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

Briefs



People visit the Indra Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden after it opened to visitors, in Srinagar on Monday

CHANDIGARH
AAP, Oppn spar over governance
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday claimed the Aam Aadmi Party government had fulfilled its guarantees in four years, citing free electricity, jobs, healthcare expansion and anti-drug measures. However, the Congress and BJP alleged the state faced rising debt, gangsterism and drugs, and accused the government of misleading people about its performance.

CHANDIGARH
SGPC flays gurdwara land claim

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhali on Monday condemned the reported attempt by the Hyderabad administration to forcibly take possession of land belonging to Gurdwara Sahib Barambala. He said the move hurts Sikh religious sentiments and urged the government to withdraw the action immediately. Dhali also appealed to the Government of India to intervene.

JAIPUR
Forest guards escape tiger confrontation

Two forest guards had a narrow escape after a tiger confronted them during routine patrol in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve on Monday morning. The incident occurred near the Sultanpur checkpoint when the guards came face to face with the animal on a forest track. They abandoned their motorbike and fled as the tiger dragged and damaged the vehicle before leaving.

PATNA
Anant Singh quits electoral politics

JD(U) MLA Anant Singh on Monday announced his retirement from electoral politics, saying his sons would now enter the electoral arena. Singh, who came from Beur Jail to cast his vote in the Rajya Sabha election, said he would not contest elections as long as Nitish Kumar was not in Bihar politics. He later returned to jail under tight security.

PATNA
28-year-old man mauled by tiger

A 28-year-old man was killed in an attack by a tiger while he was working in his sugarcane field on Monday, police said. The victim has been identified as Manoj Kumar, and the incident occurred at Nandalpur village under the Hyderabad area, they said. The area falls under the Maheshpur range of the South Kheri forest division. In view of the tiger's attack, locals have been advised to be alert, while cameras have been installed in the area to monitor the animal's movements.

ENERGY POSITION | Centre says fuel supply to ease with arrival of 2 LPG tankers & a crude oil carrier after crossing conflict zone

Situation 'concerning', but govt allays LPG fears

NEW DELHI

With India-flagged LPG carrier Shivalik reaching Mundra Port in Gujarat after crossing the Strait of Hormuz and LPG carrier Nanda Devi expected to reach Kandla Port in Maharashtra on Tuesday, the Centre on Monday said while LPG supply situation was "still concerning", it was being "maintained" and no dry-out has been reported at distributor points.

On Saturday, the Ministry of Shipping had said these two vessels had crossed the strait with 92,700 MT of LPG.

Special Secretary in Ministry of Shipping Rajesh Kumar Sinha said all Indian seafarers in the Persian Gulf area are safe and that "no incident has been reported in the last 24 hours". He added that yet another India-flagged vessel "Jag Laadki", which sailed from the UAE on March 14 with 81,000 metric tonnes (MT) of Murban crude oil would reach Mundra Port on Tuesday. The official said the DG Shipping has facilitated safe repatriation of 286 Indian seafarers from the Gulf region and this includes 33 repatriations in the last 48 hours.



Opposition MPs stage a protest over LPG crisis in the Parliament complex, in New Delhi on Monday -PTI

Passengers stranded at Dubai airport

Thousands of travellers were left stranded on Monday as Dubai International Airport (DXB) suspended all flight operations following a drone strike that ignited a fire near the facility. The incident caused cancellation of hundreds of flights to and from DXB while hundreds were diverted to Dubai World Centre airport, Abu Dhabi or Fujairah. In the early hours of Monday, a drone targeted a fuel tank in the vicinity of the world's busiest international hub. While the Dubai Civil Defence successfully contained the blaze with no reported injuries, the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority enacted an immediate precautionary shutdown of all runways to assess further security risks.

550 Indians evacuated via Armenia

India has evacuated more than 550 of its citizens from Iran through Armenia amid the escalating West Asia conflict, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar thanking the Armenian government and people for facilitating the land-border transit. The government has urged Indians stranded in Iran to cross into Armenia for onward travel to India.

Kharge cites panic; politics, claims Nadda

NEW DELHI

Asserting that there was a severe shortage of LPG cylinders and they are even being sold at Rs 5,000 in the open market, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday charged that there was a gross disconnect between the claims of the government and the ground reality.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Kharge while drawing attention to the "LPG crisis in the country due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia" claimed that "the LPG crisis has caused widespread panic across the entire nation."

He alleged that its impact was "severely affecting the poor and vulnerable sections, the middle class, ordinary households, restaurants, hostels, and commercial users."

Responding to Kharge's lengthy statement, Leader of Opposition and union minister J.P. Nadda accused him of "politicising (the issue) even during this time of crisis."

Ready to halt war if Iran changes course: Israel envoy

NEW DELHI

Amid the raging conflict in West Asia, Israeli

Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, on Monday said "we are ready to stop hostilities if Iran changes course", and asserted that Tel Aviv has consulted

"diplomatic channels" in the last few days, including its partners the US and countries in the region. Asked about Israel's plans

as the conflict ended its 17th day on Monday, Azar told reporters, "I don't think a full-fledged terrestrial invasion is on the cards."

Anti-Bengal: Mamata blasts EC order

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI

Lashing out at EC for transferring top state bureaucrats and police officers shortly after announcing the assembly polls in West Bengal, CM Mamata Banerjee termed the poll panel and the ruling BJP at Centre "anti-women and anti-Bengal". She said the saffron camp may change as many officers as they want, but they will not be able to change the government.

"It doesn't matter who you appoint as replacement officers; they will all work for Bengal," Banerjee said, without directly naming EC.

In New Delhi, TMC MPs walked out from Rajya Sabha

to protest against EC's action. Raising the issue before Zero Hour, Derek O'Brien said that while the poll panel may have the power to order transfer of officials, the manner in which it was done was "undemocratic" and "arbitrary".

TMC MPs also criticised the role of CEC Gyanesh Kumar, against whom the party had taken the lead in moving an impeachment notice. Other opposition

parties also criticised the EC. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that officers are routinely removed in states where BJP is not in power.

Hitting back, Union minister and BJP leader Giriraj Singh accused the opposition parties of trying to weaken constitutional organisations.

BJP fields Suwendu in Nandigram, Bhabanipur

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

Setting the stage for the electoral battle, the BJP on Monday released its first list of 144 candidates for the West Bengal Assembly polls, fielding Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari from both Nandigram and Bhabanipur, a constituency held by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a direct challenge to the TMC supreme.

The announcement, made in New Delhi, signals the BJP's attempt to sharpen the electoral narrative around Banerjee versus Adhikari while largely retaining its sitting legislators and inducting candidates

from diverse professional backgrounds to broaden its social outreach ahead of the two-phase polls on April 23 and 29.

Adhikari's candidature from both Nandigram and Bhabanipur underscores his role as the BJP's principal field commander in West Bengal.

Nandigram holds strong political symbolism as the centre of the 2007 anti-land acquisition movement that propelled Mamata Banerjee to power. It also witnessed a dramatic electoral contest in 2021, when Suwendu Adhikari defeated the Chief Minister by a narrow margin of about 1,900 votes.

LF 1st list of 192 candidates out

KOLKATA

The Left Front on Monday announced its first list of 192 candidates for the West Bengal Assembly elections, with outgoing Rajya Sabha MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) central committee member Minakshi Mukherjee

among the key nominees.

The CPI(M)-led front faces a battle for survival in West Bengal. It ruled the state unimpaired for 34 years until 2011 and failed to win a single seat in the 2021 Assembly polls. Bhattacharya will contest from the Jadavpur constituency in south Kolkata, while Mukherjee, a youth face of the Left Front, will contest from Uttarpara in Hooghly district.

EC transfers five Assam DEOs

GUWAHATI

The Election Commission on Monday transferred five District Election Officers (DEOs) of Assam.

The DEOs of Kokrajhar, Majuli, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri have been transferred with immediate effect.

In a letter sent to Assam

Nitish Kumar, Nitin Nabin elected to RS

Irregularities? Counting for 2 Haryana seats on hold

NEW DELHI

Bihar's longest-serving chief minister **Nitish Kumar** and new BJP president **Nitin Nabin** were elected to the Rajya Sabha from Bihar as the ruling NDA swept the elections held in three states for 11 seats of the Upper House on Monday.

Of the total 37 vacancies of Rajya Sabha, elections were held for only 11 seats in Bihar, Odisha and Haryana as the rest of the members were earlier elected unopposed.

The ruling NDA alliance won eight seats, including one Independent backed by it, and the BJD bagged one seat in results announced on Monday night, while counting on two seats in Haryana has been put on hold amid allegations of irregularities. A total of 14 candidates were in the fray.

NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and Union minister Ramdas Athawale were among the 26 candidates



elected unopposed on March 9 after the withdrawal of nominations.

In the election held on Monday, the ruling NDA won all five seats in Bihar.

Besides Nitish Kumar, who heads the JD(U), and Nabin, the other winning candidates were Union Minister Ram Nath Thakur (JDU) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief Upendra Kushwaha, both sitting members who have been re-elected, and BJP's Shivesh Kumar, who will enter the Upper House of Parliament for the first time.

In elections for four seats in Odisha, where a total of five candidates were in the fray,



the BJP won three seats amid cross-voting. At least five MLAs - three from Congress and two from BJD - reportedly voted in favour of ruling BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray.

Among those elected were BJP state unit president Manmohan Samal and sitting Rajya Sabha MP Sujat Kumar and opposition BJD's Sanjiv Misra, besides former Union minister Dilip Ray, who was backed by the ruling party.

BJD candidate and eminent urologist Dr Dattaswar Hota, who was supported by the Congress and CPI-M, was the fifth candidate in the fray.

Tejashwi blames 4 'absent' MLAs, BJP 'money power' for Bihar loss

PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday attributed Mahagathbandhan candidate's defeat in the Rajya Sabha polls to four alliance MLAs not casting their votes and also BJP's alleged money power.

Talking to newsmen,

Tejashwi said that Mahagathbandhan chose to fight the RS polls instead of bowing down to the BJP and its allies even when the opposition alliance was not having the adequate numbers initially.

"We will always fight against their (BJP) ideology till the last breath. We will respond to the four absent-

tees later. Had not some people betrayed us, our victory would have been certain as we had secured the required number of six. Five AIMIM members supported us, and the BSP also supported us... Cheating, fraud, money power, and misuse of administration are the BJP's habits. Not just in the state of Bihar."

Union min Kurian in BJP's first list of 47

NEW DELHI/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister George Kurian and former Union ministers Rajeev Chandrasekhar and V Muraleedharan are among the 47 candidates announced by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in its first list for the Kerala Assembly elections.

Fielding a mix of senior leaders and new faces as it prepares for the April 9 polls, the party is hoping to end its electoral drought in the state, where politics has traditionally been dominated by the Communist

Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United

POLL WATCH KERALA

Democratic Front (UDF).

Among the prominent names in the list are Kurian, Chandrasekhar and Muraleedharan, along with senior leaders K Surendran, Sobha Surendran, PC George, Padmaja Venugopal, PK Krishnadas, former director general of police R Sreelekha and filmmaker Major Ravi.



BENGALURU

Karnataka Assembly Speaker U T Khader on Monday walked out of his chair, protesting what he termed as the government's indifference in conducting the House proceedings. He expressed anger over ministers and officials failing to provide answers to questions raised by members.

Khader said the House exists for members, not ministers or officials, and warned that there was no point in running proceedings if questions and calling attention notices remained unanswered. Opposition BJP and JD(S) members had repeatedly complained about inadequate replies during recent sessions.

On Monday, only 84 of the 294 unstarred questions received written responses, prompting strong protests from the opposition. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah later met Khader and assured action.

Three officials from the Minority Development, Public Works and Revenue departments were suspended, after which Khader returned to the chair and resumed the proceedings.

Jnanpith winner faces fresh wrath

Chennai: The recent decision to confer the prestigious literary honour, Jnanpith Award, upon lyricist Vairamuthu has triggered a significant wave of condemnation from the top echelons of the Tamil intelligentsia, signalling an evolving cultural resistance against the veteran lyricist.

Leading the charge is Jeyamohan, another recipient of the Jnanpith Award from Tamil Nadu and one of the most influential figures in contemporary Indian literature, who called him "ridiculous film lyricist".

In a formal communication to the Jnanpith Committee, Jeyamohan expressed deep

disdain for the recognition and pointedly dismissed the lyricist's literary credentials, asserting that the survival of a culture depends on its moral clarity and that technical proficiency in film songs does not equate to a contribution to the serious literary canon.

In his letter to the committee, Jeyamohan was unequivocal in his assessment of the awardee's standing in the creative world.

He stated: "Mr Vairamuthu is neither a poet nor a writer; he is merely a ridiculous Tamil film lyricist. He plays no part at all in contemporary Tamil literature. I hereby express my deep disdain."

European agency raises alarm over Air India safety lapses

MUMBAI

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has raised a high-level alarm regarding safety lapses on Air India flights following a series of unannounced inspections at European airports. After the European authority shared about the findings with India's Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the regulator claimed that corrective measures have improved the airline's operations.

EASA data revealed that the airline's finding ratio — a weighted average of safety faults per inspection — surged to L96 in January 2026. This

figure brought the carrier dangerously close to the critical 2.0 threshold, a limit that can trigger a total ban from operating within European Union markets and subject the airline to the "EU Air Safety List" of restricted carriers.

The findings, conducted under the Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft (SAFA) programme, highlighted issues primarily stemming from the airline's aging wide-body fleet. Inspectors reportedly flagged approximately 54 parameters, ranging from technical documentation and crew licensing to cabin safety equipment.

Specific violations included worn-out emergency mark-

Pilots' body warns DGCA

Mumbai: The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has issued a stern warning to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), claiming that recent temporary extensions to Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDLT) for Air India are a "serious threat to flight safety." The association has also flagged the move to be a contempt of court as the implementation of new FDLT rules was directed by Delhi High Court.

ings and broken seats -- defects that AI attribute to delays in their \$400 million fleet refurbishment programme.

Docs link excessive diaper use to UTIs

LUCKNOW

Doctors at a workshop organised by the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) cautioned parents against the excessive use of diapers in children, saying the practice is contributing to a rise in urinary tract infections (UTIs) and may even lead to kidney-related complications if left unchecked.

The workshop was held at a hotel in Awas Vikas Colony, where paediatric specialists advised parents to avoid unnecessary use of diapers.

Dr Ashok Rai, president of the Academy of Pediatric Neurology and the chief

speaker at the event said the trend of making children wear diapers unnecessarily has increased in recent years. This, he said, has led to a sharp rise in cases of UTIs among children.

He explained that when a child passes stool while wearing a diaper, the waste can spread towards the urinary passage and cause infection. Continuous diaper use also interferes with the child's natural urination and bowel habits. According to him, around five percent of children are currently affected by such problems, with girls accounting for a higher share.

Palak Wins Second Gold Medal at Inter-University Sports Competition

Student from Beni Madhav Singh PG College Brings Glory to the University and the Region

Tharwai / Antariksh Vidyalaya: In the sport of Arm Wrestling, a first-year B.P.Ed. student from Beni Madhav Singh PG College (Madhav Nagar, Bighiya)—an institution affiliated with Prof. Rajendra Singh 'Rajju Bhaiya' University, Prayagraj—competed in the ongoing Arm Wrestling tournament in Aligarh.



Participating in the right-hand category, Palak emerged victorious, securing the gold medal. The triumphant athlete, Palak—a resident of Bara Baghada, Chandpur, Salori in the Prayagraj district—is the only daughter among three siblings (two brothers and one sister).

By achieving this victory, she has proven that daughters are in no way inferior to sons.

She stated that, alongside her academic pursuits, she possesses a deep interest in sports. Rejoicing in this victory, the entire college fraternity—including Beni Madhav Singh PG College Principal Dr. D.V. Singh, Secretary Madhuri Singh, President Kripa Ram Mishra, Head of the B.P.Ed. Department Dr. V.D. Singh, as

well as Dr. Babita Singh, Ram Prasad, Parveen Jahan, Dr. Karunesh Shukla, Ram Kailash Yadav, Supriti Mishra, Shalu Pandey, Surya Pratap Singh, and Administrative Officer Gopal Singh—extended their heartfelt congratulations to Palak and encouraged her to continue moving forward with similar success.

State Women Commission Member Hears Grievances of Victimized Women



Barabanki

Uttar Pradesh State Women Commission member Anju Prajapati held a Public hearing at the DRDA Gandhi Auditorium to address cases related to women harassment. During the hearing, she received five complaints from victimised women and directed the concerned officials to take immediate action on the matters. She said that the state government is fully committed to providing speedy justice to women and girls and the Mission Shakti campaign is being run with the objective of making women aware of their rights and

empowering them. She also instructed officials to treat complaints from women seriously and ensure timely action, so that victims do not have to struggle to get justice. After the Public hearing, the commission member also reviewed departmental schemes Related to the Women Welfare Department, Child Development and Nutrition, Panchayati Raj, Health Department, Police Department, Basic Education, Secondary Education and Social Welfare Department. She directed the concerned departments to take prompt action and inform the Commission and the District

Probation Officer about the steps taken. On this occasion, District Probation Officer Suraj Singh, the in-charge of the Women and Child Safety Organisation, the Women Police Station In-charge, the District Social Welfare Officer, the Naib Tehsildar and other concerned officials were Present. Prajapati also informed that several toll-free helplines — 1076, 112, 1090, 1098, 1930, 181, 102, 108 and 101 — have been launched by the state government for the safety and dignity of women. Women facing any form of harassment can register complaints on these Numbers.

Married Woman Found Hanging; Her Family Alleges Harassment

Jhusi. On Monday evening, the body of a married woman was found hanging from a noose inside a room in the Katka Budhwa Baba locality. The deceased has been identified as Neha Kesarwani (32). According to reports, Neha served tea and snacks to her family members in the evening, after which they left for the market. Left alone at home with her young daughter, Neha took her own life by hanging herself under suspicious circumstances. Neighbors, alerted by the daughter's cries, rushed to the scene and informed the police. Neha had married Kanchan Kesarwani 12 years ago, and the couple had two children. Following the incident, members of Neha's maternal family—who arrived from Naini—have leveled serious allegations against her husband, accusing him of harassment stemming from financial difficulties and demands for money. The police have sent the body for a post-mortem examination and have initiated a thorough investigation into the matter.

Women Empowerment is the Real Foundation of Social and Rural Development: Tribhuvan Ram

Varanasi

Under the joint auspices of the Jan Vikas Samiti, Murdaha (Varanasi) and NABARD, Varanasi, a women empowerment Program and felicitation ceremony were organized on the occasion of International Women Day. A total of 1,800 members of women Self-Help Groups (SHG) and rural women participated enthusiastically in the Event. The Chief Guest of the Program, Tribhuvan Ram, MLA from Ajgara (Varanasi), stated in his address that women empowerment is the true cornerstone of social and rural development. Women are playing a vital role in becoming self-reliant.

Farewell Ceremony for Class 5 Students Concludes at GAIL DAV Model School

Lucknow

GAIL DAV Model School held a heartfelt farewell ceremony for its Class 5 students. The Program began with a traditional Havan-Yajna, where Principal Pankaj Dwivedi, teachers and students Prayed for the bright future of the Students. Class 4 students Presented songs, dances and various Performances in honor of the Class 5 students, captivating everyone's attention. Atharv Shukla and Aanvi Mishra were selected as Master Farewell and Miss Farewell, respectively with students participating with great



enthusiasm. The event featured fun games, maintaining an atmosphere of excitement and joy. Students shared their school experiences and expressed gratitude for their teachers' guidance and affection. Some students were honored for their outstanding Performance and contributions to the School. Principal Pankaj Dwivedi wished the students a bright future, advising them to uphold discipline, hard work and values and to bring Pride to their school and Parents. The ceremony concluded with the Presentation of mementos to the students, wishing them a bright Future.

Sub-Inspector Recruitment Candidate Dies Under Suspicious Circumstances; Body Found in the Ganges

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | The body of a young man was recovered from the Ganges River in front of the Nagvasuki Temple, located within the Shivkuti police station area. He was a resident of Amethi. He had appeared for the Sub-Inspector recruitment examination held just one day prior. His family members have expressed suspicions of foul play, suggesting it may be a case of murder.



in front of the Nagvasuki Temple within the Shivkuti police station limits. It is reported that he had gone to the Phaphamau Ganges Ghat to bathe along with his friend, Shubham.

He reportedly slipped and drifted into the deeper waters. After an arduous search effort, divers successfully recovered Ayush's body, while the search for his companion remains ongoing. Ayush had been residing in a rented room in

Govindpur, where he was preparing for competitive examinations. He had appeared for the Sub-Inspector recruitment exam held two days earlier.

Expressing doubts regarding the circumstances of his son's death, his father requested a post-mortem examination of the body; subsequently, the family departed for Amethi on Monday to perform the final rites. The Shivkuti police are currently investigating the incident.

Kayastha Community Gathers for Holi Milan Ceremony, Emphasis Placed on Unity

Bahraich

A 'Holi Milan' (Holi Gathering) ceremony was organized by the Shri Chitragupta Samaj at the City Dayal Utsav Palace. The event witnessed the participation of a large number of people from the Kayastha community. The Program was Presided over by the committee President, Shравan Kumar Nigam, while the Proceedings were anchored by General Secretary Sushil Srivastava. Addressing the gathering, Rajiv Srivastava—who had traveled from Nanpara—appealed to the community to remain united. He stated that members of the Kayastha community should take Pride in remembering the contributions of their illustrious figures, such as Dr. Rajendra Prasad,



Vivekananda, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jayaprakash Narayan, Munshi Premchand and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Kuldeep Sinha, a Patron of the community, remarked that community members should remain bound together by a common thread of unity and should share in each other's joys and sorrows. President Shравan Nigam noted that the Kayastha community has made significant contribu-

tions—ranging from the freedom struggle to the nation development—and therefore, it is essential for everyone to remain vigilant and dedicated to the welfare of the community. Shashank Sinha, the District President of the ABKM (Akhil Bharatiya Kayastha Mahasabha), called upon the youth to actively participate in Politics. Meanwhile, Rajesh Nigam, President of the Temple Construction C o m m i t t e e ,

announced that the grand construction work for the Chitragupta Temple in Bashirganj is currently underway and the temple is expected to be completed in its magnificent form very soon. Due to the ongoing reconstruction of the temple, this year event was hosted at the Dayal Utsav Palace. During the Program, several individuals—including Engr. Radheshyam Srivastava, Dr. Rahul Mohan, Amit

Srivastava, Ankit Srivastava, Aklu Srivastava, Shivam Raj Srivastava, Sandhya Srivastava and Madhu Srivastava—expressed their views. The ceremony concluded with the performance of the Aarti (ritual worship) of Lord Shri Chitragupta, followed by the distribution of Prasad (sacred offerings). Hundreds of people attended the event, including Ravi Mohan Srivastava, Lav Nigam, Paras Nath Srivastava, Ravi Prakash, Brajesh Srivastava, Sanjay Srivastava, R.S. Srivastava, Media In-charge Sachin Srivastava, Mohit Srivastava, Raj Nigam, Rajesh Kumar, Ritesh Srivastava, Anand Prakash Khare, Rakesh Srivastava, Om Prakash Srivastava, and Shikhar Srivastava.

Directives Issued to Achieve 100% Target in PM Suryaghar Scheme; Action to be Taken Against Negligent Vendors

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj | A meeting was held on Monday at the NIC Auditorium, presided over by District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, to review the progress of the Pradhan Mantri Suryaghar Free Electricity Scheme. During the meeting, a detailed review was conducted regarding pending applications under the scheme, the installation of solar panels, and loan cases currently pending at the bank level. During the proceedings, the District Magistrate issued clear directives to ensure 100% progress against the stipulated targets of the scheme. He stated that strict action would be taken against vendors exhibiting laxity or negligence in their work, and their contracts would be terminated. The Officer-in-Charge (PO) of NEDA informed the meeting that, as of March 16, 2026, a total of 27,837 applications had been received under the scheme. Of these, solar panels have already been installed in 13,058 households, while installation work remains pending for 14,779 applications. The District Magistrate directed officials from the Electricity Department and vari-



ous banks to launch a special drive to expedite the resolution of pending cases and to ensure that solar connections are provided to the maximum number of consumers possible. He fur-

ther instructed the Officer-in-Charge of NEDA to hold regular meetings with officials from the Electricity Department and banks, as well as with the vendors associated with the

scheme, to ensure the swift resolution of all pending matters. The District Magistrate emphasized that every vendor must work on a priority basis to install solar systems in house-

holds, in strict accordance with their assigned targets. Furthermore, vendors who demonstrate exceptional performance will be duly encouraged and incentivized. The

meeting was attended by PO NEDA Komil Dwivedi, officials from the Electricity Department, the BDO, DPO, BSA, and LDM, along with other relevant officials.

Aggrieved Family Members Visit Tharwai Police Station Over Failure to Arrest Pickup Driver

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwai: Expressing their anger over the failure to arrest the accused pickup driver involved in a fatal road accident on March 1st—which claimed the lives of a maternal uncle and his niece—aggrieved family members visited the Tharwai Police Station on Monday. They apprised the Station In-charge of the details of the case and held discussions regarding the driver's arrest. On the same occasion, the family members also presented the matter to the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) for Tharwai; taking cognizance of the case, ACP Tharwai assured them that an arrest would be made and appropriate action taken as soon as possible. The deceased, Rashi Tripathi (daughter of



Shashikant Tripathi, aged 18) and a resident of Wazirpur, was traveling from Wazirpur to her maternal home in Tiwaripur on a scooter accompanied by her maternal uncle, Rajat Tripathi. En route, near Wazirpur, both were killed after being struck by a pickup truck, while the driver fled the scene with the vehicle. The complainant, Vinay Kumar Tripathi, stated that Rashi Tripathi was his niece. A written complaint regarding the incident had been submitted to the local Tharwai Police Station; taking cognizance of the matter, the police had registered a case against the pickup loader driver. However,

after several days had passed without an arrest being made, the aggrieved family members arrived at the police station. Inspector Santosh Kumar Pandey of Tharwai Police Station took cognizance of the matter and assured the family that action would be taken at the earliest. The family members allege that they had even provided the vehicle's registration number and details regarding its owner, yet no arrest has been made thus far. On this occasion, ACP Tharwai, Arun Parashar, also reiterated the assurance that appropriate action would be taken as soon as possible.

Jai Singh Receives 'Lifetime Excellence Award' for Social Work

Several luminaries from various fields honored at Lucknow's prestigious Hotel Clarks Avadh, Jai Singh has also previously received numerous awards and accolades from both the Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Government of India for his outstanding work

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Lucknow: Shri Jai Singh (IIS) was honored with the 'Lifetime Excellence Award' for his remarkable contributions in the fields of social service and public welfare. This honor was conferred during a dignified ceremony organized by the international organization 'Arogya Darpan' at the Hotel Clarks Avadh in Lucknow. The event was attended by a host of dignitaries from various fields—including social workers, educationists, and media representatives—with former DGP of Uttar Pradesh Vijay Kumar (IPS) serving as the Chief Guest, and Additional Commissioner of the Lucknow Division Radheshyam (IAS), along with Dr. Rakesh Kumar Verma (Director, LPS Institute of Cardiology, Kanpur) and Sushma, serving as Guests of Honor. During the ceremony,



speakers highlighted that Jai Singh has consistently worked for a long time towards the upliftment of the underprivileged and needy sections of society. He has played an active role in numerous campaigns related to education, healthcare, social awareness, and public interest. His efforts have made a significant contribution toward bringing about positive change within society. The Chief Guests at the event remarked that Jai Singh's

dedication to society, his spirit of service, and his unwavering commitment to public welfare initiatives serve as an inspiration to others. His successful efforts to promote education—by personally providing free books, notebooks, and pens to underprivileged children, and even paying their school fees out of his own pocket—are truly inspiring. In recognition of these outstanding administrative and social contributions, he was conferred with

the 'Lifetime Excellence Award.' Upon receiving the honor, Jai Singh stated that this award symbolizes both a source of pride and a sense of responsibility for him. He affirmed that serving society is his duty and that he will continue to remain actively involved in public welfare activities in the future. He pledged that, for as long as he lives, he will remain ever-ready to offer selfless assistance to the poor, the underprivileged, and the needy. He expressed his gratitude to the organizers—including Ram Prakash Verma (Chairman, Arogya Darpan)—and to all his associates for bestowing this honor upon him. At the conclusion of the program, the guests in attendance congratulated Jai Singh, wished him a bright future, and appreciated his efforts in the field of social service.

Massive Fire Engulfs Moving Thar; Occupants Jump Out to Save Their Lives

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Panic ensued in the Handia police station area on Monday after a moving Thar SUV suddenly caught fire. The occupants of the vehicle managed to save their lives by jumping out just in time. Upon receiving the report, a fire brigade team arrived at the scene and, after a strenuous effort, brought the blaze under control. While a major portion of the vehicle was destroyed in the incident, there are no reports of any casualties. According to



reports, Abhishek Singh—a resident of Nevada village within the Kapsethi police sta-

tion area of Varanasi district—was traveling with a few companions in a Thar SUV to visit relatives in the Jhalwa area of Prayagraj. On Monday, as their vehicle reached near Bheski village—located under the jurisdiction of the Saidabad police outpost within the Handia police station area—smoke suddenly began billowing from the vehicle. According to eyewitnesses, the vehicle caught fire within moments, and the flames began to spread rapidly. Perceiving the deteriorating situation, all the occupants of

the vehicle immediately exited. In a matter of moments, the fire completely engulfed the entire vehicle. Upon receiving the information, police personnel from the Saidabad outpost arrived at the scene and dispersed the crowd that had gathered nearby. Subsequently, the fire brigade team arrived and extinguished the fire. According to the police, preliminary investigations suggest that a short circuit is likely the cause of the fire. The matter is currently under investigation.

Editorial

Indian govt is scrambling to manage LPG shortage while denying it exists

India is heading toward a severe shortage of key energy commodities as the war between Israel-US and Iran enters its 15th day. The prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz—a narrow maritime passage that accounts for around 35-50 per cent of India's crude oil supplies—has compounded India's problem. India remains heavily dependent on the maritime passage not only for crude oil but also for critical fuels such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Nearly 60 per cent of India's domestic LPG demand is met through imports. About 80-90 percent of this comes from Gulf countries, including Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, via the Strait of Hormuz. The remaining 40 per cent is produced domestically. While the Narendra Modi government has stated there is no shortage of cooking gas, social media is flooded with people standing in long queues across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra, and other states. The impact of the gas shortage has been felt across the country, and that is why it is ThePrint Newsmaker of the Week. Several hotel and restaurant associations have flagged the shortage of commercial LPG. The Chennai Hotels Association wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday seeking uninterrupted supply. The letter stated that "commercial LPG has been temporarily suspended due to the shortage, for use in restaurants and food industries." Similarly, India also relies on Gulf supplies for LNG. The country consumes about 189 million standard cubic metres per day (mscm p/d) of natural gas, out of which 97.5 mscm p/d is produced domestically, while the rest is imported. Nearly 47.4 mscm p/d of imports comes from the Strait of Hormuz, which is being disrupted due to the conflict. In response to the supply crunch, the government on Tuesday invoked the Essential Commodities Act through a gazette notification to regulate natural gas supplies. Titled Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order 2026, it outlines priority sectors where gas supply will be regulated and ensured. Domestic consumers have been given the highest priority and will receive 100 per cent supply with no cuts. Industrial and manufacturing consumers have been given up to 80 per cent of their previous six-month average supply. Fertiliser plants have also been allocated up to 70 per cent of their previous six-month average supply, a move aimed at protecting the agricultural input ahead of the upcoming sowing season. With imports from Gulf countries affected, the government has issued LPG control orders and stepped up domestic production. "The LPG Control Order issued on 8 March 2026 directed all refineries to maximise LPG yields and channel the entire output of C3 and C4 hydrocarbon streams, comprising propane, butane, and propylene, exclusively to the three Oil Marketing Companies for domestic cooking gas," Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas of India Hardeep Singh Puri informed Parliament on Thursday. The government on Friday informed that LPG production has been increased by 30 per cent through refinery directives, and further procurement is actively underway. However, market analysts say the increase may still fall short of demand. "Even if refineries manage to increase LPG output by 10-20 per cent above current domestic production, domestic supply would only rise to roughly 47-50 per cent of total demand, leaving a significant gap that must still be filled through imports," Sumit Ritolia, lead analyst for modelling and refinery at Kpler. In another step, the government has revised the LPG booking cycle for both urban and rural customers. The minimum gap between two-cylinder bookings has been increased from 21 to 25 days for urban areas and from 25 to 45 days for rural areas. To manage the shortage of natural gas, the government has directed refineries and petrochemical units to reduce their own consumption.



Who Are the Manufacturers of Fake Fertilizers, and Why Does the Govt. Remain Silent?

KP Malik

Until now, factories manufacturing various counterfeit food and beverage products have frequently been busted across the country; however, never before have factories producing fake fertilizers been caught in such massive numbers as they have recently been in Rajasthan. The manner in which raids have commenced on these fake fertilizer factories in Rajasthan—leading to their subsequent sealing—is truly commendable. This crackdown has brought one crucial fact to light: fertilizer companies are deceiving farmers in multiple ways. This deception not only involves looting the farmers' hard-earned money by selling them overpriced fertilizers, but also entails a sinister conspiracy to render their fields barren. What is truly shocking is that as many as 12 of these fake fertilizer manufacturing units were discovered within a single district of Rajasthan; one can only imagine, then, how many such factories must exist across the entire state—and indeed, the entire nation—that are producing counterfeit fertilizers and driving farmers to ruin. It is also alleged that a significant number of fertilizer manufacturing units exist in Madhya Pradesh as well. Speaking on this matter, Union Minister of State for Agriculture Bhagirath Choudhary asserted that those who deceive farmers will not be spared under any circumstances; they will face the strictest possible punishment. In reality, these factories



The farmers allege that such a massive fraud could not possibly take place within the state without the tacit consent or complicity of the administration

were manufacturing counterfeit DAP and various other types of fertilizers. Shockingly, these products were not being produced using animal bones—as is sometimes the case—but rather using marble dust (finely ground marble), a substance that, when applied to agricultural land, renders it barren. Furthermore, it is reported that alongside marble dust, these fertilizers contained a cocktail of dangerous chemicals specifically designed to destroy soil fertility. It is imperative to recognize that the very farmers who feed the nation—who remain steadfast in their agricultural duty even when receiving meager Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and who never resort to adulterating their produce—are being openly and brazenly deceived. In Rajasthan, too, a massive fraud was being perpetrated against farmers within these fertilizer factories—a deception that was ultimately uncovered by the farmers themselves. Specifically, in the Chidwara and Bandarsindri areas of

Rajasthan's Kishangarh district, three truckloads of material were being unloaded right on the roadside, adjacent to agricultural fields, outside a fertilizer factory named Radhika Agro; this activity drew strong protests from the local villagers. Amidst the ensuing commotion, the drivers—who had arrived carrying marble dust—along with their accomplices, fled the scene.

When news of the recovery of such a massive quantity of raw material reached Rajasthan's Agriculture Minister, Kirori Lal Meena, he ordered the immediate seizure of the factories and vowed that strict action would be taken against the accused. Similarly, counterfeit fertilizers were also being manufactured at Divya Agro Food Industry; following a raid on the premises, Agriculture Minister Kirori Lal Meena assured the farm-

ers that stringent measures would be taken against the mafia elements involved in producing fake fertilizers. Indeed, strict action must be taken against those responsible for this fraud against farmers, as this constitutes a massive betrayal—not merely of the farming community, but of the entire nation.

However, the pertinent question remains: who exactly are these individuals perpetrating this fraud against the farmers? After all, these factories would likely never have been exposed were it not for the uproar raised by the farmers and villagers. Why, then, have the names of the owners of these factories—which supply millions of tons of fertilizer to the country's farmers every year—not yet been brought to light?

The farmers allege that such a massive fraud could not possibly take place within the state without the tacit consent or complicity of the administration and the ruling establishment. In truth, the farmers' suspicions are not entirely unfounded; whenever elections approach, these factory owners invariably contribute funds or donations to various political factions. Consequently, once a government is formed, the elected administration often works to bestow a wide array of benefits and favors upon these very individuals. This,

however, is not an issue confined to any single government; rather, it is a deeply entrenched practice that has long existed within the Indian political landscape. The funding received by political parties constitutes a significant part of this nexus—a financial flow that is, nowadays, rarely even disclosed to the public. ...Are we, then, to conclude that those who provide funds and electoral donations to political parties effectively recoup their investment—and often many times over—by engaging in adulteration and fraud at the expense of the common people? Why, after all, are no strict measures taken against adulterators and sellers of counterfeit goods—products for which the country's common citizens, including farmers, constitute the largest consumer base?

This is because the elite class remains completely insulated from such adulterated products. If a farmer's produce contains even the slightest trace of moisture or suffers from any minor defect, it is either purchased at the *mandi* (market) at a drastically reduced price or simply rejected. Yet, these very same farmers are not only being brazenly sold fake fertilizers, but are also being supplied with counterfeit pesticides and seeds.

Therefore, in this matter, the Modi-led Central Government—which has pledged to double farmers' incomes—must step forward and take action to liberate farmers from the clutches of these adulterators and purveyors of counterfeit goods.

Trump either ends Iran conflict quickly, or sky-high energy costs will force him to do so

Despite President Donald Trump's bluster that America benefits when oil prices surge, crunch time is fast approaching for both the war and the energy market. He either ends the conflict quickly, or sky-high energy costs will force him to do so. The oil market may not have the same fearsome reputation as the bond market but, trust me, it can be equally savage in twisting a politician's arm. This week, the White House earned some breathing space thanks to the release of emergency reserves, plus the use of pipelines bypassing the Strait of Hormuz. But the extra time is measured in days, rather than weeks. Certainly,



Trump does not have months. My working assumption is that the oil market will add \$3 to \$6 a barrel to the headline price for every day—every single day—that the war continues. Monday to Friday, that's \$15-\$30. It's bearable for another week, perhaps two, but any longer and the world will start to incur serious economic damage through soaring energy costs. Short of a very risky—and possibly illegal—intervention in the oil futures

market, the White House doesn't have more meaningful tools to wield to bring energy prices down. Do I believe the Trump administration is seriously thinking about interfering with the futures market? You bet. Even the Biden administration considered it in 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, before realizing it was too hazardous and unlikely to succeed. The White House has already thrown everything it can at the problem. Sure, it can ask Congress to scrap federal fuel taxes, as Biden did in 2022. But that would take time—and may ultimately not win sufficient votes.

India must allow citizens to invest beyond its borders. It's risk management, not luxury

The average Indian investor today faces high unpredictability on multiple fronts: the United States and Israel's war on Iran, the US yo-yoing on its trade policy, the volatility of the Indian rupee, and AI-linked technological disruptions. Such volatility risks pushing households back toward gold and real estate, just as India's financialisation of savings begins to gather momentum. How should policy respond to this threat? Indian households and institutional custodians of Indian savings, such as pension and provident funds, should be encouraged to diversify their portfolio globally. While the gains from global diversification have been generally shrinking, the war on Iran shows that international diversification also helps shrink war-linked losses. Indian policymakers' role, therefore, is to reverse their decades-old anti-diversification stance and remove the frictions associated with international diversification. Assets distributed across different countries and regions are less correlated than those concentrated in the same country and region—they tend not to move in the same direction. A globally diversified portfolio acts as natural insurance against country-level or regional stocks.

However, the gains from international diversification have been reducing as the world gets increasingly integrated. These gains depend on low correlations between foreign and domestic stock returns. The financial econometrics literature since the 1990s suggests that returns on international securities have become more correlated over time due to the integration of financial markets. In sum, the gains exist, but are getting thinner. Diversification benefits often shrink during wars because global markets react simultaneously to geopolitical shocks. However, the extent of the shrinkage depends on the nature of diversification. War announcements produce significant negative returns—estimates vary from -1 to -10 per cent in many markets—in the short run. The impact across equity markets is, however, uneven. Developed markets tend to move together, as do markets with greater economic ties to the region of conflict. For example, researchers have shown that Russia's war on Ukraine significantly reduced equity returns across the G7 countries in the short run, but the shrinkage was way smaller across select markets in Africa. The takeaway is that diversification across multiple

developed countries alone may not help in the face of war, as developed countries' markets tend to move together. A truly globally diversified portfolio is one that is diversified across developed and developing markets. It is tempting to discount the virtues of diversification during wartime due to the diminishing returns. However, the US-Israeli war on Iran has so far shown the opposite for Indian households and institutional investors. Despite shrinking gains from diversification, a diversified Indian portfolio would be better off than one solely focused.

on India. The table below shows the performance of four widely traded indices during the period beginning 27 February—a day before the US and Israel mounted strikes on Iran—and ending on 11 March. Two of these indices, S&P 500 and STOXX600, represent the most widely traded companies in the US and the European Union, respectively. CSE300 represents the largest Chinese companies by market capitalization. NIFTY50 is the Indian index. It is clear that an India-only portfolio bore the brunt of the war. A US-only portfolio would be moderately affected, and a China-focused one would remain mostly unchanged.

What India can learn from the US-Israel war on Iran

The Ukraine and Iran wars have given military strategists everywhere reason to re-examine their war doctrines. The fact that Russia, despite being a military superpower, has not been able to get the Ukrainians to play dead, and the fact that Iran has not only held its own against the joint might of the US and Israel, but is now also fighting back effectively, tells us why. Both Ukraine, no doubt with active logistical and financial support from Nato, and Iran, possibly with covert support from Russia and China, have shown that overwhelming military power is not enough to subdue a determined adversary. The key to their ability to hold out



is the use of asymmetric warfare capabilities against enemies with much stronger military, financial and technological power. Without any air force or navy worth the name, both have held two superpowers at bay. They have shown that cheap weaponry, especial-

ly drones and missiles (costlier, but easier to move and hide) can work in defence. Air power can pound your cities to dust, and sea power can sink your naval forces and limit your ability to trade, export and import, but they cannot ensure your defeat. Two things

make drones and missiles defy the logic of an enemy's superior military capabilities. One is comparative costs. Preventing a \$20,000-30,000 drone from inflicting damage can cost you 10, 20 or 50 times that cost using radars, space-based surveillance and missile-defence systems. Also, if you send enough drones across, any defence system (say, effective at targeting 100 drones simultaneously), can be overwhelmed by larger incoming numbers. Some drones will get through, as we saw not only in Ukraine, but recently in the Gulf countries as well. Two, the willingness to extend the damage to civilian and economic assets.

Govt. asks Telegram to remove pirated content

Delhi: The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has issued a notice to messaging platform Telegram, asking it to remove pirated movies and OTT content from its platform. The move comes after complaints from streaming services, including JioCinema and Amazon Prime Video, alleging widespread copyright infringement.

Government sources revealed that a total of 3,142 Telegram channels were identified as distributing illegal content, including films and OTT shows, prompting action under the Information Technology Act, 2000. The changes, which take effect from November 15, 2025, aim to make online platforms more accountable for unlawful content. Rule 3(1) (d) now requires intermediaries to remove illegal content in a transparent, proportionate, and accountable manner upon receiving notification from the



The amendments include safeguards to ensure responsibility

The amendments also include safeguards to ensure senior-level responsibility, clear identification of unlawful material, and periodic review of government directions. Streaming platforms have increasingly complained about piracy, which they say affects revenue and content creators' rights.

Govt. intention to crack down on illegal content distribution

The notice from the MIB signals the government's intention to crack down on illegal content distribution and hold platforms responsible for timely removal of such material. Review by MeitY found the need for stricter

measures to enhance online safety, security, and accountability for intermediaries, including social media and messaging platforms. Telegram is expected to comply with the notice by removing pirated content.

government or a court.

India plans new 1 lakh crore fund to support local chipmaking

Delhi: India plans to unveil a more than 1 trillion rupee (\$10.8 billion) fund aimed at bolstering domestic chipmaking, advancing its ambitious bid to become a global manufacturing hub. The fund, which will provide subsidies for chip design projects, manufacturing equipment and supply chain development, may be launched in two to three months, people familiar with the matter said, asking not to be named as the plan isn't yet public. The plan is still under discussion and may change. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to accelerate India's chip campaign, which is in early stages



with just a handful of major projects underway. Governments around the world are ramping up support for their chip industries to become more self-sustaining and fulfill rising demand from developers of everything from AI and smartphones to cars and appliances. India's push, though smaller in scale, is similar to the \$52 billion US Chips and Science Act that funds local chipmaking capacity.

Tata Group is also building a semiconductor plant

That effort helped kick-start India's chip journey, drawing companies like US memory maker Micron Technology Inc., which is establishing an assembly facility in western Gujarat state. Indian salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group is also building a semiconductor fabrication plant in Modi's home state of Gujarat, along with a separate chip packaging unit. Several other ventures tied to chip manufacturing and packaging, including Foxconn Technology Group's test and assembly facility.

Rising shipping costs worry meat exporters

Delhi: India's meat exporters are facing logistics disruptions and sharply rising freight costs due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, even as demand from the region remains largely stable, industry representatives said. Secretary general of the All India Meat & Livestock Exporters Association (AIMLEA), RK Boyal,



that exporters do not see any major drop in demand so far, but the biggest concern is the surge in shipping costs. "Freight rates have gone up significantly, with marine container charges

rising sharply in a very short span of time. Such sudden spikes are quite concerning for exporters and make planning shipments extremely difficult," he said. Gulzeb Ahmed of HMA Group, a prominent exporter to West Asia, said the Feb to April period is usually the peak demand season, but shipments and new orders slowed due to the crisis.

India's gems and jewellery exports rise 3.86 pc in Feb

Delhi: India's gems and jewellery exports rose 3.86 per cent year-on-year to \$2,680.79 million (Rs 24,340.05 crore) in February, supported by exporters expanding into new international markets, according to data released by the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). Exports from the sector had stood at \$2,581.08 million (Rs 22,460.13 crore) in the same month last year. However, exports during the current financial year have remained almost unchanged so far. From April 2025 to February 2026, India's total gems and jewellery exports stood at \$25,933.72 million (Rs 2,28,230.06 crore), slightly higher than \$25,915.81 million (Rs 2,18,737.62 crore) recorded during the same period a year earlier. GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali said the past year has been challenging for the global gems and jewellery industry due to factors such as changing tariff policies in the United States, geopolitical tensions and shifting consumer demand in major markets. Despite these challenges, he said the Indian industry has shown strong resilience. "Exporters have diversified their markets and increased their presence in countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Australia, where free trade agreements have helped boost business," Bhansali stated. Bhansali also said recent changes in the US tariff framework have provided some relief to the studded jewellery segment.



Firms return to WFH, as Iran targets UAE

Delhi: With the West Asia crisis escalating and recent Iranian strikes targeting the UAE, several IT companies and global capability centres (GCCs) have activated their business continuity plans (BCPs), introducing measures such as work-from-home, travel advisories and temporary office closures. Amid rising geopolitical uncertainty, many tech firms and GCCs are increasingly relying on India as a stable hub for global operations. Many are running mirror command centres from India to ensure operational continuity during disruptions. TCS, which has over 9,000 employees across the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, has asked its staffers to work remotely. The company has activated a call tree.



Cognizant has pre-identified alternate food vendors

"If the situation persists, we could actually see an acceleration of GCC ramp-ups in India as a stable anchor," he said. After Infosys, Cognizant has encouraged employees to adopt BYOF (Bring Your Own Food) wherever feasible, to reduce reliance on office cafeterias while it monitors the evolving situation linked to the West Asia crisis. Cognizant has pre-identified alternate food vendors that

do not rely on commercial LPG. The company said the current situation does not indicate an immediate disruption but could evolve into a prolonged period of operational pressure. Transport services are another area being closely monitored. Email to employees noted a "moderate risk of service strain" in commute operations due to fuel cost escalation impacting cab and shuttle vendors.

"We are also coordinating closely with local authorities"

"We are also coordinating closely with local authorities and the Indian embassies to track developments and will continue to provide timely updates as the situation evolves," the company. Infosys has introduced tighter travel restrictions. The company said only critical travel will be permitted for now, with group meetings, events, offsites and conferences currently restricted. JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs and Standard Chartered have asked their employees to work from home, among others. Vikram Ahuja, co-founder of ANSR, said organisations that were in the middle of setting up or expanding GCCs in the region.

HDFC Bank Loses Rs 61,715 Crore In Market Value

Delhi: HDFC Bank saw its market valuation erode by Rs 61,715 crore this week as a sharp sell-off in equities dragged down the combined market capitalisation of India's top-10 companies by Rs 4.48 lakh crore. The decline came during a turbulent week for the stock market when the benchmark indices, BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty 50, witnessed steep losses. Rising crude oil prices and growing concerns over inflation, along with the widening conflict in West Asia, dampened investor sentiment and triggered heavy selling across sectors. During



the week, the Sensex plunged 4,354.98 points, or 5.51 per cent, while the Nifty dropped 1,299.35 points, or 5.31 per cent. Among the country's most valued companies, HDFC Bank was one of the biggest losers. Its market value declined by Rs 61,715.32 crore, taking its total valuation down to Rs 12,57,391.76 crore. Public sector lender State Bank of India suffered the steep-

est decline in valuation, with its market capitalisation falling by Rs 89,306.22 crore to Rs 9,66,261.05 crore. Financial services major Bajaj Finance also saw a sharp erosion of Rs 59,082.49 crore in its valuation, which dropped to Rs 5,32,053.54 crore. The market value of IT giant TCS declined by Rs 53,312.52 crore to Rs 8,72,067.63 crore. Meanwhile, the valuation of ICICI Bank fell by Rs 42,205.04 crore to Rs 8,97,844.78 crore, while telecom major Bharti Airtel lost Rs 38,688.78 crore in market value.

Ambani Backing U.S. Refinery Deal Shows Shifting Energy Dynamics

Delhi: The landmark U.S. oil refinery project announced by President Donald Trump earlier this week marks a fundamental shift in global energy dynamics, with India's Reliance Industries—controlled by Asia's richest person, Mukesh Ambani—backing the deal, according to Chicago-based research firm Zacks Investment Research. "The strategic rationale for Reliance's massive U.S. bet is deeply intertwined with current geopolitical turbulence," Zacks wrote in a research note. "Global oil supply chains have become increasingly precarious amid the ongoing geopolitical volatility, marked by escalating conflicts in the Middle East and Trump's 'Operation Epic Fury' targeting Iranian influence."



This is a historic \$300 billion dollar deal - the biggest in U.S. history: Trump

Trump announced on his Truth Social platform that America First Refining would construct a new oil refinery at the Port of Brownsville, Texas. "This is a historic \$300 billion dollar deal - the biggest in U.S. history," Trump wrote. "Thank you to our partners in India, and their largest privately held energy company, Reliance, for this tremendous investment," he said. Trump did not provide details of the project, which would be the first new oil refinery to be constructed in the

U.S. in 50 years. Zacks said the project includes "a 20-year agreement for Reliance to process and distribute American shale oil, strengthening the India-based conglomerate's presence in the U.S. energy sector." Reliance did not reply to Forbes Asia's emailed request for comments.

It received a nine-figure investment from a global company at a 10-figure valuation last month, along with a binding 20-year offtake deal to buy and process U.S. shale oil.

Government bars PNG users from retaining or refilling LPG connections

Delhi: Seeking to ensure a steady supply to domestic consumers exclusively availing liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) amid the impact on imports due to tensions in West Asia, the government on (March 14, 2026) mandated that individuals with a piped natural gas (PNG) connection will neither be allowed to obtain a new LPG connection nor retain an existing additional connection of liquefied petroleum gas. The amended supply order also bars them from obtaining any refill.



Production of cooking gas has increased by about 31%: Ministry

Addressing reporters at an inter-ministerial briefing Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), said that production of cooking gas has increased by

about 31% as of date since the government instituted the supply maintenance orders. Ms. Sharma told that a total of 29 States and UT have already started disbursing commercial cylinders.

"Individuals having both LPG and gas connections 'immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection'"

Further, the order states that individuals having both LPG and natural gas connections at present "immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection". The order comes amid imports of cooking gas being affected because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing tensions in West Asia. For context, India imports about 60% of its overall cooking gas requirements. Of this, around 90% is routed through the

Strait of Hormuz. It is also essential to note that the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in two separate maintenance orders, had directed that all propane and butane, among other streams, be utilised to spur the production of cooking gas. LPG is a mixture of propane and butane. The orders had also directed that public sector oil marketing companies ensure that these supplies are directed to domestic LPG consumers.

FASTag Annual Pass Fee Raised to Rs 3075 for FY27 : NHAI

delhi: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) announced a marginal increase in the fee for the FASTag annual pass for the financial year 2026-27. The annual pass fee has been revised to 3,075 from



the existing 3,000, with the new rate set to take effect from April 1,

2026, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said in a statement. According to NHAI, the revision has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates

and Collection) Rules, 2008.

The FASTag annual pass, introduced on Independence Day, August 15, 2025, has gained traction among private vehicle owners, with over 56 lakh users currently availing the

facility.

The pass is available for eligible non-commercial vehicles with a valid FASTag and can be used at around 1,150 toll plazas across national highways and expressways in India.

CINEMA journal

Oscars 2026 Winners List

- Best Picture:** One Battle After Another
- Best Actress:** Jessie Buckley - Hamnet
- Best Actor:** Michael B Jordan - Sinners
- Best Supporting Actress:** Amy Madigan - Weapons
- Best Supporting Actor:** Sean Penn - One Battle After Another
- Best Director:** Paul Thomas Anderson - One Battle After Another
- Best Animated Feature:** Kpop Demon Hunters
- Best International Feature Film:** Sentimental Value
- Best Documentary Feature:** Mr Nobody Against Putin
- Best Original Screenplay:** Sinners - Ryan Coogler
- Best Adapted Screenplay:** One Battle After Another - Paul Thomas Anderson
- Best Original Song:** Golden - KPop Demon Hunters (by EJAE, Mark Sonnenblick, Joong Gyu Kwak, Yu Han Lee, Hee Dong Nam, Jeong Hoon Seo and Teddy Park)
- Best Original Score:** Sinners - Ludwig Goransson
- Best Cinematography:** Sinners - Autumn Durald Arkpaw
- Best Film Editing:** One Battle After Another - Andy Jurgensen
- Best Sound:** F1 - Gareth John, Al Nelson, Gwendolyn Yates and Juan Peralta
- Best Visual Effects:** Avatar: Fire and Ash - Joe Letteri, Richard Baneham, Eric Saindon and Daniel Barrett
- Best Production Design:** Frankenstein - Tamara Deverell and Shane Vieau
- Best Make-Up and Hairstyling:** Frankenstein - Mike Hill, Jordan Samuel and Cliona Furey
- Best Costume Design:** Frankenstein - Kate Hawley
- Best Animated Short:** The Girl Who Cried Pearls
- Best Live Action Short The Singers:** Two People Exchanging Saliva
- Best Documentary Short:** All the Empty Rooms

And the award goes to...



No to war & free Palestine
Priyanka Chopra Jonas, left, and Javier Bardem present the award for best international feature film. As soon as they went on stage, before presenting the award, Bardem said, "No to war and free Palestine (sic)." Priyanka was seen smiling and later slightly nodded her head.



The 98th Academy Awards took place on March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, United States

Jessie Buckley accepts the award for best actress in a leading role for "Hamnet"

Michael B. Jordan, winner of the award for best actor in a leading role for "Sinners," poses in the press room



Dharmendra not mentioned
Veteran Bollywood actor Dharmendra, who passed away in November 2025, didn't find a mention in the 'In Memoriam' segment at the 98th Academy Awards. The tribute segment at this year's Oscars ran for 15 minutes longer than in previous years with special remembrances for Hollywood legends Rob Reiner, Diane Keaton and Robert Redford. Despite the extended runtime, Dharmendra's name was absent from the broadcast. The "Sholay" star, however, was included in the official online list of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) alongside five other Indian film personalities - actors Saroja Devi, Manoj Kumar, Jayasree Kabir, Kota Srinivasa Rao and documentary filmmaker S Krishnaswamy. Earlier in the awards season, Dharmendra received a tribute at the 79th BAFTA Awards held at the Royal Festival Hall in February 2026, where he was the only Indian actor included in the 'In Memoriam' montage.



gauravguptaofficial/Instagram

India shines at Oscars
The 98th Academy Awards witnessed a striking fashion moment on the red carpet as several stars stepped out wearing stunning ensembles designed by Indian designers. Rei Ami from K-Pop Demon Hunters walked the red carpet in handcrafted Rahul Mishra Couture. Rachel McAdams donned earrings by Sabyasachi High Jewellery while Li Jun Li was seen in Gaurav Gupta Couture.



Rachel McAdams
sabyasachiofficial/Instagram



Rei Ami
rahulmishra_7/Instagram

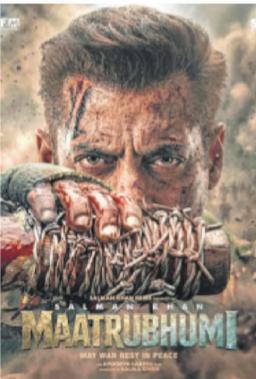


Hollywood sensation Kylie Jenner stunned at the Academy Awards 2026 in a red sequined Schiaparelli gown featuring a keyhole cutout and plunging neckline.

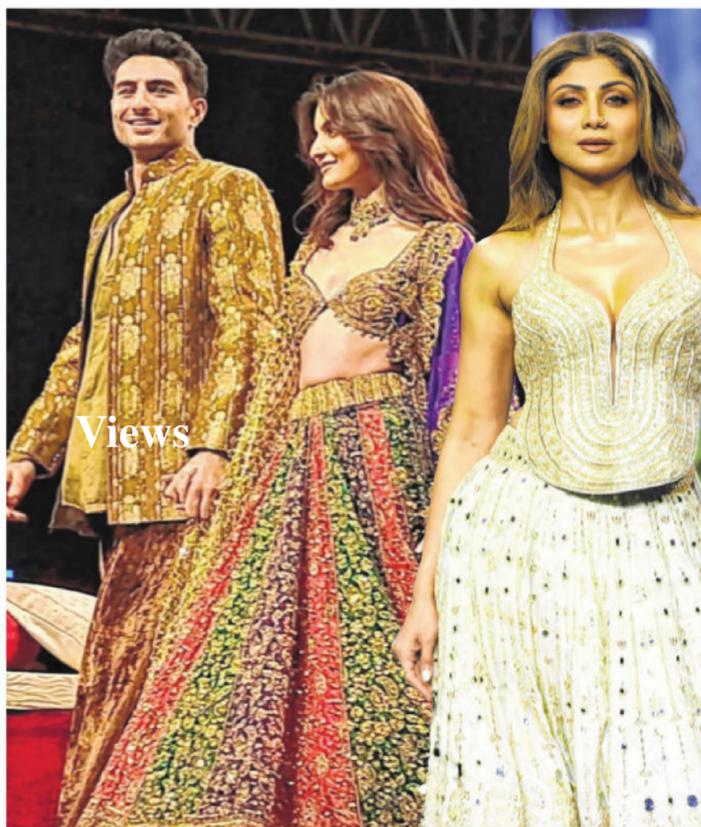
No Indian film at the Oscars
No Indian film could make it to the nominations at the 98th Academy Awards. Karan Johar's production venture Homebry was India's official entry to the Oscars 2026. While it made it to the top 15, the film didn't receive a nomination.
Other films like Kantara: The Chapter 1 and Tanvi The Great were also eligible to be nominated in Best Film category, but they couldn't make it to the final nomination list.



Bhaiya aur Bhaijaan ek saath
Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav met Bollywood superstar Salman Khan in Mumbai, and took to Instagram to share a picture with him. The reason behind this meeting is not yet known. But, according to some reports, during this meeting Yadav enquired about the health of veteran writer and Salman's father, Salim Khan, who has been in the hospital for around a month now.



May war rest in peace
Salman Khan's next with director Apoorva Lakhia is one of the most-awaited films of the year. The film was titled *Battle Of Galwan*, but now the title has been changed to *Maatrubhumi*. On Monday, Salman took to Instagram to share a new poster of the film, and reveal the new title. The superstar captioned the post as, "May War Rest In Peace #Maatrubhumi (sic)."



Views

Caring with style

Several actors walked the runway for Gopi Vaid and ITRH's show in Mumbai supporting the Cancer Patients Aid Association

Aanchal Chaudhary

Mumbai's fashion scene sparked with purpose and glamour at the Caring With Style 2026 show, an event in collaboration with the Cancer Patients Aid Association. The star-studded evening on March 15 in Mumbai saw Bollywood icons and Gen-Z talents lighting the runway, marrying high fashion with a powerful cause.
Shilpa Shetty and Dino Morea brought high-octane drama as show-stoppers for designer Gopi Vaid. Dino set the tone for the night with a striking runway entrance, donning a luxurious gold sherwani left open at the front to reveal his sculpted abs. The intricately embroidered sherwani, combined with classic ivory pyjamas and a wide embroidered waistband, gave Dino's look a regal edge.
Shilpa

Shetty closed the evening with a show-stopping gold ensemble that shimmered with every step. Her structured corset featured a plunging neckline and dramatic backless cut, lavishly adorned with fine gold embroidery. She paired it with a voluminous lehenga decorated with mirror work and delicate shimmering motifs, letting her bold stack of gold kadas do the talking in lieu of heavy jewellery. Shilpa's dupatta trailed gracefully behind her, completing a look that epitomised Gopi Vaid's signature aesthetic.
Gen-Z stars Ibrahim Ali Khan and Pratibha Ranta made waves on the ramp for Mohit Rai and Ridhi Bansal's label ITRH. Pratibha opened the segment in a vibrant lehenga, exuding youthful energy. Ibrahim later joined her in a green ethnic look, and the pair ended the show hand-in-hand, charming the audience with their chemistry and poise.
The event was not just a celebration of couture but also a heartfelt effort to support cancer patients, blending runway glamour with a message of hope and solidarity.

CONFLICT WIDENS | Have launched ground operations against Hezbollah's strongholds in southern Lebanon, says IDF

ISRAEL HAS PLANS FOR 3 MORE WEEKS OF WAR

Tel Aviv/Dubai: Israel said on Monday it has detailed plans for at least three more weeks of war as its military pounded sites across Iran overnight, Reuters reported.

The US-Israel war on Iran is now entering its third week, with no clear end in sight, shutting down the Strait of Hormuz through which 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flow, pushing up oil prices and raising fears of a renewed spike in global inflation.

Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters there were detailed operational plans for the war with Iran for the next three weeks, along with additional plans extending further ahead.

The military has framed its aims as limited to weakening Iran's capacity to threaten Israel by striking ballistic missile infrastructure, nuclear facilities and the security apparatus.

"We want to make sure that they are as weak as possible, this regime, and that we degrade all their capabilities, all parts and all wings of their security establishment,"



An Israeli self-propelled howitzer artillery gun fires towards southern Lebanon from a position in the Upper Galilee in northern Israel near the border.

Shoshani said. The military said it still has thousands of targets to hit inside Iran.

NEW FRONT OPENED

Israeli forces launched ground operations on Monday against Hezbollah strongholds in southern Lebanon, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said, opening a new front in a widening regional conflict, Xinhua news agency reported.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said the operation aimed "to remove threats and protect the residents of the north." He added that

hundreds of thousands of southern Lebanese residents evacuating homes south of the Litani River would not be allowed to return until northern Israeli communities were secured.

"PM Benjamin Netanyahu and I have instructed the IDF to destroy the terror infrastructure in the Lebanese border villages, just as it was done against Hamas in Rafah, Beit Hanoun and the terror tunnels in Gaza," Katz said, warning that Israel could target Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem.

Hezbollah said its fighters repelled Israeli advances throughout the day, striking a Merkava tank north of the Khiam detention centre with a guided missile and hitting an Israeli troop gathering near the Kfar Yuval settlement with rockets.

CHABAHAH IN LINE OF FIRE

US fighter jets have targeted Iran's military positions near the Chabahar Free Trade Zone, according to reports. The sound of explosions was heard in the area behind the Chabahar Free Trade Zone, Al Jazeera reported, citing Voice of America's Persian-language service. The free trade zone is located in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province near the border with Pakistan.

Israeli troops, supported by Merkava tanks and armoured personnel carriers, advanced at dawn towards the towns of Khiam and Aitaroun and surrounding villages. The incursion was backed by airstrikes, artillery, drones and warplane attacks, according to sources.

Hezbollah said its fighters repelled Israeli advances throughout the day, striking a Merkava tank north of the Khiam detention centre with a guided missile and hitting an Israeli troop gathering near the Kfar Yuval settlement with rockets.

Iran keeps stranglehold on shipping, hits Dubai airport

Beirut: Fears of a global energy crisis rose on Monday as the war in West Asia raged on, with more US-Israeli strikes on Tehran, the Iranian capital. An Iranian drone strike temporarily shut Dubai's airport, a crucial global travel hub, underscoring the threats to the world economy.

As morning broke, a drone hit a fuel tank near Dubai International Airport, causing a large fire. Firefighters contained the blaze and no injuries were reported. Authorities indefinitely suspended permission for foreign airlines to operate from the airport, disrupting any immediate chance of recovery.

Later, a person was killed in an Iranian missile hit a vehicle, the Abu Dhabi Media Office

said. Fire also broke out at an oil facility in Fujairah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, following a drone attack.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, said it intercepted a wave of 35 Iranian drones sent to its eastern region, home to major oil installations.

Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones towards countries in the region hosting US military assets since the war began. Israel's military said Iran launched missiles towards Israel as well.

ISRAEL HITS BEIRUT, ATTACKS TEHRAN

Massive explosions were heard in Beirut as Israel launched new attacks on the Lebanese capital before dawn, saying it was striking infrastructure related to the



Fire and plumes of smoke rise after a drone struck a fuel tank forcing the temporary suspension of flights at Dubai International Airport.

'NOT ASKING FOR CEASEFIRE OR TALKS, READY TO DEFEND IRAN'

Iranian Foreign Minister **Seyed Abbas Araghchi** said the country was not asking for a ceasefire or negotiations with the US, stating Tehran was prepared to defend itself "as long as it takes" against what he described as an "illegal war". In an interview with CBS News aired on Sunday, Araghchi rejected claims Iran had sought an end to hostilities. He noted Iran would continue its operations until US President Donald Trump "comes to the point that this is an illegal war with no victory." "We don't see any reason why we should talk with Americans, because we were talking with them when they decided to attack us, and that was for the second time," Araghchi added. As for the Strait of Hormuz, the minister emphasised Iran had not closed this waterway. "This is up to our military to decide, and they have already decided to let a group of vessels belonging to different countries pass," he noted. On the nuclear issue, Araghchi reiterated that Tehran had never sought nuclear weapons. Revealing that Iran had agreed to dilute its enriched uranium during pre-attack talks with the US, the minister said, "Everything is under the rubble." He added Iran had no plans to recover enriched uranium stockpiles from the damaged sites.



Iran-linked Hezbollah group. In southern Lebanon, seven people were killed in Israeli airstrikes. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said two of them were paramedics. At least 850 people have been killed by Israeli strikes so far.

Not long after Israel's military announced it had launched new strikes on Tehran targeting infrastructure, explosions were heard in

the Iranian capital and outlying areas. Israel has carried out some 7,600 strikes on Iran so far, knocking out 85% of its air defences, military spokesman Lt Col Nadav Shoshani told reporters on Monday. It has also destroyed 70% of Iran's missile launchers, but Shoshani said Israel still has thousands of targets to hit and would continue attacks "for as long as needed." —AP

Bibi shares video Grok flags cafe clip as AI-generated

Israeli PM **Benjamin Netanyahu** (C) has shared another video on X, after AI chatbot Grok, created by Elon Musk, labelled one of his earlier videos as AI-generated. The latest video shows Netanyahu interacting with civilians in Israel while the region continues to face tensions linked to the ongoing war with Iran.

In the new footage, Netanyahu is seen speaking with civilians and admiring the surroundings in Jerusalem. He is seen walking and speaking with locals.

"How beautiful. Thank you very much. Thank you. Good. Let's soak up some sun," Netanyahu said. At one point, he notices a dog and asks about it, saying, "Whose dog is this? What breed?"

The woman replies, "Canaanite-Israeli."

The Canaan Dog, also known as the Canaanite-Israeli dog, is recognised as



Israel's national dog breed.

Netanyahu continues chatting with the people around him. "Canaanite-Israeli, well done. It's also good for her to get out a bit. It's good for all of you. Did you come out to get some air?" he asked.

"Of course, as long as there is a protected space nearby," he added.

Before releasing this latest video, Netanyahu had already dismissed rumours circulating on social media about his death. On Sunday, he posted a clip of himself ordering coffee at The Sataf in the Jerusalem Hills, saying he was dying for the coffee, showing his hand with five fingers.

Republicans resist war hearings as Democrats push Senate votes

Washington: The United States' war with Iran has entered its third week, but Congress has yet to publicly test the Trump administration's case for the conflict, setting up a fresh standoff between Republicans and Democrats over oversight of the war.

Republicans in Congress have largely sidestepped public debate, even as Senate Democrats push for hearings with senior administration officials. Increasingly frustrated, Democrats are threatening to force a series of votes this week on the conflict, hoping the move will disrupt the Senate's schedule and pressure Republicans to allow testimony.

"We've had no oversight whatsoever over what the executive is doing as we're spending a billion dollars a day, and we have failed to have any real substantive debate or discussion," said Senator Cory

Booker, Democrat-New Jersey.

Congress's role remains an unsettled question with significant stakes as costs and casualties mount. So far, 13 military personnel have been killed and billions of dollars spent, yet President Donald Trump has not sought congressional approval for attacks on Iran.

Republican leaders say lawmakers are being kept informed through classified briefings rather than public hearings. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he did not expect hearings focused solely on the war, though the issue would likely arise during routine testimony on military policy and spending. "They have briefed us," Thune, Republican-South Dakota, said, referring to classified sessions held behind closed doors.

Senator Roger Wicker, chair of the Senate Armed

Services Committee, said lawmakers would still have opportunities to question officials.

"We're going to conduct generous oversight, through oversight," Wicker, Republican-Mississippi, said.

However, some Republicans have expressed unease about the lack of high-level engagement from the administration, especially as lawmakers brace for a possible supplemental spending request to cover war costs.

"I don't want to just be given the invoice from the Department of Defense," said Senator Lisa Murkowski, Republican-Alaska. "I want them to be engaged with us."

Democrats say they may force daily votes on war powers resolutions unless hearings are scheduled. Senator Chris Murphy warned, "We're not going to let the Senate go on with business as usual."

Macron: Targeting France unacceptable

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron said it was "unacceptable" for France to be targeted, Xinhua reported. Macron made the remarks on X after speaking to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian over the phone.

He said France had acted within a strictly defensive framework to protect its interests, safeguard regional partners and support freedom of navigation. He called on Iran to immediately end the attacks, either directly or through proxies.

Macron warned the uncontrolled escalation risks plunging the region into chaos with long-term consequences. He reiterated that freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz must be restored as soon as possible.

PREZ PREPS FOR POSTWAR TALKS

The government is bolstering France's military presence in

West Asia, dispatching its aircraft carrier and other warships while Macron engages with key players, including Iran, to position Paris for future diplomatic talks.

He said France's military involvement is strictly "defensive" and aimed at avoiding becoming a party to the war.

Macron announced the deployment of eight warships, two helicopter carriers and the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle with its 20 Rafale fighter jets to the eastern Mediterranean and West Asia.

France has over 4,000,000 citizens in West Asia, including more than half in Israel and over 60,000 in the UAE.

The French Navy's swift deployment contrasts with the UK's delay in sending the HMS Dragon destroyer, which left Portsmouth on March 10.

Mojtaba okay: Iranian leader

In an interview with NDTV, Dy Foreign Minister Esmail Baghaei dismissed speculation surrounding the supreme leader's condition, saying the Iranian leadership remained intact. "I can tell you that he's fine. I'm sure you have already heard about his message and hopefully, very soon, he will give another message to the public."

Four-day work week in Lanka

Sri Lanka has announced a 4-day work week with every Wednesday a public holiday as a contingency measure for possible fuel shortages due to the war in West Asia. Currently, the island nation follows a 5-day work week. "It was decided to declare every Wednesday a public holiday with effect from March 18," Commissioner General of Essential Services Prabath Chandrakerthi said. —PTI

WAR SNIPPETS

SHRAPNEL FALLS NEAR CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

Shrapnel from an interception fell on the rooftop of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, according to the Patriarchate. That's just metres from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the spot where Christian tradition holds that Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected. There were no reports of injuries. Jerusalem's Old City, where

there are holy sites sacred to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, has come under uncommon fire this war.

FCC CHAIR WARNS TV NETWORKS WITH LICENCE REVOCATION, FACES BACKLASH

US Federal Communications Commission chairman Brendan Carr has warned American news television networks of revocation of broadcast licences over their coverage of the Iran war, remarks that drew sharp

political backlash. After US President Trump lashed out at the media coverage of the Iran war, Carr asked news broadcasters to "correct course" and "operate in public interest", failing which they risk losing their licences. "Broadcasters that are running hoaxes and news distortions, also known as the fake news, have a chance now to correct course before their license renews come up. The law is clear. Broadcasters must operate in the public interest, and they will lose

their licenses if they do not," Carr said on X. The FCC chair's remarks drew sharp criticism from Democrats who cited the First Amendment that guarantees free speech and freedom of the press. "If Trump doesn't like your coverage of the war, his FCC will pull your broadcast license. That is flagrantly unconstitutional," Gavin Newsom, California Governor, said. Trump was all praise for Carr's actions and accused the outlets of spreading lies about the Iran war by

circulating AI-generated videos. "I am so thrilled to see Brendan Carr, the of Federal Communications Commission Chairman, looking at the licences of the corrupt and highly unpatriotic news organisations. They get billions of dollars of free American airwaves, and use it to perpetuate lies, both in news and almost all of their shows, including the Late Night Morons, who get gigantic salaries for horrible ratings, and never get, as I used to say in The Apprentice, "FIRED!"

Trump: Have right to charge tariffs

Washington: President Donald Trump said he had the authority to impose duties despite the US Supreme Court last month striking down his global tariffs. "I have the absolute right to charge tariffs in another form, and have already started to do so," he said on Truth Social.

Trump's post came hours after Beijing urged Washington to "immediately correct its erroneous ways" as the two countries began a new round of negotiations.

China's commerce ministry called the latest US probes "extremely unilateral, arbitrary and discriminatory," accusing Washington of "attempting to construct trade barriers." Chinese and US trade officials met in Paris on Sunday for talks that Washington said would last two days.

Trump wrote the Supreme Court "knew where I stood, how badly I wanted this vic-



tory for our country, and instead decided to potentially give away trillions of dollars to countries and companies who have been taking advantage of the United States for decades."

In another post, Trump criticised federal judge James Boasberg for quashing subpoenas issued as part of a probe into Fed Chair Jerome Powell over costs linked to the bank's headquarters renovations. "What Boasberg has done on the 'too late' Powell case, and many others, has little to do with the law, and everything to do with politics," Trump said. Trump has repeatedly criticised Powell over the central bank's policies on setting the economy's key interest rate. —AFP

Heavy snowfall, freezing rain sweep across US and Canada

A powerful winter storm swept across the north-eastern US and south-eastern Canada, bringing heavy snowfall, freezing rain and strong winds.

The system developed from a low-pressure area that formed in the north-western US late last week and rapidly intensified as it moved north-east across the central US. Cold, dry air from northern parts of the continent combined with warm, humid tropical air, generating widespread snowfall across northern US states on Sunday.

The storm is forecast to move into south-eastern Canada through Monday and Tuesday, bringing heavy snowfall and freezing rain to parts of the north-eastern US, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland. Areas near the Great Lakes could get 60-80 cm of snow, with winds of 96-113 kmph creating blizzard conditions.



Myanmar parl meets after 5 yrs with military dominating seats

Naypyitaw: Myanmar opened its first parliamentary session in over five years on Monday after a poll that excluded major opposition parties, ensuring the ruling military retains a firm grip on power.

The military prevented the previous parliament from convening after it seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. It has governed without a legislature since then and has promoted elections held in December and January as a step towards restoring democracy. —AP

However, the military and its allies control nearly 90% of seats in the two-chamber parliament. Myanmar's former ruling National League for Democracy and other major opposition parties were either barred from contesting or boycotted the polls, describing conditions as unfair.

Delegates wearing traditional attire arrived in capital Naypyitaw for the opening session of the 373-seat lower house in a heavily guarded parliamentary complex that was renovated after damage caused by last year's quake. —AP

US report on religious freedom biased: India

New York: A US federal government commission has flagged the alleged worsening of religious freedom in India and called for linking Washington's future security assistance and bilateral trade with improvements in New Delhi's record on the issue.

India on Monday rejected the "motivated and biased characterisation" of the country in the 2026 Annual Report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

"We have taken note of the latest report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). We categorically reject its motivated and biased characterisation of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

The USCIRF recommended that the US government designate India as a "country of particular concern", or CPC, for "engaging in and tolerat-

ing systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations."

The report called for "targeted sanctions" on individuals and entities such as the Research and Analysis Wing and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, including freezing their assets and barring entry into the US. It recommended linking future US security assistance and bilateral trade policies with India to improvements in religious freedom.

Jaiswal said USCIRF has for years presented a "distorted and selective picture of India, relying on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts." "Instead of persisting with selective criticism of India, USCIRF would do well to reflect on disturbing incidents of vandalism and attacks on Hindu temples in the US and growing intimidation of members of the Indian diaspora." —PTI

Series of blasts heard in Kabul

Kabul: A series of explosions was heard in Kabul, Afghanistan, at 8:50pm on Monday, accompanied by the roar of aircraft in the air, followed by heavy gunfire, Xinhua reported. Earlier, Taliban forces and Pakistan's military exchanged fire at multiple locations along the border, killing at least two kids and wounding 10 people in southeastern Afghanistan.

Boats sinks off Japan; 2 killed

Two boats carrying 21 people capsized on Monday off Henoko, a controversial relocation site for a US military base off Japan's Okinawa island, throwing all into the water and leaving a girl, 27, a boat captain dead. Japan Coast Guard said 18 of them were students from a Kyoto high school on two boats, 10 on Heiwa Maru and 8 on the smaller Fukutsu, to observe the Henoko area as part of the peace education programme.

Briefs

BENGALURU
K'taka govt
clears
C'swamy



The Karnataka government on Monday granted formal approval to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) and Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to host matches of the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, ending months of uncertainty following the stampede during celebrations after the franchise's maiden title triumph. The 19th edition of the world's biggest T20 league will begin on March 28.

NEW DELHI
'Hardik must
unleash his
real version'



Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh feels Mumbai Indians captain **Hardik Pandya** needs to "unleash his real version" and lead from the front if the five-time champions are to mount a strong challenge in the upcoming IPL. Mi, led by Pandya, will be aiming to end their five-year trophy drought and become the most successful franchise in the league's history. "I think Hardik Pandya needs to unleash his real Hardik Pandya version. He needs to bring his A game to the table. Once he starts playing his A game, not just as a batter but as a bowler as well, it will make a huge difference," Harbhajan said.

ORLEANS (FRANCE)
Ayush, Tanvi
to lead Indian
challenge



Youngsters **Ayush Shetty** and **Tanvi Sharma** will lead India's challenge at the USD 250,000 Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday after senior shuttler HS Prannoy pulled out due to a shoulder injury. Prannoy, who was originally slated to face top seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the opening round, was forced to withdraw after experiencing shoulder pain during the Swiss Open in Basel last week. While the cause of his discomfort was unclear initially, the Indian had decided to pull out of his match against Japan's

SKIP TALK | India captain admits the shortest format suits his game best

T20 mein 'haath set hai', says Suryakumar on dominance

NEW DELHI

World Cup-winning skipper Suryakumar Yadav says he still yearns to play Test cricket and admits that One-Day International (ODI) cricket never quite felt like his natural format. But when it comes to T20 cricket, the India captain believes he has found his true calling because, as he puts it, "usmey apna haath set ho gaya hai."

In an exclusive podcast interview with PTI, Suryakumar occasionally slipped into his trademark Mumbaiya Hindi, offering candid and colourful explanations of his journey through different formats of the game.

One such moment came when he used the phrase "haath set ho gaya hai", a colloquial expression that has no exact English equivalent.

Roughly translated, the phrase suggests that a player has become completely comfortable and confident in a particular skill. For Suryakumar, that skill lies in T20 cricket, where his innovative strokeplay has made him one of the most destructive batters in the world.

Relaxed throughout the hour-long conversation and clearly on cloud nine after leading India to a hugely successful T20 World Cup campaign, Suryakumar spoke openly about his lingering disappointment at not getting a proper opportunity in Test cricket.

He was reminded during the interview that he had, in fact, played a Test match against Australia.

"One innings!" he quickly corrected the interviewer with a broad smile, underlin-



India skipper Suryakumar Yadav with teammates during the BCCI Naman Awards 2026. PTI

ing how brief that opportunity had been. "...what is written in your life, you get that only. I started with red-ball cricket itself. I played Ranji Trophy for 10-12 years. I played a lot of red-ball cricket in Bombay because if you grow up in Bombay, you start with red ball itself, so everything is around red ball," he said.

According to Suryakumar, his cricketing foundation was deeply rooted in the traditional format. Like many players who emerge from Mumbai's strong domestic structure, his early years in the sport revolved around long-format cricket.

"But gradually, when we started playing white ball cricket, the inclination shifted a bit towards that. And after that, I came to this format (T20). I also tried a lot in One-Day cricket to play well in it,



...what is written in your life, you get that only. I started with red-ball cricket itself. I played Ranji Trophy for 10-12 years. I played a lot of red-ball cricket in Bombay because if you grow up in Bombay, you start with red ball itself, so everything is around red ball.

Suryakumar Yadav, Indian captain

but nothing happened there," he said.

Despite putting in considerable effort to succeed in ODI cricket, Suryakumar admitted that the format never quite suited his style of play.

"T20 mein jaisa chal raha tha, usme apna haath set ho gaya hai, aisa bol sakte hain," he said. "The way T20 was working out for me, I had

become good at it, you can say that."

Even so, the desire to play Test cricket still lingers.

Asked directly whether he would want to play the longest format if given another opportunity, Suryakumar responded without hesitation.

"I would love to, because, as I mentioned, I played red-ball cricket from 2010-11 to 2020.

So 10 years is a long time to play red ball and I was in love with that format. But yeah, obviously, given an opportunity, who would not want to play Test?" he said.

However, at 35 years of age, the chances of Suryakumar returning to the Test team appear slim. His only appearance in the format came in 2023 against Australia in Nagpur, where he scored eight runs in one innings.

The same year also saw him feature in the ODI World Cup final against Australia. Batting in a tense chase, he scored 18 off 28 balls, but India eventually lost the final.

Since that match, Suryakumar has not played ODI cricket again. When asked whether ODI cricket still has a future at a time when T20 formats dominate the calendar:

SKY feels India can field multiple T20 teams at same time

India skipper credits strong domestic system, IPL for change

NEW DELHI

India's T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav believes the country's talent pool in the shortest format has become so deep that it could field two or even three international-quality teams at the same time.

The dynamic batter said India's strong domestic structure and the Indian Premier League (IPL) have played a major role in expanding the country's talent base and strengthening its dominance in T20 cricket.

Suryakumar, who took over the captaincy after the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2024, has overseen a highly successful period for the team. Since assuming leadership following Rohit Sharma's decision to step down after the title triumph in Barbados, India have won 42 of their 52 matches in the format.

Speaking in a podcast interview with PTI Videos on Sunday, Suryakumar described the current squad as one of the strongest T20 teams India has produced.

"If you talk about talent, I feel you can find talent regularly. There is IPL cricket, franchise cricket and then there is domestic cricket. You can see how many players come every year. So you can make as many teams as you want in T20 when I'm talking about T20," he said.

"So I feel talent is unlimited. If you can make two-three playing XIs, our base is so strong. This is not a modest and diplomatic reply. But now it is so strong, so there is no shame in telling the truth," he added.



If you talk about talent, I feel you can find talent regularly. There is IPL cricket, franchise cricket and then there is domestic cricket.

Suryakumar Yadav,
India captain

Suryakumar attributed the team's impressive results to a collective effort in the dressing room and a shared sense of purpose among players and support staff.

India have maintained a win rate of nearly 80% in T20 Internationals under his leadership, a remarkable feat in a format often considered unpredictable.

However, Suryakumar acknowledged that success in bilateral series does not always guarantee similar outcomes in global tournaments.

"We played bilateral matches one way and in ICC tournaments something else happened," he said, referring to the need to maintain consistency during the World Cup held from Feb 7 to March 8. "I do not pay too much attention to statistics, but I hate losing any game. If everyone in the dressing room moves in the same direction, only then can you achieve such a percentage."

India's consistency in T20 Internationals over the past 18 months has largely been credited to a stable leadership group led by Suryakumar and head coach Gautam Gambhir.

Mumbai Indians begin preparatory camp for IPL

Shardul Thakur, Mayank Markande among first batch as five-time champions start training in Mumbai

MUMBAI

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians began their preparatory camp for the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) season on Monday as the first batch of players reported for training ahead of the tournament starting on March 28.

Among the players who arrived for the opening session were Shardul Thakur, Mayank Markande, Allah Ghazanfar, Naman Dhir, Raja Angad Bawa, Robin Minz, Raghu Sharma, Mayank Rawat, Danish Malewar, Mohammad Izhar and Ashwani Kumar.

The remaining members of the squad, including senior players such as Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah and captain Hardik Pandya, are expected to join the camp in the coming days as preparations gather pace ahead of the new season.

Mumbai Indians head coach **Mahela Jayawardene** said the first day of pre-season training plays a key role in setting the tone for the campaign.



There is always something special about the first day of pre-season. You see the players walk in, the energy builds, and the objective is to start strong.

Mahela Jayawardene,
Mumbai Indians head coach

"There is always something special about the first day of pre-season. You see the players walk in, the energy builds, and the objective is to start strong. We have got the boys who know this franchise inside out, and we have got some exciting new faces coming in," Jayawardene added.

He emphasised the importance of creating the right environment from the very first training session.

"Day one sets the tone for the entire campaign. We

wanted everyone to feel the intent from the very first session, in how we train, how we prepare and how we show up for each other," he said.

"The first session is always exciting, but it is also the start of something serious and we know what we are building towards."

The opening day began with a structured fitness and conditioning programme, with the team's strength and conditioning staff putting the players through a series of drills and assessments.

Indian cricket's time to dominate world stage has come, says Mithali

Ex-captain credits recent success of men's, women's and junior teams

NEW DELHI

Former India captain **Mithali Raj** said her long-held dream of seeing Indian cricket dominate the global stage is finally becoming a reality, with the country's men's, women's and junior teams winning major international titles in recent years.

Speaking at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Naman Awards, Mithali said the success achieved across different levels of the sport reflects the steady growth and strengthening of Indian cricket.

"For the longest time, I wanted Indian cricket to dominate and the time has come," Mithali said during the ceremony.

She noted that the last few years have been particularly significant for Indian cricket, with teams across formats delivering strong performances at global tournaments.

"The last two-three years, Indian cricket, men, women and the under-19 girls or boys, have been doing immensely well. It is a proud moment as a



For the longest time, I wanted Indian cricket to dominate and the time has come.

Mithali Raj,
former India captain

former cricketer to see the growth of Indian cricket," she said.

In the past couple of years, the Indian men's team ended a decade-long drought for global trophies by winning the 2024 T20 World Cup. The

teams winning world titles in recent years, further strengthening India's position as one of the leading forces in world cricket.

At the BCCI's annual awards function on Sunday, Mithali was honoured with the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award alongside former India captain Rahul Dravid and former BCCI President Roger Binny.

Reflecting on the transformation of Indian cricket, Mithali credited former BCCI Secretary and current ICC Chairman Jay Shah for playing a key role in the development of the women's game in the country.

"I have seen the evolution of women's cricket and I need to acknowledge the support of the BCCI and Jay Shah. In the last four-five years, there has been a huge transformation of the Indian women's cricket team and that is because of that one person," she said.

"His vision and commitment towards it. Globally also he has put in so much effort to enhance and promote women's cricket's profile. It shows that he is a visionary and committed to the cause."

candid

U-19 WC final century was special moment: Vaibhav

JAIPIUR

India's teenage cricket sensation **Vaibhav Sooryavanshi** on Monday described his match-winning century in the Under-19 World Cup final against England as one of the most special innings of his young career.

The 14-year-old smashed a blistering 175 off just 80 balls in the final to power India to a record-extending sixth Under-19 World Cup title.

Reflecting on the perform-

ance, Sooryavanshi said the innings remains his personal favourite because it came in the summit clash of the tournament.

"My personal favourite is the final knock in the Under-19 World Cup in Harare. I could only play one Under-19 World Cup. It was a proud moment for me to score a hundred in the final," he said. "What I contributed for the team in the final was special."

The young batter was speaking on the sidelines of

an event where Rajasthan Royals unveiled their new jersey and announced a partnership with JK Lakshmi Cement as the principal sponsor for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

Sooryavanshi has emerged as one of India's most exciting young prospects after drawing widespread attention for his explosive power-hitting during the junior World Cup.

Despite the growing spotlight on him, the teenager

said he is focused on maintaining a simple approach towards the game.

Asked about his goals for the upcoming IPL season, Sooryavanshi said he prefers to concentrate on the process rather than thinking about external expectations.

"I try to focus on winning. I just focus on my work," he said. The young batter added that media attention and public interest are natural outcomes of performing well, but they do not distract him from his priorities.

"In any field if you do well, you are bound to get attention. But I am not focusing on that attention. I just want to concentrate on my job," he said. Sooryavanshi's fearless strokeplay and composure at a very young age have already earned him praise from several senior cricketers and observers of the game. His remarkable knock in the Under-19 World Cup final not only sealed victory for India but also established him as one of the brightest talents in the country.

