

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Monday, 16 February, 2026

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

Briefs

CHANDIGARH Punjab CM hospitalised, health stable

Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann was on Sunday rushed to Fortis Hospital in Mohali, near here, after his blood pressure shot up during his visit to Sangrur where he took part in Mahashivratri events along with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal. He is currently experiencing exhaustion and has been admitted for observation and supportive care. His condition is stable, and he remains under the supervision of a multidisciplinary medical team, hospital sources said.

MANDYA (KARNATAKA) Two killed in chemical tank blast

In a tragic accident at Kirti Chemicals Industries in Mandya, Karnataka, on Sunday, two people died and three others were injured after a chemical storage tank exploded. The incident occurred around 10 am, when workers attempted to open the tank cap with a gas cutter, igniting residual chemical vapours. The injured were rushed to Mandya MIMS Hospital for treatment.

GUWAHATI Rhino kills forest guard in Kaziranga

A forest guard was killed and another seriously injured after a rhinoceros attacked them while on duty inside Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) in Assam on Sunday, officials said. According to a KNPTR official, the incident occurred at Bordoloni Camp under the Kohora Range around noon when 52-year-old Sahabuddin, a Home Guard, along with another forest staff member, Ramen Borah, was carrying out routine patrolling duties inside the protected area.

AMARAVATI Bill Gates to visit Andhra today

Microsoft founder Bill Gates will visit Amaravati on Feb 16 and hold discussions with CM N Chandrababu Naidu on expanding cooperation in health and artificial intelligence initiatives, Andhra Pradesh minister P Narayana sai on Sunday. Gates is expected to arrive at the state secretariat here around 10 am on Monday and meet with Naidu, IT Minister Nara Lokesh and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan briefly.

GORAKHPUR (UP) India a global centre of goodwill: RSS

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Sunday that India stands as a global centre of goodwill and social harmony, asserting that the country's civilisational ethos is rooted in a sense of oneness and mutual belonging rather than transactional relationships.

SCAM BACKBONE | More than 8,000 shady accounts frozen in 3 years, funds can be misused by terror groups, fear officials

Massive 'mule account' network in J&K busted

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

Security agencies have busted an ever-growing ecosystem of "mule accounts" in Jammu and Kashmir that serves as the financial backbone of global scam networks, with officials fearing that the funds routed through these accounts could be used for separatist and anti-national activities.

The officials said more than 8,000 mule accounts operating in the region have been identified and frozen over a period of three years, exposing a sophisticated network of money laundering.

They described these accounts as the "weakest yet most crucial link" in the cybercrime chain, as without them, the conversion of stolen money into untraceable cryptocurrency would be impossible. Central security agencies have asked the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other law enforcement agencies to hold consultations with banks to curb the mushrooming of 'mule accounts' and identify middlemen, commonly referred to as "mulers", who facilitate such financial frauds, they said.

Officials suspect that after the National Investigation Agency's 2017 crackdown on the flow of illicit money into Jammu and Kashmir, anti-national elements may have shifted to a newer model of

Docs formed new terror group



The 'white-collar' terror module recently busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police indicates that the doctors arrested in the case had been radicalised since 2016 and formed a new terror organisation named "Ansar Interim" to carry out subversive activities in the Union Territory as well as in the hinterland, officials said on Sunday. The case, which is now being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), also brings to light that Dr Umer-un Nabi — the man

behind the wheel of the explosive-laden car that exploded outside the Red Fort on November 10, killing over a dozen people — had unsuccessfully attempted to join terror groups in 2016 and 2018, they said. Officials said the accused doctors had decided to form the organisation when they met in downtown Srinagar in April 2022. According to officials, the doctors said the new group was needed because because all their contacts with active terrorists had been severed.

"digital hawala", wherein commissions earned by mule account holders or mulers may be used for activities against the country.

Officials said the money trail is deliberately messy,

with the scammed money rapidly shifted through several accounts and broken into smaller transactions to avoid detection. "The entire scam ecosystem depends on these accounts. Without a destina-

What is a muler?

A muler is typically not a person who contacts victims or sends fake links. Instead, their role is covert but critical — arranging and maintaining a steady supply of mule accounts that scammers use to receive and transfer stolen money without revealing their identities. These mule accounts often belong to ordinary people lured with promises of "easy commission". They are persuaded to hand over control of their bank accounts, including net banking credentials, under pretext that the accounts will be used briefly as "parking accounts". A single scammer is often supplied with 10 to 30 mule accounts at a time, and in many cases, bank accounts are opened in name of fictitious firms.

tion for the money, the scam fails at the first step. Those renting out their accounts are not just victims of circumstance; they are the engines of the crime," a senior official said.

Assam CM unveils infra push across sensitive Northeast

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said the Centre and the state government are jointly rolling out a series of strategic infrastructure projects across the state of Assam to strengthen national security and improve connectivity.

Sarma underlined that the Northeast remains a sensitive and strategically vital region. He added that multiple infrastructure layers are being developed to ensure uninterrupted connectivity.

He referred to the newly operational emergency landing facility at Moran, where fighter jets and transport aircraft landed during the Prime Minister's visit on February 14.



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma speaks at a function in Nagaon, Assam, on Sunday

The state has sought more such dual-use facilities, especially in remote and flood-prone areas, to support both defence and disaster response.

He also said a new Army base has come up in Dhubri to strengthen coverage in western Assam.

On the civil aviation front, the state will soon sign a MoU with the Ministry of Civil Aviation to develop four new airports in Majuli, Diphu, Umrangso and Manas. If land is made available, these could be operational within five years, boosting tourism and regional growth.

Vote on motion to remove Birla on March 9: Rijju

TAWANG

The debate and subsequent vote on the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will be taken up on March 9, when the House reassembles after the recess, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said here on Sunday.

Rijju stated that the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, will be "interesting" as

several "important" legislations and a "critical" bill will be presented in Parliament for debate and passage.

He warned that if opposition parties continue their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.

"On March 9 in the Lok Sabha, we will have the debate on the no-confidence motion moved against the speaker. It is the rule to take it up on the first day. There will be a vote following the debate," he told PTI in an interview.

Renuka served privilege notice over stray dog

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Renuka Chowdhury, a Rajya Sabha MP, has served a notice for breach of privilege for bringing a stray into the Parliament complex in her car and for allegedly making derogatory remarks against MPs. The Committee of Privileges of the Rajya Sabha has taken up a complaint against Chowdhury and has asked her to respond to the charges by February 23.

Blow to Punjab BJP as industrialist joins SAD

CHANDIGARH

Industrialist-turned-politician Arvind Khanna on Sunday quit Punjab BJP and joined Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

A senior leader and two-time Congress MLA earlier, Khanna, had joined BJP in 2022 and was made vice-president of the BJP Punjab unit. Though he could not win the 2022 election from Sangrur assembly seat and 2024 election from Sangrur Lok Sabha seat on BJP ticket, he is known for his various social welfare activities. Besides, he has also held positions in various sports organisations including serving as the president of the Professional Golfers Association of India.

Khanna was inducted into SAD by its president Sukhbir Badal at the former's residence in Sangrur.

Sukhbir said in his post on X: "It is my pleasure to wel-



come senior BJP leader and my friend Arvind Khanna into the

Shiromani Akali Dal and appoint him as the in-charge of the Sangrur assembly constituency. Mr. Khanna has been serving Sangrur for more than two decades and has been instrumental in carrying out various social initiatives under the Umeed Foundation headed by him", he said and added that "I am confident that his joining @Akali_Dal will further strengthen the party in Sangrur district.. I also welcome BJP district president Dharminder Singh Dullat, former Municipal Council president Harbans Singh Garcha, and all the leaders and workers of BJP and Congress who are joining the SAD along with Mr. Khanna".

Extremism to be eradicated in two weeks, says Bihar Dy CM

PATNA

Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Choudhary on Sunday indicated that a massive operation would be launched against terrorism and claimed that left wing extremism will be completely eradicated in the next couple of weeks.

Speaking at an event in his assembly constituency Tarapur in Munger district, Choudhary said that the government was committed to freeing the state from left-wing extremism. He said that Munger had of late been excluded from the 'Legacy and Thrust Zone' category under the Centre's policy.

Munger was once considered as one of the worst Maoist-hit districts in Bihar. Even the then Munger SP K C Surendra Babu along with four police personnel was killed in a landmine explosion



Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary performs Jalabishek to Lord Ganesha on the occasion of Mahashivratri at Tarapur, in Munger on Sunday

carried out by Maoists in

2005. The SP's convoy was detonated with landmines while returning to Munger district headquarters after a joint police operation carried out by Munger and Jamui police

in Bhimbandh region. The 1997-batch IPS officer's killing was the biggest ever blow to the state police force.

Choudhary said that Munger has now officially been declared free from Naxal menace.

Nitish gov't's job claims: RJD seeks white paper

PATNA

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Sunday demanded that the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government issue a white paper detailing its claims on job creation, amid assertions that government employment in Bihar has seen a significant rise over the past two decades.

The demand came after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar stated that the number of government employees in the state had increased more than threefold in 20 years. According to the state budget for 2026-27, the total number of government employees has risen to around 9.5 lakh from 3.5 lakh two decades ago. The budget noted that expenditure on salaries has grown more than 13 times during the same period.

The NDA government also claimed that over two lakh

employees, including teachers and constables, were appointed in the last two years. It said salary allocation has risen from Rs 5,152 crore in 2005-06 to Rs 51,690 crore in 2025-26, and further to Rs 70,220 crore in 2026-27, the highest ever. Pension allocation, it added, has increased from Rs 2,456 crore in 2005-06 to Rs 35,170 crore in the current budget.

Countering the claims, senior RJD leader and spokesperson Chittaranjan Gagan said regular recruitment was carried out across departments during the party's tenure. He asserted that 1.9 lakh Shiksha Mitras were appointed and that MBBS graduates received regular jobs during the rule of Lalu Prasad Yadav. Gagan further alleged that regular appointments slowed after 2005 and claimed that thousands of contractual teachers appointed later were found with fake certificates.

Muslim groups' signature drive before Ajmer Dargah hearing

MUMBAI

Ahead of a February 21 hearing in the Ajmer Civil Court on a plea seeking an archaeological survey of the Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Dargah, Muslim groups have launched a nationwide signature campaign opposing claims that the shrine stands atop a demolished Shiva temple. Organisers aim to collect 10 million signatures.

The petition, filed by the Maharana Pratap Sena, alleges that the shrine, built by Mughal emperor Humayun

over the tomb of the Sufi saint who died in 1236 CE, was originally a Hindu temple. The court will also hear an application by the Dargah trust the same day.

Rajvardhan Singh Parmar, president of Maharana Pratap Sena, said the group collected 1.25 lakh signatures during its 2022 Jan Jagran Yatra in Rajasthan in support of the claim. He alleged that previous Congress government ignored their demand for an investigation and has petitioned Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma for an archaeological study similar to those conducted in

Ayodhya and Varanasi.

This is the second such plea. In 2024, Vishnu Gupta of the Hindu Sena moved court, claiming the Dargah was built over the Sankat Mochan Mahadev Mandir.

Meanwhile, Hazrat Khwaja Gareeb Nawaz Welfare Committee has approached the Supreme Court, contending that the petitions violate the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The Act prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship.

UP air clean, Delhi like a gas chamber: Yogi

GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday compared the air quality of the national capital to a "gas chamber", asserting that people in Uttar Pradesh are enjoying a clean environment and are not being suffocated despite rapid development. Speaking at an event in Gorakhpur, CM Yogi said environmental pollution has emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing the world today, and stressed that UP has focused on balanced development.

Fake degree probe against 10 private varsities in Raj

JAIPUR

Following complaints of fraudulent degrees and irregularities, the Rajasthan government has ordered an investigation into 10 private universities in the state.

Responding to a question in the assembly regarding action into the alleged irregularities of private universities of the state, deputy chief minister and minister for higher education Dr Prem Chand Bairwa said that out of the 53 private universities under the control of the department,

orders have been given to investigate 10 private universities after receiving complaints of irregularities against them. These include OPJS University Churu, Singhania University Jhunjhunu, Sunrise University Alwar, Shridhar University Jhunjhunu, Mewar University Chittorgarh, Madhav University Sirahi, Raffles University Alwar, Nirvana University Jaipur, University of Technology Jaipur, and Jagdish Jhabarmal Tibrewala University Jhunjhunu. He said out of these 10 uni-

versities, following complaints of fraud, the department has liquidated OPJS University, Churu, on January 7, 2026, appointing the Divisional Commissioner, Bikaner, as its administrator.

The Special Operation Group of the police had received complaints against officials of OPJS University Churu, Sunrise University Alwar, and Singhania University Jhunjhunu. Shri JTT University Jhunjhunu and Mewar University Chittorgarh regarding awarding backdated mark sheets/degrees of various courses.

Former Cong leader Siddiqui joins SP

LUCKNOW

Former Uttar Pradesh minister and ex-Congress leader Naseemuddin Siddiqui on Sunday joined the Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party in Lucknow, saying he respects the party chief immensely and will work to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots.

Siddiqui, who was earlier associated with the Bahujan Samaj Party and later joined the Congress, formally joined the Samajwadi Party in the presence of Akhilesh Yadav. He said he shared old ties with Yadav and would work under his guidance along with other senior leaders.

"I have old relations with Akhilesh Yadav. I respect him

immensely. We will follow his directions," Siddiqui told reporters.

Along with Siddiqui, former BSP leader Anees Ahmad Khan and former Apna Dal state president S Raj Kumar Pal also joined the Samajwadi Party. Siddiqui had resigned from all positions in the Congress last month, saying he had been unable to work at

the grassroots level for the past eight years. He said he continues to respect senior Congress leaders but felt sidelined in organisational work.

"I have no resentment towards anyone. I respect Kharge ji, Rahul ji, Priyanka ji and Sonia ji and I will continue to respect them. There was no work for me there," Siddiqui said.

Vijayan will remain CM after polls: Cong's Aiyar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar on Sunday expressed confidence that Pinarayi Vijayan will continue as the chief minister of Kerala. His remarks come as the Congress seeks to return to power in the state, with

Assembly elections scheduled in the coming months.

Speaking at the international seminar titled "Vision 2031: Development and Democracy", inaugurated by CM Vijayan, Aiyar said necessary amendments should be introduced to legally secure Kerala's top position in Panchayati Raj system.



The Magh Mela concludes after the Mahashivratri bath, with a large crowd gathering at the ghats, with 4 million devotees taking a holy dip



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

reverberated with chants of "Har Har Bam Bam." According to the fair administration, by late evening, more than 4 million devotees had taken a holy dip at all 24 ghats. Over 220 million devotees have bathed during the 44-day Magh Mela. Devotees began arriving at the various ghats of the Triveni Sangam from the early

Prayagraj. The Magh Mela 2026, currently underway in the Sangam city of Prayagraj, concluded with the final Mahashivratri bathing festival. On Sunday, a huge crowd of devotees gathered at all the major ghats, including the Triveni Sangam. The entire fair area

hours of the morning. Bathing and worship continued throughout the day at the Triveni Sangam, Daraganj, Dashashwamedh, Arail, Jhunsi, and Phaphamau, among other ghats. Devotees also performed charity after bathing. According to astrologers, this year's Mahashivratri festival was even more fruitful due to the special

alignment of planets and stars. Donating food, clothing, and gold was emphasized to be of particular importance. The administration had made extensive preparations for the final bathing festival. Tight security arrangements were in place. ATS commandos were deployed alongside UP Police, PAC, and RAF personnel. 400

CCTV cameras, including over 150 AI cameras, were installed to monitor the fair.

Senior police and administrative officials remained on ground zero throughout the day. Mela Officer Rishiraj stated that with this sixth and final bathing festival of Mahashivratri, the Magh Mela 2026 officially concluded.

All necessary arrangements were made for the convenience of devotees, and officials remained on constant patrol. Mela SP Neeraj Pandey stated that after the final bath, police personnel on fair duty would be withdrawn in a phased manner. Deployment of various sector and water police will continue as needed.

Family members were away at a wedding, thieves broke into an empty house and stole jewelry worth lakhs of rupees

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Jhunsi. Thieves targeted an empty house in Devnagar (Sangam Lal Ki Bagiya) in the police station area and stole jewelry worth lakhs of rupees. The incident occurred while the family was attending a wedding. Arvind Kumar, a resident of Devnagar, had locked his house with his family on Saturday and gone to a relative's wedding. Late at night, the thieves took advantage of the situation, broke the main door lock, and entered the house. They then stole valuable gold and silver jewelry, including necklaces, chains, anklets, and other items kept in the cupboard and fled. When the family returned on Sunday morning, they were shocked to find the lock of the house broken. Upon entering, they found the items scattered and the cupboard empty. The police were immediately informed of the incident. The victim's wife, Deepika Bharti, has filed a written complaint at the police station, demanding action. Police arrived at the scene, conducted an investigation, and questioned people nearby. The station in-charge stated that an investigation is underway based on the complaint, and the incident will be revealed soon.

Auto sank into pond, six-year-old girl saved by shopkeepers' presence of mind

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Jhunsi. A major tragedy was averted in the New Jhunsi area on Saturday. An auto rickshaw parked in a deep pond in front of the sugar mill parking lot suddenly rolled over and fell into the water. A six-year-old girl playing in the auto rickshaw also began drowning. The prompt action of onlookers saved the innocent girl's life. According to reports, the auto rickshaw was parked near the pond. Meanwhile, six-year-old Rashi, who was playing nearby, climbed onto the auto. While playing, the auto suddenly lost balance and plunged straight into the pond. Seeing the auto slam into the water, panic gripped the surrounding area. Seeing the girl drowning, Sunil Chauhan and Magru, who were at nearby shops, jumped into the pond without delay. After a great deal of effort, they pulled her out. According to eyewitnesses, the girl was completely submerged in water for some time, leaving everyone gasping for breath. The police, who arrived on the scene, also assessed the situation. Outpost in-charge Harishankar Mishra stated that the girl is safe and has been returned to her family. Efforts are underway to retrieve the auto that sank in the pond. Locals have praised the bravery of the two young men, whose promptness saved the life of an innocent child.

Devotees throng Loknath Temple on Shivratri

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A sea of devotees thronged the Loknath Temple located at Loknath Temple Chowk in Prayagraj on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Long queues of devotees began forming as early as Brahmamuhurta in the morning, continuing until late at night. The entire area echoed with chants of "Har Har Mahadev" and "Bam Bam Bhole." Devotees performed the ritualistic Jalabhishek and Dudhbhishek of Lord Shiva. The temple premises were deco-



rated with attractive flowers and colorful lights. Devotees offered Belpatra (Bael leaves), Datura (sweet flowers), fruits, flowers, and Prasad (blessings), praying

for the happiness and prosperity of their families. Temple priest Gauri Shankar Ji explained that Mahashivratri is celebrated as the sacred wedding ceremony of Lord

Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Night vigils and Rudrabhishek hold special significance on this day. He said that the wishes of devotees who observe a fast and perform Jalabhishek with devotion are fulfilled. In view of the large crowds, the local administration made special security and traffic arrangements. Volunteers assisted in ensuring orderly darshan for the devotees. Bhajans, kirtans, and chanting of mantras continued throughout the day in the temple premises, maintaining a devotional atmosphere.

Ghaziabad is filled with Shiva on Mahashivratri with the Municipal Corporation stunning and Captivating Paintings



Ghaziabad

As Directed by Ghaziabad Municipal Commissioner Vikramaditya Singh Malik, Paintings depicting the 12 Jyotirlinga temples have been painted on the road leading to the Dudheshwar Nath Math Temple. The Thakurdwara flyover, which is on the route to the Dudheshwar Nath Temple, has been painted by the Municipal Corporation team with paintings depicting the 12 Jyotirlinga temples and four Shiva Dhams on the flyover Pillars. The Paintings are so captivating and captivating that the road appears completely

Shiva-filled. The Paintings depicting Shiva temples Painted by the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation on the road leading to the ancient Math Temple Dudheshwar Nath Prior to the Mahashivratri festival are vibrant and are being Praised by residents and devotees passing by. The efforts of the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation are infusing the city with Shiva. In the same sequence, Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation is also carrying out amazing and attractive Painting work at many Places in other cities. The Painting work on

Thakurdwara Road is enhancing the beauty of the city and the Paintings of Lord Shankar made along with the Shiva temples are also being liked by the devotees. Along with the four Dhams Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath the 12 Jyotirlingas Somnath, Mallikarjuna, Mahakaleshwar, Omkareshwar, Kedarnath, Kashi Vishwanath, Bhimashankar Trimbakeshwar Ghrishneshwar, Vaidyanath, Rameshwaram, Nageshwar have been depicted in a wonderful manner through Painting.

AAP Workers Staged a Massive Statewide Protest against the Modi-Trump trade Deal

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh At the call of Senior Aam Aadmi Party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, the Aam Aadmi Party held simultaneous protests at the district headquarters of all districts in Uttar Pradesh, including Lalitpur, Ghaziabad, Bahraich, Baghpat, Jalaun, Muzaffarnagar, Chandauli, Varanasi, Agra, Badaun, Mainpuri, Meerut, Kanpur, Moradabad and Saharanpur, calling the alleged trade deal between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump a direct attack on the nation's sovereignty, the interests of farmers, small businesses and ordinary citizens. In this connection, prominent Aam Aadmi Party leaders, office bearers and workers, led by Lucknow District President Iram Rizvi, held a strong protest at the Health Building intersection in Lucknow and submitted a memorandum to the President. During the Protest, a Clash broke out between the workers and the Police. Later, the Police arrested all the workers and took them to Eco Garden. Police removed the turban of AAP Auto Wing State President Preet Pal Saluja, an insult to the entire Sikh community and unacceptable. The party alleges that this agreement is a conspiracy to open the Indian agricultural market to American interests, stop the purchase of cheap oil



from Russia, impose trade inequality and mortgage the country self-respect and it must be immediately canceled. During this interaction, District President Iram Rizvi said, "Prime Minister Modi has signed the death warrant for the country farmers by opening India agricultural market to American farmers. We will not tolerate this! This is not a trade deal, but a threat deal. Under the new trade deal, the US will impose an 18 percent tax on Indian Products, while allowing American agricultural Products tax-free entry into India, thereby inflicting injustice on millions of farmers. The Modi government, under American Pressure, has signed the death warrant for Indian farmers. Will the government explain why the country self-respect is being mortgaged to America? The government is mortgaging the country farmers and self-respect to America to Protect its own Personal interests

and those of Adani and Ambani! This compromise on the interests of the country food Providers will not be tolerated at all." Iram Rizvi said that instead of buying cheap oil from an old friend like Russia, the government has decided to buy expensive oil worth ₹80,000 crore from the US and Venezuela. The common people will have to bear the brunt of this huge expenditure. Whose Pockets was this deal intended to fill? If India buys oil from Russia, America will impose a 25% tax. Isn't this a compromise on the country sovereignty? Are we thieves? Are we dishonest that America will keep surveillance on us? We abandoned our old friend Russia at America's behest and what did our traders get in return? Sanjay Singh said that many games are being Played behind this trade deal. Why is the media, which yesterday called Trump the worst man in the world, now echoing his

words? What is being hidden behind the 'undisclosed' Conditions? Meanwhile, Lucknow District President Iram Rizvi said that the central Modi government has ordered oil refineries to buy oil from America, not Russia. This order came after threats from US President Trump. Today, the entire country is questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi: Who is Trump to tell India what to buy from whom? What compulsion is Modi under that he is agreeing to everything Trump says? Iram Rizvi said that under US pressure, India stopped buying cheap oil from Russia, saving the country ₹1,53,000 crore. Can India no longer make its own decisions? Why is our sovereignty and self-respect being compromised? The condition of not buying oil from a traditional friend like Russia is an insult to India Sovereignty. Outgoing General Secretary Dinesh Patel said, "18% tax on Indian Clothing and 0% on Bangladeshi clothing? What kind of trade deal is this? Modi has lowered India's reputation, placing it below countries like Uganda, Venezuela, Ghana and Bangladesh. Is the Prime Minister under pressure from corruption allegations against Adani and the shocking revelations in the 'Epstein Files', making foreign visits and agreements?" Why the silence on the "Epstein Files" and US threats? Stop resorting to emotions instead of answering in the House.

On the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, the entire region was filled with faith, devotion, and spiritual energy

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Ghazipur. On the occasion of Mahashivratri, it seemed as if Lord Shiva himself was illuminating the atmosphere with his divine presence in the urban and rural areas of the district. From streets to ghats, from temples to markets, the sky-piercing chants of "Har Har Mahadev" and "Bol Bam" resounded everywhere. A large crowd of devotees lined up at Mahahar Dham since early morning, eager to offer water to Lord Shiva. The ancient Someshwar Mahadev Temple, located in the Muhammadabad city area, fondly referred to as Mahadeva by devotees, remained the center of devotion on this occasion. Long queues of devotees began moving towards the temple from around 3 a.m. A short distance from the temple, a flood of devotees thronged the banks of the sacred Ganges. Unmindful of the bitter cold and dark dawn, devotees took a dip in the Ganges to purify their bodies and minds. As soon as they emerged from the water, their lips automatically chanted "Har Har Mahadev," filling the entire atmosphere with



Shiva. After bathing in the Ganges, devotees were seen carrying water, Bel leaves, Datura, and flowers towards the Mahadeva Temple. The temple courtyard was fragrant with the light of lamps and the aroma of incense and aarti. Amid the melodious sound of bells and chanting of

mantras, devotees performed the ritualistic Jalabhishek (water consecration) and prayed for the happiness and prosperity of their families, society, and nation. Many devotees had tears of devotion in their eyes—it was an ocean of faith in which everyone immersed themselves,

finding spiritual peace. A grand Shiva procession was also organized in the city on this auspicious occasion, bringing a festive atmosphere to the entire area. Beginning from the Hanuman Temple in Shahinda, the Shiva procession passed through the city's main streets, accompanied by

attractive tableaux, decorated chariots, hymns, kirtans, and the resounding beats of drums. Artists, dressed as the adoring followers of Lord Shiva, captivated everyone in the wedding procession. When the scene of the divine marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati was present-

ed, devotees were overwhelmed with emotion, witnessing the transcendental moment. Many elderly people described it as the best of their lives, while the youth saw it as an opportunity to connect with their cultural roots. A fair held in the vast grounds of Mahadeva added color and vibrancy to this spiritual festival. Crowds flocked to the shops selling prasad, puja materials, toys, and local delicacies. The laughter of children and the melodious sound of bhajans and kirtans created an atmosphere as if the entire city had joined in a divine celebration. This age-old tradition once again proved the deep roots of faith. The presence of millions of devotees conveyed the message that the spirit of faith, devotion, and collective celebration remains as strong in Indian culture today. This night of Mahashivratri was not just a festival, but a living symbol of self-purification, collective unity, and spiritual awakening. The cheers echoing throughout the area and the glow of the lamps seemed to be declaring that as long as faith is alive, the light of culture will never dim.

A large crowd of devotees gathered for Mahashivratri; the police force remained engaged in security arrangements



DCP Ganganagar and ADCP Ganganagar arrived to review the fair and conducted a surprise inspection of the fair.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwai. On this sacred festival of devotion, a large number of devotees visited every Shiva temple for darshan, and the ritual of offering water continued uninterrupted. Similarly, Pandeshwar Nath Dham, also known as Padila Dham, located in Ganganagar, Prayagraj district, witnessed the procession of devotees offering water to the Shiva temple from dawn on this devotional festival of Mahashivratri.

A sufficient police force was deployed throughout the temple complex and the fair area. ACP Tharwai Arun Parashar, Inspector Tharwai Santosh Kumar Pandey, and police forces from several police stations were deployed at the fair. ACP Tharwai stated that additional police

forces have been deployed along with the Tharwai and Phaphamau police stations. DCP Ganganagar Kuldeep Singh Gunawat and ADCP Ganganagar Pushkar Verma, who reached the spot, also remained engaged in the security arrangements of the fair and kept a close watch on the cleanliness arrangements, due to which volunteers were continuously engaged in the cleaning arrangements of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Along with this, a large number of police personnel were deployed, due to which the visiting devotees could have smooth darshan.

More than lakhs of devotees reached Pandeshwar Nath Dham and had darshan of Lord Shiva. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Ganganagar Pushkar Verma and ACP Tharwai were themselves present in the security arrangements of the fair and remained continuously engaged in the security arrangements.

A beautiful evening of devotion was held at Nageshwar Mahadev

Surya Prakash Dubey's bhajans captivated the audience, and the name of Shiva echoed late into the night.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Jhansi Prayagraj. A unique confluence of devotion and music was witnessed on Sunday at the Nageshwar Mahotsav held in the Nageshwar Temple premises at Chhatnag. Held for the 11th consecutive year, the festival filled the entire complex with Shiva's tune, "Bam Bam Bol Raha Hai Kashi." Devotees were seen dancing to the hymns throughout the program, which continued late into the night. **One of the best hymns was presented** Prayag's pride gem and renowned bhajan singer Surya Prakash Dubey, who came from Mumbai, immediately filled the stage with devotion. He per-



formed popular bhajans such as "Mera Bhola Hai Bhandari," "Hey Shambhu Baba Mere Bholenath," "Bring milk from the entire village and bathe the Pindi," and "Mangal Bhavan Amangal

Hari." Devotees clapped and danced to the rhythm of the hymns. Singer Lakshmi ji also captivated the audience with her melodious voice.

The atmosphere was filled with

devotion, echoing the name of Shiva throughout the performance.

Attractive Decorations and a Large Crowd

The temple complex was decorated with elaborate lighting and decorations for the festival.

A large crowd of devotees attended. The organizing committee's meticulous arrangements ensured a peaceful conclusion.

Organizers Honored

At the end of the program, Amit Tripathi and Dr. Preeti, director of Preeti Hospital, the organizer and sponsor, honored the artists. They stated that the Nageshwar Festival will be held in a grander format each year, ensuring devotees continue to enjoy devotional music.

Crowds flock to Khadi Exhibition on Shivratri, to conclude with a fashion show on February 16

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. While millions of devotees are taking a holy dip in the Sangam on the occasion of Shivratri in Prayagraj, the divisional-level Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition organized by the Uttar Pradesh Khadi and Village Industries Board at the Parade Ground, Triveni Road, is also attracting a large crowd. Devotees are purchasing Khadi and Village Industries products in large

numbers at this exhibition, held as part of the Magh Mela 2026. District/Regional Village Industries Officer Jawahar Lal informed that the exhibition will conclude on February 16, 2026. A grand Khadi fashion show will be organized before the closing ceremony at 6 p.m. Models from across the state will walk the ramp in Khadi garments, showcasing traditional and modern designs. The aim is to promote the traditional

arts and crafts of Khadi and popularize Khadi among the youth. The fashion show will be directed by Arvind Yadav and his team. Around 20 models will participate in the event. Choreography will be done by Akanksha Verma, while renowned costume designer Anuj Kapoor will also be involved. A total of 210 stalls have been set up for Khadi institutions and village industry units in the exhibition. Khadi institutions from the state as well as

Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand are displaying and selling their products at these stalls. Various garments, including cotton, woolen, silk, and poly khadi fabrics, are available here. According to officials, sales worth more than 10.75 crore rupees have been made at the exhibition so far. Various departmental officers and employees were also present during the event.

Editorial

Reimagining democracy: Why India's call for transparent rankings rattles the West

Over the years, democracy has come to mean many things, often abstract and distorted, especially used to invoke a necessary "value" of the global order. Such a "value" has depended upon a few aspects: economic and military hard power and alignment with Western interests. As India finally announced its democracy rankings, nations that depend on using inaccurate "expert opinions" to subvert data raised a hue and cry. Domestically, there is a cohort that disagrees with the idea of such rankings and argues one of two ideas: That the collective West has more expertise in deciding such rankings and must be unchallenged; That India and other nations can eschew Western validation and need not care about the rankings and other indices. The first is a group that believes in Western supremacy and has formed the ideological collaborator class of any foreign group that has sought to "govern" as a euphemism for colonisation by other means. This is reflected in their calling directly for foreign interference regarding India's domestic policy setting and makes no bones about their preference for externalised decision-making. This is not a group with the interests of Indian citizens at heart, seeking only to maintain their position as an intellectual and social elite, watching self-righteously from atop a high horse made of colonial dreams. As such, malintent entails that their ideas cannot pertain significantly to the will of the people of the country. The second group is made of those with well-intentioned naivete. A little knowledge would go a long way in explaining an economic, and otherwise, interconnected world. The fact that interests and debt ceilings on investments and loans are dependent on credit ratings and indices such as these need us to be concerned about them. Moreover, they create a legacy for judgment by other nations we interact with. At its peak of wealth, knowledge and value creation, Bharat stood as a beacon, inviting engagement, not insularity, and not content in hubris. That is a later doing, a subject of an era of turmoil preventing recognition of a national conscience underlying its diversity. For an endeavour such as a democracy index to fill a void in data and not in propaganda, the rankings need to take into consideration several true indicators of the values that define self-governance. To prevent further distortions, though, it is necessary to reiterate what democracy means – governance by the representatives of all citizens. The universal adult franchise is the most inclusive indicator of true democracy and a basic pre-requisite. Other parameters aid in measuring the refinement of processes that allow for universal franchises to be executed during elections. The below parameters offer a relevant set of data that measures people's participation in governance and are significant in calculating the functioning of democracy in a nation: Women voting percentage: Women form a major part of the population, and yet, across the world, have been kept away from the ballot system for socio-cultural reasons. Their participation determines the freedom of a notable part of the population to implement universal franchises.

Voter percentage: A clear determinant of a population's participation in the democratic exercise, voter turnout in percentage terms is a necessary parameter for inclusion in such an index.

Electoral malpractices (such as poll-related violence, ballot stuffing, coercion regarding voting choice etc.): The prevention of exercising individual freedom of choice in electing one's representative through safe and secret exercise of ballot options is a hindrance towards an exercise in democracy.



Status of Indian job market: Fact versus fiction

Every once in a while, there will be news items and columns on the state of employment in India. Some of this is ill-informed, based on old or unreliable data. Essentially, there are three sources of data on employment: (1) Household-based surveys; (2) Establishment-based surveys; and (3) Administrative data. (I am leaving out private surveys.) These are the three official sources of data. EPFO, ESIC, and NPS are examples of administrative data. For instance, in 2022-23, almost 14 million net members were added to EPFO. Is this a meas-

ure of new job creation? For various reasons, it isn't. As an example, the moment an establishment crosses the threshold of 20 workers, all of it gets counted as a net addition. Administrative payroll data are indicators of formalisation, not employment. Establishment-based surveys are ASI by MoSPI (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) and QES by MoLE (I wish people would stop using this acronym for the Ministry of Labour and Employment). In an informal economy like India, where there are usually no clear employer-employee rela-

tionships, unlike in more advanced countries, I am sceptical about establishment-based surveys telling us much about employment. Don't get me wrong. They do tell us something about demand for employment and, potentially, about skills and their lack. At present, both the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) and the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) have biases. Agriculture is a different proposition. But even outside of agriculture, neither is comprehensive in coverage. Both can be streamlined and improved, and time lags can be reduced.

Outside of agriculture, until the Indian economy changes dramatically, I think there is no getting away from household-based surveys. This means the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). We can complain about PLFS: The quarterly estimates only cover urban India, not rural. It is annual or quarterly, and why can't it be monthly, like the Current Population Survey (CPS) in the US? To emulate the US, data collection would have to move from personal interviews to personal interviews spliced with telephone interviews. Is that feasible? In the US.

Strategic shield: Need to recalibrate defence diplomacy

Ever since ancient times, military officers have been employed in foreign lands as part of a politico-military approach to national security to safeguard national interests. There are references to such a role in Kautilya's Arthashastra, in the history of the pre-Judean era, and in Roman history. In those times, the role of military officers was largely focused on spying. In the 17th century, when the Prussians found ambassadorial reports neither sufficiently detailed nor updated for the purpose of decision making in war, they began to employ generals in diplomatic assignments. Napoleon frequently used generals as ambassadors. By the mid-nineteenth century, most European powers were assigning military officers to foreign countries, and in 1857, these military officers were designated as military attaches and given diplomatic status. In more recent times, defence diplomacy has emerged as one of the most important tools of military statecraft. The term "defence diplomacy" was perhaps first used by the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence (MoD) to consolidate a bouquet of military activities being conducted by the MoD. Although there is no universally accepted definition of defence diplomacy, it is generally considered the non-violent use of a state's defence



apparatus to advance the strategic aims of a government through cooperation with other countries. Typically, the term includes activities such as officer exchanges, ship visits, training missions, and joint military exercises. The significance of defence diplomacy dimmed for Indian decision makers post-independence, and it was in the early 1990s that India's defence engagement began to gain momentum. C Raja Mohan, as late as 2015, lamented: "...India's military diplomacy has been severely limited by the lack of adequate political support and insufficient coordination between the armed forces, the ministry of defence, and the foreign office. While the services and the MEA see the value of leveraging India's military strengths, the MoD has neither the aptitude nor the institutional capability to meet the growing interna-

tional demand for defence cooperation with India. Fortunately, things have begun to change. The MoD and the services are proactively involved in defence diplomacy, and as of date, the Indian Army is engaging with 110 countries through defence cooperation activities. In 2023, the Indian Army participated in 39 joint exercises with foreign armies, out of which it was lead service in 28 exercises.

In addition, the Indian Army and the US Army co-hosted the 13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC), the 47th Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar (IPAMS), and the 9th Senior Enlisted Leaders Forum (SELF). The Army has been playing a crucial role in promoting multilateralism by organising the Inaugural India-Africa Army Chiefs' Conclave (IACC) and AFINDEX (2023), themed on Humanitarian Mine Action &

Peace Keeping Operations. Several high-level visits were conducted in 2023 in pursuit of the objectives of defence diplomacy. Based on the recommendations of the MoD's Study on Realignment of Defence Wings, new defence wings are being established in Algeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Poland by the end of 2024. Reportedly, new defence wings are also being established in Armenia, Djibouti, the Philippines, and Tanzania. These wings are being established through optimisation of the existing billets of the defence attaches in countries like Russia and the United Kingdom. Although the establishment of new defence wings is a welcome development, there are certain issues that require institutional attention. Among the varied tasks the military attaches would be undertaking, they would be expected to help achieve the target for defence exports set by the government, facilitate India's defence procurements, secure supply chains, and mitigate causes of national security risks. Defence exports require building a long-term relationship with the importing countries and their armed forces. Business also requires special aptitude, which goes beyond formal training and the learning of manuals and procedures. Military attaches are expected to navigate the

realm of defence business, which is unlike any other. In addition, they must be prepared for adverse PR from inimical interests and business competitors. India has supplied weapon platforms and radars to Armenia. Should the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia flare up again, Indian systems would be tested under extreme conditions. It is possible there would be some failures, like those of any other equipment produced anywhere in the world. Indian military attaches must be prepared to face the barrage of adverse PR in all forms of media. The character of warfare is changing. If the Russia-Ukraine war is indicative of the wars of the future, India must prepare for a protracted war and secure supply chains against sanctions and export control regimes.

The export control measures imposed by the West on Russia are, perhaps, the most stringent applied against a single country since the Cold War.

India may face a similar situation, which may include measures aimed at cutting off high-tech imports, restricting access to vital technological inputs, weakening its industrial base, and undercutting its influence on the world stage. The defence sector may be subjected to sweeping restrictions due to the denial of sensitive technology.

Finance surveillance radars for the Navy

This is unacceptable with regard to the freedom of the seas and a potential flashpoint for all, including India, already plagued by China. Chinese spy ships, navy and submarines, constantly ply in the Malacca Straits and Andaman/Nicobar Islands area, the broader Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal. This is aided by Chinese bases in Sri Lanka at Hambantota, in Bangladesh where it has ostensibly built a submarine base for it, from the Maldives, from the Coco Islands of Myanmar, farther afield at Djibouti. India is helped in guarding the Indian Ocean area by the US Navy, plus the French and British navies in particular.

India, not only participates in QUAD and the Malabar Exercises on a

regular basis with other countries but joins in the naval exercises in the South China Sea as well. It has now opened two shipyards, in Kattupalli, near Chennai, and another in Cochin, to repair and service US and British ships. Ever since the legendary Ferdinand Marcos' son, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., nick-named Bongbong in his youth, came to power, the Philippines has upped the ante against Chinese hegemony. There is no longer much effort to appease China or deal with it using do-nothing but hot rhetoric, though diplomatic and political dialogue is still maintained. The Philippines is the first foreign country to order three batteries of Brahmos anti-ship shore-based supersonic cruise missiles from India. It has

had its navy personnel trained in their use by India. These missiles, ordered a couple of years ago, are presently being delivered and placed. They are being deployed to protect Filipino interests in the South China Sea. The Indo-Russian Brahmos, manufactured in India, come in air, sea, land and submarine variants, and are widely acknowledged to be the fastest and most devastating missiles in the world. In November 2023 Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. began work on a security pact that would allow the conduct of joint military exercises. Japan has also agreed to finance surveillance radars for the Philippine Navy.

Manama mosaics: 72 hours of heritage and history in Bahrain

In Manama, the ancient and the modern intertwine like the threads in its vibrant souqs. Skyscrapers pierce the azure sky while narrow alleyways whisper tales of a bygone era. At the aromatic chaos of the Bab el-Bahrain Souq, spices dance with textiles and shimmering pearls hold the secrets of the deep. Then, turn a corner and you will find yourself transported to the serenity of the Al Fateh Grand Mosque. Manama is a city of contrasts, a blend of tradition and progress, waiting to be explored by the curious traveller. And the beauty lies in the fact that you can experience it in just 72 hours.

Al Fateh Grand Mosque interiors

No matter how long you linger in this Middle Eastern land, a breakfast extravaganza awaits. As you step into one of the city's cherished cafes, let the intoxicating aroma of Bahraini cuisine envelop you, a prelude to a flavour-filled odyssey that will tantalize your taste buds and ignite your spirit for the day to come. Dive into the gastronomic classics by indulging in the timeless delights of Balaleet vermicelli noodles, the rustic allure of



Khameer and Regag, alongside the hearty flavours of Foul Fava beans and the savoury embrace of Samboosa fried pastries. Elevate your culinary journey with falafel and shawarma, and don't forget to snag some Halwa, a quintessential Middle Eastern sweet sensation.

Among the culinary havens dotting Bahrain's landscape, seek refuge in esteemed establishments such as Al Ameer, renowned for its culinary finesse; Emmawash celebrated for its mastery of dried shrimp and mung beans; and Freej Bin Al Rashdan, nestled near Dohat Arad Lagoon, where the aromas of lamb machboos and Bahraini kebabs beckon the discerning palate. Conclude your epicurean odyssey at Haji Gahwa, nestled within the bustling enclave of Manama Souq, where authenticity reigns supreme and traditional Bahraini cuisine is savoured with a gen-

erous sprinkle of heritage and charm. Manama delivers all the bling you'd expect from a modern Arab metropolis – sleek malls and skyscrapers that wouldn't look out of place in a sci-fi movie. But amidst the shiny veneer, you'll find whispers of a charming past, a reminder of Manama's days as a bustling port. Old Bahrain's landscape, and new coexist with playful harmony, most evident in the legendary Manama Souq, where ancient market vibes and the scents of exotic spices swirl. Before you hunt down the perfect gold bangle or spice up your culinary repertoire at the Souq, soak in the history of Bab Al Bahrain, the gateway to Manama's bustling souq.

This venerable archway, erected in 1949, once held court by the waterfront but now finds itself a few kilometres inland. Today, it's a colossal arch framing a road—flanked by two smaller arches for pedestrians.

Zomato's Q4 net profit falls 77% to Rs 39 crore

Delhi : Eternal Ltd. (previously Zomato) announced a 77% drop in overall net profit to Rs 39 crore in Q4 FY25 from Rs 175 crore the year before. Zomato, which owns Blinkit, lost 33% of its quarterly net profit to Rs 59 crore in October-December. Overall expenditures rose 67% to Rs 6,104 crore from Rs 3,636 crore. QoQ, costs rose over 10%. Food delivery company consolidated income from operations rose 64% to Rs 5,833 crore from Rs 3,562 crore in the January-March quarter of the previous financial year. Zomato earned Rs 6,201 crore in the quarter, up from Rs 3,797 the year before. Its expenses rose from Rs 3,636 crore to Rs 6,104 crore. Zomato shares finished at Rs 232.5 on the BSE, up 0.58 percent. According to its stock exchange filing, Blinkit opened 294 net new stores in Q4 and is on track to reach 2,000 by



December 25. Deepinder Goyal, Founder and CEO, Eternal, said, "We don't see any long-term structural reason for this slowdown, as the fundamentals – low penetration of restaurant food and increasing urbanisation and per capita income in India – remain unchanged." The company has several promising initiatives in the pipeline and hopes some will work and lead to higher growth without compromising profitability. The company began reporting NOV and GOV for its B2C activities (food delivery, rapid commerce, and going-out) in Q4 FY25.

Wagah closure hurts Afghan dry fruit imports

Delhi: The closing of the Attari-Wagah border has hampered the movement of dry fruits from Afghanistan to India, which may raise domestic prices by 10 to 25%. Afghanistan is India's greatest dried fruit supplier despite war and civil upheaval. Anil Mehra, National President of the Federation of Grocery and Dry Fruit Commercial Association, when the Attari-Wagah border closed, no trucks transporting dry fruits from to Attari had come. "50 trucks are at the Pakistani Wagah border.

Private sector capex may fall 25% to Rs 4.88 lakh cr in FY26: Govt survey

Delhi: A government survey research estimates private business capital spending will drop 25% to Rs 4.88 lakh crore in 2025-26 from Rs 6.56 lakh crore in FY25. The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation's Forward-Looking Survey on Private Sector CAPEX Investment Intentions between November 2024 and January 2025 found that private corporate capex was Rs 3.94 lakh crore in 2021-22, Rs 5.72 lakh crore in 2022-23, and Rs 4.22 lakh crore in 2023-24. To establish a fixed panel, 2,172 firms provided complete infor-



mation for all five years of the reference period. The government said the aggregated (unweighted) capex data from this panel of firms is credible for five-year capital expenditure trends. Over four years from 2021-22 to 2024-25, aggregate capex (unweighted) increased 66.3%. Of the

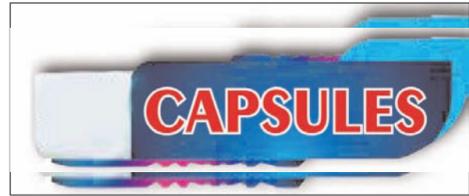
3,064 responding companies, 2,172 planned 2025-26 capex. The data suggests respondents are cautious when revealing capital spending plans. The research advised caution when interpreting 2025-26 Capex data due to the conservative stance and fear of responding firms.

Possible goal of India-US trade deal: equal access to technology

Delhi: According to insiders, as part of the intended bilateral trade agreement (BTA), India is expected to request that the United States relax export controls and provide it with access to vital technologies on par with important American

allies such as Japan, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, they mentioned that India might be interested in pursuing these kind of concessions in the following industries: semiconductors, biotechnology, artificial intelli-

gence (AI), pharmaceuticals, quantum computing, and telecom equipment. Textiles, gems and jewelry, leather goods, clothing, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes, and bananas are among the labor-intensive sectors.



Meta releases standalone AI app to challenge ChatGPT

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



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

ATM withdrawals cost more: All about the new fees

Delhi : ATM users in India will incur revised transaction rates starting May 1, 2025, under the RBI's amended fee regime. The revisions aim to simplify ATM usage charges and promote digital banking for both financial and non-financial activities. Under the new guidelines, metro consumers will get three free ATM transactions each month and non-metro customers five. Free transactions include cash withdrawals and balance checks.

After this limit, banks can charge Rs 23 per transaction, excluding taxes. This applies to ATM and CRM transactions, although CRM



cash deposits are free. Many big banks have revised their client policies: HDFC said, "With effect from 1st May 2025, the ATM transaction charge rate beyond free limits will be revised from Rs 21 + taxes to Rs 23 + taxes."

Bank emphasized that only cash withdrawals at HDFC Bank ATMs exceeding the free limit will be charged, while non-financial transactions are free. Other banks' ATMs count both sorts of transactions toward the free limit.

The government raises sugarcane FRP by 4.41% to Rs 355 per quintal for 2025-26

Delhi: The government raised the fair and remunerative price (FRP) of sugarcane by 4.41 percent to Rs 355 per quintal for the 2025-26 season in October.

An official statement said the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi made this decision in the interest of sugarcane farmers. Sugarcane FRP is Rs 340 per quintal for 2024-25. Sugar mills must pay sugarcane growers FRP, the minimum price set by the Indian government. I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told the media after the meeting that the FRP of Rs 355 per quintal for a 10.25%



basic recovery rate was approved. "The FRP for sugar season 2025-26 is 4.41 per cent higher than current sugar season 2024-25," says the report. Farmers will receive Rs 3.46 per quintal for each 0.1% sugar recovery increment above 10.25%. FRP decreases by Rs 3.46 per quintal for every 0.1% recovery rate decline. The government also agreed

not to deduct sugar mills with recovery below 9.5%. These farmers will receive Rs 329.05 per cent for sugarcane in 2025-26. The statement states that sugarcane production costs Rs 173 per quintal in 2025-26. The 2025-26 FRP of Rs 355 per quintal at 10.25% recovery is 105.25% higher than manufacturing cost.

For 2025-26, I-T Department notifies ITR forms 1, 4

Delhi: Individuals and companies with income up to Rs 50 lakh must file ITR forms 1 and 4 for assessment year (AY) 2025-26 with the income tax department. Anyone with long-term capital gains up to Rs 1.25 lakh in a fiscal year can submit ITR-1. Previously, they had to file ITR-



2. With the notification, individuals, HUFs, corporations with income up to Rs 50 lakh, and

those with business and professional incomes in 2024-25 (April-March) can file I-T returns. ITR Form 1 (Sahaj) and ITR Form 4 (Sugam) are easier forms for many small and medium taxpayers. Sahaj can be filed by a resident with an annual income of up to Rs 50 lakh from

salary, one residential property, other sources (interest), and agricultural income up to Rs 5,000. Individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), and firms (other than LLPs) with yearly income up to Rs 50 lakh and business and profession revenue can file sugam.

Q4 Adani Enterprises net profit jumps 7.5x to Rs 3,845 crore, incubating enterprises thrive

Delhi : Adani Enterprises Ltd. (AEL), the flagship firm of the Adani Group, reported strong financial results, with net profit rising 7.5 times to Rs 3,845 crore in Q4 FY25 from Rs 449 crore in FY24. Adani Wilmar Ltd.'s 13.5% stake sale in Q4 gave AEL an outstanding gain of Rs 3,946 crore. Revenue rose 2% to Rs 1,00,365 crore and consolidated PBT rose 16% to Rs 6,533 crore in FY25. Incubating firms' solid operational performance drove EBITDA up



26% to Rs 16,722 crore last fiscal, the company said. Gautam Adani, Chairman of Adani Group, said Adani Enterprises is establishing firms that will shape India's infrastructure and energy sector. Our scale, speed, and sustainability drove our strong FY25 success. The billionaire industri-

alist said disciplined execution, future-focused investments, operational excellence, innovation, and sustainability drove impressive development across our incubation businesses. Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL) began expanding solar cell and module operations

WB: Oil prices might drop 17% and commodity prices 12%

Delhi: Commodity prices, according to the World Bank, could drop 12% this year, with the oil index possibly falling 17%, as a result of slowing economic development. "If realised, these declines will end a period of ele-

vated inflation-adjusted commodity prices in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine," recent commodities Markets Outlook. Reports indicate that supplies might be higher this year.

for 6 GW in Q4 FY25 with financial close. Improved realization and operational efficiency drove solar module sales up 59% to 4,263 MW and greater

EBITDA margins. The company reported that ANIL wind business expanded capacity to 2.25 GW in Q4 FY25 with 5.2 MW, 3.3 MW, and 3.0 MW WTG.

Bollywood divas embrace sustainable style

On this National Handloom Day, these actresses remind us that fashion can be both stylish and sustainable. Their choices amplify the voices of countless weavers and artisans, helping to keep India's textile heritage alive—one thread at a time

Every year, August 7 is celebrated as National Handloom Day—a tribute to India's rich textile legacy, the artistry of local weavers, and the growing importance of sustainable fashion. In an era dominated by fast fashion, several Bollywood actresses are making conscious style choices, setting powerful examples by embracing handloom and supporting indigenous crafts. These stars not only wear handloom but also actively advocate for the artisans behind them. Here are the stories of these leading actresses who champion handloom fashion and sustainability with pride and passion.

Janhvi Kapoor

Janhvi Kapoor, another rising star, has embraced handloom with elegance and grace. By opting for traditional weaves at public appearances, she brings youthful appeal to sustainable fashion and inspires her generation to celebrate Indian crafts.

Dia Mirza

A long-time environmental activist, Dia Mirza is often seen in handloom sarees and consciously crafted clothing. She consistently uses her platform to emphasize that every sustainable choice—no matter how small—can contribute to a healthier planet. For Dia, wearing handloom is both a personal and political act of care for the Earth.

Saiee Manjrekar

Among the newer faces in the industry, Saiee Manjrekar stands out as a passionate supporter of Indian handloom. Despite her young age, Saiee has consistently championed traditional craftsmanship through her fashion choices. Whether featured in magazine shoots or on social media, she's often seen promoting handloom clothing. By choosing heritage weaves over fast fashion, she not only honors tradition but also encourages her followers to embrace sustainable, homegrown fashion.

Richa Chadha

Richa Chadha has long been a vocal advocate for sustainability in fashion. Along with her husband, Ali Fazal, she co-founded Ehaab, a label that collaborates closely with artisans creating exquisite Chikankari pieces. Their initiative empowers local weavers and artisans by preserving this centuries-old craft and offering them dignified livelihoods. Richa often emphasizes that true style stems from conscious and ethical choices.

Alia Bhatt

Among the younger generation of stars, Alia Bhatt has consistently chosen handloom sarees for significant occasions.

Whether wearing elegant Jamdani or Chanderi drapes, or endorsing Indian crafts on global platforms, Alia exemplifies how handloom can be both contemporary and timeless. She believes sustainable fashion isn't a passing trend—but a shared responsibility.

Shweta Tripathi

Actress Shweta Tripathi has been vocal about environmental sustainability and mindful fashion. She frequently champions handloom art and proudly wears indigenous fabrics. For Shweta, fashion is an expression of responsibility—both towards the environment and the communities who preserve these rich traditions.

Kritika Kamra

Kritika Kamra has taken her commitment a step further by launching her own label, Cinnabar. The brand is dedicated to reviving the traditional Chanderi craft of Madhya Pradesh, offering artisans a direct platform to showcase their work. Kritika's deep belief in Indian textiles and her passion for slow fashion drive her advocacy for handloom and handicrafts.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

Global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas has proudly showcased India's handloom legacy on numerous occasions. Whether in Banarasi, Chikankari, or other traditional weaves, her sartorial choices reflect a deep appreciation for Indian craftsmanship. Priyanka continues to highlight the timeless relevance of heritage textiles in global fashion.



'I clearly explained I promoted a gaming app'

Vijay reveals exactly what he told ED officers during betting app case investigation

CJ Desk

Vijay Deverakonda on Wednesday, appeared before the Enforcement Directorate office in Basheerbagh, Hyderabad. The actor was summoned in connection with a case for allegedly promoting betting apps. After the investigation, Vijay spoke to the media and revealed what he told the ED officers.

The actor revealed, "I was summoned because my name came up in connection with a betting app case. In India, there are

two different categories—betting apps and gaming apps. I clearly explained that I promoted a gaming app called A23. There is no connection between betting apps and gaming apps. Gaming apps are legal in several states. They are registered, have GST, taxes, and necessary approvals."

"I submitted all my bank transaction details to the ED. The A23 app I promoted is not even accessible in Telangana. I have only promoted a legal gaming app. I also shared the details of the agreement I had with the concerned company with the ED," he added.

Story is entirely fictional: Makers

Vijay Deverakonda's Kingdom makers apologise to Eelam Tamils for after protests, ban calls in TN

After protests erupted across Tamil Nadu, demanding a ban on Vijay Deverakonda's latest film, Kingdom, the makers have issued an official statement, apologising to the Eelam Tamil population. The Eelam Tamils (Sri Lankan Tamils) were protesting in the state after accusing the makers of showing their community in a negative light. Producers Sithara Entertainments issued an official statement which read, "We have heard that certain scenes in the film have hurt the sentiments of the Tamil people. We hold the sentiments of the Tamil people in the highest regard. We would like to clarify that the story is entirely fictional, as clearly mentioned in the disclaimer portion of film."

Bigg Boss 10

Bigg Boss 10 contestant Priyanka Jagga, who was ousted from the show by host Salman Khan himself, is now all set to make a comeback in the upcoming season—Bigg Boss 19.

She took to her social media handle to herself confirm the news and wrote that she is not chasing headlines anymore.

On Tuesday, Priyanka grabbed eyeballs after she took to her Facebook account and sharing pictures from her stint on Bigg Boss 10, wrote, "10 years ago, I was part of a show called Bigg Boss. It changed my life—but not all of it was easy. I had a fight with the host, Salman Khan. And I walked away. From the show. From the glam world. From the noise. But now, out of the blue... Bigg Boss has called again. Yes—this season. They want me back (sic)."

She went on to say, "This season is all about RAJNEETI. Here's the thing: I've healed. I've built a new life. I'm not chasing lights or headlines anymore. But this offer feels like a breakthrough. Not for fame. But maybe for closure. Maybe for courage. Maybe for something more. I'm torn. Should I say yes? Or walk away with peace?"

Hours later, in another post, Priyanka confirmed her participation in Bigg Boss 19, and wrote, "I don't know who to thank first—I'm truly overwhelmed. I've always had deep respect for those who give, who forgive, and who forget. That kind of grace is rare (sic)."

Priyanka Jagga returns stronger

Bigg Boss 10's Priyanka Jagga confirms return in Season 19, says she's back for closure, not headlines or fame

"To the team, the people behind the scenes, and everyone who believed I could be part of the show again thank you. From the bottom of my heart. The new season starts in just 2-3 weeks... and this time, it's RAJNEETI with a different energy. Let's see where this journey takes us. Thank you all (sic)," she added.

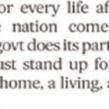
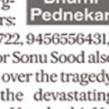


Stars pray for Uttarakhand

Sara Ali Khan, Bhumi Pednekar, other celebs react to Uttarakashi cloudburst, share helpline numbers

Several members of the Indian film industry, including Sara Ali Khan, Sonu Sood, and Bhumi Pednekar, have expressed condolences to those affected by the cloudburst in Dharali, Uttarakashi district of Uttarakhand. Sara took to Instagram and wrote, "My heart goes out to everyone impacted by the incident in Uttarakhand. Praying for safety, strength and healing for all (sic)." In another post, she provided emergency contact numbers to support ongoing relief operations.

"Uttarakshi District Emergency Operation Centre has issued the following emergency numbers: 01374222126, 01374222722, 9456556431," read the message. Actor Sonu Sood also expressed his concern over the tragedy. "Heartbroken by the devastating floods & cloudburst in Uttarakshi, Uttarakhand. Prayers for every life affected. It's time the nation comes together—the govt does its part, we as individuals must stand up for every soul who lost a home, a living, a life," Sonu wrote on X.



Briefs

Karachi fire: Kin protest as many missing

Nearly a week after the fire in shopping centre in Pakistan's Karachi, anger and despair among families of the missing erupted as they protested against the lack of urgency by officials, "The Express Tribune" reported. Women clutching photos of sons, husbands and brothers assembled near the site, accusing officials and rescuers of moving painfully slowly while their loved ones remained unaccounted for. The toll from the January 17 fire has risen to at least 67.

Ruling party boss reelected in Vietnam

Vietnam's To Lam was re-elected on Friday as the general secretary of its ruling Communist Party. The decision came at the conclusion of the National Party Congress, the country's most important political conclave. No announcement was made about whether he will also become president. If To Lam were to get both positions, he would be the country's most powerful leader in decades, akin to Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

2 dead as boat sinks in South China Sea

Two people died and four were missing when a Singapore-flagged cargo ship with 21 Filipinos on board capsized in the South China Sea, Chinese officials said on Friday. The Chinese Coast Guard and navy operations from People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command have rescued 15 people. The boat sank 100 kms north-west of Scarborough Shoal, said Chinese Coast Guard.

Nine killed in Pakistan's KP avalanche

Nine people were killed after an avalanche struck a house in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Friday, police said. A child was also injured in Chitral's Domel mountainous area.

21 killed in Myanmar airstrike

A military airstrike this week on a Myanmar village sheltering displaced people from Bhamo, where a final round of the 3-phase poll is to be held, killed 21 people, a rebel group said.

UAE MEET | As trilateral talks involving US begin, no sign of Moscow and Kyiv softening their positions on Donbas region

Land dispute in focus at Ukraine peace talks

ABU DHABI

Ukrainian, Russian and American negotiators were holding meetings on Friday in the UAE, marking the first trilateral talks since the start of the war in Ukraine, tackling the vital issue of territory with no sign of a softening of positions to end the four-year conflict.

This round of talks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday, could focus on post-war control of territory in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, which has emerged as a major stumbling block through months of negotiations.

"The question of Donbas is key. It will be discussed how the three sides... see this in Abu Dhabi today and tomorrow," he said. The talks would resume on Saturday morning.

The Kremlin confirmed Russian officials would take part in a security working group meeting in Abu Dhabi with the Russian delegation led by Igor Kostyukov, the head of Russia's military intelligence. The secretary of the national security council, Rustem Umerov, will lead Ukraine's delegation.

A bilateral working group on economic issues between Russia and the US was slated to take place separately, the Kremlin said.

On the table is a revised 20-



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) greets US President Donald Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff (C-L), Jared Kushner (2nd R) and Josh Gruenbaum, the head of the Federal Acquisition Service at the General Services Administration in Moscow. —AP

point peace plan drawn up by Ukraine and the US. That plan covers a range of issues like potential territorial arrangements and security guarantees, as well as plans to rebuild the war-ravaged nation.

But the Ukrainian and Russian authorities are still at odds over territory, with Russia demanding a big chunk in the Donbas, and on security guarantees.

Steve Witkoff, US President Trump's special envoy, and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, were also expected to be in Abu Dhabi. The Kremlin said Witkoff would lead the bilateral economics talks alongside Kirill Dmitriev, the

Kremlin special envoy and head of the country's sovereign wealth fund.

Witkoff said on Thursday in Abu Dhabi, working groups would handle components of the peace plan, including what he called "military-to-military" aspects and "prosperity," or postwar economic recovery. Late on Thursday, Witkoff and Kushner met for 4 hours in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy adviser, said after the meeting it had been "useful in all aspects, both for us and the US."

He said Russia wanted to end the war "through political

and diplomatic means" but that until then it would continue to push on the battlefield, "where the Russian Armed Forces hold the strategic initiative."

During the Kremlin meeting, Putin underscored there was no hope of achieving a long-term settlement if Ukraine was not prepared to resolve "the territorial issue according to the formula agreed upon in Anchorage," Ushakov said, referring to a meeting in Alaska last year. During that meeting, Putin agreed to cease fighting if Kyiv handed over the remainder of the Donetsk region and agreed to other nonterritorial demands.

Nato troops avoided Af frontline: Don sparks row

LONDON / WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has sparked outrage among British MPs and veterans after claiming Nato troops stayed away from the frontline in Afghanistan, "The Guardian" reported.

The US president made his comments in an interview with 'Fox News' in which he reiterated his suggestion Nato would not support the US if asked. Trump has long criticised the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which also includes 30 European allies and Canada, over his belief that other members don't pay their fair share.

"Maybe we should have put Nato to the test: Invoked Article 5, and forced Nato to come here and protect our Southern Border from further Invasions of Illegal Immigrants, thus freeing up large numbers of Border Patrol Agents for other tasks," Trump posted on Truth Social. Article 5 refers to Nato's mutual defence clause, which states that an "armed attack" on one member is considered an attack on all 32 member-states.

His remarks drew condemnation, with critics pointing to the 457 British deaths in Afghanistan and highlighting Trump's avoidance of military service in Vietnam.

A total of 3,486 Nato troops died in the 20-year conflict, of which 2,461 were US service men. Canada suffered 165 deaths, including civilians.

Denmark, which has been at loggerheads with the US



over Trump's designs on Greenland, had 44 combat deaths in Afghanistan, the most per capita outside the US. In the interview with 'Fox News', Trump said: "We've never needed them. They'll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan ... and they did, they stayed a little back, a little off the frontlines."

"I will never forget their courage, their bravery and the sacrifice they made for the country. President Trump's remarks are insulting, appalling. I am not surprised the remarks have hurt the loved ones of those killed or injured," said UK PM Keir Starmer.

Armed forces minister Al Carns said, "Trump's comments are utterly ridiculous and a real shame."

Tory party leader Kemi Badenoch called US president's remark a disgrace.

Calvin Bailey, a Labour MP and former RAF officer who served alongside US special operations units in Afghanistan, said Trump's claim "bears no resemblance to the reality experienced by those of us who served there."

The Conservative MP Ben Obese-Jecty, who served in Afghanistan as a captain in the Royal Yorkshire Regi-

ment, said it was "sad to see our nation's sacrifice, and that of our Nato partners, held so cheaply by the US president".

Tan Dhesi, the chair of the Commons defence committee, said the US president's comments were "appalling and an insult to our brave British servicemen and women, who risked life and limb to help our allies, with many making the ultimate sacrifice".

The foreign affairs committee chair, Emily Thornberry, described the comments as "so much more than a mistake", and "an insult" to the families of those who had died. Stephen Stewart, a former soldier and an author and journalist, said: "Trump's comments are as offensive as they are inaccurate. It's hugely ironic someone who allegedly dodged the draft for the Vietnam war should make such a disgraceful statement."

"He has desecrated the memory of hundreds of British soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, people who we called friends and comrades. If he was a man of honour, he would get down on bended knees to ask forgiveness from the families of the fallen."

Bailey added: "As I reminded the US forces I served with on 4 July in 2008, we were there because of a shared belief, articulated at America's founding, that free people have inalienable rights and should not live under tyranny. That belief underpinned the response to 9/11, and it is worth reflecting on now."

Ties with US have taken a big blow: EU foreign policy chief

BRUSSELS

Transatlantic relations have suffered serious strain over the past week, the European Union's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said, as EU leaders met for an emergency summit amid escalating tensions with the US over Greenland.

Kallas told reporters the situation had become increasingly unpredictable. "One day, one way; the other day, again, everything could change," she said, referring to the shifting signals from US President Donald Trump. She said ties between Europe and the US "have definitely taken a big blow over the last week", but added, Europe was "not willing to junk 80 years of good relations".

After the summit, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU's united approach and its effort to engage Washington in "a firm but non-escalatory

manner" had helped ease tensions.

BRUSSELS MEET

EU leaders gathered in Brussels late on Thursday to review ties with Washington and to revive talks on an EU-US trade deal, Bloomberg



reported. The European Parliament had earlier paused ratification of the deal in protest against US pressure over Greenland.

The leaders said they wanted to strengthen cooperation with the US and were ready to respond if new threats emerged.

GREENLAND SEEKS TALKS WITH US

In Nuuk, Greenland PM Jens-Frederik Nielsen said he was unaware of the deal details, but the territory wanted a "peaceful dialogue" with the US and its sovereignty cannot be compromised. He said if the Greenland people were forced to make a choice, their position was clear. "We choose the Kingdom of Denmark, we choose the EU, we choose Nato."

MACRON FOR RESPECT

French President Emmanuel Macron said firm pressure from Europe pushed Trump to step back from his earlier threats over Greenland, AP reported. He said Europe's collective response showed its strength on the global stage. "Europe can make itself be respected, and that's a very good thing," Macron said, adding, "When we use the tools we have at our disposal we get respect and that's what happened this week."

POTUS plans China visit in April, to host Xi later in 2026

Washington: President Donald Trump said he would travel to China in April and host Chinese President Xi Jinping in the US later this year, signalling renewed leader-level engagement between the two countries.

"We are gonna make a trip. I am going in April," Trump told reporters. He said the two leaders would meet twice in 2026. He added Xi would visit the US "towards the end of the year". Trump described his relationship with Xi in positive terms. "I've always had a great relationship."

He acknowledged ties were strained during the Covid period. "It was a very strained relationship during Covid, but now it's an excellent relationship," he said.

The president pointed to trade as evidence of improving ties. He said China is buying more US farm products. "Look at all the farm products they're buying now," Trump said. "Soybeans — they're buying a lot of soybeans."

Trump said the purchases

'Turbulent' times: Jinping assures Brazil's Lula of Beijing's support

Beijing/Sao Paulo: China's President Xi Jinping (L) assured his Brazilian counterpart on Friday China would stand by the Latin America's biggest economy and the Global South, and called for both nations to maintain the role of the UN, Xinhua said. Xi's comments in a telephone call with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva followed the latter's criticism of the US attack on Venezuela in an opinion piece in the 'New York Times' this week. Xi said China and Brazil should safeguard the shared interests of the Global South and jointly maintain the role of the United Nations in the "current turbulent international situation", the agency said. Lula's office confirmed the 45-minute call, saying both leaders "reiterated their commitment to strengthening the United Nations as a path to safeguarding peace and stability in the world".



benefit American farmers. "That makes our farmers happy, and that makes me happy," he said. He also praised Xi personally. Trump

called him "an amazing guy" and spoke favorably about Xi's wife. His remarks suggested a focus on personal diplomacy.

TikTok seals deal to form new US entity

Washington: TikTok has finalised a deal to create a new American entity, avoiding the looming threat of a ban in the US that has been in discussion for years on the platform now used by over 200 million Americans.

The social video platform firm signed pacts with investors including Oracle, Silver Lake and the Emirati investment firm MGX to form the new TikTok US joint venture.

The new version will operate under "defined safeguards that protect national security through comprehensive data protections, algorithm security, content moderation and software assurances for US users," the company said. American TikTok users can continue using the same app.

Trump praised the deal, thanking Chinese leader Xi Jinping specifically "for working with us and, ultimately, approving the Deal". He hoped "long into the future I will be remembered by those who use and love TikTok."

Hasina alleges anarchy

MUMBAI

In her first public audio address in New Delhi, since fleeing Bangladesh, former PM Sheikh Hasina accused the interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus of pushing the nation into what she dubbed "murderous anarchy", declaring that democracy now survives "in exile".

The message, played to a packed audience at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia in Delhi, came amid rapidly fraying ties between India and Bangladesh and as New Delhi moves families of Indian diplomats out of Dhaka, anticipating escalating political violence ahead of next month's elections.

Hasina said Bangladesh had slipped into its "darkest hour", transformed from a peaceful nation into a landscape marked by fear, bloodshed and repression. "What was once fertile and calm is ruled by terror," she said, alleging, violence, torture and sexual assaults were being carried out with impunity, particularly against women and minorities.

Hasina, who was forced into exile after her govern-

AMERICA TRYING TO BEFRIEND JAMAAT IN BANGLADESH: CLIP

Washington: As Jamaat-e-Islami readies for its strongest showing in Bangladesh poll next month, 'The Washington Post' has reported US diplomats are quietly signalling a willingness to engage with the once-banned party. The paper on Thursday cited a leaked audio clip of a closed-door interaction between a US diplomat and some female Bangladeshi journalists on December 1, 2025, at the US embassy in Dhaka.

The US official said Bangladesh had "shifted Islamic" and predicted Jamaat would "do better than it's ever done before" in the Feb 12 poll. "We want them to be our friends," the official added, asking if journalists could bring members of the party's "influential student wing", Islami Chhatra Shibir, onto their programmes. The unnamed diplomat downplayed worries Jamaat would try to force its interpretation of Islamic law on Bangladesh, saying "we would have 100% tariffs put on them the next day".



ment was toppled during violent protests in August 2024, accused what she called a "fascist clique" of conspiring to seize power. She blamed Yunus for dismantling democratic institutions and allowing extremist forces to flourish.

"Bangladesh today resembles a prison and an execution

ground," she said, claiming, religious minorities, especially Hindus, were under sustained attack since her ouster.

She warned the February 12 general election would face a legitimacy crisis if her party, the Awami League, remains barred from contesting. The party's registration has been suspended and its activities banned by the interim government. Hasina said law and order had collapsed, daily life had become a struggle for survival, and the promise of a free and fair poll was hollow without political pluralism.

"The shooting on January 8,

Woman shot at by Border Patrol sentenced for illegal entry in US

PORTLAND (US)

A woman who was shot and wounded by a Border Patrol agent during a recent immigration stop in Portland, Oregon, pleaded guilty on Thursday to illegally entering the US and was sentenced to one year of probation.

Yorlenys Zambrano-Contreras appeared by video from an immigration detention facility in Tacoma, Washington, for the federal court hearing in Portland, "The Oregonian/OregonLive" reported.

She won't face time in prison but will have location monitoring and certain nighttime curfew requirements during probation.

She will be able to remain out of custody in Oregon under the negotiated resolution of the case, the news outlet reported.

The case was initially filed in Texas, where she was accused of illegally entering the US, but she waived her right to appear there for prosecution, the outlet reported.

The shooting on January 8,



one day after a federal agent shot and killed a driver in Minneapolis, prompted protests over agents' aggressive tactics during immigration enforcement operations.

The FBI said in a court filing it had found no surveillance or other video of the shooting, in which a Border Patrol agent wounded Zambrano-Contreras and Luis Nino-Moncada while they were in a pickup truck in a medical complex parking lot.

According to court filings, the agent opened fire after Nino-Moncada put the truck in reverse and repeatedly slammed into an unoccupied car Border Patrol agents had

rented, smashing its headlights and knocking off its front bumper. The truck struck the agent, and he fired two rounds out of fear for his life, the filings say.

Nino-Moncada has been indicted on charges of aggravated assault on a federal employee and damaging federal property. He has pleaded not guilty and remains in custody, with a jury trial set for March.

The Department of Homeland Security said Zambrano-Contreras and Nino-Moncada entered the US illegally in 2023 and 2022, respectively, and were affiliated with the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

HARRIS FLAYS ICE

Former US Vice-President Kamala Harris criticised Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sharply after a five-year-old child was taken to a detention centre in Texas. "The child should be at home with the family and not used as bait by ICE and held in a Texas detention centre. I am outraged, and you should be too," she said.

Minnesota traders stand against ICE

WASHINGTON

No work, no shopping, no dining out. Hundreds of businesses across Minnesota were expected to close and many people vowed to pause everyday activities on Friday as part of a general strike against the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, NYT reported.

As tensions mount and a sense of fear of detention by immigration agents permeates the state, vendors, labour unions and residents said they would take part in an economic blackout and gather at prayers and protests on what organisers called a "Day of Truth and Freedom."

"It's tense and emotional, and folks are hurting," said Bishop Dwayne Royster, the executive director of Faith in Action, which is helping with the organising effort.

Minnesotans, he said, are demonstrating "deep resilience and willingness to stand together in ways I haven't seen folks do in a very long time." The day of the strike, which



A man brings out an 18th century Bible to the anti-ICE site, Minneapolis

was set to include outdoor demonstrations, dawned with much of the Midwest, including all of Minnesota, under an extreme cold warning from the National Weather Service. The cold was particularly bitter in Minneapolis, with temperatures as low as -20°C forecast for much of the day, with wind chills even lower.

On Thursday, Vice President JD Vance said the Trump administration wanted to "turn down the temperature" in Minneapolis after weeks of clashes. Vance, who said he had travelled to the city to understand the tensions,

Briefs

Australians mull Smith's inclusion



Injury-hit Australia could consider bringing in veteran Steve Smith to bolster their stuttering batting as the former champions aim to keep their fate in their own hands when they face Sri Lanka in a crucial T20 World Cup Group B clash here on Monday. Australia risk an early exit after suffering a shock 23-run defeat to Zimbabwe in their previous match. They now need victories in their remaining group matches against Oman and Sri Lanka to progress.

UAE eye middle-order fix in Afg game



UAE will look to plug their middle-order frailties, particularly against spin, when they take on a hurting Rashid Khan-led Afghanistan in a must-win Group D clash of the T20 World Cup here on Monday. The two sides head into the contest after contrasting results in their previous outings. UAE scraped past Canada to register their first win, while Afghanistan suffered a heartbreaking defeat despite pushing their last game into two Super Overs in one of the greatest T20 matches. Afghanistan are desperate to open their account.

Sanjay's 68, bowlers seal win for USA



Sanjay Krishnamurthi's explosive unbeaten half-century followed by a disciplined bowling show powered USA to a crucial 31-run win over Namibia, in a must-win Group C clash here on Sunday, keeping their slim Super Eights hopes alive. With back-to-back victories, USA finished the group stage on four points and are on third place behind India and Pakistan as they remain in contention for a place in the next round from Group A, though they will depend on other results. Krishnamurthi hammered an unbeaten 68 off 33 balls to lift USA to their highest-ever T20 World Cup total of 199/4.

Holder happy with special effort at iconic Wankhede

West Indies all-rounder states team not thinking too ahead

MUMBAI

West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder had a field day at the Wankhede Stadium scalping four wickets and claiming the player-of-the-match award in his team's victory over Nepal and said it was a special accomplishment. Holder was sharing his thoughts with the media at the mixed zone after the match.

"Not a bad wicket. I think getting four wickets in a World Cup game is special and to be able to do that today was good. Nepal has obviously been a team that's been very competitive and they've beat us in the recent past as well too, so we knew we had to come up really hard in this game and make sure we started the game really well," he added.

Holder was impressed overall with the West Indies' bowling performance and felt it was a great team effort.

"I think the spell that Matthew put upfront was very, very crucial for us. He was able to start really well for us, kept the pressure on them but also got an early wicket as well too. Aki (Akeal Hosein) was outstanding with the new ball as well, so it made it a little bit easier for me when I came into more tough conditions. It was very hot out there this morning and yeah, just happy that we overcame the conditions," Holder stated.

The West Indies felt the team was gathering momentum with each victory and happy to get to the Super Eights but were not thinking too ahead either.

"Yeah, I mean, I think we've



Not a bad wicket. I think getting four wickets in a World Cup game is special and to be able to do that today was good.

Jason Holder,
West Indies all-rounder

been lucky in a sense with our draw in terms of our fixtures. We've had one game in Kolkata, went back to Kolkata not to play a second and we've had two games in Mumbai. I mean, the grounds have been really good, the conditions have been good and we've been playing some good cricket. I think we're building quite nicely," he added.

On the question of why West Indies are not able to produce the genuine fast bowlers of the 1970s and 1980s anymore, Holder felt it had a bit to do with slow pitches in the Caribbean over the years.

"Look, there's been a lot of debate as to why over the years we've had some very slow pitches. We don't quite get the quick pitches that we used to get on the consistent pace that we can be."

DOMINANCE | Ishan's 77 and bowling masterclass guide defending champions to 61-run win over Pakistan; Suryakumar-led side qualify for Super Eight stage

Kishan powers India to big win

COLOMBO

India recorded a 61-run victory over Pakistan in the T20 World Cup here on Sunday for another dominant victory over the arch-rivals in ICC events. Ishan Kishan made a high-quality 77 off 40 balls on a challenging surface to take India to 175 for seven.

The total proved to be more than enough for Pakistan who folded up for 114 in 18 overs. Both Indian pacers and spinners produced timely wickets to decimate the opposition.

Jasprit Bumrah (2/17) and Axar Patel (2/19) were the stand out bowlers for India.

Put in to bat, Kishan took the game away from Pakistan despite the fall of Abhishek Sharma in the first over bowled by Salman Ali Agha.

The other Indian batters found it tough to get the boundaries against the Pakistan spinners. Agha employed pace for just two overs in the innings.

India captain Suryakumar Yadav scored 32 off 27 balls.

Off-spinner Saim Ayub was the pick of the Pakistan bowlers, ending with three wickets for 25 runs in four overs.

Kishan (77, 40b) shared an 87-run alliance with Tilak Varma in which the latter's contribution was a princely 11, after India were asked to bat first.

The match, which had several preceding dramatic weeks because of the admixture of sports and politics, started off in an unusual note as Pakistan skipper Salman Agha brought himself on for off-spin and accounted for Abhishek Sharma.

The off-spin continued through Saim Ayub (3/25) in the power play and it fetched the desired result initially.



India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Saim Ayub during an ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 match against Pakistan at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Sunday. PTI

Scoreboard

India: I Kishan b Ayub 77, A Sharma c Shaheen b Salman Agha 0, T Varma lbw b Ayub 25, S Yadav c Ayub b Tariq 32, H Pandya c Babar b Ayub 0, S Dube run out 27, R Singh (not out) 11, A Patel c Ayub b Shaheen O Extras (LB-2, W-1) 3. Total 175-7 (In 20 overs).

Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-88, 3-126, 4-126, 5-159, 6-175, 7-175. Bowling: Salman

Agha 2-0-10-1, Shaheen Shah Afridi 2-0-31-1, Saim Ayub 4-0-25-3, Abrar Ahmed 3-0-38-0, Shadab Khan 1-0-17-0, Mohammad Nawaz 4-0-28-0, Usman Tariq 4-0-24-1.

Pakistan: S Farhan c Singh b Pandya 0, S Ayub lbw b Bumrah 6, S Agha c Pandya b Bumrah 4, B Azam b Patel 5, U Khan st Kishan b Patel 44, S Khan c Dube b Varma 14, M Nawaz c Dube b Kuldeep 4, F Ashraf c Rinku b Varun 10,

S Afridi (not out) 3, A Ahmed lbw Varun 0, U Tariq b Pandya 0 Extras (LB 1, W 3) 4

Total 114 all-out (In 18 overs). **Fall of wickets:** 1-0, 2-6, 3-13, 4-34, 5-73, 6-78, 7-78, 8-97, 9-97. Bowling: Hardik Pandya 3-1-16-2, Jasprit Bumrah 2-0-17-2, Axar Patel 4-0-29-2, Varun Chakravarthy 3-0-17-2, Kuldeep Yadav 3-0-14-1, Tilak Varma 2-0-11-1, Rinku Singh 1-0-9-0.

Abhishek went for a loft off Agha but could not clear Shaheen Shah Afridi at the edge of the circle in the final ball of the first over.

For the next 7.4 overs,

Kishan converted the Premadasa Stadium into his own little kingdom, shots flying all around the vast corners of this venue.

It seemed as if Kishan was

batting on a different track altogether.

The left-hander started with an arrogant chin-high pull off pacer Afridi that thundered into the hoardings

beyond the mid-wicket fence.

But that was a mere appetizer. The Jharkhand man soon dismantled an armada of Pakistan spinners.

Agha and Ayub were dispatched for a four each, while leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed was carted for a six and four off successive deliveries.

The four was a spectacular shot. Despite the slowness of the deck, Kishan lent power and placement to the late cut through his malleable wrists, as the ball sped to the third man fence.

Later, leg-spinner Shadab Khan too was lobbed for a six as Kishan raced to his fifty in just 27 balls, impressive considering the less than ideal conditions for shot-making and a skillful opposition.

Toss played a crucial factor, says Nepal's Kami after defeat

Nepal all-rounder feels this West Indies side very different from the side that beat them in Sharjah

MUMBAI

Nepal's Sompal Kami felt toss played a crucial role apart from the brilliance of West Indies in their nine-wicket defeat to the Caribbean team at the Wankhede Stadium, here on Sunday.

Kami was addressing the media at the post-match briefing and also explained the difference between the West Indies side they beat in Sharjah in a T20I series last year and the present team.

"You know, it's a totally difficult wicket and difficult condition as well. And today, what I feel a toss was very important and we lost the toss. So that's why maybe it's a big fact, what I feel is. And obviously, that West Indies team is different and World Cup is totally different, you know."

He felt the Windies were at full strength this time around and came harder at them.

"So I know they are coming stronger. And you know, we did in Sharjah, we played an excellent game in Sharjah, we deserved. But here we are not, you know, playing that way. So that's why what I feel is we are losing."

Kami also felt Nepal were unable to lift their game a notch higher after the excellent performance against



Nepal's Sompal Kami plays a shot during the match against West Indies. PTI

England. "I don't know. We are excellent with England. But after that, we could, you know, play better. And if you are not playing well in the highest level, you cannot survive. So we know and we as a team, we are not playing good. That's why what I feel is we are a losing side. We are far better than what we played today. So we are coming stronger in the next game. But I feel it's just starting," he added.

Kami also offered his two cents on Nepal coach Stuart Law's advice to the players to focus on their cricket rather than spending time on social media.

"I think what the coach is saying is, you know, true. I feel because there are lots of, young players, you know, whenever they perform well, they go on Instagram or Facebook, they read good comments. But as a cricket player, as a sports person, you know, every day is not good. But I feel you don't go to social media."

Clinical West Indies thump Nepal in one-sided contest

The Windies sail into the Super Eight stage

MUMBAI

West Indies made shortwork of Nepal to record a breezy nine-wicket victory in their ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Group C match, at the Wankhede Stadium, here on Sunday.

Chasing a mere 134 for victory, the Windies were hardly tested as they coasted home in 15.2 overs topping the target at 134/1. Skipper Shai Hope and Shimron Hetmyer were unbeaten on 61 and 46 respectively to execute the formalities in style.

With the win, West Indies have assured themselves of a place in the Super Eights. Holder was declared the Player-of-the-Match for his brilliant bowling figures of 4/27.

West Indies began in typical fashion in pursuit of 134 as Brandon King and Shai Hope went about their business in clinical fashion.

King slammed four boundaries before getting out for 22 as they reached 43/1 after the powerplay.

Nepal were put under pressure straightaway by the West Indies through Akeal Hosein's spin in the first over as he bowled Kushal Bhurtel for one on the fifth ball of the over.

They suffered another jolt when skipper Rohit Paudel was trapped leg before by Holder, Matthew Forde for just five runs as they were in deep trouble at 17/2 in 3.1 overs.

Aasif Sheikh was sent pack-

ing by Jason Holder when he played a flick shot half-heartedly that was snapped up by Shimron Hetmyer at long leg as Nepal slipped to 17/3. And when Aarif Sheikh was dismissed by Holder, things got worse for Nepal as they were slipping to 23/4 and staring down the barrel.

Forde was the pick of the West Indian bowlers after he returned figures of 1/10 in his allotted four overs with an economy of just 2.50.

Airee brought up his fifty in the 19th over off Joseph with a six over third man.

Scoreboard

Nepal: K Bhurtel b Hosein 1, A Sheikh c Hetmyer b Holder 11, R Paudel lbw Forde 5, D Airee c Powell b Holder 58, A Sheikh c Forde b Holder 2, L Bam c Hope b Joseph 13, G Jha b Chase 11, S Kami (not out) 26, Karan KC c Forde b Holder 1. Extras (LB-1 NB-1 W-3) 5. Total 133-8 (In 20 overs).

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-17, 3-17, 4-23, 5-46, 6-73, 7-127, 8-133. Bowling: A Hosein 4-0-

30-1, M Forde 4-1-10-1, J Holder 4-0-27-4, S Joseph 4-0-38-1, G Motie 2-0-17-0.

West Indies: B King c Bhurtel b Yadav 22, S Hope (not out) 61, S Hetmyer (not out) 46. Extras (NB-1, W-4) 5. Total 134-1 (In 15.2 overs) 134.

Fall of wicket: 1-43. Bowling: Karan KC 2-0-12-0, S Kami 2-0-23-0, N Yadav 3-0-24-1, S Lamichhane 3-0-38-0, D Singh Airee 3.2-0-19-0, K Bhurtel 2-0-18-0.



West Indies' captain Shai Hope plays a shot. PTI

analysis

Shai Hope feels West Indies have tremendous depth



West Indies' captain Shai Hope and Shimron Hetmyer, along with Nepal's players, walk off the field. PTI

MUMBAI

West Indies captain Shai Hope stated the performance of Matthew Forde showed the tremendous depth that his team possessed at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Hope was talking to reporters at the post-match media briefing and dwelt upon the roles played by the likes of Forde in offering balance to the team.

"Firstly, that goes to show how strong our squad is,

when you select anyone in the team, you have someone who can fill a hole, I wouldn't necessarily call it a hole, but every single person in the squad has something that they can bring to contribute to team's win."

Hope was elated with Forde's efforts and lavished praise on him.

"On Matthew, he's been incredible for us in the ball pit in the last few series, all the way from New Zealand when he came out from that injury, so it's great to have

him back. He's been bowling really well, and then you can see what he can do in the back end with the bat as well, so he's a very good all-round player and someone that could be a very perfect player," he added.

When queried about Windies feeling a sense of redemption after beating Nepal, who had beaten them in the T20I series 2-1 last September, Hope brushed it aside and felt it was important to stay in the present.

"Well that's in the past,

like I said before, it's history, you know we've got to stay in the present. We've got to ensure we play our best cricket because we've seen Nepal as a very good team regardless of what you're playing against, where they're playing, so we needed to bring our A game once again today and like I said, that was in the past, they played good cricket then, but today we needed to get over the line to ensure our place in the Super Eights."

The WI skipper felt it was

a great feeling to assure themselves of a place in the Super Eights.

"That's a great feeling, that's what we set out to do from the jump, and we've got our new player to come here, that was our first step. We all want to lift the trophy but there's a process to get there, so play our best cricket, hopefully we can continue to peak and keep a strong unit in all departments, and when the time comes, we can always seize those moments and be on top," he added.