Nine Years of New Construction" Fair Concludes; Benefits of Schemes Distributed to Workers

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur | To mark the completion of nine years of the Uttar Pradesh government, a grand nine-day fair-cum-exhibition titled "Nine Years of New Construction: Resolve, Prosperity, Security, Good Governance, and Growth" was organized in the Ghazipur district from March 18 to March 26, 2026. The event was graced by the distinguished presence of the Honorable Member of Rajya Sabha, Dr. Sangeeta Balwant, who served as the Chief Guest. She was accompanied by the District Development Officer, District Programme Officer, District Information Officer, the Master of Ceremonies, and other officials, all of whom contributed to the successful organization of the event. The program also saw the presence of distinguished guests, including Shri Vashishth Singh Yadav—President of the Udyog Manch (Industry Forum), Ghazipur, and Member of the Industrial and Trade Security Forum, Ghazipur—and Guddu Keshari, President of the District Trade Council, Ghazipur. The proceedings commenced with a welcome address delivered by the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Ghazipur, Abhishek Singh, who extended his greetings to all the guests and the assembled gathering. On this occasion, the Chief Guest, Dr. Sangeeta Balwant, delivered



a brief address regarding the government's public welfare policies and the schemes being implemented for the benefit of workers; in her speech, she encouraged the workers present to avail themselves of these schemes to the fullest extent.

Subsequently, the Chief Guest distributed sanction letters for financial assistance to beneficiaries under various public welfare schemes administered by the Labour Department. An atmosphere of palpable enthusiasm and joy was observed

among the workers who had traveled from far-flung areas to attend the event. The beneficiaries expressed their deep gratitude towards the government for these schemes. Present at the occasion were the District Development Officer,

Ghazipur, Subhash Kumar Saroj; Assistant Labour Commissioner, Ghazipur, Abhishek Singh; Labour Enforcement Officers Gyanendra Singh and Manoj Kumar Rajput; Junior Assistant Akhilesh Yadav; and other staff

members. At the conclusion of the program, the District Development Officer proposed the vote of thanks, expressing his gratitude to all the guests and attendees. The event concluded in a well-organized and harmonious atmosphere.

Outpost In-charge Suspended Amidst Mafia Henchmen's Rampage: Goons Drag and Beat Property Dealer at Prayagraj Restaurant

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

In connection with an incident of brazen hooliganism by mafia henchmen in Prayagraj, Surendra Kumar Yadav, the In-charge of the Atala police outpost, has been suspended. It is alleged that, despite receiving orders, he failed to demonstrate adequate vigilance, thereby allowing the miscreants to carry out the crime with impunity. Furthermore, he failed to take timely action following the incident. It is this very negligence that has led to disciplinary action being taken against him. Meanwhile, two individuals have been arrested in connection with this case. They have been identified as Shah Saud and Faiz Akhtar; both are named accused in the FIR. In total, a case has been registered against six named individuals and five unidentified persons in this matter. The police are currently engaged in a search for the remaining accused. Shah Saud is the son of Mashook Pradhan, a notorious figure from Asrauli. Criminals from Atiq's Former Strongholds Involved: The incident, which took place at the 'Allahabad Kabab Paratha' restaurant in Atala, involved miscreants from villages that were once strongholds of Atiq Ahmed—specifically Hatwa, Asrauli, and Saraiya. Also involved was a criminal from Nawabganj who is a convicted

felon in a double-murder case and is currently out on bail. The incident occurred at 11:30 PM on the night of March 17. Muzammil, a 45-year-old property dealer residing in Rudapur, recounted the events: "I had gone to the 'Allahabad Kabab Paratha' shop in Atala, Khuldabad, along with my maternal uncle, Muhammad Jaseem. It was quite crowded there, and when the restaurant staff asked us to wait, I stood near the billing counter." "We Won't Let You Leave Alive Today": Just then, Mohd. Saqib—a resident of Nawabganj—arrived at the scene. He was accompanied by 10 to 12 other individuals. Upon arrival, he immediately began hurling verbal abuses. When I objected to his behavior, he dragged me aside and began beating me. By that time, his accomplices had also joined in; they surrounded me and began raining kicks and punches upon me." In a crowded restaurant, right in front of the public, the attackers continued to beat me. When I ran downstairs to escape, they followed me there and continued the assault. As they beat me, they also issued threats, warning that they would not leave me alive that day. After beating me to a semi-conscious state, they all fled the scene. I sustained significant injuries in this incident.

Previously Committed a Double Murder:

The victim revealed that he has an ongoing land dispute with Saqib, regarding which several legal cases have been filed. In 2011, Saqib had committed a double murder in Nawabganj itself. He was convicted for that crime and is currently out on bail. Among the attackers was Shah Saud, the son of the notorious Mashooq Pradhan of Asrauli. Additionally, the group included Faiz Akhtar (a resident of Hatwa), Mohd. Amir (Asrauli), Mohd. Hanzala (Talab Tiwari), and Mohd. Ammar (Saraiya), along with four to five unidentified individuals.

CCTV Footage Surfaces: CCTV footage of the incident has also emerged. In the footage, the accused can be seen surrounding the property dealer and beating him. The visuals also show that the incident created an atmosphere of chaos and panic within the restaurant. The victim stated that he immediately called 'Dial 112' after the incident, prompting the police to arrive at the scene. ACP Ravi Kumar Gupta confirmed that two of the accused have been arrested in connection with the case, while a search for the others is underway. Meanwhile, DCP (City) Manish Kumar Shandilya announced that the In-charge of the local police outpost has been suspended following an inquiry that revealed negligence on his part.

Eid Greetings Exchanged with Warm Embraces; Lalgopalganj Immersed in the Sweetness of Sewaiyan

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Lalgopalganj | On Saturday, the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated with deep reverence and enthusiasm across the town and its surrounding areas. After offering morning prayers at Eidgahs (prayer grounds) and mosques, people prayed for peace and harmony throughout the country and the world. Following the prayers, a tradition of exchanging Eid greetings through warm embraces began—a practice that continued until late in the evening. Prayers were offered at the historic Lalgopalganj Eidgah, as well as at other prominent mosques in the region—including Jama Masjid Gausia Daniyalpur, Eidgah Nindura, Masjid Ahle Hadees Ibrahimpur, Jama Masjid Ahladganj, and Shahi Masjid. Prior to the prayers, religious scholars (Ulama) shed light on the significance of fasting (Roza), as well as the importance of Zakat, Fitra, and Sadaqa (charitable acts). Fairs were also organized outside the Eidgahs after the prayers, where children delighted in buying toys and enjoy-



ing chaat and sweets. In homes across the town, the tradition of serving traditional delicacies—particularly Sewaiyan (sweet vermicelli)—continued throughout the day, further enhancing the festive spirit. The administration remained fully vigilant regarding security arrangements. Administrative and

police officials were deployed around the various Eidgahs and mosques, ensuring that the festivities concluded in a peaceful and orderly manner.

Public Representatives Extend Greetings

Following the prayers, public representatives and dignitaries visited the

Eidgahs and major thoroughfares to extend their Eid wishes to the people. During these interactions, a palpable message of brotherhood and harmony was witnessed across the region. The representatives mingled with the people to share in the festive joy and appealed to everyone to uphold unity.

Body of Commando Posted in Police Commissioner's Security Found Hanging; Had Taken SI Exam Four Days Ago

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

The body of Commando Kripal Singh (29), who was posted in the security detail of Prayagraj Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar, was found hanging from a noose inside his room on Friday morning. The incident occurred at a residence located in Rajapur, Ganganagar. According to the police, the body appears to be two days old. Four days prior, Kripal had appeared for the Sub-Inspector (SI) recruitment examination. The police have not recovered any suicide note from the scene. It is suspected that he may have committed suicide due to a poor performance in the exam or as a result of domestic discord. The Cantt Police Station is currently investigating the matter. A native of Nikau village under the Khairgarh police station area

in the Firozabad district, Kripal Singh had joined the Police Department as a Constable in 2019. His first posting was in Prayagraj. Kripal lived as a tenant on the third floor of a house owned by Omprakash Patel in Ganganagar, Rajapur (Cantt area). At the time of his death, he was deployed as a commando in the escort team of Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar. When the door to his room remained unopened for two days, the landlord peeked through the window around 9:00 AM on Friday morning and discovered Kripal hanging from the ceiling fan by a nylon rope noose. Upon hearing the alarm raised by the landlord, neighbors gathered at the spot. Kripal's brother, Omveer Singh—who is posted as a Constable at the George Town Police Station—and the Dial-112 police unit were immediately informed.



Police officials arrived at the scene and conducted an investigation.

Had Ordered Food Two Days Prior

According to the police, Kripal had been married for three years. His family consists of his wife, Madhubala, a two-year-old son, and a one-year-old daughter. His wife currently resides at her maternal home along with both

children. The police investigation revealed that the door to the room was bolted from the inside. Furthermore, it was noted that Kripal had ordered food from the caretaker two days earlier.

Police Seize Mobile Phone

The police have taken possession of the mobile phone recovered from the scene of the incident. Police Lines Inspector Vinod Kumar stated that Kripal Singh had been posted to the Police Lines approximately six to seven months ago. He stated that four days ago, Kripal Singh had appeared for the SI recruitment examination. Since then, no information regarding his whereabouts had been received. The room was locked from the inside. No suicide note was recovered from the scene. Preliminary investigations suggest that the body is approximately two days old. The matter is currently under investigation. —

Vidhut Goyal, ACP, Civil Lines. **Recruited into the Police Force Alongside His Brother in 2019**

As soon as the news of the death of Constable Kripal Singh—a resident of Nikau village within the Khairgarh police station jurisdiction—arrived from Prayagraj, it plunged his family into utter chaos. Family members have since departed to retrieve the deceased's body. The body is expected to reach his ancestral village late on Friday night. Kripal Singh (28), a resident of Nikau village, had joined the police force in 2019 alongside his elder brother, Omveer. At the time of his death, he was posted in Prayagraj. His father, Kailash Chandra, recounted that he had spoken with Kripal on Wednesday evening, after which his phone became unreachable. On Thursday morning, around 11:00 AM,

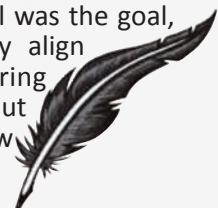
his elder son Omveer—who is also posted in Prayagraj—informed the family over the phone that Kripal had hanged himself inside his room, resulting in his death. The deceased, Kripal Singh, was the second of three brothers. His wife, Madhubala, along with their 4-year-old son, Golu, and 1-year-old daughter, Kavya, had been staying at her maternal home in Itoli, Shikohabad, for about a week prior to the incident. Upon hearing the news of her husband's death, a mountain of grief descended upon his wife and children. She, too, has since returned to her in-laws' home. Meanwhile, upon learning of the tragedy, a large crowd of villagers gathered at the family's ancestral residence in Nikau. Everyone remains stunned by this incident. The family members maintain that they are unaware of the reasons behind the suicide.

Editorial

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

damaged houses, roads, and the one bridge connecting Dharali and Hershil, another area affected by the landslide. Satellite images from ISRO now show that deposits of mud and sediments from the floods cover all of the village. Alongside civilian settlements, an Army camp near Hershil too was impacted by the floods, although the number of people missing there hasn't been reported. The IMD had issued warnings of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in all of Uttarakhand, including the Uttarkashi district, from 1 August onwards. But compared to other districts, Uttarkashi's rainfall during this monsoon was still pretty low. From 1 to 5 August, Uttarkashi's recorded rainfall was 6 per cent lower than the average rainfall it gets during this period. Over the monsoon season so far this year in the state, Uttarkashi has recorded 7 per cent lower rainfall than average. If there was indeed a cloudburst—100 mm of rain falling in one hour in a small area—then the IMD is not aware of it. The closest Automatic Weather System (AWS) station that could record this cloudburst is 7 km from Dharali, and it did not catch a cloudburst. But experts say that even without a cloudburst, the possibility of heavy rainfall,

causing this disaster is not unfounded. Dharali's location and slope explain it. "The 'cloudburst' may have happened much higher at 12,000 ft above sea level, and Dharali is at 8,000 ft. Even this slope of 4,000 ft makes a huge difference to the intensity of the water flow," Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, told ThePrint. "The canal is very narrow, and a lot of trees and mud could have been uprooted and swept along with the water." If extremely heavy rainfall can cause such damage without a rare event like a cloudburst, it should leave the system working toward.

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

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

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

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

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

HC grants Delhi 10 weeks to address EWS fee violations



Fees will be regulated for all Delhi private schools

Delhi: Delhi High Court ordered the Directorate of Education (DoE) to determine within 10 weeks on a case against various private schools for allegedly charging EWS and DG pupils fees. A panel of chief judge DK Upadhyay and justice Tushar Rao Gedela noticed that the Wazirpur JJ Colony Association had previously sent a representation to DoE on the subject, but the department had not acted on it. The court dismissed the petition and ordered the group to file a new, full representation within four weeks. It further ordered DoE to investigate and respond within 10 weeks of receiving the new representation. In its suit, the group accused numerous Delhi private schools of violating the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, by charging EWS/DG pupils and expelling those who couldn't pay. The RTE Act and Article 21A of the Constitution guar-

Delhi: The minister predicted the passage of the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill, 2025, during the Delhi Assembly's Monsoon Session. He said the bill's largest benefit is halting a "decade of unchecked profiteering" by private institutions through equitable application. A toothless, reactive framework is replaced by a proactive, empowered, and transparent one by this bill. Previously, the DoE

could only approve school fee increases under the land clause, but hundreds of smaller private schools raise tuition unchecked. Although parents of larger schools may object, a fee rise of ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 for a small private school in Najafgarh is a 50% increase. This is a significant hardship for that school's parents, yet they rarely complain, Sood added. He claimed that the land clause applies to 350 of 1,443 schools and that the Department of Education .

antee free education

up to Class 8 for these

Aiming for Defacement-Free DUSU Elections with a Rs 1 Lakh Bond



Delhi: In order to enforce order and avoid property damage during the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) election campaigns, the University of Delhi (DU) has released stringent regulations. A fair and disciplined election process is ensured by these new guidelines, which also seek to maintain the cleanliness and decency of the campus atmosphere. A Rs 1 lakh anti-defacement bond is required of all candidates nominated for any position in the DUSU. By posting this bond, the candidate promises that while campaigning, he or she will not engage in any behavior that could cause harm to or vandal-

ize college or university property. The amount of the bond will be lost if it is determined that the candidate or their supporters have violated these restrictions. This technique highlights the gravity of enforcing discipline on campus, much like the anti-ragging affidavit that students sign when they enroll. All academic units are

required by the university to hold orientation and sensitization workshops where students will learn about campus environmental preservation and the electoral code of conduct. By educating the public on the consequences of vandalism and promoting civil protest, these initiatives hope to counteract the problem.

Academics fear FYUP may dilute relevance of UG in DU

Delhi: The academic community in India is concerned that the New Education Policy's (NEP) proposed four-year undergraduate program, FYUP, contains flaws that will lower the bar for higher education in the country. Professor Seema Das of Political Science at Hindu College, Delhi

University, believes that removing four required courses from the three-year bachelor's degree program would significantly water down the curriculum. "Reduction in core papers would not allow a graduating student to master the respective subject," according to Das. When picking up elec-

tives or research papers, it's likely that a select few fields will be favoured. Some classes might end up being scrapped entirely as a result of this, rendering the instructors obsolete. Rajesh Jha, a professor of political science at Rajdhani College, has stated that this might go against the NEP's principles.

With an improved score, Delhi University achieves NAAC's top A++ grade



Delhi: In its most recent round of institutional assessment and accreditation, the University of Delhi was declared to have achieved the highest possible grade of A++ by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) on August 8. The accreditation is effective for five years, until 2029, according to the varsity's statement. The school achieved a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.55. Following DU's A+ rating and 3.28 cumulative grade point average in 2018, Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh extended congratulations to the university's staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders. He stated that the dramatic uptick was evidence of the university's dedication to excellent teaching, ground-breaking research, and responsible administration. Singh expressed enormous pride for the entire fraternity, stating that obtaining the NAAC A++ grade is a landmark moment in the university's history. Our faculty, students, non-teaching staff, alumni, and all stakeholders have worked tirelessly, and their unfaltering dedication has paid off. He spoke about how it will inspire them to "expand the horizons of excellence in teaching, research, and service to society" by setting even higher standards.

Mid-Entry Window Opens Until August 10; More Than 9,000 Undergraduate Spots Remain Available at Delhi

Delhi: According to the list of open seats issued by the university's admissions division, there are over 9,000 undergraduate seats that are still vacant, thus students who have not yet obtained admission to colleges at Delhi University still have a chance. The institution has opened the mid-entry window for the 2025-26 academic session, giving applicants another chance to apply for undergraduate admissions using the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS). A one thousand rupee (Rs.) non-refundable application fee is due



when submitted via the university portal. Before submitting their applications, students can use this window to see which seats are available, revise their course and college choices, and more. It is important to note that during the mid-entry

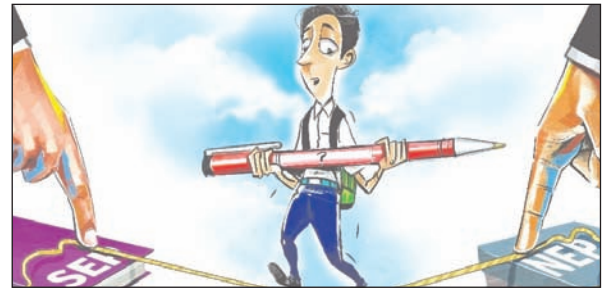
window, only candidates who were denied in Round 1 or Round 2 owing to faulty subject mapping, non-fulfillment of program-specific eligibility, or invalid documents will be allowed to fix their subject mapping and edit their preferences.

Irish education minister invites Indians for education, research

NEW DELHI: James Lawless, Ireland's Education Minister, on Monday said his country is "very welcoming" for students and has a supportive post-study employment visa arrangement. "Ireland is a very welcoming country. We have a very cosmopolitan culture. We have many nationalities now in Ireland, and many people have made their home, including many, many Indians," the Irish minister said, when asked whether his government is considering any changes in post-study work or immigration policies to retain skilled talents.

Test formats between the NEP and the SEP in Tamil Nadu

Delhi: The state of Tamil Nadu has defied the federal government's National Education Policy (NEP) by releasing its own policy on education, which is called the State Education Policy (SEP). When Chief Minister MK Stalin introduced the new strategy, he made it plain: Tamil Nadu's educational system will go its own way. Under Justice Murugesan's leadership, a fourteen-person group developed the Tamil Nadu SEP. This strategy upholds the two-language policy, rejects important NEP provi-



sions, and gives English, science, and artificial intelligence top priority. Up to the tenth grade, Tamil is a requirement for all students, regardless of whether they attend a state-run school or adhere to the CBSE, ICSE, or any other national board. It is quite evident that the state is against impos-

ing any language on its citizens. The NEET is strongly opposed by this person. Concerned about stress and inequity, Tamil Nadu has fought against it for a long time. As a result of the state's insistence on using NEP and NEET, the federal government allegedly withheld Rs 2,152 crore (Samagra Shiksha).

Legislation to Regulate School Fees Adopted by the Delhi Assembly

Delhi: The 2025 School Fee Regulation Bill was approved by the Delhi State Assembly. A parent can now veto a decision to increase school fees, thanks to a recently passed bill. This prevents school administrations from making the decision to increase fees all at once. Even if just one parent objects to the proposed fee increase, it will not be authorized, according to Ashish Sood, Delhi's minister of education. The decision cannot be enforced by management, and parents will have the power to veto it. In addition, the measure specifies that institutions that are determined to have imposed excessive fees may be subject to fines or even the revocation of their future ability to submit fee modifications.



CBSE loosens regulations on adding new sections

Diviya Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has revised its affiliation rules to permit section growth based on built-up carpet area instead of land size, in an effort to alleviate space restrictions caused by the increasing demand for school admissions. The board took this action in response to comments made by schools that are having trouble meeting the demand for new admissions despite having more sections than allowed. According to CBSE's circular, children's health, social and psychological development, and sense of belonging could be negatively affected if they had to travel significant distances to attend school because there aren't enough seats in their neighborhood. Officials and school administrators stated that the decision will alleviate admission pressure.

in 20 business days if more than the allowed school's fees are limit.

J&K bans 25 books for 'false narrative' and 'glorification of terrorism'

Delhi: In an unprecedented action, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has ordered the seizure and prohibition of 25 books, stating they promote secessionism, glorify terrorism, and threaten national integrity and public order. On August 5, the Home Department issued S.O.203 to declare the books "forfeited," noting their "false narrative" and involvement in "misguiding the youth" of Jammu and Kashmir. Azadi by writer-activist Arundhati Roy, The Kashmir Dispute 1947-2012 by constitutional expert A.G. Noorani, and Kashmir at the Crossroads by political scientist Sumantra Bose are prohibited. David Devadas, Hafsa Kanjwal, Ather Zia, Anuradha Bhasin, and Tariq Ali all have novels on the list. After a thorough investigation, officials decided the content was "objec-



IGNOU July 2025 registration deadline extended again

Delhi: The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has extended the deadline for admission and re-registration for the July 2025 session. Students now have until August 15, 2025, to complete the process. The applies to both new admissions and re-registration for continuing students. IGNOU offers courses in both distance learning (ODL) and online mode, and the application must be completed through its websites.

tionable" and "potentially harmful to public peace and the unity of the nation." The Home Department reported

that investigations and intelligence inputs showed that these publications radicalized adolescents.

Controversy over the Maratha map prompts NCERT commission to review content

Delhi: A group of specialists was assembled by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to review comments made regarding the subject matter of many textbooks. According to officials, the group consisting of



esteemed faculty members and domain specialists from prestigious universities would be chaired by Ranjana Arora, head of NCERT's Curriculum Studies and Development (DCSD). Several textbooks' instructional content has recently been reviewed and provided feedback to NCERT. Therefore, in keeping with previous procedure, a Committee consisting of prominent specialists is being formed. In a statement, NCERT stated that the committee will review the feedback based on the evidence that is currently available and will deliver its report as soon as practicable. Three days prior to NCERT's announcement, former Jaisalmer royal family leader Chaitanya Raj Singh voiced his disapproval of one of the organization's recently published textbooks, citing what he saw as historical mistakes. In an X post, Singh took issue with a social studies map for eighth grade that showed Jaisalmer as an outpost of the Maratha Empire. Due to the lack of "any Maratha dominance, invasion, taxation, or authority" mentioned in "any authentic historical sources," he asserted.



Faith, focus & gratitude

Actor Taha Shah Badusha opens up about what Ramzan truly means to him beyond rituals

As the holy month of *Ramzan* brings with it a sense of reflection, gratitude, and spiritual renewal, actor Taha Shah Badusha takes a moment to pause and look inward. In an exclusive interview with

Taha opens up about what *Ramzan* truly means to him beyond rituals. He also shares how the month helps him reconnect with himself and stay grounded amid the fast-paced world of showbiz. From cherished *Eid* traditions to moments of gratitude and faith, Taha offers a glimpse into his *Ramzan* journey. Excerpts:

Ramzan is described as a time of self-reflection and discipline. What has this month taught you about yourself this year?

Ramzan reminds me to slow down. This month brings a quiet pause. This year, especially, has reminded me that discipline is not just about controlling my routine but it's also about being grateful for all that you have.

What does an ideal Ramzan day look like for you when you are not working?

When I am not working, *Ramzan* is quiet and simple. I wake up for *sehri* and then try to keep the day calm. I also spend time with my family. The day ends with a small prayer.

Many people see fasting as just abstaining from food, but spiritually it's much deeper. How do you connect with that deeper meaning?

For me, fasting is about mindfulness. It reminds me to be kind to people and to myself and to be patient. It reminds you to pause and reflect. The idea is not just to control hunger but to control all negativity and distractions. It's definitely very powerful.

Was there a Ramzan from your childhood that still feels very special or memorable to you?

It was always magical. The entire atmosphere in the house would change. There were all kinds of food being prepared. Our friends and family members used to come over and we all prayed together.

What are some Eid traditions in your family that you still follow?

No matter how busy life gets, there are some traditions we still follow. We begin the day early, get ready, go to the mosque, meet family and friends. There's a lot of laughter and food. And, of course, a lot of money comes in the form of *Eidi*. So the warmth and connection are something I hold very dear.

Have you ever celebrated Eid on a film set? What was that experience like?

Most of the time it is off but there have also been times when I was shooting during *Eid*. On set, sometimes we pray and open fast together. Someone brings sweets from somewhere and we share joy.

Ramzan often reminds people to practice gratitude. What are you most grateful for in your life and career right now?

Right now, I feel deeply grateful for this journey. Every opportunity is great and things are all coming together. I'm connecting with the audience, with my fans and it's incredible. I'm grateful that my family is safe. I'm thankful for the love and support I receive from people.

Has faith or spirituality influenced the choices you make in your professional life?

Faith gives me a sense of grounding. It always reminds me that success should be balanced with humanity. In my professional life, I try to choose projects that make me grow and learn and stay honest to my values.

Photos: Instagram @anamikakhanna.in

CAUGHT ON CAM

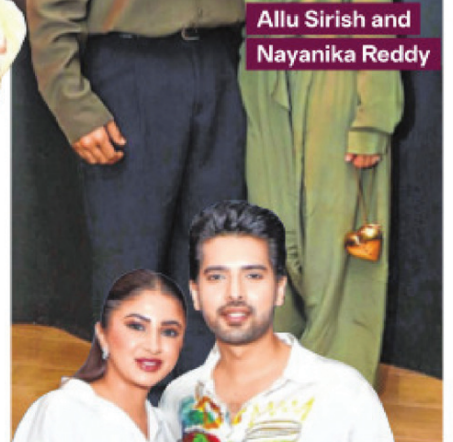
Celebrities spotted at the opening night of Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI 2026 on Thursday at the Jio World Convention Centre

Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI 2026

Model Mahieka Sharma is back on the runway, and how! The stunner, who is also dating ace Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya, made a chic appearance on opening night at Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI 2026, walking for ace designer Anamika Khanna on Thursday at the Jio World Convention Centre in a show-stopping look that blended comfort with couture. The showcase marked the unveiling of AK(OK)'s latest collection by Anamika Khanna.



Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi



Allu Sirish and Nayanika Reddy



Aashna Shroff and Armaan Malik



Simar Bhatia

B-town celebs attend Manish Malhotra's mother's last rites

Celebrity fashion designer Manish Malhotra's mother, Garima Malhotra, passed away on Thursday, leaving behind a legacy of love and cherished memories. Several Bollywood celebrities were spotted at the Santacruz Hindu Crematorium in Mumbai to pay their final respects. Among those who attended the funeral were Karan Johar, Urmila Matondkar, Ronit Roy, Rakul Preet Singh, Jackky Bhagnani, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Saiyami Kher, Sophie Choudry, David Dhawan and his son Rohit Dhawan, Karan Tacker, among others. Earlier, several celebrities visited Malhotra's residence on Thursday to offer their condolences. Those who paid their respects included Aishwarya Rai, Abhishek Bachchan, Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha and others.



Karan Johar



Fatima Sana Shaikh



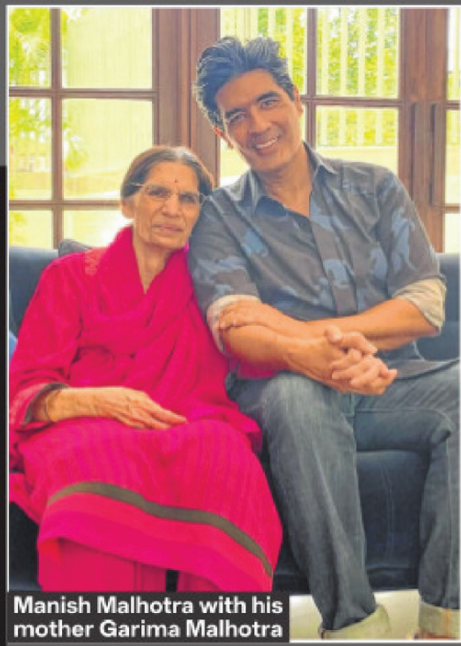
David Dhawan and his son Rohit Dhawan



Vijay Varma

Manish's LFW show cancelled

Manish Malhotra has cancelled his couture showcase at Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI 2026 following the passing of his mother. The show had been scheduled for Saturday, but will no longer take place. The designer's team confirmed the cancellation.



Manish Malhotra with his mother Garima Malhotra

TITLE: *Jazz City*

DIRECTOR: Soumik Sen

CAST: Arifin Shuvoo, Sauraseni Maitra, Shantanu Ghatak, Aniruddha Gupta, Sayandeep Sen, Shreya Bhattacharya, Shataf Figar, Alexandra Taylor, Amit Saha

WHERE: SonyLiv

RATING: ★★★

Hums with promise but rarely soars

Photo: IMDb



Set against the volatile backdrop of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, *Jazz City* aspires to marry history with mood, politics with performance, and revolution with rhythm. The premise is undeniably compelling: a jazz club in Calcutta doubling as a covert nerve centre for rebellion. Yet, what unfolds is less a gripping crescendo and more a prolonged, atmospheric riff that occasionally forgets to resolve.

The series begins with a telling proclamation, 'This is a story of a nobody who had the courage to be a somebody,' and follows it with arresting brutality, moments that underline the ideological violence of the time, but soon slips into a languid narrative rhythm. The storytelling often resembles a carefully staged tableau rather than a lived-in, urgent experience. By the later episodes, particularly around the seventh and eighth, the narrative becomes increasingly passive, leaning heavily on voice-overs instead of dramatised action. For a story steeped in espionage,

coded messages, and revolution, the absence of palpable tension is keenly felt.

There are sparks of intrigue, the shadowy intelligence networks, the moral ambiguity of its central characters, but the series rarely capitalises on them. It gestures towards depth without quite diving in, leaving one wishing for a more immersive exploration of the mechanics of rebellion itself.

Actors' performance

The ensemble cast brings sincerity, even when the writing occasionally betrays them.

Arifin Shuvoo's Jimmy Roy is suitably charismatic, embodying a man torn between self-interest and awakening conscience. Sauraseni Maitra lends Sheela Bose a quiet dignity, though her emotional arc feels underwritten.

Shataf Figar as General Hanif delivers menace with restraint, yet the character itself remains frustratingly generic. Shantanu Ghatak's Shashi Sinha adds intrigue, hinting at a larger game at play, while supporting performances, particularly Sayandeep Sengupta and Aniruddha Gupta,

add texture to the ensemble.

However, the dialogue often veers into the overly literary, making intimate exchanges sound staged rather than spontaneous. It is here that the performances struggle, caught between theatricality and realism.

Music

Where *Jazz City* truly finds its voice is in its aesthetic design. The sepia-toned frames and black-and-white interludes evoke a haunting nostalgia, effectively transporting viewers to the era. The production design, telephones, costumes, and club interiors feel meticulously curated.

Music, unsurprisingly, plays a pivotal role. From English jazz numbers to Bengali songs, the soundtrack underscores the emotional and political undertones. The titular club becomes a character in itself, its melodies echoing both defiance and despair. The sound design complements the visuals, creating an immersive, if occasionally indulgent, sensory experience.

Jazz City is ambitious, atmospheric, and intermittently engaging, but ultimately uneven. It captures the mood of a turbulent time without fully harnessing its dramatic potential. For all its visual finesse and thematic richness, it remains curiously distant, more observed than felt. Overall, the series hums with promise but rarely soars.

TITLE: *Chiraiya*

DIRECTOR: Shashant Shah

CAST: Divya Dutta, Sanjay Mishra, Siddharth Shaw, Prasanna Bisht, Faisal Rashid, Tinnu Anand, Sarita Joshi and Anjum Saxena

WHERE: JioHotstar

RATING: ★★★

With the advent of OTT platforms, hard hitting issues like marital rape, which was once pushed under the carpet, is now being very rightfully addressed. Will this week's OTT release *Chiraiya* (which addresses the issue of marital rape) act as a wake up call to the victims or will it fizzle out is what we will be finding out.

The six part series starts off with the introduction of its characters. Leading the gang is Kamlesh (the ever dependable Divya Dutta) whose shock knows no ends when she discovers that sister-in-law Pooja is a victim of sexual abuse within her marriage.

Kamlesh is a lady who has always been bound by the values that she has always cherished. But, this time round, she finds herself at a crossroads whether to back her helpless sister in law or to stand by her family in order to protect its reputation. In

which direction does Kamlesh decide to row the boat of her decision and the repercussions which follow that is what forms the rest of the series.

Actors' performance

Absolutely no prizes for guessing that the series is led by the sheer genius and expertise of two veteran actors - Divya Dutta and Sanjay Mishra. As for

Divya Dutta, she makes no mistake in shocking and surprising the audience with a spectacular performance. The transition of her character's trajectory is truly remarkable.

Ditto for Sanjay Mishra, whom we had seen with Neena Gupta recently in *Vaadh 2*, comes up with yet another stunning performance in this series. He is so much into the

skin of the character that there are few moments when you feel that what you are seeing on screen is not an enacted version but a real life one!

It is really nice to see the veteran actor Tinnu Anand after a long time. He justifies his character to a 'T'. Actors including Siddharth Shaw, Prasanna Bisht, Faisal Rashid and Anjum Saxena carry the narrative ably on their shoulders through their respective characters. Even though the veteran actress Sarita Joshi is immensely likeable, what one fails to understand is what made the makers to make her mouth an expletive a la Farida Jalal in the Shahid Kapoor starrer *O'Romeo*.

Music

After having gained oodles of experience as a director, Shashant Shah delivers a cracker with this series. He makes no mistake in calling a spade a spade through his craft. He has very clearly ensured that the series should act as an eye opener without sounding preachy. All in all, he truly lives up to the tagline of the series, *Shaadi License Nahi Hai*.

While the series' dialogues are decent, the background music elevates them into hard hitting ones. Amid all this, one does miss the presence of memorable one liners. The editing is above mediocre and the background music could have been more taut.

This hard hitting web series will only grow and reach the correct set of audience mostly and majorly through word of mouth.



A hard hitting wake up call to the 'silent sufferers'



Photo: IMDb

WAR SNIPPETS

SUPREME LEADER
BLAMES 'ZIONIST
PLOT' FOR ATTACKS
IN TURKEY, OMAN

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has called for the country's enemies to have their "security" removed in his latest public message. Khamenei made the remarks in a statement issued on his behalf and addressed to President Masoud Pezeshkian, offering condolences after Israel killed Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib. The ayatollah said the ministry should respond by voiding the security of Iran's "internal and external enemies". Mojtaba claimed attacks in Turkey and Oman were part of a "scheme by the Zionist enemy" to create divisions among regional nations. "We share with neighbouring countries the creed, the interests, and the confrontation against the forces of global arrogance."

BELGIUM'S DE WEVER
DEFENDS COMMENTS
ON RUSSIA TIES ONCE
UKRAINE WAR ENDS

Belgium's PM Bart De Wever has defended his comments calling for the normalisation of relations with Russia to re-establish cheap energy supplies. Earlier this week, he told the Belgian newspaper L'Echo that "we are losing on all fronts, we must end the conflict in Europe's interest." De Wever said Europe had to rearm "and at the same time we must normalise ties with Russia and regain access to cheap energy. It is common sense. In private European leaders tell me I am right, but no one dares say it out loud."

SRI LANKA REFUSED
US REQUEST TO LAND
PLANES: PRESIDENT

Sri Lanka refused permission for the US to land two of its warplanes in the island's southeast Mattala International Airport in early March, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake told Parliament in Colombo. Dissanayake said two US warplanes from Djibouti asked for permission to come to Lanka on March 4 and 8. Both requests were rejected. "We want to maintain our neutrality despite many pressures. We won't give in. The war in West Asia poses challenges but we will do everything possible to remain neutral. They wanted to bring in two warplanes armed with eight anti-ship missiles from base in Djibouti to the Mattala International Airport and we said no," the Lankan leader said.

SPAIN OUTLINES
€5BN PACKAGE TO
TIDE OVER CRISIS

Spain's PM Pedro Sánchez has said the government's plan includes 80 measures worth €5bn, which will come into effect as early as Saturday. Key parts include a drastic cut in energy taxes, with VAT on electricity down from 21% to 10%. But doubling down on his criticism of the war, he said the money could have gone to grants or improve health expenditure, but added: "this is what wars do: they divert money away from other important causes and from vulnerable people." "We're moved by suffering in West Asia, but we all end up paying when people beyond our borders start wars. The sooner the war ends, then more lives will be saved and the lower the economic cost we'll have to pay," he said.

PAKISTAN VIOLATED
EID CEASEFIRE, SAYS
AFGHANISTAN

Khas Kunar police command spokesperson Farid Dehqan has accused the Pakistan military of carrying out rocket attacks in Afghanistan's Kunar. Local media reports said. Dehqan said the Pakistan military fired 25 shells in Nari district of Kunar on Thursday night. Heavy weapon fire is continuing, Afghanistan-based Ariana News reported.

Qatar LNG exports
crippled for 3-5 yrsIndia, China among worst affected
as 17% supply capacity wiped out

Doha / New Delhi / Beijing: Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports have suffered a major setback after Iranian strikes damaged key energy infrastructure, wiping out 17% of the country's export capacity for an estimated three to five years, officials said.

The damage to two LNG production trains and a gas-to-liquids facility at Ras Laffan, the world's largest LNG hub, is expected to cost Qatar \$20 billion yearly and disrupt long-term supply contracts with major buyers across Asia and Europe.

QatarEnergy has declared force majeure on several contracts, signalling it may

not be able to meet supply commitments to countries including China, India, South Korea and European nations.

Fires and structural damage at the Ras Laffan complex could take years to fully repair, officials said. The disruption is expected to tighten global LNG supplies, pushing up prices and intensifying competition among import-dependent economies, particularly in Asia. India, which relies on Qatar for a significant share of its LNG imports, is among the worst affected. Qatar supplies over 40% of India's imported LNG, making it a critical component of the country's energy mix.

QatarEnergy has declared force majeure on several contracts, signalling it may

MEDIA UNDER FIRE | Cameraman says attack
'deliberately' targeted crew in press uniform
Israeli strike hurts
scribe & lensman

London: A Russia Today correspondent and his cameraman were injured in an Israeli missile strike while filming in southern Lebanon on Thursday, with footage circulating online appearing to capture the moment of impact.

Correspondent Steve Sweeney and cameraman Ali Rida said they were filming near Al-Qasbiya Bridge on the Litani River, close to a local military base, when Israeli forces struck in their vicinity.

The footage captures the moment of the strike, with a whistle audible in the seconds before the missile lands just metres behind Sweeney as he ducks for cover. RT confirmed that both men were conscious and receiving medical treatment at a hospital.

In a separate video, Rida said they were both fine and joked, "It turns out that when a missile is flying at you, you can hear it." Rida alleged Israeli forces "deliberately attacked" the crew though they were in press uniforms



Estimates have put the death toll in Iran at over 1,450, though figures vary, while more than 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon, 20 in Israel, about 20 across Gulf states & 13 US troops.

clearly displaying credentials.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova condemned the strike, saying an attack on journalists in press markings "cannot be called accidental given the killing of 200 scribes in Gaza."

On Telegram, she added the strike "did not hit a significant strategic military facility, but rather the location where the report was being filmed", and said that Moscow was "awaiting the response of international organisations."

Israel has repeatedly faced allegations of deliberately targeting journalists and media workers. Since the latest regional escalation began on Feb 28, the Committee to Protect Journalists has reported that at least three journalists have been killed in Iran and Gaza.

Albanese booed at Sydney mosque during Eid prayers

Sydney: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Friday was heckled during Eid prayers at a mosque in Sydney by protesters who voiced anger over his stance on Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Albanese and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke were at Lakemba Mosque after being invited by community leaders to attend Eid prayers.

According to BBC, there is deep resentment among the Muslims in Australia over the government's response to the Israel-Gaza war and rising Islamophobia at home.



Videos show protesters interrupting proceedings 15 minutes after Albanese and Burke joined worshippers.

Several people congregated at the mosque for the Eid prayers accused them of being "genocide supporters", refer-

ring to Israel's killing of Palestinians in Gaza, shouting "boo" and "get out of here" even as a mosque leader asked them to observe restraint.

"Dear brothers and sisters, keep calm a little bit," one of the organisers told the crowd,

urging people to sit down and stop filming the exchange. "It is Eid. It is a joyful day."

A man who was shouting at Albanese was removed by police but later released without charge, Australian Associated Press reported.

As per BBC, shortly after the event finished, the Lebanese Muslim Association, which operates the mosque, said Albanese was welcome at the prayers and they would "continue to open" their doors.

"We understand emotions are high, particularly given the suffering in Gaza and the

devastation in Lebanon. Choosing to engage with the elected leadership of this country is not a betrayal of those concerns. It is how we give them a voice," it said. The mosque said Friday was the first time the PM had been invited to attend prayers since the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Albanese said the mosque event was "incredibly positive" and he was overwhelmed by the reception. "If you got a couple of people heckling in a crowd of 30,000, that should be put in that perspective," the Australian PM said.

devastation in Lebanon. Choosing to engage with the elected leadership of this country is not a betrayal of those concerns. It is how we give them a voice," it said. The mosque said Friday was the first time the PM had been invited to attend prayers since the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Albanese said the mosque event was "incredibly positive" and he was overwhelmed by the reception. "If you got a couple of people heckling in a crowd of 30,000, that should be put in that perspective," the Australian PM said.

devastation in Lebanon. Choosing to engage with the elected leadership of this country is not a betrayal of those concerns. It is how we give them a voice," it said. The mosque said Friday was the first time the PM had been invited to attend prayers since the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Albanese said the mosque event was "incredibly positive" and he was overwhelmed by the reception. "If you got a couple of people heckling in a crowd of 30,000, that should be put in that perspective," the Australian PM said.

devastation in Lebanon. Choosing to engage with the elected leadership of this country is not a betrayal of those concerns. It is how we give them a voice," it said. The mosque said Friday was the first time the PM had been invited to attend prayers since the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Albanese said the mosque event was "incredibly positive" and he was overwhelmed by the reception. "If you got a couple of people heckling in a crowd of 30,000, that should be put in that perspective," the Australian PM said.

French Navy boards suspected
Russian shadow fleet tanker

Paris: The French Navy on Friday intercepted and boarded a tanker in the Mediterranean Sea that President Emmanuel Macron said was linked to Russia's sanctioned shadow fleet shipping oil in violation of international sanctions over Moscow's war on Ukraine.

As per the French maritime authorities for the Mediterranean, the tanker Deyna is suspected of operating under a false flag designation. The interception took place in the western Mediterranean and was carried out in cooperation with allies, including the UK, which monitored the ship, the authorities said.

"This operation aimed to verify the nationality of the

vessel," the maritime authorities said. The vessel was flying the flag of Mozambique and was coming from the Russian port of Murmansk. The documents found onboard "confirmed doubts about the flag's validity," they said.

On X, Macron called the Deyna a "shadow fleet" vessel. "These vessels, which circumvent international sanctions and violate the law of the sea, are war profiteers. They seek to generate profits and finance Russia's war effort," Macron said. "We won't let this happen."

Defence Secretary John Healey confirmed the UK's role in the tanker operation in the western Mediterranean by the French Navy.

Ukraine deploys units to intercept
drones in five West Asian nations

Kyiv: Ukraine has deployed military units to protect critical and civilian infrastructure against drones in five West Asian nations, Ukraine's Security Council Secretary Rustem Umerov said after a visit to the region.

Umerov visited the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan in the past week. He said Ukrainian units had been deployed in there and further steps for long-term security ties with each of them had been outlined.

"Ukrainian military specialists are operating in each of these countries under the coordination of the National Security and Defence

Council," he wrote on X. "Interception units have been deployed to protect civilian and critical infrastructure. Work is also underway to expand coverage areas."

ZELENSKYY SENDS TEAM TO US TO RESUME RUSSIA-UKRAINE TALKS Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he sent an official delegation to the US to move forward suspended negotiations on ending Russia's invasion of his country.

A senior Kremlin official also indicated a new round of US-brokered talks between Moscow and Kyiv will likely take place soon.

The trilateral talks, which have yet to produce any breakthrough on key issues, have been on hold while the Iran war has dominated international attention.

Zelenskyy is keen to restore momentum to negotiations and said he had sent representatives to the US for a meet likely on Saturday. The White House did not confirm it.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would not be present at those talks. The time and venue for a new trilateral meet have not been agreed yet. "The pause is temporary. We hope it is temporary regarding the continuation of the trilateral format."



KIM'S TEEN DAUGHTER DRIVES A TANK: North Korean leader's teenage daughter has driven a tank during army training supervised by Kim Jong Un, the pair's latest joint public appearance fueling outside speculation the girl is groomed as Kim's heir. Kim oversaw an offensive tactical drill involving tank units and infantry troops a day earlier and called for completing war preparations.

INDIA DISMISSES UN'S
WAQF REPORT AS FALSE

United Nations: India has dismissed a report by an expert on minority issues as "factually incorrect" and displaying "hostility" towards the country. Gaurav Kumar Thakur, a counsellor at India's UN Mission in Geneva, said India rejects the assertions of Nicolas Levrat, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, about the Waqf Amendment Act 2025.

His assertions are "factually incorrect and based on a poor grasp of its background and history," Thakur said on Tuesday at a session of the Human Rights Council in

Geneva. "The tone and content of his comments reflect a clear perceived hostility towards India," Thakur said.

Meanwhile, India has reiterated that the Indus Waters Treaty will remain in abeyance until Pakistan takes credible and irreversible steps to end support for terrorism.

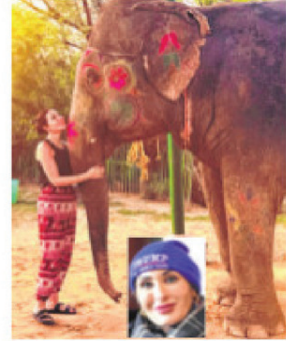
Speaking at a UN event marking World Water Day 2026, India's Permanent Representative Harish Parvathani said New Delhi was compelled to take the decision after repeated provocations and failure of bilateral engagement.

'India best country I've travelled to'

Laura Loomer after backlash over deleted racist remarks

After facing backlash over her anti-India tweets, **Laura Loomer**, a right-wing social media personality and adviser to President Donald Trump, on X, called "India the best country I have ever travelled to", News18 reported.

"It's incredible. I have been here for 9 days when I leave, and there is still so much to see and do. My experience has been amazing and India is portrayed negatively in the media as a place Americans should avoid, but I realise a lot of that is completely made up," wrote Loomer. She praised the people,



food, culture and hospitality, calling it "incredible." "I have felt safe and comfortable the time I have been here and India will truly be the next big super power. This country has

incredible potential and you have to see it yourself to understand because the media only makes it out to be 3rd world. That couldn't be further from the truth. Indian people are the nicest people I have ever met. I am grateful for my time in India. I have enjoyed it so much and I hope I can come back every year," she wrote.

Loomer had disparaged India and its people. In a 2024 post, Loomer said the White House would "smell like curry" if then-VP Kamala Harris became president. She also said the US was built by "white Europeans, not third-world invaders from India".

US govt sues Harvard, says
violated civil rights law

Washington: The US Justice Department filed a new lawsuit on Friday against Harvard University, saying its leadership failed to address antisemitism on campus, creating grounds for the government to freeze existing grants and seek repayment for grants already paid.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Massachusetts, is another missive in a protracted battle between the administration of President Donald Trump and the elite

university.

"The US cannot and will not tolerate these failures and brings this action to compel Harvard to comply" with federal civil rights law, the DoJ wrote in the lawsuit, "and to recover billions of dollars of taxpayer subsidies awarded to a discriminatory institution." Harvard did not respond to a request for comment.

The suit comes after negotiations appear to have bogged down in the months-long battle with Trump govt. -AP

3 teens sue
Musk's xAI

Three teens in Tennessee sued Elon Musk's xAI, saying its image-generation tools were used to morph real photos of them into explicitly sexual images. The high school students filed the lawsuit in California, where xAI, Musk's AI company, has its headquarters. They are seeking class-action status in order to represent what the lawsuit says are thousands of victims like themselves who either are minors or were minors when sexually explicit images of them were created.

Sailor's fitness app revealed French
aircraft carrier's real-time location

Paris: A French sailor's seemingly innocent morning run reportedly exposed the exact location of the country's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean, a shocking security blunder amid war between the US and Iran in West Asia.

It was the morning of March 13 when Arthur, name changed, started his morning workout on the deck of the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier while it headed for the eastern Mediterranean Sea. He used his smartwatch to

record his performance: a little over seven kilometres covered in 35 minutes.

Data collected was uploaded to the internet in real time, as the sailor was using the sports app Strava, and his profile was public, according to a report by French publication Le Monde. The young man, therefore, inadvertently reported, almost live, the exact location of the aircraft carrier and its escort in the Mediterranean Sea, sailing north-west of Cyprus near the Turkish coast, French outlet reported.

Was manipulated,
deceived by Epstein:
Norway's crown princess

Norway's Crown Princess Mette-Marit has said she wishes she had never met Jeffrey Epstein. "I feel so manipulated, and when you are manipulated, you don't realise it from the start," Mette-Marit said in a 20-minute TV interview in which she was on the verge of tears. Seven weeks ago, Norwegians discovered the crown princess had exchanged hundreds of mails with Epstein between 2011-14, stayed in his Florida house when he was not there.

WH AI policy
framework

White House has released a framework for the US Congress, outlining six guiding principles to shape future law and governance of the evolving technology. The framework emphasises safety, accountability and innovation, urging lawmakers to adopt a balanced approach that promotes technological advancement without compromising public trust. These include ensuring AI systems are secure, protecting privacy, advancing equity and civil rights, supporting innovation.

Briefs

NEW DELHI

Pathan feels IPL 2026 may be Dhoni's last



Speaking on JioHotstar's 'Game Plan - Know Your Team', JioStar expert Irfan Pathan explained on the importance of MS Dhoni's experience for CSK this season: "CSK is incomplete without MS Dhoni. This season might be the last time we see him in the yellow jersey and it's tough to imagine CSK and the IPL without him. This season, Dhoni will play an important role in bringing everyone together. I'm not sure how many games he will play. His presence in dressing room will help."

CHANDIGARH

Bhullar rallies to win IGPL C'garh



Gaganjeet Bhullar returned a bogey-free four-under 68 in the final round to successfully defend his title at the IGPL Invitational Chandigarh, rallying from four shots behind to register his fourth IGPL win in just six appearances. Bhullar, who shot 68 and 69 in the first two rounds, signed off with another 68, highlighted by three birdies in four holes between the 13th and 16th on the back nine. His three-day total of 11-under featured just one bogey, which came in 2nd round."

LONDON

Arsenal's Partey to plead not guilty



Former Arsenal player Thomas Partey intends to plead not guilty to two new charges of rape, his lawyer told a London court on Friday. The 32-year-old Ghana midfielder, who now plays for Spanish club Villarreal, is separately awaiting trial on five counts of rape related to two women and one count of sexual assault involving a third woman. The new charges were brought after a different woman alleged Partey twice raped her on the same day in December 2020. According to a court hearing Friday, the new allegations arose after the first set of charges were publicized. Partey was not required to attend Friday's

CONTROVERSY | Sunrisers Leeds faced backlash following Abrar's signing, with the team's X account suspended briefly

BCCI washes hands off Sunrisers-Abrar issue

NEW DELHI

The BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla on Friday downplayed the acquisition of Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed by Sunrisers Leeds during The Hundred auction, saying the development in an "overseas league" is beyond the board's ambit. The Sunrisers Leeds, owned by Chennai-based media conglomerate Sun Group, on Thursday signed Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar during The Hundred player auction, making him the first Pakistan cricketer to be picked by an Indian-owned franchise in the tournament.

"It doesn't concern us. It's not the IPL. What happens in The Hundred or other overseas leagues, we have nothing to do with it," Shukla told PTI.

The franchise paid GBP 190,000 (approximately Rs 2.34 crore) for Abrar after a bidding contest with Trent Rockets. The tournament will be held from July 21 to August 16.

Sunrisers Leeds faced backlash following Abrar's signing, with the team's X account suspended briefly due to the issues.

IPL franchises have not signed any Pakistani player since 2009 due to strained diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Sun Group, which also owns Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, completed a full takeover of the erstwhile Northern Superchargers last year, acquiring a 49 per cent stake from the ECB and the remaining 51 per cent from county club Yorkshire for around GBP 100 million.



190,000 GBP (Rs 2.3 cr)
Amount paid for Abrar Ahmed by Sunrisers Leeds



It doesn't concern us. It's not the IPL. What happens in The Hundred or other overseas leagues, we have nothing to do with it

Rajeev Shukla,
BCCI Vice-President

Sunrisers CEO Kavya Maran attended the Thursday's auction and raised the paddle during the bidding.

The group also owns Sunrisers Eastern Cape in SA20 but does not have a Pakistani player in its squad.

Abrar was the second Pakistan cricketer sold in the auction after mystery spinner Usman Tariq, who was picked by Birmingham Phoenix for GBP 140,000 (approximately Rs 1.72 crore). However, Phoenix have no IPL connection.

Abrar's old posts resurface on social media

MUMBAI

The signing of Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed by Sunrisers Leeds for the 2026 edition of The Hundred has sparked renewed controversy after several of his old social media posts resurfaced online.

One widely circulated post from March 2025 shows Abrar allegedly mocking the Indian Air Force. In the post, he posed with a cup of tea, captioned: "Having the last cup of FANTASTIC evening TEA before Ramadan begins," a reference to the 2019 Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman incident, which was brought up again during Operation Sindoor. The post drew sharp criticism from Indian cricket fans, who interpreted it as disrespectful to the Indian armed forces.

Following the resurfacing of these posts, social media erupted with calls for accountability. Many users criticized Kavya Maran and demanded a boycott of Sunrisers Hyderabad, given the franchise's connection with Sunrisers Leeds.

Hashtags demanding action and boycott began trending, reflecting growing anger among fans over the perceived insensitivity. The controversy underscores the challenges sports franchises face when selecting international players.

Rohit should play full 40 overs: Chopra

Former India cricketer questions Mumbai Indians' use of Rohit Sharma as Impact Player

NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer and commentator Aakash Chopra has said Rohit Sharma should remain on the field for the entire duration of a T20 match rather than being used as an Impact Player by Mumbai Indians (MI) in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Chopra said it made little sense for a fully fit player like Rohit to feature only as a batter when he could contribute to the team throughout the match.

"Logically, if you are fit, you should play the whole game and not be substituted. Especially when you are batting second, you should not come in as an Impact Player. An opener is not used to watching 20 overs of the match from the dugout," Chopra told Jio Hotstar.

The former India opener also explained that opening batters are accustomed to being involved in the game from the start and preparing accordingly before walking out to bat.

"Opening

batters are used to staying on the field, preparing accordingly and then hitting the ground running. Rohit Sharma is the fittest, meanest and maybe the strongest at this point in time, so he should be on the ground for all 40 overs. That is how Mumbai Indians will be able to make full use of Rohit Sharma," he added.

Meanwhile, former India spinner Harbhajan Singh also said Rohit should not be restricted to a substitute role and highlighted the value of his experience on the field.

"Rohit Sharma has been used as the 12th man who just bats, but I feel that the kind of leader he has been, a player

Logically, if you are fit, you should play the whole game and not be substituted.

Aakash Chopra
former India cricketer

like him should be on the field. In tough matches, when you need to take certain calls and when a captain sometimes needs a shoulder to lean on, Rohit Sharma can do that for Hardik Pandya," Harbhajan said.

Five-time IPL-winning captain Rohit was often used as an Impact Player by Mumbai Indians during IPL 2025, a move that drew criticism from fans. Rohit endured a poor campaign in the previous season, scoring just 240 runs. The opener will look to turn things around and make a stronger contribution with the bat in the upcoming IPL.



Shooters Samrat, Suruchi added to TOPS core group

Gulveer and Pramod Bhagat among eight athletes included; Prannoy, Deepak Punia dropped

NEW DELHI

Rising pistol shooters **Samrat Rana** and **Suruchi Singh**, Asian gold medal-winning long-distance runner **Gulveer Singh** and world champion para-shuttler **Pramod Bhagat** are among eight athletes added to the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Core group following a recent review of performances.

Badminton player **HS Prannoy**, former Asian gold medal-winning rifle shooter **Diyansh Singh Panwar** and wrestler **Deepak Punia** were among the prominent names dropped from the Core group for failing to meet the required performance parameters, according to a well-placed source.

The revision of the list was carried out during the 169th meeting of the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), chaired by TOPS Chief Executive Officer **NS Johal** in New Delhi.

Samrat enjoyed a breakthrough year, winning world titles in both the individual and team 10m air pistol events



last year. Suruchi also had an impressive run on the international circuit, claiming four consecutive World Cup gold medals.

Pramod secured his sixth world title earlier this year. The 37-year-old para-badminton star, whose left leg was disabled by polio, is a former Paralympic gold medalist. He returned to competition last year after serving a three-year suspension for an anti-doping violation involving three missed tests.

Another shooter included in the Core group is rifle shooter **Niraj Kumar**, who won a silver medal at the

Asian Championships earlier this year. However, former Asian Games gold medalist **Shiva Narwal** was excluded from the updated list.

Despite the additions and removals, the TOPS Core group continues to comprise 56 athletes.

Gulveer earned promotion from the Developmental group after a series of remarkable performances last year. The distance runner holds national records in both the 5,000m and 10,000m events and created history by winning gold medals in both races at the Asian Championships.

Also promoted from the Developmental group were badminton mixed doubles pair **Tanisha Crasto** and **Dhruv Kapila**, along with boxer **Jaismine Lamboria**, who won the 57kg featherweight gold medal at last year's World Championships.

Athletes in the TOPS Core group receive a monthly allowance of 50,000 and an additional \$25 per day during training and competitions overseas.

Kolkata Knight Riders rope in Zimbabwe's Blessing Muzarabani

Right-armed pacer was among standout performers in the T20 WC

KOLKATA

Three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Friday announced the signing of Zimbabwe fast bowler **Blessing Muzarabani** ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season, with the pacer opting out of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), which is scheduled to run concurrently.

The right-arm fast bowler was among the standout performers in the recently concluded T20 World Cup, finishing as the joint third-highest wicket-taker with 13 wickets as Zimbabwe progressed to the Super Eights stage of the tournament.

"KKR have signed Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani to join the squad for the upcoming Indian Premier League 2026 season," the franchise said in a statement.

"The 6 ft 8 in right-arm quick has emerged as one of Zimbabwe's leading pace bowlers in the shortest format, known for generating steep bounce and striking during key phases of an



KKR have signed Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani to join the squad for the upcoming Indian Premier League 2026 season

KKR statement

innings."

Muzarabani brings considerable experience in the T20 format. The Zimbabwe international has claimed more than 90 wickets in over 80 T20 Internationals at an average of around 21, with best bowling figures of 3/8.

The franchise added that the pacer's experience across international cricket and global T20 leagues will strengthen KKR's bowling unit.

"Muzarabani brings significant T20 experience, having claimed over 90 wickets in more than 80 T20 Internationals at an average of

around 21, with best figures of 3/8. His pace and consistency across global leagues and international cricket add further depth to KKR's pace attack heading into the season," the statement said.

The signing comes after Bangladesh left-arm pacer **Mustafizur Rahman** parted ways with the franchise last year. KKR had released Mustafizur in December as part of their squad reshuffle ahead of the new IPL season.

Muzarabani's addition is expected to bolster Kolkata's fast-bowling resources, particularly in the powerplay and death overs, where his height

and ability to extract bounce could prove crucial.

Standing at 6 ft 8 in, Muzarabani has built a reputation for troubling batters with steep bounce and disciplined line and length.

His performances for Zimbabwe across formats, especially in T20 Internationals, have made him one of the country's leading pace bowlers in recent years.

The Zimbabwe pacer has also featured in several franchise leagues around the world, gaining valuable experience against top international players. KKR management believes his presence will add variety.

cricket

Sharp increase in Indian women's participation: study

NEW DELHI

Women's cricket in India has grown exponentially with participation doubling across 14 states since 2020, according to a study commissioned by the BBC and Collective Newsroom.

The survey, which covered over 10,000 women, has found that the share of women who say they play cricket has risen from five per cent in 2020 to 10 per cent now. The participation

of young women is growing even faster as 16 per cent of those aged 15 to 24 say they play cricket compared with six per cent in 2020.

"The research also finds that one in four young women aged 15 to 24 have considered sport as a career option," according to the study.

The Indian women's cricket team has been on a high recently, winning its maiden ODI World Cup and defeating Australia in a bilateral three-match T20I series

for the first time in a decade, a surge that could also be contributing to the sport's growing popularity.

Cricket has overtaken traditional sport kabaddi, which has long been a favourite in India's hinterlands, by a huge margin.

"Cricket has also strengthened its position as the most played sport among women in the states surveyed. In 2020 it only narrowly edged past kabaddi, but the new figures suggest it is now firmly ahead.

"Participation has increased across most regions. All but two of the states surveyed report a rise in the number of women playing cricket. In Uttar Pradesh, levels of participation have increased 10-fold, from one per cent to 10 per cent. The gender gap in cricket participation across the states covered has also narrowed." The study also shows that for every woman who plays cricket, three men play the sport, compared with a ratio of one to five in

2020.

As for career interest, 26 per cent of young women aged 15 to 24 say they have considered a career in sport, up from 16 per cent in 2020, with the highest levels reported in Tamil Nadu (27 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (19 per cent), and Meghalaya (19 per cent), the study said.

The participation in badminton has also risen among the women surveyed, especially in the states of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

