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

Briefs

CHANDIGARH Uproar over Pb privilege motion

The Punjab assembly passed a privilege motion against Congress MLA Sukhpal Khaira accusing him of allegedly insulting elected legislators by calling them "bonded labourers", amid uproar during the ongoing budget session, here on Thursday. Finance minister Harpal Cheema who moved the motion during Zero Hour, alleged that Khaira's words amounted to breach of privilege, and that he had also made "objectionable gestures".

PATNA Tejashwi, JD(U) spar over Nitish

A verbal duel broke out on Thursday between RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and JD(U) leaders over the performance of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his government during more than two decades in power.

Nitish Kumar is poised to step down after being elected to the Rajya Sabha. He filed his nomination papers for the Upper House on March 5. The Rajya Sabha elections will be held on March 16.

JAIPUR 3 cubs bring Sariska tiger tally to 52

The Sariska Tiger Reserve in Alwar, Rajasthan, has welcomed three new tiger cubs, taking the total number of tigers in the reserve to 52, the highest ever recorded in Sariska. Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) Sangram Singh said tigress ST 17 has given birth to three cubs in the Akbarpur range. The cubs were captured on camera while roaming in the forest with the tigress. A video showing the tigress with the cubs has also surfaced.

Monitoring teams have been directed to keep a close watch on the activities of the tigress and her cubs.

NEW DELHI 130 MPS sign notice to remove CEC

As many as 130 Lok Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs have signed a notice seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, sources said on Thursday.

According to a source, the notice is likely to be submitted in at least one of the two Houses on Friday, though it was not clear in which House it would be brought first. According to rules, at least 100 MPs need to sign the notice while the required strength in the Rajya Sabha is 50.

SHILLONG BSF vehicle set afire in Meghalaya

The total curfew imposed in Meghalaya's East and West Garo Hills districts was relaxed on Thursday to allow people to procure essential items, officials said. In the ongoing unrest, a vehicle part of the convoy of a Border Security Force DIG was set on fire and some personnel were injured in an attack in the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday evening when the deputy inspector general (DIG), along with other officials, was returning from a meeting in Tura town in the West Garo Hills district near the India-Bangladesh border.

'PROMOTING ALTERNATIVES TO LPG' | States being engaged to identify priority consumers, Petroleum Minister Puri tells LS

No shortage of diesel, petrol, kerosene: Govt

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday spelt out a number of steps to increase LPG production and availability through transition to other fuels and identification of priority consumers with the help of the states. It has also now eased the environmental norms to allow restaurants and hospitality sectors to use alternate fuels in order to free LPG for other consumers.

In a statement in the Lok Sabha, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Puri insisted that "there is no shortage of diesel, petrol or kerosene and their availability is fully assured and supply chains across the country are functioning smoothly."

The Minister added that "before the West Asia crisis, approximately 45 per cent of India's crude imports transited through the Strait of Hormuz route" and he lauded



Prime Minister Narendra Modi for helping the country "secure crude volumes that exceed what the disrupted Strait of Hormuz could have delivered in the same period." The minister added that

"the non-Hormuz sourcing has risen to approximately 70 per cent of crude imports, higher than 55 per cent before the US-Israel-Iran war." Also, he said, "India's sources have grown from 40 countries as against 27 in 2006 and 2007 and this structural diversification built through sustained policy over successive years has given us options that other nations find themselves without."

Further, he said, the refineries are operating at high capacity utilisation, in cases at over 100 per cent.

Gandhi attacks Puri on Epstein, Soros links

Just ahead of the statement of Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas in the Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, during the discussion on Supplementary Demands for Grants, alleged that he was a "friend" of sexual offender Jeffrey Epstein and that his daughter had received money from US businessman George Soros - who incidentally has often been accused by BJP of being close to Gandhi.

Meanwhile, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey hit back at Gandhi, saying billionaire Soros had given Rs 10 crore for his Bharat Jodo Yatra.

PM castigates panic creators

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hit out at those trying to create panic on the LPG situation in India, and said they are not only exposing themselves before the people but also hurting the country.

Addressing the NXT Summit here, Modi said people were black-marketing products, and warned of action against them. Earlier, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, reacting to the PM's assurance to citizens amid reports of nationwide LPG shortage, told media, "I hope he is right, but it doesn't look like it."

Neighbours turn to India for help in fuel crisis

NEW DELHI

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that India has received requests for assistance from other countries in the neighbourhood. "We have received a request from the government of Bangladesh for the supply of diesel, which is being examined. Given our people-centric and development-oriented approach towards Bangladesh, we have been supplying diesel to them from the Numaligarh refinery in Assam. A sale-purchase agreement was signed in 2017 between the Numaligarh refinery in Assam and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation," Jaiswal said.

God saved me, says Farooq after attack

JAMMU

"God saved me," said former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, recalling a narrow escape from an assassination attempt during a marriage function here on Wednesday night. He also voiced concern over the alleged lack of adequate police security at the venue.

The assailant, identified as Kamal Singh Jamwal, allegedly targeted Abdullah - president of the ruling National Conference - during the event in the Greater Kailash area on the outskirts of the city.

"I am fine and God has saved me," Abdullah told PTI on Thursday morning.

Warrant recalled

Hours after issuing a non-bailable warrant against Abdullah in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association scam case, a Srinagar court on Thursday recalled it considering his condition following the attack. Chief Judicial Magistrate Srinagar, Tabassum, had issued the warrant after Abdullah failed to appear in court, either in person or online.

Recounting the chilling moment, he said the assailant had managed to get right behind him.

Cong protests Govt silence on West Asia

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to personally make a statement in the Parliament on the West Asia crisis even as it protested in the complex along with other Opposition parties to protest against the alleged severe shortage of LPG across the nation due to disruption in supplies from the Middle East.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who participated in the LPG protest at Parliament, said, "When the country is grappling with a severe crisis, Prime Minister Modi ji is engrossed in election tours."

Heatwave forecast over parts of India

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department has forecast severe heatwave conditions over some parts of Saurashtra, Kutch and parts of Vidarbha on Thursday. It has issued an orange alert for heatwave in Gujarat's Rajkot and Surendranagar.

Similar weather conditions are also seen over some parts of Madhya Pradesh till Friday.

Hot and humid conditions are very likely in some coastal areas of Saurashtra, Kutch, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe till Friday and over Gujarat region till Saturday, the weather bureau said.

A gradual rise in maximum temperatures across Tamil Nadu is forecast over the coming days, with the mercury likely to increase by 2 degrees Celsius. Delhi on Thursday recorded a maximum temperature of 35.8 degree Celsius.

Pawan Khera tried to fix poll results via militants: Himanta

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said 3-4 FIRs have been registered against senior Congress leader Pawan Khera for allegedly trying to contact militant groups to influence election results.

Sarma levelled the allegations a day after the Congress spokesperson asserted that the CM would be lodged in jail within weeks after the election results are out due to his

alleged corruption. "There are 3-4 cases already registered against Pawan Khera for trying to contact some militant organisations in Assam to influence election results," Sarma told reporters.

An investigation into the matter is going on, he added. "So, you will know after the election who will end up in jail. I think that Pawan Khera's final address will be in Assam jail," the CM asserted.

No immediate comment could be obtained from the

All India Congress Committee Media and Communications Chairman.

Khera on Wednesday alleged that the BJP and its government work only for their own interests, and that ministers, including the CM, prioritise the interests of their families above all else.

"No one can save Himanta Biswa Sarma after the elections, not even his masters sitting in Delhi. After the Assam assembly results are declared, he will be behind bars within weeks," he had claimed.

Now, parent-managed WhatsApp accounts for under-13s

MUMBAI

Meta-owned WhatsApp has introduced parent-managed accounts that allow parents or guardians to set up the messaging platform for pre-teens under 13, with built-in safety controls.

The company said the feature was developed after consultations with families and experts and is aimed at allowing younger users to communicate while remaining under parental supervision.

"With input from families and experts, we're rolling out new parent-managed

accounts that allow parents or guardians to set up WhatsApp for pre-teens, with new controls to limit their WhatsApp experience to messaging and calling," WhatsApp said.

To set up the feature, parents must keep their device and the child's phone side by side to link the two accounts.

Back in saddle, Speaker Birla says no MP enjoys privilege

NEW DELHI

Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said Lok Sabha functions strictly according to rules and no member has the privilege to speak whenever he or she wishes and warned that if anyone behaves contrary to the decorum of the House, he would be compelled to take strict action to preserve its dignity.

A day after a resolution seeking his removal from office was defeated, Birla also said in Lok Sabha that members may personally agree or disagree with the decision of the Chair, but it remains his duty to enforce the rules, procedures and traditions of the House.

He said the Chair does not belong to any individual, it is a symbol of India's democratic traditions, the spirit of the Constitution, and the prestige of this great institution.

The speaker said whether it

is the Leader of the House (Prime Minister), the Leader of the Opposition (LoP), or any other member - they can speak only by following the procedures laid down in the rules of the House.

Thursday was the first time Birla came to the House to conduct the proceedings since the notice of no confidence was given against him by the

opposition on February 10 during the first part of the Budget session, which ended on February 13. The second part began on March 9.

Birla said MPs always must remember that disagreements and intense exchanges of ideas are natural in parliamentary debate but there is a clear line between democratic discourse and disorder.



'ESF shows foresight'

BJP MP Jagdambika Pal on Thursday said the Modi government has shown foresightedness in proposing Rs 1 lakh crore Economic Stabilisation Fund, which will act as a shield against future shocks.

Participating in a discussion on the second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2025-26 in the Lok Sabha, Pal said the government has also earmarked additional expenditures for food and fertiliser subsidies to help farmers and poor.

Stress-test portal, I-T dept told

A Parliamentary panel on Thursday asked the Income Tax department to undertake "rigorous stress and load testing" of its e-filing portal and the entire IT backbone to ensure that there are no glitches when the new Act is rolled out from April 1. "The notification and publication of the Income-tax Rules and corresponding forms should be expedited, ensuring that adequate time is given to taxpayers," the panel said.

RS MP pushes spice farming

BJP Rajya Sabha member Dorjee Tshering Lepcha on Thursday sought a special incentive for young farmers to continue large cardamom cultivation in Sikkim. Lepcha emphasised the need for revival and strengthening of large cardamom in Sikkim.

Panel calls for smart meters installation

A parliamentary panel has urged the power ministry to undertake urgent measures to accelerate installation of smart meters in a structured and time-bound manner. The Eleventh Report of the Committee on 'Demands for Grants (2026-27) of Ministry of Power' was tabled in Parliament on Thursday. The report said since the pace of installation of smart meters across the country has been far below envisaged.

Varma report in Monsoon session

The three-member committee set up by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to probe grounds on which removal of High Court Judge, Justice Yashwant Varma, was sought following the recovery of burnt currency notes from his residence, is expected to submit its report in the Monsoon Session. On August 12, 2025, the Speaker constituted the three-member committee to probe charges against Justice Yashwant Varma.

NCERT row: IIT-G to review prof's role

NEW DELHI

A standing committee at IIT-Gandhinagar will review Michel Danino's role as guest professor after the Supreme Court directed governments and public institutions to disassociate from him following a controversy about a chapter on judicial corruption in a now-withdrawn NCERT textbook, officials said.

Danino, a Padma awardee, was the chairperson of the curricular area group that

develops social science textbooks for NCERT. Two others who were part of the drafting committee - Suparna Diwakar and Alok Prasanna Kumar - have also come under fire, besides Danino.

There was no response from Danino, Diwakar and Kumar to calls and messages. The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre and all state governments to disassociate from the three experts involved in drafting the chapter in the textbook.

Another girl falls through bus floor, dies

AGRA

A nine-year-old girl died after falling through the broken floor of a moving school bus in Agra's Etmadpur area on Wednesday, just 10 days after a seven-year-old girl similarly lost her life in Aligarh.

Police said the victim, identified as Naina, a class one student of RBS School in Bhagpur village, slipped through the damaged floor of the bus and fell onto the road while the vehicle was moving. The bus wheel ran over her before the driver could stop, and she was declared dead on arrival.

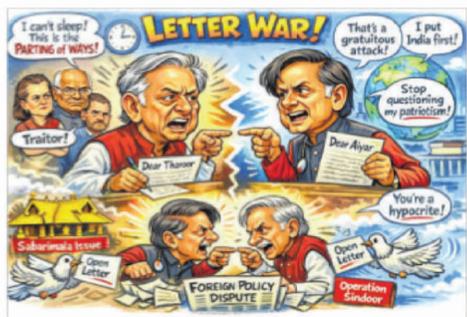
Family members said the bus was dilapidated, and the children had to sit on wooden planks placed over broken portions of the floor.

When the bus went over a speed breaker with a jolt, one of the planks slipped, and Naina fell through the damaged section.

Betting scam: ED moves Raipur court

MUMBAI

In a fresh move in the Mahadev online betting probe, the Enforcement Directorate has approached a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Raipur seeking to declare alleged Mahadev network operatives Shubham Soni and Anil Kumar Agrawal alias Atul Agrawal as Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs) under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.



NEW DELHI

In an 'open letter war' on media platforms, Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar declared that he was parting ways with party colleague Shashi Tharoor while the latter hit back at the veteran politician for his "many gratuitous" comments.

It all started with Aiyar penning an open letter to Tharoor in a magazine earlier this week, saying he was "shocked to the core" by Tharoor's

answers to questions on a TV channel on the ongoing war on Iran.

"I have been so disturbed that I could not sleep and have woken at 3 in the morning to write you this open letter," Aiyar wrote.

Aiyar said the scales fell from his eyes over Tharoor's rejection of the Supreme Court decision on allowing menstruating women to enter the temple at Sabarimala.

"I could barely believe my ears that an intelligent, scholarly, modern-minded St

Stephen's graduate, and post-graduate from an Ivy League college, could be so backward as to endorse a thoroughly sexist, gender-discriminatory practice that punishes women only because of their natural bodily functions," Aiyar said.

Tharoor hit back at Aiyar with an open letter of his own on a news channel's website, saying disagreement is a hallmark of a thriving democracy, but questioning a colleague's motives or patriotism simply because they adopt a different approach to foreign policy

does little to strengthen public debate.

"I have always approached international affairs from a clear nationalist perspective, placing India's interests, security, and global standing at the heart of every discussion, Tharoor said.

On Sabarimala, Tharoor said he is slightly amused that after attacking him for allegedly heretical views, Aiyar is criticising him on this issue for going along with the party's considered stand on the matter.

offgrid

It's Cong vs Cong as Aiyar, Tharoor trade barbs

Supreme Court Permits Euthanasia for the First Time

Son in Coma for 13 Years; Parents Had Filed a Plea

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

New Delhi | On Wednesday, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark verdict in a case concerning euthanasia. The Court granted approval for euthanasia (specifically, passive euthanasia) to Harish Rana, a 31-year-old man who has been in a coma for the past 13 years. Harish, a resident of Ghaziabad, is currently on a life support system. This marks the first instance of such a case in the country. A bench comprising Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice K.V. Viswanathan directed AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) to withdraw Harish's life support system in a phased manner. This process is to be executed in a way that preserves the patient's dignity. Passive euthanasia entails discontinuing or withdrawing the external life support or medical treatment being administered to a critically ill patient to keep them alive, thereby allowing the patient to die a natural death. The Supreme Court delivered this verdict in response to a plea for euthanasia filed by Harish's mother, Nirmala Rana, and his father, Ashok Rana. Reacting to



the verdict, his father, Ashok, said, "We have been fighting for this for a long time. What parents would ever wish for such a thing for their son? We have been pursuing this legal battle for the past three years. He will now be shifted to AIIMS. He used to be a topper at Punjab University." While delivering the judgment, Justice Pardiwala cited the words of the American clergyman Henry Ward Beecher, stating, "God does not ask man whether he accepts life or not; he simply has to accept it."

Harish Fell from the Fourth Floor of His Hostel; Bedridden Ever Since

Born in Delhi, Harish Rana was pursuing his B.Tech degree at Punjab University in Chandigarh. In 2013, he fell from the fourth floor of his

hostel building. As a result, he suffered total paralysis and slipped into a coma. He is currently unable to speak or perceive anything. Doctors diagnosed Harish with quadriplegia. In this condition, the patient is entirely dependent on a feeding tube and ventilator support. There is no scope for recovery. Due to being bedridden for 13 years, Harish has developed bedsores—deep, open wounds—on his body. His condition continues to deteriorate. This situation is extremely painful for Harish. For his family, witnessing him in this state has become mentally agonizing. The expenses incurred over many years on the ventilator, medications, nursing, and care have been so substantial that the family has been left financially devastated.

Villagers Protest Against Plans to Close Road Near Saraichandi Crossing; Memorandum Submitted to Railways

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Sahson. On Thursday, villagers staged a protest amidst apprehensions that the road near the Saraichandi railway crossing—located on the main route connecting Garapur to Bahariya via Sikandra—was being prepared for closure. Residents from various villages gathered to submit a memorandum to the Northern Railway, demanding that the road be maintained in its current state. The villagers stated that this road, situated on the Tiwaripur route just before the Saraichandi railway crossing, was originally constructed by the Mandi Parishad (Market Council) approximately four decades ago. Subsequently, following initiatives by elected representatives, the Public Works Department (PWD) widened the road to a width of approximately 18 feet. At that time, the Railway Department raised no objections whatsoever. According to the



villagers, this route directly connects residents living within a radius of about 20 kilometers to the Phulpur Tehsil and serves as the primary access route to the Block Headquarters, located approximately 15 kilometers away.

Residents of nearly 30 Gram Panchayats—including Tiwaripur, Hasanpur Korari, Baijpur, Chak Shahwan, Pratappur, Belwa, Saraichandi, Barethi, and Soprawari—rely on this very road for their daily commute. The villagers alleged that the Railway Department is making preparations to close the road and con-

struct a boundary wall at the site, a move that would severely disrupt the movement of thousands of people. The villagers have demanded that the land earmarked for the railway boundary wall be officially surveyed in the presence of local residents, and that the boundary wall be constructed without removing or encroaching upon the existing road. Village Pradhan (Head) of Kumbhauna, Ram Singh Yadav, and Village Pradhan of Pratappur, Shivkumar Bhartiya, emphasized that farmers, laborers, and students use this very route daily to reach their workplaces and schools. They

warned that if the route were to be closed, it would have a detrimental impact on local livelihoods and the education of children. A large number of villagers were present on this occasion, including former Pradhan Vinod Shukla, Gulabchand Vishwakarma, former BDC member Vinod Kumar Mishra, Gaya Prasad Tiwari, Munna Pal, Ramesh Maurya, Hariram Maurya, Ramakant Maurya, Vinod Kumar Maurya, and Vidyasagar. Presenting a copy of the Gram Sabha map, the villagers pointed out that the Saraichandi Railway Station is not located within Saraichandi itself, but rather within the Baijpur Gram Panchayat. They demanded that the Revenue Department conduct an impartial inquiry by carrying out an on-site measurement survey. Furthermore, they warned that any attempts to obstruct the road access would be opposed, and that this issue would be escalated to higher authorities.

Bike Carrying Four Youths Returning from Wedding Procession Collides with Trailer; Two Dead, Two Critically Injured

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Sahson: Two youths died on the spot, while two others sustained critical injuries, after the motorcycle they were riding collided with a trailer truck while they were returning home from a wedding procession. The accident sent a wave of grief through the region, and the families of the victims are inconsolable with sorrow. According to reports, Pankaj Patel (19)—son of Chandra Bhushan Patel and a resident of Takiya village (Tharwai police station area)—along



with Gyanchand Patel (26)—son of Ram Adhar Patel and a resident of Soprawari village—Neeraj Patel (20)—son of Brahma Bahadur Patel—and Rohit Gautam (20)—son of a resident of Jivnarayanpur village (Pratappur police station area)—had gone on Wednesday night to



attend the wedding procession of Rajmani, son of Girdhari Patel (a resident of the neighboring Berui village), at a guest house located in Rerua (Nawabganj police station area). While returning from the wedding procession around 11:00 PM, the four youths were heading home together on a single

motorcycle. As they reached the vicinity of 'Raja Saheb Ki Bagiya' (Raja Saheb's Garden), situated opposite Shahabpur village on the Handia-Kokhranj National Highway (within the Nawabganj police station limits), a speeding trailer truck crashed into their motorcycle. The accident was so severe that Pankaj Patel and Gyanchand Patel died instantly at the scene, while Neeraj Patel and Rohit Gautam sustained critical injuries. The injured youths have been admitted to the Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in Prayagraj

for treatment, where they are currently undergoing medical care. It is reported that Pankaj Patel was unmarried and was the third child among two brothers and two sisters. Similarly, Gyanchand Patel was also unmarried and was the third child among three brothers and two sisters. Their fathers are farmers. This tragic accident has cast a pall of mourning over both families, and their relatives are overwhelmed with grief. The families have since performed the final rites for both of the deceased youths.

Youth Falls into Well Beside Canal; Rescued Safely with Help from Police and Villagers

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: On Thursday morning, a young man fell into a well situated along the banks of a canal near Bharha village, within the jurisdiction of the Karchhana police station. Upon receiving information about the incident, teams from the police and the fire brigade rushed to the scene and, with the assistance of local villagers, successfully rescued the youth. According to reports, Ravi Kumar Bhartiya (24)—son of Radheshyam Bhartiya and a resident of Kaithi village—had left his home in the morning to relieve himself. During this time, he accidentally



fell into a well located along the canal bank. A villager passing by the area heard sounds coming from the direction of the well. Upon approaching to investigate, he discovered that a young man had fallen inside. The villager immediately alerted other residents of the village. Subsequently, a large crowd gathered at the spot and attempted to pull the youth out using ropes. Simultaneously, the Karchhana police station was also notified of

the incident. Acting swiftly upon receiving the information, the Karchhana police force and the fire brigade team arrived at the scene. With the assistance of the villagers—and after a considerable struggle—the youth was safely extracted from the well. A preliminary examination revealed that the youth was completely unharmed, following which he was sent home in the care of his family members.

Young Man Meets Tragic End After Being Struck by Train in Janghai



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Janghai. On Wednesday, shortly after the Godan Express—traveling from Gonda to Kurla Terminus, Mumbai—departed Janghai Junction and proceeded towards Prayagraj, a young man stepped onto the railway tracks near Semri village and ended his life by jumping in front of the moving train. Upon

receiving the information, GRP Outpost In-charge Arun Kumar Mishra and RPF Sub-Inspector Deepak Kumar arrived at the scene; they took custody of the body and inspected the site. Based on an Aadhaar card found on his person, the deceased has been identified as Raju Kumar Manjhi, 31, son of Kishan Manjhi, a resident of East Kailash, Delhi. Local residents reported that

the young man had been pacing along the railway tracks for over an hour. As the Godan Express reached a point approximately 200 meters from Janghai Station—towards Prayagraj, near the villages of Semri and Bhogipur—the man committed suicide by jumping in front of the train, despite repeated warnings and attempts by villagers to dissuade him.

Training on Mushroom Production at Khusro Bagh: Farmers Briefed on Modern Techniques

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: On the second day of a three-day training program organized under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) scheme at the Horticultural Experiment and Training Centre, Khusro Bagh, farmers were briefed on modern techniques for mushroom production. Approximately 100 farmers and trainees participated in the program. Farmers hailing from the districts of Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Kaushambi, and Pratapgarh participated in this training to gain an understanding of the intricacies of mushroom production. Chief Horticulture Specialist Dr. Virendra Singh apprised the farmers of advanced mushroom production techniques, as well as the various schemes offered by the department. He explained that under the 'Mukhyamantri Yuva Yojana' (Chief Minister's Youth Scheme), farmers can avail of an interest-free loan of up to ₹5 lakh to start a mushroom production business. He noted that a mini mushroom production unit can be established at a cost of approxi-



mately ₹2 lakh, and farmers can even initiate this venture from a small hut or a single room. This makes it possible to generate a monthly income ranging from ₹20,000 to ₹25,000. Highlighting the nutritional value of mushrooms, he explained that they are rich in protein, Vitamin D, and fiber—nutrients that are beneficial for patients suffering from diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Dr. S.R. Baghel, CEO of the Shubha Seva Agro Welfare Foundation, demonstrated the process of mushroom production through practical demonstrations

during the training session. He explained that the bags are prepared by soaking straw and then adding mushroom spawn while maintaining appropriate moisture levels. He also provided instructions on how to store the mushroom bags in a room, the expected timeframe for production to commence, and methods for drying, packaging, and marketing the mushrooms for sale. During the practical session of the training, each participant was provided with one mushroom bag free of cost for practice purposes. During this session, approximately 10

farmers expressed interest in establishing their own mushroom production units at an estimated cost of ₹2 lakh each. Mushroom expert Kumari Isha explained the process of Button Mushroom production, noting that it requires the preparation of compost—a process that takes approximately 28 days to complete and involves turning the compost pile seven times. Bran, poultry manure, urea, potash, and gypsum are used in the preparation of compost. He explained that the production of button mushrooms is optimal between October and February. He further noted that establishing an automated mushroom plant entails a cost of approximately ₹30 lakhs, of which the government provides a subsidy of about 12 lakhs, while the remaining amount must be borne by the farmer. At the conclusion of the program, Dr. V.K. Singh, the In-charge of Khusro Bagh, took the trainees on a tour of the Khusro Bagh nursery and provided information on scientific methods for protecting mango and guava crops against pests and diseases, as well as for preventing fruit drop.

Accused Wanted in Robbery Case Arrested; Case Linked to 2020 Incident

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Bahariya Police have arrested an accused individual who was wanted in connection with an old robbery case. The police apprehended the accused on Thursday near the canal bank in Ramgarh Kothari village, located within the police station's jurisdiction. Following the arrest, necessary legal action has been initiated against the accused. According to the police, they had been



searching for an accused named Prashant Dubey in connection with a robbery case registered in the year 2020. A resident of Ramgarh Kothari village, he

had been absconding for a considerable period. The police team received intelligence that the accused was present near the canal bank close to the village; acting on this tip-off, they cordoned off the area and took him into custody. According to the police, on September 30, 2020, near the canal culvert in Ramgarh Kothari village, a man returning from visiting relatives was intercepted, and his motorcycle was stopped. The perpetrators then robbed him of

₹3,000 in cash and his mobile phone. A case regarding this incident was subsequently registered at the Bahariya Police Station. The police had previously arrested and sent to jail three other accused individuals involved in this case, while Prashant Dubey had remained at large. According to police records, several criminal cases are already registered against the accused. These include charges such as causing damage to public property, robbery,

assault, and criminal intimidation. Acting under the leadership of Bahariya Station House Officer (SHO) Brajesh Singh, the police team executed the operation and arrested the accused. The team comprised Sub-Inspectors Balwant Singh, Umesh Yadav, Balkesh, Chandan Kumar Yadav, and Govind Das Prajapati; Woman Sub-Inspector Shivani Mishra; Head Constable Ramchandra Verma; and Constable Manish Yadav.

Empowered Youth through Skills – Dreams Take Flight with the Support of Meja Urja

Meja. On 11 March 2026, Meja Urja Nigam organized a program at the St. Joseph School Auditorium for young men and women trained at CIPET (Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology), Lucknow, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) skill development initiative. During the event, 40 trainees were awarded certificates and appointment letters. Under its CSR initiative, Meja Urja Nigam, in collaboration with CIPET, Lucknow, has successfully provided technical training to youth and connected them with employment opportunities. A total of 40 trainees received four months of free residential training at CIPET, Lucknow in the Machine Operator – Tool Room trade. Following the training, the program achieved 100% placement, with the trained youth securing jobs in various leading companies in the states of Gujarat and Haryana. The Chief Guest, Shri G. Srinivas Rao, CEO, MUNPL in his address said: "The youth are the future of the nation. By providing them with the right training and opportunities, we can lay a strong foundation for a developed and self-reliant



India. Skill development is the true strength of nation building." He also extended his best wishes to all trainees for a bright future

and encouraged them to keep progressing in life. On this occasion, all the trainees expressed their gratitude to Meja Urja Nigam

and CIPET for helping them build a brighter future. The event was also attended by Shri Narendra Nath Sinha (GM, Operations &

Maintenance), Shri Ashok Kumar Samal (GM, Maintenance), Shri Vivek Chandra (HOHR), Dr. A. K. Chaudhary (CMO), Shri

Nawab Ansari (AGM, Vigilance), along with officials of unions and associations, officers from CIPET, and the trainees' parents.

DC Inspects Offices within Collectorate Complex; Directs Expedited Disposal of Pending Cases

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

In alignment with the government's intent to enhance the efficiency of government offices, ensure the swift redressal of public grievances, and reduce the backlog of cases pending at various desks, Divisional Commissioner Smt. Soumya Agarwal today inspected various offices situated within the Prayagraj Collectorate complex. The District Magistrate, along with the concerned Additional District Magistrates and Sub-Divisional Magistrates, were present on this occasion. Prior to the inspection, the Divisional Commissioner held a meeting at the Sangam Auditorium with clerks and desk assistants associated with various sections, directing them to keep ready up-to-date information regarding the status of the oldest pending cases at their respective desks, as well as general data concerning pendency. The inspection commenced at the court of the Additional District Magistrate (City), where cases that had been pending for over five years were reviewed. Upon finding the reasons for the pendency in several cases to be unsatisfactory, the Divisional Commissioner directed that a comprehensive list of all matters related to Food Safety be compiled. She stated that cases not involving serious allegations—such as food adulteration—should be disposed of expeditiously by submitting prompt reports. Conversely, in serious cases, legal prosecution



proceedings should be initiated and executed within a time-bound framework. To ensure the swift disposal of matters related to Food Safety and Rent Control, she directed the District Magistrate to organize special camps on a fortnightly basis to resolve pending cases, thereby aiming to reduce the overall backlog. The Divisional Commissioner also inspected the desk of the Judicial Assistant (J.A.)—Judicial Section—where cases pertaining to Town Areas are adjudicated. During the review of the Guard File, instructions were issued to ensure that all necessary orders and important documents were systematically filed and attached. Furthermore, the concerned Additional District Magistrate was directed to conduct a monthly review of pending cases—desk-wise—to monitor and ensure progress toward their disposal. During the inspection, upon discovering errors in entries made by the Desk Assistant at certain locations, the official reprimanded the assistant and issued instruc-

tions to re-verify all entries and rectify them. Regarding pending cases related to service verification—specifically the issue that verification reports from the Police Commissioner's office are not received in a timely manner despite reports having been dispatched from this end—the Divisional Commissioner directed that a list of all pending cases be compiled and forwarded to the Police Commissioner through the District Magistrate. Suggesting improvements to the record management system, he noted that the current practice of maintaining multiple separate registers for different types of entries creates difficulties in coordination. Therefore, he directed that a system be implemented wherein, once a verification report is received, the corresponding entry is recorded within the same register, or alternatively, an additional column is added to record relevant remarks. The Divisional Commissioner also inspected the Postal Department, the Judicial Archives, and the Revenue Archives.

Meja Energy Awarded Improved Credit Rating: G. Srinivas

Meja : Meja Urja Nigam Private Limited a 50:50 joint venture between NTPC Limited and Uttar Pradesh Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited, has received an upgrade in its credit rating from CARE Edge Ratings Limited. The rating agency has upgraded the Company's long-term bank facilities to CARE AA-; Stable from CARE A+; Stable, reflecting MUNPL's strong operational performance, stable financial profile, and the robust regulatory framework governing the Indian power sector. The rating upgrade covers Long-Term Bank Facilities of ₹7,363.20 crore, which have been upgraded to CARE AA-; Stable from CARE A+; Stable, and Long-Term/Short-Term Bank Facilities of ₹200 crore, which have been upgraded to CARE AA-; Stable / CARE A1+ from CARE A+; Stable / CARE A1. Backed



by the strong operational and managerial expertise of its promoters, NTPC Limited and UPRVUNL, MUNPL continues to maintain stable operational performance and healthy liquidity. The long-term cost-plus PPAs, established payment security mechanisms, and consistent cash flows provide strong financial visibility for the Company going

forward. On the occasion, Sh. G. Srinivas Rao, CEO, Meja Urja Nigam said "The rating upgrade reflects our sustained focus on operational excellence, technical reliability, and long-term value creation for all stakeholders." Further Sh. Angshu Barua, Chief Financial Officer said "The improved rating underscores our strengthened financial profile, driven

by stable cash flows, disciplined deleveraging, and improved operational performance." The Upgradation of these ratings reflects MUNPL's strong financial discipline and robust operational performance, further strengthening the confidence of investors, lenders, and other stakeholders in the Company's long-term growth prospects and financial stability.

Sensation in Prayagraj: Mother Kills 5-Month-Old Son with a Stone; Hides Body in a Woodpile

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. A heart-wrenching incident has come to light in Pilakhini village, located within the jurisdiction of the Sarai Mamrez police station. Here, a mother murdered her own innocent five-month-old son by striking him with a stone. Following the incident, the woman hid the child's body in a pile of firewood near their home. According to reports, the woman struck the infant multiple times on the abdomen with a stone, resulting in his death on the spot. Some time later, when the child could not be found any-



where, family members grew suspicious and initiated a search. During the search, the child's body was discovered lying beneath a pile of firewood inside a room with a tin-shed roof. The family mem-

bers were left stunned upon making this discovery. Upon receiving the information, the police rushed to the scene and commenced an investigation. The police have taken the accused mother into custody and have begun interrogating her. During preliminary questioning, the woman revealed that she had become enraged following an argument with her husband, and it was in this fit of rage that she committed the act. It is reported that Santosh Yadav, a resident of the village, works as a farmer, while his father resides in Mumbai and works in the private sector. Approximately five months

ago, Santosh's wife, Manorama, gave birth to a son, who was named Ishwar.

According to family members, disputes frequently arose between the couple, and

they had engaged in an argument just a few days prior to the incident.

Information

It is hereby informed to the general public that my daughter's correct name is VIDYA, as recorded in her educational records. Due to an inadvertent error, her name has been recorded as VIDHA on her Aadhaar Card (Number 445165373233), which is incorrect. Henceforth, my daughter shall be known and identified by her correct name, VIDYA, daughter of Rakesh Kumar. It is hereby certified that all legal formalities pertaining to the above matter have been personally completed by me.

Rakesh Kumar
Malak Bharat Postan
Baragaon Chakha, Kaushambi

Information

It is informed to the general public that my original deed dated 24-03-2003, whose Aaraajee sankhya 573, book number -1, volume 3774, page 163/172, number 3238, is recorded. Really lost. Name: Anita Sah Wife: Basant Sah Address: 83L/1K/Q/P Harwara, dhoomanganj, Prayagraj-211011

Editorial

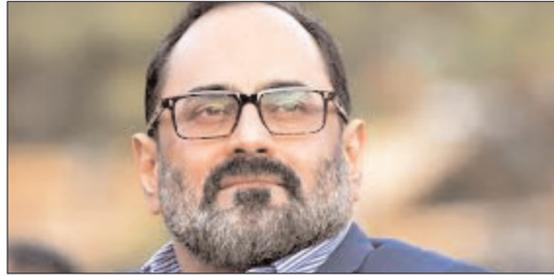
Civil servants are running India's regulatory bodies. It dilutes institutional independence

Looking back at India's reform story of more than three decades, it is worthwhile to recall that economic liberalisation of the 1990s had a few implicit assumptions of how an economy should function and grow on a sustainable basis. One of those assumptions followed from the government decision to allow the private sector to operate in areas that were hitherto monopolised by state-owned enterprises. Under such liberalisation, it was assumed that while the government would continue to frame policies for areas opened up to the private sector, the regulation or enforcement of those policies would be undertaken by independent regulators through rules framed by them. A classic example of this thinking was India's telecommunications sector that was opened up to the private sector in the early 1990s. This was followed by the setting up of the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of India or Trai a few years later. Subsequently, the business of basic telephone services, run in large parts of the country by a government department, was hived off to a newly created state-owned enterprise. Something similar, in varying degrees, happened in other areas such as the insurance, airports, and power sectors. In addition, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) was set up to regulate and adjudicate upon issues of market dominance and practices that undermined competition in various sectors. The principle was clear: Let the government frame the policy (and not run a business), while independent regulatory bodies could enforce the policy by framing necessary rules. Another implicit assumption behind such a separation of responsibilities between the government and the regulators was about who should steer those regulatory bodies. To impart autonomy and independence to these institutions and insulate them from government interference, the pool of talent for hiring key personnel was widened. Experts and private-sector professionals in related fields, along with even retired members of the judiciary (though under some pressure as was seen when the legislation for setting up the CCI was framed), were among those the government believed could be hired to head these regulatory institutions. Thus, the first chairperson of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission was an economist. Trai was set up under the chairmanship of a retired judge and its next chairperson was a former banker. Even the first capital market regulator was a banker in the late 1980s, and the first chairperson of the insurance sector regulator was a former chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes. The first full-fledged chairperson of the CCI was a retired Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer. So, there was a mix of regulatory heads chosen from a pool of experts from both the government and the private sector. In spite of a few civil servants heading these institutions, the idea that continued to be pursued was to insulate regulation from the stranglehold or influence of the political executive. The third significant aspect of regulation in the early days of economic reforms was the framing of rules for appointing heads of regulatory bodies in a way that effectively ruled out conflicts of interest. Thus, a regulator would usually not be considered for another job in the government system after the completion of his or her term. The idea was that the regulator should be able to act freely and fairly without any expectation of future assignments from the government or the private sector. Indeed, one of the regulators under the law was, until recently, barred from accepting any government job after having served in that regulatory post. These were guardrails to preserve the integrity and independence of regulators. However, the situation with regard to the last two assumptions behind the regulatory framework has changed significantly in the last few decades.



Chandrasekhar's acceptability cuts across factions. But there are various other considerations at play

On June 9, 2024, as the Modi 3.0 government was set to swear in, Rajeev Chandrasekhar came up with a cryptic tweet: "Today, curtains down on my 18-year stint of public service, of which three years I had the privilege of serving with PM Narendra Modi's Team Modi 2.0. I certainly didn't wish to end my 18 years of public service as a candidate who lost an election, but that's how it has turned out". The tweet was deleted after a day, and the amended version conveniently laid the blame for the confusion on an "intern". It was an emotional response, a mark of Chandrasekhar's utter disappointment with not finding a place in Modi 3.0. It also signified how the 'technocrat' was not a run-of-the-mill politician who believed in rehearsed or curated responses. Less than a year since then, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) high command has now sprung a surprise by naming Chandrasekhar as its new Kerala state president. By no means was Rajeev Chandrasekhar the frontrunner. Incumbent K. Surendran, who overstayed his term by two years, was tipped to get another year's extension, until the assembly elections in the state in 2026. There were other contenders too, such as firebrand Sobha Surendran and veteran MT Ramesh. Even conventional wisdom suggested that social engineering compulsions would go against Chandrasekhar, a Nair hailing from Thrissur. With the two Malayalis in Modi's third ministry being a Nair and a Syrian Christian—Suresh Gopi and George Kurian—an



Ezhava/Hindu OBC candidate would've been the more practical option. But the high command had enough reasons to pick Chandrasekhar. The BJP in Kerala is a divided house with multiple factions, and none of the frontrunners would have been able to function smoothly on account of internal dissension. Even K. Surendran's five-year term was marred by friction with the PK Krishnadas-led faction, as well as his running feud with Sobha Surendran. The BJP leadership reckons that Rajeev Chandrasekhar can carry all the factions together. He is not a natural politician, but the central leadership deems that this very characteristic will become Chandrasekhar's USP. It is very much a repetition of the 'K. Annamalai' experiment in Tamil Nadu.

True, Chandrasekhar's acceptability cuts across factions. But there are various other considerations at play. For all the gains it made elsewhere, the BJP has hardly had any electoral impact in Kerala, despite a steady rise in vote share. Even after faring reasonably well in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, cornering nearly 20% votes and Suresh Gopi's win from Thrissur, it did badly in the Palakkad by-election last November. That loss probably

had proved to be a baggage for the party in the past. The central leadership also believes that Chandrasekhar can cater to sections of Kerala's aspirational middle class that are yearning for change and are unhappy with both the ruling Left government and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). Since Chandrasekhar doesn't fit the mould of a regular politician, he may be able to connect better with this class and some increasingly 'apolitical' sections of voters that support, say, a Shashi Tharoor. In many ways in fact, it was the spirited contest that he put in against Tharoor in the Lok Sabha election in Thiruvananthapuram, despite being a late entrant, that may have propelled Chandrasekhar to the coveted position today. Giving a tough fight to Tharoor, a lot of people were left wondering whether Chandrasekhar could have emerged victorious had he been pencilled in sooner. "Ini Karyam Nadakkum" ('Now things will move') was Chandrasekhar's campaign slogan. This may well be called Chandrasekhar's second coming in Kerala politics. Contrary to what many may believe, the contest in Thiruvananthapuram wasn't his initiation in state politics, even if he was based in Bengaluru until then. Much before that, he had been a key mediator for getting the Bharat Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), affiliated to the Ezhava community outfit Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), to join the National Democratic Alliance

Now, Rajeev Chandrasekhar's appointment is likely to be followed by the RSS naming an organising secretary to assist the new president in his functioning. The last time the high command named an out-of-the-box candidate as state president was in the run-up to the 2016 assembly polls, when veteran Sangh leader Kummanam Rajasekharan, whose hardliner image and association with the Nilakkal protests of 1982

had proved to be a baggage for the party in the past. The central leadership also believes that Chandrasekhar can cater to sections of Kerala's aspirational middle class that are yearning for change and are unhappy with both the ruling Left government and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

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(NDA) in 2016. That is when Chandrasekhar was named the NDA's vice-chairman for Kerala, despite being a Rajya Sabha MP from Karnataka. Now, he may be expected to act as a bridge to the Christian clergy and cater to their grievances. The Christian community in Kerala has traditionally stood with the Congress, although cracks have begun to appear in recent times. Chandrasekhar may be expected to utilise issues such as the controversy surrounding the Munambam suburb of Ernakulam, where some 600 LChristian and Hindu families are protesting against the Wakf Board's claim over the area. Notably, Chandrasekhar was a key figure in getting veteran leader PC George to merge his splinter party with the BJP. Shone George, the latter's son, is also expected to emerge as an important leader during Chandrasekhar's term. It would also be remiss not to mention Chandrasekhar's ownership of Asianet News, which has consistently topped BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council) ratings for Malayalam news channels. He is the majority shareholder of the news channel through the holding company Jupiter Capital. While some BJP leaders think that with the channel maintaining an independent editorial line Chandrasekhar's business interests may backfire on him, that could be a thin reading of the situation. This view got amplified recently when he had to tweet an apology on account of the channel's alleged slighting of the Maha Kumbh on a news show.

Why's Turkey erupting for Ekrem Imamoglu? He's the biggest threat to Erdogan yet

In Turkey, the vox populi is rising once again, reminiscent of the Gezi uprising that occurred 12 years ago. After a week of continuous protests in multiple cities—against the arrest of Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu—authorities have put a ban on gatherings and detained close to 2,000 individuals. The unlawful and unconstitutional arrest of Imamoglu is the culmination of over two decades of political erosion under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly autocratic governance. It has systematically undermined democratic institutions, silenced dissent, and played up the Islamist agenda internationally, particularly on the matter of Kashmir. Now, in the streets of Turkey's major cities, thousands of people, mostly students and youth, are pushing back against Erdogan, and their defiance is growing louder by the day. At the heart of this unrest lies the struggle for Turkey's political future—and the figure leading this charge—Ekrem. Imamoglu, a calm and charismatic mayor, was arrested

under politically motivated charges of corruption and embezzlement—accusations that many see as a pretext for silencing a rising political star. His arrest was an absurd spectacle. Taken from his walk-in closet while calmly adjusting his tie, Imamoglu was detained merely hours before he was set to be nominated as the presidential candidate by Turkey's Opposition in the 2028 elections. For a leader with immense support across Turkey, this act of political repression has galvanised protests not just in Istanbul but across the nation. But why has one figure—mayor of Istanbul since 2019—become the focal point of such a significant crisis. Obscurity in 2019, defeating the candidate supported by Justice and Development Party (AKP) by 13,000 votes—when no one thought he could. Before Imamoglu, conservatives from the AKP had ruled Istanbul for 25 years. Erdogan himself owes the foundations of his political career to his mayorship of Istanbul in the 1990s.

BJP has a new Muslim strategy up its sleeve. Saugat-e-Modi isn't just about Bihar election

This Ramadan, a quiet gesture from the Narendra Modi government has stirred conversation. Eid kits for 32 lakh underprivileged Muslims, described as a goodwill initiative timed with the holy month. The offering appears festive, including familiar Eid ingredients such as dry fruits, semolina, vermicelli and sugar. The kits also include kurta-pyjamas for men and suit fabrics for women, all neatly packaged to reach Muslim households before Eid. At first glance, it appears to be a thoughtful cultural outreach by the Bharatiya Janata Party, an attempt to bring warmth and festivity into homes that might otherwise go without. But as with most things in Indian politics, the surface is rarely the whole story. The move hasn't gone unnoticed by political observers. Why this sudden and massive outreach to Muslims—by a party that has so far built much of its narrative on distancing itself from appeasement politics? This is the same BJP whose leaders have routinely criticised political opponents for attending Iftar parties, framing such gestures as opportunistic pandering. And yet, here we are, with the ruling party preparing curated Eid hampers not just for a symbolic few but for over 30 lakh Muslim households. For many, the question is not whether the gesture is kind—but why now, and why like this? The BJP's 'Saugat-e-Modi' kits have not only surprised political commentators but also drawn scathing remarks from the Opposition. For some, it's a clear contradiction of the BJP's usual stance on such gestures. But for political analysts watching the timing closely, the move seems less like a change of heart and more like a strategic calculation—with Bihar in mind. The upcoming Bihar assembly election has raised concerns within the BJP that rising Opposition

momentum could impact not just the party, but also its key allies—Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United), Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), and Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular). In that light, the Eid outreach feels less like an act of cultural generosity and more like a political buffer—an attempt to soften the blow in a state where coalition math can shift quickly. That analysis may hold some truth—but it also seems to overlook the broader outreach pattern the BJP has been steadily building, particularly toward poor Muslims, Pasmanda communities, and Muslim women. Over the past few years, the party has made targeted efforts to create an opening within sections of the Muslim electorate long seen as distant. In the 2023 urban local body elections in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP went as far as fielding Pasmanda Muslim candidates—a move once considered politically unthinkable. Of the 395 Muslim candidates it fielded, 54 went on to win. These numbers may seem modest when seen in the larger national context, but they speak to a subtle shift in the party's approach.

One that goes beyond gift boxes and hints at reimagining of BJP's political strategy—at least on the surface. BJP's effort to engage with Pasmanda and poor Muslims isn't new. In UP, Danish Ansari, a Pasmanda Muslim, was appointed as Minister of State for Minority Welfare, Muslim Waqf, and Haj in Yogi Adityanath's second cabinet—which was seen by many as a symbolic but politically significant move. The party and its spokespersons often claim that it was the BJP that made APJ Abdul Kalam the President of India, citing it as proof of its inclusive credentials. Added to this are a number of welfare schemes that directly.

Trump should withdraw USCIRF's authorisation. It's interfering in India's domestic governance

In a strongly worded statement, Government of India has condemned and refuted the findings of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom report as "biased and politically motivated, and continuation of persistent attempts to misrepresent isolated incidents and cast aspersions on India's vibrant multicultural society which reflects USCIRF's deliberate agenda rather than a genuine concern for religious freedom". Though this is not the first time such reports have painted India as a coun-

try highly intolerant of its religious minorities, the March 2025 report is the first time a recommendation has been made for India to be designated as "country of particular concern". It alleges that minorities in India are facing 'deteriorating treatment'. Fifteen other countries, including Afghanistan, Russia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, have been found to be treating their respective minorities badly. Three aspects of this report should be of concern to New Delhi, and it should be brought to

the attention of those the report is supposedly submitted to. The first is the report's mention of the assassination of separatist Sikh elements in Canada posing as members of the Sikh religious community and the alleged attempt on the life of another Khalistani separatist. "The Indian government also continued to expand its repressive tactics to target religious minorities abroad, specifically members of the Sikh community and their advocates... International reporting and intelligence from the Canadian govern-

ment corroborated allegations linking an official in India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and six diplomats to the 2023 assassination attempt of an American Sikh activist in New York," the report has said. It's important to note that these radical elements do not represent the Sikh community. While the Government of India has categorically rejected the allegation, the Canadian government and the prosecuting authorities in the then Biden dispensation initiated legal actions against Indian officials.

In a joint venture, Ambani and Adani will sell transportation fuel

Delhi : In a joint statement, Adani Total Gas Ltd and Jio-bp, an arm of Reliance Industries Ltd, announced their partnership to sell auto fuel at select outlets. Certain ATGL outlets will offer Jio-bp's gasoline and diesel, while Jio-bp outlets will incorporate ATGL's compressed natural gas (CNG) dispensers. "This partnership will enable us to leverage each other's infrastructure, thus enhancing customer experience and offerings," said Suresh P. Manglani, executive director and CEO of Adani Total Gas. After Reliance bought a 26% interest in an Adani Power project in Madhya Pradesh, the two opposing billionaires teamed together again. "We are united by a shared vision to offer our customers a superior selection of high-quality fuels," stated Jio-bp chairman Sarthak



Behuria. "The partnership between RIL and the Adani Group is anticipated to be extremely complementary, providing substantial operational advantage via their combined physical presence," stated Nirav Karkera, head of research at Fisdcom. A more holistic consumer experience is the goal of the relationship, which is why both companies are offering complementary items.

Both parties stand to benefit from this partnership, which is especially noteworthy in an industry where state-run corporations predominate.

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

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

JioHotstar Reaches 300 Million Subscribers, Closer to Netflix

Delhi: JioHotstar, a worldwide OTT player from India, is closing in on Netflix's subscriber dominance. JioCinema and Disney+Hotstar now have 300 million users, up from 50 million in February 2025 after the 2025 TATA IPL. The 2025 Indian Premier League season greatly impacted JioHotstar's client base. It rose from 50 million subscribers in February to 280 million by May and 300 million currently. Digital viewership overtook television for the first time, causing tremendous development. Digital reach was 652 million versus 537 million TV viewers. The final IPL 2025 match



received 237 million digital viewers and 189 million TV viewers. Along with user growth, the platform broke revenue records.

JioStar, the parent company of JioHotstar, announced that the 2025 IPL had the largest advertising and subscrip-

tion revenue. Historically, league rights were auctioned for 23,575 crore for TV and 20,500 crore for digital over 5 years, indicating great value. The IPL's peak internet viewership was 55.2 million and TV viewing time was 514 billion minutes.

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

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

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

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

JSW to acquire Dulux Paints for 9,000 crore

Delhi : JSW Paints will buy 75% of Dulux-owner Akzo Nobel's India operations for Rs 9,407 crore (\$1.1 billion), the sector's biggest purchase amid rising competition. JSW Paints, founded by steel tycoon Sajjan Jindal in 2019, will become the fourth largest participant in the sector, controlled by Asian Paints, Berger Paints, and Kansai Nerolac. Aditya Birla Group launched Birla Opus in 2024. According to Indian takeover legislation, JSW Paints would openly offer Rs 3,929 crore to Akzo Nobel India's public stockholders for a 25% stake. Public shareholders would



receive Rs 3,418 per share in the open offer, while JSW Paints will pay the Dutch firm Rs 2,762.

Based on the open offer response, JSW Paints would buy enough shares from the Dutch company to maintain 75% ownership in

Akzo Nobel India. JSW Paints, part of the \$23-billion JSW Group, will market Akzo Nobel India after the purchase, with the Dutch corporation perhaps remaining a public shareholder.

Birla Co. recovers Rs 2 crore in stolen digital gold

Delhi : Hackers breached the ABCD mobile app run by Aditya Birla Capital and stole digital gold valued at approximately Rs 1.95 crore from 435 user accounts, according to Delhi. On June 9, the scam was exposed after multiple consumers contacted the company's call center to express their dissatisfaction with the theft of their digital gold. Concerned about this, the company's technical staff launched an internal investigation and filed a first information report. According to our sources, the affected accounts now have their balances returned by the company.

The BSE was fined 25L for the unfair distribution of corporate information

Delhi : According to Delhi, the 45-page SEBI order confirmed that the BSE's system design allowed paying clients and the internal listing compliance monitoring (LCM) staff to view business announcements ahead of schedule. Prior to the information being made public on its website, this occurred. Because there were no measures in place to ensure that all stakeholders had equal and contemporaneous access to the data, the regulator deemed this to be a breach of norms. To keep information



inequality at bay and guarantee fair markets, this is crucial. After reviewing the Securities Contracts (Regulation) SECC (Stock Exchange and Clearing Corporations Regulations, 2018), SEBI determined that BSE had broken Regulation 39(3). All users must have fair and transparent access for stock exchanges to

comply with the rules. Additionally, the regulator brought attention to the fact that BSE neglected to establish a really basic syndication (RSS) feed, which would have mitigated the possibility of unequal access to corporate filings. Inspections revealed gaps, but BSE just created a time gap to fix the problem, according to SEBI. The regulator also pointed out significant problems with BSE's oversight of client code updates, which are permitted only for legitimate mistakes.

NHAI to blacklist FASTags 'kept in hand', seeks details from toll operators

Delhi: Drivers who don't fix their FASTags on the windshield of their vehicles will face permanent blacklisting of tags, a measure taken in view of the malpractice of people handing out "loose or unfixable tags" for payment of highway-user fee, which leads to congestion at toll plaza lanes and sometimes altercations with toll collectors. The NHAI company dealing with toll collection and management of highways, IHMCL, has asked federations of toll collectors, highway builders and operators to report such cases for quick action. "Tags-in-hand" have been categorised as "loose tags". Despite repeated advisories against the practice there have been several cases of people handing out FASTag at toll gates for deduction



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

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

of user fee. In letters addressed to these federations, IHMCL said, "This leads to lane-level congestion due to manual handling and viola-

tion issues, misuse in closed-loop tolling operations, generation of false chargeback demands and overall disruption.

GST compensation fund likely to have 95k cr surplus

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



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

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

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

1 in 5 Indians with over Rs 5 crore worth plans to relocate overseas

Delhi: One in five ultra-rich Indians with a net worth over Rs 25 crore plans to settle abroad for investment opportunities, tax advantages, and greater global connectivity, according to a Kotak Mahindra Bank private banking survey. The first two quarters of 2024-25 survey interviewed 150 ultra-high networth people (UHNIs) and private bankers in 12 cities. EY ordered and validated the findings with industry. For this report, those worth over Rs 25 crore were canvassed.



However, Kotak's private banking division targets individuals worth over Rs 300 crore. Many UHNIs buy abroad property for migration and permanent residency. "Ultra-HNIs are diversifying their portfolios and embracing domestic and global assets, setting the stage for a sig-

nificant increase. Alternative assets and equities are becoming more popular in domestic and international markets. Nearly a third of India's Ultra-HNIs own worldwide assets. With two in three ultra-HNIs planning structured wealth transition, succession planning is crucial.

JB Chemicals' promoter KKR will sell 10% of the company for 2,6k crore rupees

Delhi: In a series of block agreements, the promoter of JB Chemicals — Tatu Investment Holdings, a subsidiary of global private equity giant KKR — is selling around 1.6 crore shares, or 10.2% of the firm, for approximately Rs 2,575 crore (\$300 million). According to the deal's term sheet, the minimum price at which the shares can be sold is Rs 1,625—a 5%

reduction to JB Chem's closing price of Rs 1,709 on Wednesday on the NSE. Shareholding reports on the BSE indicate that as of December 31, 2024, KKR owned 53.7% of the pharmaceutical company situated in the city. Midway through 2020, at a share price of Rs 745, the PE giant had taken over the pharmaceutical manufacturer.

Bollywood actresses leading fitness goals

From Alia Bhatt to Shilpa Shetty, Bollywood actresses continue to inspire fans with disciplined workouts and strong fitness dedication

Fitness has become an essential part of life for many Bollywood actresses who balance demanding schedules with disciplined training routines. From intense workouts to high-energy dance performances, these stars consistently push their limits to stay in shape. Here's a look at five who inspire fans with their dedication to fitness.



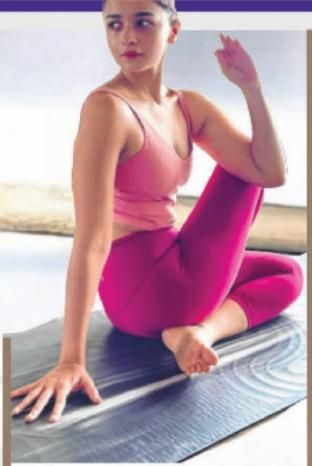
Shilpa Shetty

Shilpa Shetty has long been one of Bollywood's most consistent voices for holistic wellness. A strong advocate of yoga, she frequently demonstrates challenging asanas that highlight balance, flexibility, and strength, often reminding followers that yoga connects the mind and body. Even at 50, the actor continues to maintain remarkable agility and fitness through a disciplined lifestyle.

Photos: Instagram

Katrina Kaif

Katrina Kaif's dedication to fitness has been evident across her dance and action-heavy roles. Known for pushing through demanding choreography like the physically intense routines seen in songs such as *Kamli*, the actor is also known to insist on performing difficult steps herself rather than relying on body doubles. For *Tiger 3*, she further intensified her training with kettlebell squats, high-intensity interval workouts, and strength training.



Alia Bhatt

Alia Bhatt's fitness journey became a major talking point when she prepared for *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* soon after embracing motherhood. To get back into shape for the chiffon saree sequences in *Tum Kya Mile*, she focused on Pilates, strength training, yoga, and functional workouts, rebuilding stamina and core strength within months of childbirth. Maintaining such disciplined fitness, the actor recently looked stunning at global events like the BAFTAs and the Gucci show.

Lauren Gottlieb

Lauren Gottlieb's fitness is rooted in her journey as a professional dancer who has consistently pushed the limits of stamina, strength, and discipline. After gaining recognition with *ABCD: Any Body Can Dance*, she built a global career around high-energy performances. Recently, Lauren also shared glimpses of her fitness routine, including weight training and regular cardio to stay performance-ready.



Recreated version of Bombay Rockers' song will surely become a chartbuster again with massive fan buzz

Dhurandhar 2 unveils peppy track Aari Aari

The trailer of *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* was released a few days ago, and the song in it, *Aari Aari*, had grabbed everyone's attention. Now, the makers have unveiled the track, which is composed by Shashwat Sachdev and sung by Navtej Singh Rehal (Bombay Rockers), Sachdev, Khan Saab, Jasmine Sandlas, Sud-

hir, and Yaduvanshi. The song is a recreated version of the track *Ari Ari* by Bombay Rockers, which was released in the early 2000s. Well, the song has been recreated wonderfully, and it will surely become a chartbuster. But, when it comes to the video of the song, it offers nothing new apart from a couple of scenes. The video of *Aari Aari* is an amalgamation

of scenes from the teaser and trailer. The makers are surely trying not to reveal anything more about the movie, but clearly, the audience would have expected some never-before-seen scenes in the song. The teaser and the trailer had created a fantastic pre-release buzz, and this song is just like a cherry on the cake.

Yami Gautam wishes husband Aditya Dhar

Bollywood star Yami Gautam, on Thursday, took to her social media account to pen a heartfelt birthday wish for her husband, filmmaker Aditya Dhar, on March 12. Sharing a couple of pictures on her social media account, the dotting wife expressed her love for her husband Aditya and called him her 'one and only'. Along with sharing a few photos of the two, Yami wrote, "If only there were enough words to describe what you mean to me. To my one & only, Aditya!! Happy Birthday, love." In the first picture, the couple is seen enjoying a sunny day in a

scenic mountainous landscape. The second picture features a mirror selfie clicked at a gym, where Yami is seen wearing a red sweatshirt and black tights while holding the phone, as Aditya stands beside her in a black hoodie and cap.



Photo: Instagram

Dhurandhar to re-release worldwide

A week before *Dhurandhar 2* hits the big screen, its makers on Thursday announced that they are re-releasing the first part in cinema halls worldwide. The Aditya Dhar-directed spy thriller, featuring Ranveer Singh, was released on December 5 and attained humongous success. The film amassed Rs 1,300 crore globally, with Rs 1,000 crore of the total originating from the Indian market. Jio Studios and B62 Studios are bringing the global blockbuster *Dhurandhar* back to the big screen in a rare and exciting theatrical re-release across approximately 500 screens worldwide, including 250 screens across India beginning March 12 and 250 overseas beginning March 13.

Arjun Rampal backs animal welfare

Actor Arjun Rampal partners with PETA India to donate a mechanical elephant to a Chennai temple promoting cruelty-free traditions



Actor Arjun Rampal has joined hands with PETA India to support animal welfare by donating a life-size mechanical elephant to Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Vidya Mandir in Chennai. The initiative, sponsored by Mulmul, aims to promote cruelty-free religious practices by replacing the use of real elephants in temple ceremonies. The mechanical elephant, named Sankara, was unveiled by Kalaimamani award-winning actor Revathi Sankaran in the presence of trustees, animal welfare advocates, and students.



The temple had earlier taken a compassionate decision to not own or hire live elephants, and this donation supports that commitment. Sankara will now be used during rituals and celebrations, ensuring traditions continue without harming animals. With this addition, PETA India has now facilitated the donation of 23 robotic elephants across India.

Speaking about the initiative, Arjun Rampal said, "It is a privilege to be part of this thoughtful initiative. Our temples represent faith and tradition, but they must also reflect compassion. When we protect and respect all living beings, we honour the very essence of God." The initiative highlights growing awareness about ethical alternatives in religious spaces while encouraging temples to adopt humane practices. Animal rights groups hope such efforts will inspire more institutions to embrace technology while protecting wildlife.



Suresh Triveni praises Aditya Rawal

Director Suresh Triveni praises Aditya Rawal's versatility, discipline, and creative partnership while recalling their collaboration on *Jalsa & Subedaar*

Filmmaker Suresh Triveni recently spoke about working with Aditya Rawal, recalling how he first discovered the young actor during the pandemic while watching *Bamfaad* during the COVID pandemic. I was immediately struck by his presence in front of the camera. When I met him, I discovered he was a writer as well. I was working on *Jalsa* at the time, and we began developing a screenplay in parallel based on one of his ideas. From day one, I was certain that I wanted to collaborate with him on something," Triveni

shared. The director further spoke about Rawal's work ethic and creative temperament while collaborating on projects, including *Subedaar*. "He is one of the most sincere team players I have worked with. Whether as a writer or an actor, it is his discipline and maturity that set him apart. He is a chameleon when it comes to adapting to characters. A mind full of questions, he is vocal and yet remarkably quiet and shy at the same time," he said. With such strong creative

synergy already established, industry watchers believe the collaboration between Suresh Triveni and Aditya Rawal could continue to evolve, potentially leading to more ambitious, character-driven stories in the years ahead. As *Subedaar* trends on Amazon Prime Video, the director's work continues to generate strong audience interest. Suresh Triveni is also set for his upcoming film *Maa Behen*, starring Triptii Dimri and Madhuri Dixit, which forms part of Netflix's upcoming slate.

With momentum building around the filmmaker's current and upcoming projects, the possibility of him and Aditya Rawal eventually bringing their parallel screenplay idea to life only adds to the intrigue around what the filmmaker might explore next.



WAR SNIPPETS

PAK PM IN SAUDI

PM Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday left for a brief official visit to Saudi Arabia with Pakistan's role coming under scanner due to its defence agreement with the kingdom. The PM is undertaking the visit at the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, a statement by the PMO said. It added the prime minister will hold a meeting with the Saudi crown prince, during which they will "exchange views on the ongoing tensions in the region, the regional security situation and bilateral ties between the two countries."

3.2MN DISPLACED

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people in Iran have been displaced by the ongoing war. It said on Thursday most have fled Tehran and other cities towards the north of the country or rural areas.

CITI BRANCHES SHUT

Citigroup has temporarily closed most of its retail bank branches across the UAE as part of an operational adjustment. The bank said services would continue through digital channels and select offices. Customers have been advised to use online and mobile banking while normal branch operations are gradually restored. The move affects multiple locations across the UAE.

WAR IN IRAN COSTS

US \$11BN IN SIX DAYS

The US spent over \$11.3 billion in the first six days of its military campaign against Iran, according to estimates shared by Pentagon officials with lawmakers. The cost includes intensive airstrikes, missile interceptions and deployment of advanced defence systems. About \$5.6 billion was spent on munitions in just the first two days of the campaign. Officials say the figure reflects only initial operational expenses and does not include future costs such as troop deployments, equipment replacement or extended operations. The administration is expected to seek up to \$50 billion in additional funding from Congress if the conflict continues.

CONSUMERS HIT AS

PRICES SURGE IN PAK

Consumers in Pakistan are facing renewed pressure as prices of essential goods continue to rise, driven by higher food, fuel and utility costs. Staples such as wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar and vegetables have recorded sharp increases in recent weeks, squeezing household budgets. Traders cite supply disruptions, currency weakness and higher transportation costs as key reasons for the surge. Economists warn persistent inflation is eroding purchasing power, particularly among low- and middle-income families. Government has pledged to monitor markets and curb hoarding, but analysts say stabilising prices will depend on improved supply chains and broader economic stability.

19 convicted over Moscow concert attack

Moscow: A court in Moscow on Thursday convicted 19 people over their involvement in the 2024 shooting attack at a concert hall that killed 149 people and wounded more than 600 in one of the deadliest assaults in the Russian capital in years.

A faction of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the March 22, 2024, attack at the Crocus City Hall concert venue. Four gunmen opened fire on people waiting for a performance by a popular rock band and later set the building on fire. Of the 19 defendants, 15 were sentenced to life imprisonment. One received 22-and-a-half years in prison, while three were jailed for 20 years each.

FRANTIC ATTEMPT | After US attack, naval personnel raced to stop flooding and restore power before vessel sank: NYT report

How Iran sailors fought to save torpedoed ship

MUMBAI

Iranian sailors made desperate attempts to save their warship after it was struck by a US submarine torpedo in the Indian Ocean earlier this month, racing to contain flooding and restore power as the vessel began to sink, according to a report in The New York Times.

The Iranian frigate IRIS Dena was hit on March 4 while sailing in international waters off the coast of Sri Lanka. The strike came amid escalating hostilities between Iran and a US-Israeli coalition during the ongoing conflict in the region.

NYT reported that the explosion ripped open the hull and immediately plunged parts of the ship into darkness, forcing crew members to scramble through smoke-filled corridors to reach damaged compartments.

Sailors rushed to seal watertight doors and activate emergency pumps as seawater poured into the lower



The Iris Dena seen in the Bay of Bengal during the International Fleet Review 2026. —AP

decks. "The crew immediately began damage-control procedures," a Western defence official familiar with the incident told the paper. "They tried to isolate the flooded sections and stabilize the ship."

According to the report, officers ordered teams below deck to assess the damage while others attempted to restore power to key systems. Engineers struggled to keep the pumps running as water spread through the ship. "The flooding was moving fast," another official said. "They were fighting to keep the ship

afloat minute by minute."

Crew members also attempted to send distress calls as the vessel began listing. Some sailors worked to launch life rafts and prepare for evacuation while others continued efforts to save the ship. "The sailors did what they are trained to do — fight the ship," the official said, using a naval term for emergency efforts to prevent a vessel from sinking.

But the blast had caused severe structural damage, and the flooding quickly overwhelmed the crew's efforts.

The report said that within a short time the situation had become uncontrollable.

"At some point it became clear the ship could not be saved," the official said.

Survivors later described scenes of chaos as alarms sounded and sailors rushed across the deck amid smoke and rising water. Some crew members jumped into the sea while others clung to debris after abandoning the vessel.

Rescue operations began shortly afterward as nearby ships and regional naval forces moved to pick up survivors from the water.

The NYT report noted that such damage-control battles are among the most demanding tasks faced by naval crews, requiring sailors to seal compartments, manage flooding and keep critical systems running even after catastrophic damage.

In this case, despite their efforts, the torpedo strike had crippled the vessel too severely. "The crew fought hard," the official said. "But the damage was simply too great."

Struck site where Iran advanced critical capabilities for making N-weapons: IDF



Pictures created on March 11 using satellite images show a view of Taleghan 2 facility at the Parchin military complex, some 30 kms southeast of Tehran on March 6 and on March 11, after airstrikes.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it recently struck an Iranian nuclear facility where the regime worked on "critical capabilities in the development of nuclear weapons."

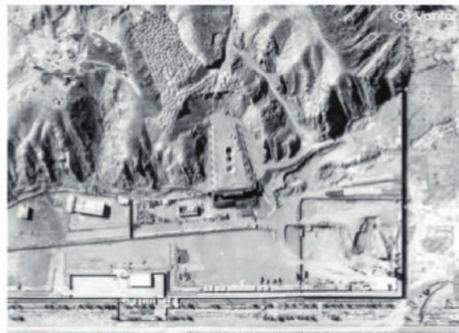
The site near Tehran, identified by the military as the Taleghan compound, was hit during waves of strikes the Air Force carried out in the area over the past few days, as per "The Times of Israel."

The IDF said Iran had in recent years used the site for "the development of advanced explosives and for conducting

sensitive experiments as part of the AMAD Project", Iran's alleged secret nuclear weapons development programme.

The Taleghan compound had previously been struck by Israel last year during retaliation for an Iranian missile attack earlier that month. The military said it recently detected Iran had "taken steps to rehabilitate the compound" following those strikes.

"The Iranian regime has continued efforts to advance and develop capabilities required for the development



of a nuclear weapon," the IDF said, adding, the strike was part of a "series of operations" aimed at damaging Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Meanwhile, Israeli security sources said the country had no realistic plan for regime change when it attacked Iran, with expectations that airstrikes could trigger a popular uprising driven more by "wishful thinking" than intelligence. "The Guardian" reported.

Former and serving Israeli defence and intelligence officials said the long-term success of the conflict may

depend on the fate of 440kg of enriched uranium buried under a mountain by US strikes last June. Enough for more than 10 nuclear warheads, the material could allow Iran to hasten the construction of a nuclear weapon if it remains in the country.

"The worst result of this war will be the declaration of victory while the Iranian regime still holds enriched uranium," former Israeli military intelligence official Joab Rosenberg said, warning it would accelerate Tehran's pursuit of a nuclear bomb.

US, Japan to release oil from strategic reserves

Washington/Tokyo: The US will release 172 million barrels of oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve over four months as part of a coordinated international effort by major economies to stabilise energy markets as the conflict in West Asia pushes global prices higher, IANS reported.

The announcement came after 32 member nations of the International Energy Agency agreed to release a combined 400 million barrels of oil and refined products

from national reserves to increase supply and ease pressure on global markets.

"Earlier today, 32 member nations of the International Energy Agency unanimously agreed to President Donald Trump's request to lower energy prices with a coordinated release of 400 million barrels of oil and refined products from their respective reserves," US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said.

"As part of this effort, President Trump authorised

the Dept of Energy to release 172 million barrels from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve beginning next week. This will take about 120 days to deliver based on planned discharge rates," Wright said.

As per the Energy Dept, the release will begin next week and take about four months to complete based on planned discharge rates. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve was created in the 1970s after the Arab oil embargo to provide emergency supplies during

major disruptions in global energy markets.

Japan will also release oil from its strategic reserves, Bloomberg reported. PM Sanae Takaichi said Japan would release about 80 million barrels of oil from reserves. The move includes the equivalent of 15 days of oil consumption from private sector stocks and one month's supply from national reserves.

Speaking in a broadcast on NHK, Takaichi said the release would begin from March 16.

One killed in Basra port attack; Iraq halts operations at oil ports

AP

BAGHDAD

An attack on Iraq's Basra port killed at least one person and forced authorities to halt operations at all the country's oil terminals, officials said on Thursday.

Farhan al-Fartousi, the director-general of the General Company for Ports of Iraq, made the announcement in a statement carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency. Al-Fartousi said the attack targeted a vessel in a ship-to-ship transfer area at the Basra port on the Persian Gulf.

He said it remained unclear if the ship was targeted by a



flying or seaborne drone or a missile. Rescuers recovered one body and helped 38 others after the attack.

He said commercial ports

in Iraq remained open, though the oil terminals had been shut. It marked the latest oil infrastructure to be targeted in the Iran war.

Don: Can cripple Iran's power infra in an hour

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said the US could destroy Iran's electricity infrastructure within an hour if it chose to escalate the conflict, while revealing authorities were investigating a possible Iranian revenge plot involving drones launched from a boat off the California coast.

Trump made the remarks at Joint Base Andrews after returning from a political trip to Kentucky and Ohio, offering a blunt assessment of the war with Iran and the risks of retaliation. About a law enforcement bulletin warning of a possible drone attack from a boat off the California coast, Trump said the matter was under investigation.

"That's being investigated, but you have a lot of things happening, and all we can do is take them as they come."

"We could take apart their electric capacity within an hour. And it would take them



25 years to rebuild it. So ideally we're not going to be doing that," Trump said.

The president said Iran's military position had been severely weakened following US operations. "Iran is being absolutely decimated. The war was being conducted as well as anybody has ever seen".

Trump claimed Iranian military capabilities had largely been dismantled.

"They've got no navy. They've got no air force. They have no systems of control. We're just riding free range over that country," he said.

According to Trump, US forces had neutralised much of Iran's naval capability.

"We've knocked out all of their boats. They have some missiles, but not very many. I think we're in very good

shape," he said. Despite saying Iran had been badly weakened, Trump said the timing of ending the conflict remained uncertain. "Most people say it's already been won. It's just a question of when do we stop?" he said, adding, Washington did not want Iran to "regrow".

Trump said the administration was preparing to tap the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to stabilise energy markets during the conflict. "We're going to be doing it very quickly," he said, referring to releasing oil from the reserve.

US MAY BACK ISRAEL'S MISSION MOJTABA

Trump has said he would support the assassination of Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei if he does not cooperate with US demands, as per the "Wall Street Journal".

Trump has criticised Iran's decision to elevate Mojtaba Khamenei, the second son of Ali Khamenei, as the new leader, saying he would not be able to "live in peace".

CULTURAL SITES HIT

UNITED NATIONS

US and Israeli strikes on Iran have damaged at least four cultural and historical sites, including palaces and an ancient mosque, raising alarms about the impact of the widening war on protected landmarks important to Iranian identity and world history.

The speed and extent of the damage have so concerned Iran and Lebanon that they sent a request this week to the United Nations cultural agency to add more sites to its enhanced protection list.

Unesco confirmed it has verified damage to the lavish

Qajar-era Golestan Palace in Tehran, as well as the 17th century Chehel Sotoun Palace and the Masjed-e Jame, the country's oldest Friday mosque, both in Isfahan.

There was also verified damage to buildings close to the Khorramabad Valley, which includes five prehistoric caves and one rock shelter providing evidence of human occupation dating to 63,000 BC.

At Golestan Palace, shattered glass from the mirrored ceilings blanketed the floors, alongside broken archways, blown-out windows and damaged moulding scattered below its glass-mosaic walls.



At Golestan Palace, shattered glass from the mirrored ceilings blanketed the floors alongside broken archways, blown-out windows and damaged moulding scattered below its glass-mosaic walls.

Briefs

Nasa probe re-enters atmosphere

A Nasa spacecraft weighing more than 600kg has re-entered Earth's atmosphere nearly 14 years after its launch. The US Space Force said the Van Allen Probe re-entered over the eastern Pacific at 10.37GMT on Wednesday, roughly 12 hours later than predicted but within the expected margin of error. Most of the spacecraft was expected to burn up during re-entry, though some components may have survived. Nasa said the chance of anyone being harmed by debris was one in 4,200, describing the risk as low.

Kim and his daughter try out pistols

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his teenage daughter tried pistols during an inspection of a light munitions factory, media photos showed on Thursday, as he pushes to modernise conventional forces after years of focus



on nuclear weapons. Kim visited a factory producing pistols and other light arms a day earlier and reviewed a new pistol that recently entered production.

Ye ordered to pay \$140K

A Los Angeles jury has ordered rapper Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, to pay \$140,000 to a handyman who sued over unpaid renovation work at his Malibu mansion. Tony Saxon alleged he was not properly compensated and was wrongfully dismissed. Although Saxon had sought \$1.7 million in damages, the jury awarded \$140,000, and attorney and court fees.

Ethiopia landslides: 64 dead, 125 missing

ADDIS ABABA

At least 64 people have died and 125 are missing after landslides hit three districts in southern Ethiopia following a week of heavy rains, a local official said on Thursday.



The landslides happened in Gamo Zone and affected the Gacho Baba, Kamba and Bonke, according to Gamo Zone director of disaster response Mesfin Manuqa.

Manuqa said that one person was pulled out of the mud alive.

US TO CLOSE CONSULATE IN PESHAWAR

Washington: The US will permanently close its consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan, its closest diplomatic mission to the Afghan border and a key operations and logistics hub before, during and after the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

The State Department informed Congress this week of its plan to shut the facility, saying the move would save about \$7.5 million per year while not affecting Washington's ability to advance its national interests in Pakistan.

Officials said the decision had been under consideration for over a year as part of broader efforts by the administration to downsize federal agencies.

China mandates Mandarin learning for minority kids

Beijing: China has approved a sweeping new law that authorities say will promote "ethnic unity", but critics warn it could further erode the rights and cultural identity of minority groups, the BBC reported.

The legislation aims to promote integration among China's 56 officially recognised ethnic groups, dominated by the Han Chinese, through measures involving education, housing and community policies. Critics, however, say it could weaken minority languages and traditions.

Under the law, children must learn Mandarin before kindergarten and continue studying in the language until the end of high school. Previously, students in some

Irish woman wins harassment case

London: A tribunal has awarded an Irish woman £23,526 (£29 lakh) after ruling her employer racially harassed her by repeatedly shouting "potato" and using offensive slurs linked to her heritage.

Bernadette Hayes worked as a bookkeeper at a civil engineering firm in Leeds. She said her boss Mick Atkins frequently mocked her Irish background. He shouted "potato" in an exaggerated Irish accent during disagreements, also using "paddy", "stupid paddy" and "p'key".

Employment Judge Buckley said the repeated remarks created a hostile and humiliating workplace environment. Hayes said the behaviour lasted six months and left her anxious and distressed.

Briefs

INDIAN WELLS

Bhambri in ATP Masters 1000 semis



Indian tennis player Yuki Bhambri reached his maiden ATP Masters 1000 semifinal after he and Swedish partner Goran Goransson defeated Alexander Erler and Andrea Vavassori 6-3, 7-6 in the Indian Wells quarterfinals on Thursday. The Indo-Swedish pair dominated on serve, winning 83% of first-serve points to seal the win in over 90 minutes. Bhambri and Goransson will face Arthur Rinderknech and Valentin Vacherot in Friday's semifinal.

BASEL

Mannepalli enters Rd 2 of Swiss Open



Indian shuttler Tharun Mannepalli advanced to the men's singles second round of the Swiss Open after Japan's Kenta Nishimoto retired in the decider on Wednesday. Mannepalli, ranked 43rd, was leading 16-21, 21-16, 7-2 when the fifth seed pulled out due to a shoulder injury. He will next face Malaysia's Justin Hoh. In women's singles, Malvika Bansod lost 11-21, 15-21 to Thailand's world No. 4 Pornpawee Chochuwong, her fourth straight defeat against the Thai star.

BANGKOK

Gunjan wins at World Boxing Futures Cup



Gunjan, Radhamani Longjam and Chandrika Pujari secured victories as the Indian youth boxing team delivered strong performances on the fifth day of the World Boxing Futures Cup on Thursday. Gunjan (48kg) beat Poland's boxer 5-0 by unanimous decision, while Radhamani Longjam (57kg) defeated her Ecuador opponent by first-round RSC. Chandrika Pujari (50kg) later outclassed a United States boxer 5-0. However, Prachi (60kg) lost 5-0 to a Slovakian rival, and Priyansh Sehrawat (70kg) also went down 5-0 against Morocco's boxer in

BUMRAH RELISHES THRIVING UNDER PRESSURE

Indian pacer reflects on match-winning spell in T20 World Cup final at his home venue

India's Jasprit Bumrah (R) celebrates after dismissing New Zealand's Matt Henry during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final in Ahmedabad on Sunday. PTI

AHMEDABAD

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah said he thrives on responsibility in pressure situations and described defending the ICC Men's T20 World Cup title as one of the most satisfying achievements of his career.

Bumrah delivered a match-winning performance in the final, claiming four wickets as India thrashed New Zealand by 96 runs to become the first team to win the T20 World Cup three times.

The fast bowler, who was named Player of the Match for his outstanding spell, said he always looks forward to taking on the toughest challenges. "I don't want to hide behind; I want to be in the thick of things. I always wanted to do a tough job," Bumrah said in a video shared by the BCCI after the victory.

I don't want to hide behind; I want to be in the thick of things. I always wanted to do a tough job

Jasprit Bumrah
India pacer

"I've played cricket for that. I started cricket for that. When I'm able to make a difference, that gives me so much joy. There is no better feeling than that."

For the Gujarat-born pacer, the triumph held special significance as it came at the venue where he began his cricketing journey.

"I started my cricket here. I played all my cricket here and came up the ranks playing for

Gujarat," Bumrah said. "Winning the World Cup here and being the Man of the Match is really special. The last time we fell just short, but this time we crossed the line. I'm really happy."

Bumrah also spoke about the emotional aspect of the moment, particularly the presence of his family during the title victory. "My son was here. He was there last time as well, and this time he was here again. My mum came too — it's really special," he said.

Reflecting on the team's achievement, Bumrah said winning back-to-back World Cups is a rare accomplishment and one he feels grateful to have experienced.

"I don't know about full circles, but I'm really, really happy. Back-to-back World Cups never really happen. I feel very grateful. God has been very kind and I couldn't be more thankful," he added.

HUNDRED AUCTION | The leg-spinner becomes first Pakistan player in Indian-owned team, Usman Tariq also sold

Sunrisers Leeds rope in Pakistan spinner Abrar

LONDON

Sunrisers Leeds, owned by Chennai-based media conglomerate Sun Group, signed Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed during the Hundred player auction on Thursday, making him the first Pakistan cricketer to be picked by an Indian-owned franchise in the competition.

The franchise secured Ahmed for £190,000 (approximately ₹2.34 crore) after a bidding battle with Trent Rockets.

His signing ended speculation that franchises owned by Indian Premier League (IPL) stakeholders might avoid selecting Pakistan players due to the long-standing diplomatic tensions between India and Pakistan, which have prevented Pakistani cricketers from featuring in the IPL since 2009.

The Sun Group, which owns IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad, completed a full takeover of the team formerly known as Northern Superchargers last year. The group acquired a 49% stake from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the remaining 51% from Yorkshire for around £100 million.

Sunrisers CEO Kavya Maran was present at the auction and raised the winning bid for the Pakistan spinner.

The Sun Group also owns Sunrisers Eastern Cape in South Africa's SA20 league, though the franchise does not currently include any Pakistan players in its squad.

Abrar was the second Pakistan cricketer sold in the auction. Earlier, mystery spinner Usman Tariq was



Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed in a file pic. X

bought by Birmingham Phoenix for £140,000 (around ₹1.72 crore).

Phoenix, however, do not have ownership links with any IPL franchise.

Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf and off-spin all-rounder Saim Ayub went unsold during the auction.

The upcoming edition of The Hundred will be played from July 21 to August 16.

Meanwhile, Uncapped Sussex all-rounder James Coles was the most expensive player, attracting an £390,000 salary from London Spirit after a five-way bidding war.

The talented 21-year-old cricketer earned just £31,000 in the Hundred last summer when he played for Southern Brave.

Rana credits fast bowling coach Tait for five-wicket haul vs Pakistan

DHAKA

Bangladesh pacer Nahid Rana praised fast bowling coach Shaun Tait for his guidance after producing a match-winning performance in his team's eight-wicket victory over Pakistan in an ODI. Rana delivered a superb spell, claiming five wickets to help Bangladesh secure their first ODI win over Pakistan since the 2018 Asia Cup. The performance came in just his 17th international appearance.

Speaking after the match, Rana credited former Australian speedster Tait for playing an important role in his development and boosting his confidence. "To be honest, he is an outstanding coach because he behaves with us not only as a coach but also as a friend," Rana said, as quoted by the ICC.

"Whenever we need something, he provides it. He always tells us to stick to our strengths and to let him know if we need anything. He gives us plans and motivates us to execute them on the field."

Reflecting on his maiden five-wicket haul in ODIs, Rana said that skill matters more than sheer pace at the international level.

"Honestly, I don't think too much about speed. In international cricket, skill matters more than pure pace," he said.



RAISING THE WINNING BID

Sunrisers CEO Kavya Maran was present at the auction and raised the winning bid for the Pakistan spinner for approximately ₹2.34 crore.

Shubman Gill set for BCCI Cricketer of Year

Rahul Dravid to receive CK Nayudu Lifetime Award, Mumbai CA likely to be named Best Association

NEW DELHI

India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill is set to be named Cricketer of the Year at the BCCI's annual awards ceremony scheduled to be held here on March 15.

The 26-year-old enjoyed an outstanding year across formats, delivering consistent performances in both Test and ODI cricket. Although he was not part of the Indian side that defended the ICC T20 World Cup title last month, Gill's achievements in the longer formats have placed him firmly in line for the prestigious honour.

Gill amassed 983 runs in Test cricket during the year, including a remarkable 754 runs in the drawn away series against England in 2025. He maintained an average of over 70 in the series, underlining his growing stature as one of India's most dependable batters in the format.

In One-Day Internationals, Gill scored 490 runs, including 188 runs during India's



Indian Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill. PTI

successful Champions Trophy campaign, where the team went on to lift the title.

Across formats, Gill accumulated a total of 1,764 runs at an average of 49. While his T20 International performances were relatively modest, Gill displayed exceptional form in the IPL.

Former India head coach Rahul Dravid is also set to be honoured during the awards ceremony. Dravid will receive

the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his immense contribution to Indian cricket.

During his tenure as head coach, Dravid guided India to several notable achievements, including the triumph in the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup.

Meanwhile, the Mumbai Cricket Association is expected to be named the Best Association in domestic cricket.

Pandya faces complaint over alleged flag disrespect

PUNE

A complaint has been filed against Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya at the Shivajinagar police station in Pune over alleged disrespect to the national flag during celebrations following India's T20 World Cup victory at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

The complaint was lodged by Pune-based lawyer Wajed Khan Bidkar, who submitted a written application seeking action against the cricketer.

According to the complaint, several videos of the Indian team's on-field celebrations after winning the tournament have circulated widely on social media. In one such clip, Pandya is seen celebrating with the Tricolour draped over his shoulder while running and dancing on the field.

The complainant alleged that during the celebrations Pandya was also seen lying on the stage with his girlfriend while the national flag was still draped over his shoulder, which he claimed amounted to disrespect to the Tricolour.

Sumit Antil wins javelin gold

Paralympic champion throws 69.25m for gold in Delhi

NEW DELHI

Double Paralympic champion Sumit Antil lived up to his reputation by winning gold in the men's javelin throw (F43/F44/F64) as India enjoyed another dominant day at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix here on Thursday.

Antil, who won gold at both the Tokyo and Paris Paralympics, topped the event with a powerful throw of 69.25 metres. Pushpendra Singh secured the silver medal with a throw of 56.91m, while Poonam Ram claimed bronze with an effort of 49.48m.

The 27-year-old from Sonapat in Haryana said the throw exceeded his expectations. "I expected around 67-68m, but today the throw went to 69.25m, which makes me happy," said Antil, a three-time World Championship gold medalist.

He added that he is targeting the Asian Para Games later this year in Japan and hopes to breach the 75m mark. India also dominated the men's 400m T13 event with Subodh Bhatt winning gold in 51.88 seconds.

Priyanshu Kaushik took



Para athlete Sumit Antil in a file pic. PTI

silver in 53.19 seconds, while Avnil Kumar secured bronze in 56.91 seconds.

In the men's 400m T46/T47 race, Bhavikkumar Din Bharwad won gold with a time of 49.89 seconds, with fellow Indian Jasbeer finishing second in 50.09 seconds. Serbia's Ivan Cvetkovic claimed bronze.

The hosts also swept the podium in the men's 400m wheelchair event (T53/T54), with Manojkumar Sabapathi winning gold in 54.33 seconds, followed by Anil Kumar in second and Manikandan Jothi emerging third.

Gulf conflict, Ramzan hit Para GP entries

The ongoing conflict in West Asia and the holy month of Ramzan have significantly affected participation at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix here, with only six foreign nations ultimately competing despite nearly 30 countries having earlier confirmed their presence. Coaches associated with the Indian team said the war and travel disruptions played a major role in the reduced turnout. They also noted that Ramzan prevented several Muslim-majority nations from sending athletes. The participation is far lower compared to last year's inaugural edition at the same venue, when 18 foreign nations had taken part. A total of 257 athletes are competing in the Grand Prix, with India fielding a massive contingent of 219 athletes.

Women's Qualifiers

World Cup berth secured, India now eye title triumph

HYDERABAD

Having already secured a berth in the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup 2026, India will now shift focus to winning the title when they face Italy in the semifinal of the Women's World Cup Qualifiers here on Friday.

The Indian women's hockey team topped Pool B with seven points from three matches. Scotland also finished with seven points but placed second due to India's

superior goal difference. The hosts registered two wins and one draw in the group stage, displaying strong attacking intent and defensive discipline. Their performances ensured qualification for the next year's World Cup and also set up a favourable semifinal clash.

Italy finished second in Pool A with four points after recording one win, one draw and one loss. While India start as favourites on paper, the Italian side has shown

enough quality during the tournament to pose a challenge.

India will once again rely on the impressive form of forward Navneet Kaur, who is currently the joint top-scorer of the tournament with four goals. Navneet delivered a standout performance in India's final pool match against Wales, scoring a hat-trick to guide the hosts to a convincing win.

Italy, meanwhile, will depend heavily on Federica Carta, who has emerged as

their main attacking threat with three goals so far in the competition.

Historically, India also enjoy an advantage in head-to-head encounters. Since 2012, the two teams have faced each other seven times, with India winning five matches. Italy have managed one victory, while one match ended in a draw.

India chief coach Sjoerd Marjine, who returned to the role after guiding the team during the Tokyo Olympics cycle, described the World

Cup qualification as an important milestone for the squad.

"Securing qualification for the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026 is a significant achievement for this group," Marjine said. "The players deserve credit for the discipline, composure and attacking intent they have shown throughout the pool stage."

However, the Dutchman made it clear that the team's objective extends beyond qualification.



Indian hockey team topped Pool B. Hockey India