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

Briefs

CHANDIGARH

AAP gov't cuts power tariff in Punjab

The Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab on Friday reduced the power tariff across categories by 50 paise to ₹1.5 per unit for 2026-27. Power Minister Sanjeev Arora said the revised structure lowers rates while keeping the sector financially stable. Domestic users will see cuts of up to ₹1.5 per unit, commercial consumers up to 79 paise, and industrial users up to 74 paise. Arora said households will continue to get free power. "300 units of electricity per month, which translates to 600 units per billing cycle, remain completely free for households. More than 90% of households in Punjab are already benefiting from the free electricity scheme," he said.

CHANDIGARH

Gangster Amrit Dalam detained

Most-wanted gangster Amritpal Singh alias Amrit Dalam has been detained at the Moldova border based on an Interpol Red Notice issued at the request of Punjab Police, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Saturday. Dalam, a native of Dalam Nangal village in Batala, is linked to the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria gang and had fled abroad using a fraudulent passport. He is wanted in multiple criminal cases, including drug smuggling and murders, and had allegedly been making extortion calls targeting individuals and business owners in the Amritsar region. "His detention follows sustained international coordination and persistent follow-up by Punjab Police agencies," Yadav said.

PATNA

Rai rejects Pappu Yadav's UT claim

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai vehemently denied that the Centre was planning to carve districts out of Bihar and West Bengal for new union territory (UT). Nityanand Rai, on Saturday asserted that there was no plan to create a union territory by merging some districts of Bihar and West Bengal. "Pappu Yadav's statement should not be taken seriously. He should not try to mislead people. People should not pay any attention to rumours," he remarked. Earlier, Pappu Yadav had linked Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's move to Rajya Sabha and appointment of a retired Army officer as governor as the centre's plan to create a new UT.

GEOPOLITICS | Jaishankar says Tehran sought urgent entry after vessel reported technical problems near Indian waters

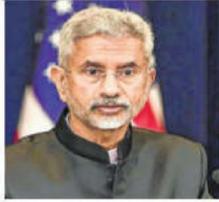
EAM plays down Kochi docking of Iran vessel

NEW DELHI

India allowed an Iranian naval vessel to dock at Kochi earlier this week on humanitarian grounds after it reported technical problems. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday amid concerns following a US strike on an Iranian warship off the coast of Sri Lanka.

Jaishankar said the Iranian vessel, IRIS Lavan, was granted urgent docking permission on March 1 after New Delhi received a message from the Iranian side that the ship was facing difficulties and was closest to Indian waters.

"We got a message from the Iranian side that one of the ships, which presumably was closest to our borders at that point of time, wanted to come into our port. They were reporting that they were having problems. On March 1, we said, 'You can come in.' It took them a few days to sail in, and then they docked in Kochi," he said.



IRIS Lavan docked in Kochi on March 4. The vessel remains in Kochi, and its 183 crew members are currently being accommodated at Indian naval facilities on humanitarian grounds.

The Indian Navy cleared the request to dock the vessel days before the US torpedoed and sank the Iranian frigate, IRIS Dena.

Jha: Nitish to guide Bihar govt till 2030

PATNA

A day after Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said that he would continue to monitor the functioning of the new government, JD (U) national working president Sanjay Jha asserted that Nitish, who is all set to move to Rajya Sabha, will be in Delhi only when the house is in session.

After participating in a meeting of district JD (U) presidents held at his residence, Jha told newsmen, "Many people think Nitish Kumar is going to the Rajya Sabha and so will not be available for Bihar. But let me tell you that the government will be run under the guidance of



Nitish Kumar till 2030. No confusion should be spread. Bihar government will function with the support of Nitish Kumar." The meeting was also attended by Nitish's son, Nishant Kumar, who will join JD (U) on Sunday.

On the question of JD (U)'s future, Jha said, "The future of our party is decided by the people of the state. They decided the party's future in the 2025 elections."

India explores other sources to ramp up energy supply

New Delhi: India is exploring alternative energy sources to strengthen its energy security, and countries such as Australia and Canada have offered additional gas supplies, official sources said on Saturday. They said only around 40% of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, while about 60% are routed through other supply routes that remain unaffected.

According to the sources, supplies from Russia, West Africa, the Americas, Central Asia, and non-Gulf Middle Eastern routes have helped ensure that disruption in any single corridor leads to managed sourcing adjustments rather than a supply emergency. They said this diversification has ensured that there has been no shortage of energy for Indian consumers even during periods of global turmoil or the pandemic.

Over the last decade, India's strategic oil diplomacy has expanded its supplier base from 27 to 40 countries across six continents, the sources said. They added that India's energy procurement decisions are governed by one principle: national interest.

"We source crude from wherever supplies are available, competitively priced and deliverable, and we will continue to do so. This has been our consistent position across administrations and across geopolitical cycles," a senior government official said.

TMC MPs to support motion against Birla

NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress would support the no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla listed to be taken up when the Budget session of Parliament resumes on Monday, party leaders said.

A senior TMC leader said the party was "always on board" with the no-trust motion sought by several opposition members of Lok Sabha.

At least 118 opposition MPs have submitted a notice to move a resolution to remove Om Birla as the speaker of the Lower House for allegedly acting in a "blatantly partisan" manner. TMC MPs had previously not signed the notice.

"We were always on board with the no-confidence motion. We didn't want it to be rushed and that's why in the last half of the Budget session, we said submit it after three days," the TMC leader told PTI.

Almost all TMC MPs, "except those who are unwell", would be present in Lok Sabha



Mamata warns Centre

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister on Saturday said that if she is pressurised then she will go and topple the government in Delhi. "The central government has no absolute majority. They are depending on Chandrababu Naidu. After the Bengal election, we will roam across the country, especially BJP-ruled states and will inform everyone about the real face of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). I will not allow anyone to divide Bengal. I know the central government won't last till 2029," said Mamata.

when the notice is considered on Monday, the leader said.

TMC leaders are also in touch with other INDIA bloc leaders over the issue. Lok Sabha has listed for

March 9 a notice by Opposition members to move a resolution to remove Birla as the speaker. The resolution is the only item listed as the business of the day.

Akhilesh says Oppn wanted Nitish as PM

LUCKNOW

Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday took a swipe at Nitish Kumar, saying the opposition once wanted the Bihar chief minister to become Prime Minister but the Bharatiya Janata Party now appears keen to retire him through the Rajya Sabha.

The SP chief said that when the INDIA alliance was formed ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, opposition leaders had proposed Nitish Kumar's name for the prime minister's post.

"When the INDIA alliance was formed in 2024, we wanted to make Nitish Kumar the Prime Minister," Yadav said.

Rajasthan: Bill on Disturbed Area property sales passed

JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on Friday passed the Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property in Disturbed Areas and Provision for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises Bill, 2026 after a five-hour debate marked by strong opposition from Congress and some Independent MLAs.

The Bill was cleared by voice vote despite 18 legislators demanding that it be referred to a select committee. Congress also said it would scrap the law if it returns to power in 2028.

With the legislation, Rajasthan becomes the sec-

ond state after Gujarat to implement such a law.

The Bill aims to prevent distress sale of property and forced migration in areas experiencing communal tension or demographic imbalance.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel said the law does not target any religion or community and was drafted based on legal advice and prevailing circumstances.

He said it would strengthen social harmony and prevent exploitation during communal tensions.

Congress state president Govind Singh Dotsara opposed the measure, alleging it could harm communal harmony and open the door to corruption.

Cong flays hike in LPG prices

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday criticised the increase in prices of both domestic and commercial LPG cylinders as it claimed that it was the failure of the Centre's foreign policy which was putting economic pressure on people due to the US-Israel conflict with Iran.



Flagging the issue of the LPG rates going up, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote in a post on "X" that the "hike of Rs 60 in domestic LPG cylinders" and Rs 115 on commercial LPG cylinders

has put extra burden on the people who were as it is denied the "benefits of lower international prices" earlier. "The Modi government, which boasts 'sab changa si' when war breaks out, is helpless in providing adequate oil-gas, fertilizer!" he remarked.

Meanwhile, Congress's social media head Shriya Shrinete noted that, "The Modi government had earlier said that there is sufficient supply, and the America-Israel-Iran war will have no impact on our energy security." But, she said, "in one swift move, they hiked LPG prices."

Airfares soar ahead of T20 final

MUMBAI

Airfares to Ahmedabad have skyrocketed, with many routes recording a jump of more than 150% to 200% as India prepares to face New Zealand in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final. The surge is being witnessed while multiple airlines have announced special flights to Ahmedabad as fans scramble to reach the Narendra Modi Stadium for the title clash on Sunday.

The surge follows India's high-scoring semifinal victory over England, which triggered an immediate spike in travel bookings from major metros across the country. The demand jumped so rapidly that domestic airlines



including Akasa Air announced an additional flight between Mumbai and Ahmedabad whereas Air India Express announced special flights from Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Hyderabad.

The tickets on Mumbai-Ahmedabad route, which are usually priced at Rs2,500, have surged by as high as 246% as Akasa Air's flight fare increased to Rs8,666. Similarly, the fare offered by Air India was Rs8,319, IndiGo's tickets were priced at Rs8,108 and SpiceJet's tickets were

priced at Rs7,677. Akasa Air's special flight, which saw pricing of Rs8,300 on Friday evening, came down to Rs7,121 on Saturday evening.

The Kolkata to Ahmedabad route saw the costliest flight as IndiGo priced the ticket at Rs19,676 whereas Akasa Air's fare was Rs15,422. Similarly, Air India Express' flight from Bengaluru was priced at Rs16,543, Akasa Air at Rs16,789 and IndiGo at Rs16,425. The Delhi-Ahmedabad route saw the airfare jump to Rs13,337 on Akasa Air flight, Rs12,989 by Air India and Rs12,883 by IndiGo.

The return flights to all these destinations from Ahmedabad on early Monday morning also saw record breaking fares.

Man booked for 'objectionable' AI video of PM

ETAH

Police in Uttar Pradesh's Etah district have registered an FIR against a man for allegedly circulating an "objectionable" AI-generated video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, officials said on Saturday.

According to police, the video was created by misusing artificial intelligence (AI) to manipulate the prime minister's image, which was later circulated on social media.

The video, which purportedly showed scenes of assault and a person being thrown into water, triggered anger among people after it went viral, they said.

Class 10 'passouts' in Bengal to get ₹1,500

KOLKATA

Ahead of the assembly polls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that from Saturday unemployed young job seekers, having passed secondary examination (class 10), will receive Rs 1,500 allowance every month to help them move towards a self-reliant future.

The TMC supremo made this announcement - on the eve of International Women's Day on March 8 - during her speech at the sit-in against large-scale deletion of names of voters by the Election Commission during Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of

electoral roll exercise. She said young men and women - aged 21-40 years - who have passed the secondary exams - will receive Rs 1,500 per month from March 7. Banerjee said while the assistance was originally scheduled to begin in April, it will now start immediately.

"In the case of Yuva Sathi, all those who are still studying and are not beneficiaries of any schemes other than scholarships will receive the amount. We had earlier stated that the money would be given on April 1. But since tomorrow is International Women's Day, as a gift, we have changed the payment date from April 1 to today (March 7)," she said.

Rahul would have a business in aerospace if...

Thiruvananthapuram: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said if he was not in politics, he would probably be doing some entrepreneurship in the aerospace world.

Gandhi was responding to a query during a dialogue with the Information Technology (IT) Fraternity at Technopark here.

He said he has been defined as a politician by many, but he actually does a lot of other things.

Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, said he was of the view that calling someone a politician, technocrat, techie or engineer were "constricting definitions".

money special

India got best trade deal with US among competing nations: Goyal

NEW DELHI



India has secured the best trade deal with the US compared to its competing nations, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday, noting that the two countries share a "very powerful" relationship.

He said that the US is the world's largest economy - \$30 trillion - and nobody can wish it away.

"It has been a fantastic journey. We have the best of relations. You would have observed that through the last year, President Donald Trump has always had the best things to say about India as a country, and about PM Modi. We have

fantastic relations with our counterparts there.

"Even within your family, sometimes you can have one or two misunderstandings. It's a part of the course. I think it's a very, very powerful relationship that the US and India share. And we got the best deal amongst all the nations with whom we compete," Goyal said when asked about the trade relations with the US.

"We have a large responsibility cast on both our nations. They are the world's largest economy, \$30 trillion economy, nobody can wish them away," he said.

He said that ultimately a trade deal is about preference over competitors.

"What's a trade deal? You are trying to get a preference or a preferential access for yourself, your goods, your services, compared to your competitor. And we got the best deal amongst all the competing nations. I mean whether it's in our neighbourhood Pakistan or Bangladesh. If we look at the Asian region, we got the best deal amongst all of the competitors..." Goyal said.

BlackRock caps withdrawals as redemptions rattle pvt credit

MUMBAI

BlackRock has limited withdrawals from a flagship debt fund after a surge in redemption requests, as investor worries mount around the \$2 trillion private credit industry, Reuters reported.

Shares of BlackRock fell 6.7% on the New York Stock Exchange, amid a broader market selloff after worse-than-expected U.S. jobs data and escalating U.S.-Israeli war against Iran.

Sentiment has soured around private credit in recent months, and retail investors are increasingly asking for their money back from funds like BlackRock's \$26 billion HPS Corporate Lending Fund (HLEND), which were designed to be open to wealthy individuals.

"It should serve as a warning value..."

ing sign for the industry and the rulemakers about the downside of illiquid funds for retail investors," said Gregory Warren, senior stock analyst at Morningstar.

Last year's bankruptcies of a U.S. auto parts supplier and a subprime auto lender, along with the collapse of a UK mortgage lender last week, have raised questions about lending standards.

Earlier this week, mounting requests prompted rival Blackstone to lift the usual 5% redemption limit on a \$82 billion fund to 7%, while the company and its employees invested \$400 million to allow all requests to be met. Blue Owl bought back 15.4% of one of its funds in January.

HLEND received withdrawal requests worth \$1.2 billion in the first quarter, or roughly 9.3% of its net asset

Govt provides certain relaxations to exporters to meet obligations

The government has granted certain relaxations to exporters in fulfilling their export obligations, as the trading community is facing difficulties in the movement of goods due to the ongoing West Asia crisis, according to a notification.

"In view of the prevailing geo-political developments affecting international shipping routes and global supply chains, and with a view to facilitating exporters, the export obligation (EO) period/block wise EO period in respect of specified advance authorisations and EPCG authorisations expiring between March 1, 2026 and May 31, 2026 has been automatically extended up to August 31, 2026 without payment of composition fee," the DGFT has said in a public notice. -PTI

Ministry asks ports to consider waiving charges, issues SoP

Union Shipping, Ports and Waterways Ministry has proposed that ports may consider requests regarding reduction, waiver or remission of charges, including change of vessel charge, and also rolled out a standard operating procedure (SoP) for them to deal with issues arising from the West Asia crisis. As part of the SoP, each port will appoint a nodal officer at the level of head of department or deputy head of department, who will be the single point of contact for addressing the issues coming up for consideration at ports.

Australia, Canada offer additional gas supply, say sources

With India exploring alternative sources to further strengthen its energy security, countries like Australia, Canada and several others have offered additional gas supplies, official sources said on Saturday. Sources said the passage is not the only route for India's crude imports and asserted that the days of dependence on a single maritime chokepoint are long over.

Peak power demand to be at 270 GW this summer: MoS Naik

The peak power demand is projected to be around 270 GW this summer and there will not affect on regular electricity supply due to West Asia crisis, Minister of State for Power Shripad Yesso Naik said on Saturday. Ministry of Power had projected 277 GW of peak power demand during last summer (April 2025 onwards).

Grand Celebration at NTPC Auraiya on International Women Day 2026

Auraiya

A Grand and dignified ceremony was organized at NTPC Limited Auraiya on March 7, 2026 to mark International Women Day. The event took Place at the auditorium of the administrative building and celebrated the remarkable social, economic and Professional achievements of women while acknowledging their invaluable contributions to society and the organization. The programme was attended by the Project Head of NTPC Auraiya, Shubhashish Guha as the chief guest, along with Manjari Guha, President of Jagriti Mahila Mandal. The ceremony began with Manjari Guha Presenting rosebuds to all the women participants as a mark of respect and appreciation. The event was formally inaugurated with a cake-cutting ceremony by the chief guests. Several senior officials, additional general managers, department heads, members of Jagriti Mahila Mandal, principals and teachers from Kendriya Vidyalaya and St. Joseph Senior Secondary School, along with women employees and contractual women



workers of NTPC Auraiya, actively participated in the celebration. During the programme, detailed presentations were delivered on various aspects of women empowerment. The discussions highlighted women constitutional and legal rights, workplace safety, self-reliance, social and economic equality, freedom of thought and expression and the inspirational achievements of globally renowned women personalities. Many participants also shared their views and experiences, expressing pride in being a part of the NTPC Auraiya family. The theme for International Women Day 2026 was "Give to Gain," emphasizing the idea that meaningful contributions lead to greater achievements and collective growth. As part of the celebration, women employees and participants were

honored with mementos by the chief guests in recognition of their dedication, commitment and contributions to the organization. In his motivational address, Project Head Shubhashish Guha highlighted the importance of self-reliance, career growth and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. He encouraged women to continue striving toward their goals and assured that NTPC remains committed to the empowerment and overall development of its women employees, acknowledging their crucial role in the organization progress. The event proved to be inspiring and memorable for all attendees, strengthening confidence, self-respect and the spirit of empowerment among women. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks in a warm and cordial Atmosphere.

Dibiyapur Mohit Tripathi Plays Role in Film "Subedar"



Dibiyapur

Mohit Tripathi from Dibiyapur has appeared in the recently released film Subedar, which premiered on the OTT Platform Prime Video on March 5. In the film, Mohit plays the role of the boyfriend of the daughter of the lead character portrayed by veteran actor Anil Kapoor. Mohit completed his schooling at Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College in Dibiyapur. He later pursued graduation from Kirori Mal College under University of Delhi. During his college years, he joined the theatre society "The Fyers," where he learned the nuances of acting and developed his

interest in theatre. After working in theatre in Delhi for nearly 15 years, Mohit moved to Mumbai in 2023 to pursue a career in films and television. Since then, he has appeared in several projects including the feature film Sabka Sai, Maun and a few other productions.

In Subedar, actress Radhika Madan plays the role of Shyama, the daughter of Anil Kapoor character. Mohit Tripathi appears in the film as Shyama boyfriend and has managed to leave a noticeable impression with his performance. The achievement has brought pride to Dibiyapur, as a local talent continues to make his mark in the film Industry.

Shubham achieves success with 21st rank in UPSC

Ghazipur

Shubham Singh, a resident of Tanda village in the Sadat region, has brought pride to his family, region and state by securing 21st rank in the prestigious Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination. Son of retired Chief Veterinary Officer Dr. Vijay Pratap Singh, Shubham achieved this significant success while working in the Indian Corporate Law Service. Shubham Singh wife, Dr. Sanjana Singh, is a gynecologist and is also preparing for the UPSC Examination. Shubham attributed his achievement to hard work and dedication, as well as the support of his parents, teachers and elders. His mother, Manju Singh, elder brother Shivansh Pratap Singh, Dr. Upendra Nath Singh, Sadhna Singh, Utkarsh Singh, Dr. Sanjana Singh, Krishna Kumar Singh and well-wishers congratulated him on his success and wished him a bright Future.

A constable jumped into the Yamuna from a new bridge, saved by divers

Prayagraj. Constable Kaushal Dwivedi, posted at Muthiganj, jumped from the new Yamuna bridge on Saturday. Water police divers present at the ghat rescued him. He has been admitted to SRN Hospital for treatment. The constable attempted suicide due to family discord. Originally from Mahoba district, he lived in a rented room with his wife, mother, and brother. Police arrived at the scene and have begun investigating further details.

Country and People are Paramount to Me, I will Complete stalled Development Work: Ishtiaq Rai

Bahraich

CPN-UML candidate Mohammad Ishtiaq Rai has been elected to the House of Representatives for the third time from Parliamentary constituency number two in Nepal Banke district, adjacent to the Indian border, Rupaidiha. This comes at a time when the ruling party, the CPN-UML, has lost the trust of voters. Rai, a former minister, thanked the residents of the constituency and vowed to work



with the country and people as his top priority. Addressing his supporters after his victory, he said, "Despite the Nationalist

Independence Party wave sweeping Nepal, the people have Placed their trust in me. I will never let this trust be broken. They have undertaken sig-

nificant development in the Past, which has earned me immense love from the people of Banke constituency number 2." Former minister Rai, who won

for the third time, reiterated his resolve to fulfill all Promises made to the Public and continue the remaining development Projects. Rai won by a margin of 5946 votes, defeating Nationalist Independent Party (NSWP) candidate Vivek Kumar Shrestha. He secured 24,628 votes, while his nearest rival, Shrestha of the RSWP, secured 18,692 votes. Similarly, Nepali Congress candidate Sudhansu Koirala secured 17,596 votes, finishing Third.

Civil Lines Business Board's Holi Milan and Felicitation Ceremony to be Held Today

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The Civil Lines Business Board will organize a Holi Milan and Felicitation Ceremony on Sunday, March 8th. The event will be held at 11 a.m. at Hotel Prayag Inn (near Akashvani) in Civil Lines. According to the organizers, on this festival of colors, the city's businessmen will gather and pledge

to strengthen mutual harmony, cooperation, and business excellence. Justice Sanjay Singh of the Patna High Court will be the chief guest, while the District Magistrate and several public representatives are also expected to be present as special guests. During the event, special guests will be felicitated with shawls and certificates.

Additionally, there will be business honors, certificates distributed to organizations that contributed to the world record, and a special honor for the Ramdal team. Vyapar Mandal President Sushil Khurbanda and General Secretary Shiv Shankar Singh have appealed to the city's businessmen to attend the event in large numbers.

Office lock Broken, Items Shifted or Stolen? Chairman-EO Dispute

Bahraich

A dispute erupted in the Rupaidiha Nagar Panchayat on Saturday when Nagar Panchayat Chairman Dr. Umashankar Vaishya accused Executive Officer Rambadan Yadav of breaking the office lock and stealing furniture and important documents. Chairman Dr. Umashankar Vaishya stated that on Saturday morning, employees informed him that Executive Officer Rambadan Yadav had broken the lock of the Nagar Panchayat office and taken away the furniture and documents. He alleged that the Executive Officer has not been attending the office regularly for the past several months, impacting the work of the Nagar Panchayat and disrupting its operations. Residents also allege that work in the Nagar Panchayat has come to a complete standstill. The public is deeply distressed. Birth and death certificates, along with many other matters, remain pending for months. Applications are not even verified for months after submission, resulting in the loss of a certificate.



Consequently, the public of Rupaidiha Nagar Panchayat feels distressed and Cheated. The Chairman also stated that the Executive Officer has repeatedly created tensions between Nagar Panchayat employees and sanitation workers. Once, the dispute escalated to the point of reaching the Police station, but was resolved through Persuasion. According to Dr. Vaishya, breaking into the office lock and removing items without Prior notice on Saturday morning is a serious matter. He stated that for this reason, he has withheld the Executive Officer salary for two months. He also alleged that the Executive Officer is also getting the support of the office clerk Ganga Pratap

Singh in this entire Matter. When Executive Officer Rambadan Yadav was contacted on mobile in this regard, he termed all the allegations as baseless. He said that he has not committed any theft. The new building of the Nagar Panchayat is ready and it has been transferred to the Nagar Panchayat. He said that as per the government intention, the goods kept in the old Nagar Panchayat office have been shifted to the new Nagar Panchayat building. This work has been done under the administrative Process. The statements of the Chairman and the Executive Officer coming face to face in this matter have become a topic of discussion in the Nagar Panchayat Area.

Kaushambi

Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Keshav Prasad Maurya today inaugurated the Saras Fair and Saras Mahotsav by cutting the ribbon and lighting the ceremonial lamp at the Babu Singh Degree College Ground, Sayara, district Kaushambi. During the event, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the exhibition and stalls displaying various handicrafts, food items, clothing and other household products prepared by women of Self-Help Groups. He encouraged the women and also performed traditional ceremonies such as god-bharai (baby shower) and annaprashan (first feeding of grains to Infants). Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister said that women associated with Self-Help Group possess immense talent. He encouraged them to produce high-quality products and assured full support from the government. He also announced that a 10-day national-level Saras Fair will be organized in the district in the coming days. Plans are also being prepared to



establish companies where thousands of women from Self-Help Groups will run factories producing clothes, ration items and spices. The aim is to make every group member a "Lakhpati Didi." He further said that the Prime Minister has given the respectful name "Divyangjan" to differently-abled persons. Disability certificates are being issued here and from April onwards, Divyangjan will receive ₹1500 as pension. He also directed officials to verify cases where farmers are unaware that their PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi installment has already been transferred to their accounts. Eligible farmers are also being connected with the scheme through proper land record verification. Under the Chief Minister Housing

Scheme, eligible destitute women are being provided housing facilities. The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Prime Minister has announced a target to make 6 crore women from Self-Help Groups across the country "Lakhpati Didis." In Uttar Pradesh alone, the government aims to make 1 crore women Lakhpati Didis. In Kaushambi district, around 1.54 lakh women are already associated with Self-Help Groups. Across the state, efforts are underway to connect 3 crore women with Self-Help Groups and empower them economically. Women preparing food items can avail 35% subsidy from the Food Processing Department and 90% subsidy is available on solar installations for women Entrepreneurs. He also said that

law and order in the state is strong and strict action is being taken against criminals. Within the next six months, the strength of Self-Help Groups will be increased threefold by adding more women. Dairy units and spice factories will also be established for the groups. Quality products of the groups will be marketed and branded to enable sales even in international Markets. In Kaushambi district, 11,863 Self-Help Groups have been formed, connecting 1,30,493 women. Out of these, 6155 groups have received ₹18.46 crore as revolving fund, while 5021 groups have been given ₹75.31 crore as Community Investment Fund. Currently, 10,864 women have already become Lakhpati Didis and the target is to make 1 lakh women Lakhpati Didis in the district. Skill development programs are also being conducted for women associated with the groups. The government has taken a pledge to make the poor economically prosperous. He added that the Prime Minister has set a vision to make the country.

Action taken against officers and accountants for negligence, explanation sought

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. The administration has taken action against several officers and accountants for negligence and indifference in government work. Explanations have been sought from the concerned officials, while some have been issued adverse entries.

Bara Tehsil
The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Bara, has issued notices to the superintendents of Community Health Centers Jasra and Shankargarh, and the Electricity Sub-Divisional Officers of Kaundhiara and Rewa Road, for their absence from the Sampurna Samadhan Diwas. Due to the absence of the officials, complaints related to the department could not be resolved on time. Furthermore, due to the increasing number of complaints and unsatisfactory feedback, all have been asked to appear within three days and provide explanations. Failure to respond within the stipulated time will



result in a report to higher authorities and further action will be taken.

Handia Tehsil
The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Handia, has issued an adverse entry to Anil Kumar Paswan,

accountant of the Upardaha area, for negligence in work related to important government schemes—farmer registry, digital crop survey, and Tehsil Diwas.

The Sub-District Magistrate, Meja, has issued an adverse entry to Ramashankar, the village women's area accountant, for failing to register a widow's name in an inheritance case and for negligence

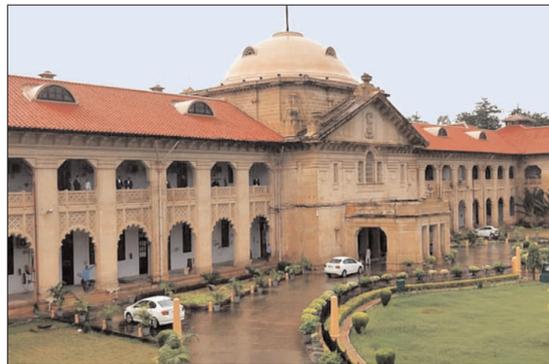
in his duties. **Koraon Tehsil**
The Tehsildar, Koraon, has issued a special adverse entry to Shubham Kumar Mishra, the accountant of the Bhagesar area, for failing

to comply with orders from higher officials in a timely manner and tarnishing the tehsil's image. He also warned of strict action if such a mistake is repeated in the future.

Life sentence overturned in 48-year-old case

Prayagraj. The Allahabad High Court has overturned the life sentence of Guru Prasad, accused of murdering a former soldier 48 years ago at the Musafir Khana police station in Sultanpur. The sessions court had convicted him of complicity in the murder and sentenced him. The High Court stated that the prosecution failed to prove the charges against the appellant. He was carrying a stick, and the murder was caused by a gunshot

from a co-accused, in which he had no role. The sessions court had awarded life imprisonment in 1981. The court overturned the life sentence awarded by the sessions court on March 18, 1981, and revoked the bail bond. This decision was given by a division bench of Justice C.D. Singh and Justice Devendra Singh while hearing the appeals of Ram Hriday, Shivram, and Guru Prasad. The appeals had been awaited due to the



death of two of the accused. On the orders of the Chief Justice, the appeals were transferred

from the Lucknow bench to the principal bench of the Allahabad High Court for disposal. Death occurred at Lucknow Military Hospital. It is known that Bhagwati Sevak has five brothers. He filed an FIR for attempted murder against his brother. He alleged that while he was sitting with his brothers, the accused's cousin and others surrounded him with weapons and sticks. The main accused opened fire, injur-

ing Tribhuvan Dutt. This incident occurred due to a feud. The incident occurred in 1978. The injured was taken to the hospital and later transferred to Lucknow Military Hospital. He died during treatment. The medical report stated the cause of death as septicemia. The deceased was 35 years old. The police filed a charge sheet. The Sessions Court pronounced the sentence, which was challenged in an appeal.

The festival of Holi is a symbol of mutual love, harmony: **Mulayam Singh**

Meja. The festival of Holi was celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy on Wednesday in the village council of Lotadh in the Meja development block. People shared the joy of Holi by applying colors to each other. On the occasion of Holi, Village Head Mulayam Singh Yadav played Holi with the villagers in the Panchayat Bhawan premises and wished everyone a happy Holi by applying colors to them.

Women employees of the Municipal Corporation will be honored on Women's Day



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Municipal Corporation Employees Association will honor women employees of the Municipal Corporation on Monday.

The event will be held at 3 p.m. at the

Union Building at the Municipal Corporation headquarters. Association officials stated that women employees working in the Municipal Corporation who perform their duties with dedication, commitment, and hard work will be honored at the event.

During the event, the officials of the

Association will recognize the women's contributions and present them with certificates of honor. Municipal Employees Association President Manoj Kumar Srivastava stated that officials and members of the employee organization will be present at the event. City journalists have also been invited.

Six-year-old boy abducted while returning from school, car-borne assailants flee

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. On Friday, a six-year-old boy was abducted by car-borne assailants in Sarayankala village, Manda police station area. The incident has caused a stir in the area. Police have registered a case and launched a search for the child. According to reports, Om Prakash Sharma, a resident of Sarayankala, has a six-year-old son, Pratik, who is a LKG student at a private school in Akodha, Meja area. The school van left him in front of his house around 3 pm on Friday. His grandfather, Nageshwar, had just arrived to pick him up. It is reported that the assailants arrived in a car and, in front of his grandfather's eyes, forcibly placed the child in the car and fled towards Onaur village.



Upon learning of the incident, the family was devastated. The child's mother, Aarti, is inconsolable, while his father, Om Prakash, works in a private company in Mumbai. Upon receiving the information, Dighiya

outpost in-charge Vicky Gupta and Manda police station in-charge Anil Verma arrived at the scene with police force. Police have begun examining footage from nearby CCTV cameras. During the investi-

gation, a white car was seen driving suspiciously. Police say the case is being investigated seriously and teams have been deployed to search for the child. They claim they will soon find the perpetrators.

Editorial

Iranian Ship Sinks: How A 2016 Deal With US Could Spell Trouble For India

The coordinated action of the US and Israel against Iran has fast emerged as a watershed moment for security dynamics in the Middle East. On March 4, the US Department of War confirmed that a torpedo launched by an American submarine sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka, near Indian waters in the Indian Ocean. This attack has introduced a new naval dimension into the conflict, which has thus far remained limited to air power. Touted as the first major naval casualty in the Indian Ocean since the Second World War, the attack by the US on the Iranian warship is significant in many ways for the security dynamics in the Indian Ocean, as well as for India's own interests in the region.

The IRIS Dena was subjected to the torpedo attack while it was returning to Iran after having recently participated in the Indian Fleet Review and Exercise MILAN in Vishakhapatnam in February 2026. Following the attack and destruction of the warship, in compliance with obligations under international laws, the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force promptly initiated search and rescue efforts. At least 87 people on board the ship have died as a result of this attack. While those who have been rescued are being treated in Sri Lanka, two other Iranian warships have reportedly taken refuge in Colombo. Given that this took place close to India's territorial waters, and soon after the warship and its personnel participated in an exercise hosted by the Indian Navy, a rethink must be set in motion in New Delhi about what this development entails and how it can best be navigated.



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

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

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

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

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

How 12 'Insurers' Sitting In London Paralysed Hormuz?

Edward Lloyd used to keep a coffee house on Tower Street in the City of London since around 1688. The establishment was nothing remarkable to look at. Ship captains who had docked at Wapping would walk up to exchange intelligence: which vessel had come home safely from the Indies, which had not, where pirates had last been reported. Merchants and moneylenders followed. Those willing to shoulder a portion of a voyage's risk began writing their names and their accepted liabilities below the details of the insured - beneath - literally. Underwriters. From this arrangement of wooden tables and coffee cups grew Lloyd's of London and, over three and a half centuries, the entire legal and financial architecture of marine insurers that makes global seaborne trade possible.

In March 2026, the successors to those Tower Street underwriters did something more consequential than any naval fleet. They picked up the telephone.

When The Underwriter Hangs Up

Hours after Operation Epic Fury began on February 28, war risk underwriters started cancelling policies for transits of the Strait of Hormuz. Seven members of the International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs issued 72-hour cancellation notices on March 1. All twelve followed. The International Group covers approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage. These clubs cover the full suite of liabilities, including cargo damage, crew injury, and environmental pollution. Without their backing, a ves-



sel becomes an economic pariah. Ports refuse entry, cargoes go unloaded, banks withhold financing, charters evaporate. By March 3, maritime tracking platforms recorded zero active tanker transits inside the strait. Not because of Iranian mines. Not because the Fifth Fleet had sealed the approaches. Because the underwriter had hung up. The numbers are worth stating plainly. The Strait of Hormuz handles roughly 20 million barrels of crude and petroleum products daily, a fifth of global demand forced through a tectonic bottleneck 21 miles wide between Iran and Oman. As much as 20% of all seaborne LNG passes through the same narrows. Baseline war-risk premiums before hostilities stood at 0.25 per cent of hull value, approximately USD 250,000 per voyage. Within 48 hours of the first strikes, rates had risen to 1% (a million dollars per transit), and for tankers with American or Israeli connections, no rate was available at any price. QatarEnergy halted LNG production at its facilities at Ras Laffan and Mesaieed after Iranian strikes. European benchmark gas prices rose nearly 50%. Asian LNG spot prices jumped 39%. As many as 150 vessels lay at anchor in open waters off Iraq, Saudi

Arabia, and Qatar, waiting for orders that did not come.

A Complex Web Of Insurers

The mechanism deserves examination, shorn of jargon. The International Group is not a free market. It is a tightly coordinated oligopoly. Twelve mutual clubs, administered from a London secretariat, whose pooling agreement shares liabilities above USD 10 million across the membership. Behind them sits a reinsurance layer, and behind that a retrocession market of roughly USD 41 billion that explicitly excludes war risks, it covers earthquakes and storms, not missiles and drones. When seven clubs cancelled simultaneously, no backstop existed to replace them. European insurance regulation (Solvency II) actively incentivised withdrawal, as geopolitical uncertainty rises, so do capital adequacy requirements, making it rational.

For firms to cancel rather than hold exposure while slowly raising reserves. The Red Sea disruption since late 2023 had already drained global war-risk buffers by the time Hormuz became a question.

The Tanker War of the 1980s is instructive by contrast. Between 1984 and 1988, roughly 500 merchant vessels

were attacked in the Persian Gulf. Insurance premiums spiked. Flags changed. Yet trade continued, because war risk insurance itself did not withdraw entirely from the market. What changed in March 2026 is that the retrocession layer (the reinsurers' reinsurers) declined to carry the exposure at any price. As Skuld, one of the twelve clubs, put it in its notice: "reinsurers' appetite for war risk exposure is tightening, and in practical terms, it will result in reinsurers withdrawing capacity at short notice." The market ceased to exist. Operation Praying Mantis crippled Iran's operational naval capacity in eight hours on April 18, 1988. The International Group's clubs needed less than seventy-two hours in 2026 to close the same strait without firing a single shot.

The Economics Of Shipowners

To this, one further institutional layer must be added. The International Transport Workers' Federation and the Joint Negotiating Group designated the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Strait of Hormuz a formal high-risk warlike operations area - triggering a bonus equal to basic wages for every day a seafarer spends in the zone, double compensation for death or disability, and a right to refuse sailing with repatriation at the company's expense. When the crews themselves acquire a legal right to refuse passage, the economics for shipowners shift entirely. No captain needed an IRGC warning to know the calculus had changed. Donald Trump's response has been interesting.

On March 4, he announced that the United States Development Finance Corporation (whose statutory mandate is to mobilise private capital in support of American foreign policy) would backstop political risk insurance for all maritime trade through the Gulf, at what he described as a very reasonable price. He also offered US Navy escorts. The move confirmed what the episode had already demonstrated: insurance today is a strategic instrument. The state that controls the underwriting controls the passage. Iran figured out something the Pentagon had not. You do not need to mine a strait. You need only make it uninsurable.

Why India Should Be Very, Very Worried

India should be paying close attention. In the entire International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs, not one member is domiciled in India. The Russian crude episode after 2022 made this vulnerability plain. When the Price Cap Coalition (comprising Australia, Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) instructed P&I clubs to deny cover for cargoes traded above USD 60 a barrel, Indian shipowners and charterers associated with those clubs found themselves squeezed between their commercial interest and their insurer's compliance obligations. In 2023, the Finance Minister acknowledged the gap publicly, calling for a full-fledged, India-owned, India-based P&I entity. The acknowledgement has not yet

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

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

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

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

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

momentum could impact not just the party, but also its key allies—Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United), Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), and Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular). In that light, the Eid outreach feels less like an act of cultural generosity and more like a political buffer—an attempt to soften the blow in a state where coalition math can shift quickly. That analysis may hold some truth—but it also seems to overlook the broader outreach pattern the BJP has been steadily building, particularly toward poor Muslims, Pasmanda communities, and Muslim women. Over the past few years, the party has made targeted efforts to create an opening within sections of the Muslim electorate long seen as distant. In the 2023 urban local body elections in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP went as far as fielding Pasmanda Muslim candidates—a move once considered politically unthinkable. Of the 395 Muslim candidates it fielded, 54 went on to win. These numbers may seem modest when seen in the larger national context, but they speak to a subtle shift in the party's approach. One that goes beyond gift boxes and hints at reimagining of BJP's political strategy—at least on the surface. BJP's effort to engage with Pasmanda and poor Muslims isn't new. In UP, Danish Ansari, a Pasmanda Muslim, was appointed as Minister of State for Minority Welfare, Muslim Waqf, and Haj in Yogi Adityanath's second cabinet—which was seen by many as a symbolic but politically significant move. The party and its spokespersons often claim that it was the BJP that made APJ Abdul Kalam the President of India, citing it as proof of its inclusive credentials. Added to this are a number of welfare schemes that directly or benefit Muslims.

India wants Rs 3 lakh cr in defense manufacturing



Delhi: The government wants to produce Rs 3 lakh crore in defence by 2029, strengthening India's standing as a global powerhouse. Now, 65% of defense equipment is made locally, up from 65-70% import dependency. According to the Ministry of Defence, 16 DPSUs, over 430 licensed enterprises, and 16,000 MSMEs boost indigenous production capabilities. "The private sector contributes 21% to total defence production, fostering innovation and efficiency," it said. The government wants to expand defence exports to Rs 50,000 crore by 2029, strengthening India's position as a global manufacturing hub and supporting economic growth. Defence exports rose 32.5% to Rs 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24 from Rs 15,920 crore in FY 2022-23. Indian defence exports increased 21 times from Rs 4,312 crore in

2004-14 to Rs 88,319 crore in 2014-24, demonstrating its growing involvement in the global security sector. India exports defense equipment to over 100 nations, with the US, France, and Armenia buying most in 2023-24. In 2024-25, the Ministry of Defence signed a record 193 contracts worth Rs 2,09,050 crore, nearly doubling the previous record. These include 177 contracts, 92% awarded to the domestic industry for Rs 1,68,922 crore, 81% of the overall contract value. This emphasis on indigenous manufacture supports defence production self-reliance.

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

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

Kotak highlights the risk in the lending business strategy



Delhi: Veteran banker Uday Kotak has expressed worries about the banks business model, pointing out the shrinking gap between deposit and lending rates, ahead of an anticipated rate decrease by the RBI, despite the fact that liquidity is still limited. According to Kotak, leading banks are increasing one-year wholesale deposits by about 8%, which, when accounting for CRR, SLR, deposit insurance, and priority sector lending requirements (but not operational costs), results in a marginal deposit cost of more than 9%. The system as a whole has restrained

growth in low-cost retail deposits (CASA non-wholesale). However, banks are offering home loans at a variable rate of 8.5%. Take out a loan at 8.5% and borrow at 9%, Spread is negative by 0.5%. Additionally, repo rates are probably going to decline. Kotak warned that if the tight deposit situation continues, it may make it difficult for banks to maintain their

business model and asked how they would handle credit and operational expenses. The majority of banks are required to connect their retail floating rate loans to the repo rate. The remarks coincided with a sharp decline in bond yields as investors awaited the RBI's next liquidity injection before its monetary policy committee's decision.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Small savings program interest rates unchanged April-June quarter

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

Cabinet approves electronic component program

Delhi: The Union Cabinet approved a six-year Rs 22,919 crore incentive program for electronic component manufacture. The initiative seeks to increase India's domestic value addition and global value chain participation. The Indian Express originally revealed that the government was developing the system, its costs, and its details. The government wants at least 91,600 direct jobs from the scheme and has tied participating firms' annual payments to job creation. Rs 4.56 lakh crore in production and Rs 59,350 crore in investment are envisaged from the scheme. The government wants to target display modules, sub assembly camera modules,



printed circuit board assemblies, lithium cell enclosures, resistors, capacitors, and ferrites. These are utilized in cell-phones, laptops, microwave ovens, refrigerators, and toasters. "This scheme will reduce component imports. We must

abandon import substitution and promote exports. After mass production, viability follows. Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said electronics production is \$120 billion and hopes to reach \$500 billion in the next years.

Gautam Adani Is India's Biggest Wealth Gainer

Delhi: According to the 'Hurun Global Rich List 2025', Gautam Adani, Adani Group Chairman, is India's greatest wealth gainer, increasing his net worth by approximately Rs 1 lakh crore. The ranking showed Adani's fortune rising 13%. Second-richest Indian on the global list, his total is Rs 8.4 lakh crore. Meanwhile, Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani fell off of the top 10 richest list. However, he leads Asia. The Hurun list ranks India third in billionaires. Tesla-SpaceX CEO Elon Musk tops Hurun Global Rich List 2025. India has 284 billionaires, 13 more than previous year.

Airtel prepaid 5,985 crore spectrum dues but stock remains unchanged



Delhi: Bharti Airtel Ltd. shares closed flat after the company and its subsidiary Bharti Hexacom Ltd. prepaid Rs 5,985 crore to the Department of Telecom, fully prepaying the 8.65% high-cost interest liabilities for the 2024 auctions. Airtel subsidiary Network i2i Ltd. voluntarily called and redeemed \$1 billion in Perpetual Notes. BSE Bharti Airtel shares down 0.04% to Rs 1,733. Large cap stock has gained 8.58 percent this year and 42.51% in a year. The market cap of Bharti

high-cost spectrum commitments for the 2025 fiscal year and Rs 66,665 crores overall. The average cumulative liability prepaid interest rate was 9.74%. Airtel had entirely prepaid liabilities with 10%, 9.75%, and 9.3% interest rates. Prepayments were made 7 years before average residual maturities. Airtel prepaid Rs 116,405 crores of scheduled instalments that would have been due on their various dates over the obligations' original lifespan. Airtel's cost of debt on spectrum liabilities.

The Reserve Bank of India will increase the price for using an ATM from Rs 21 to Rs 23

Delhi: News broke from India's central bank. There will be a cost of Rs 23 per transaction for clients using ATM banking services from May 1, 2025. The previous amount was Rs 21 for each transaction. The central bank announced that customers will still be able to use their own bank's ATMs for five free transactions per month, regardless of whether they are financial or not. There are three ATMs in major cities and five in smaller towns where they can use their card for free transactions. According to ET, a two rupee hike to the ATM interchange fee for cash withdrawals has been authorized by the Reserve Bank of India and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The revised fees were



Greater Noida Authority board authorizes Rs 5,600 crore land acquisition, important projects

Delhi: The Greater Noida Authority's 138th Board meeting approved a Rs 5,600 crore budget for 2025-26. Manoj Kumar Singh, Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary and Authority Chairman, chaired the meeting. Budget priorities include land acquisition, development, and construction. The approved budget allocates Rs 1,400 crore for land acquisition and Rs 1,973 crore for development.

announced to member banks by NPCI and are scheduled to be implemented on May 1, 2025. An increase of Rs 19 for domestic finan-

cial transactions and Rs 7 for non-financial transactions has been agreed by the National Financial Switch Steering Committee.

Income Tax wants Rs 2,209 crore from Yes Bank

Delhi: Union Minister of State for Power Yesso Naik urged state power companies to become more profitable. AI and digital technologies and cost-reflective pricing are crucial for electricity sector financial stability, the Minister said. These steps will help utilities



become financially stable, he said. He also suggested India's Ujwal DISCOM Assurance

Jojana (UDAY) for DISCOM financial turnaround and rehabilitation. The Energy Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, top officials from the Central and State governments, State Power Utilities, PFC Ltd., and

REC Ltd. attended the conference. Special invitee TATA Power Distribution, Odisha, shared their best practices and journey to prosperous DISCOMS. Member States actively engaged and presented State DISCOM overviews. They give DISCOMS good

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



Voices salute women's strength

Actress Snehlata Vasaikar and chefs Ranveer Brar, Vikas Khanna and Kunal Kapur share their thoughts on women's strength and achievements on Women's Day



International Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, personalities from the worlds of entertainment and food came together to celebrate the strength, resilience and achievements of women. In an exclusive chat with *The Free Press Journal*, actress Snehlata Girish Vasaikar and chefs Ranveer Brar,

Vikas Khanna and Kunal Kapur spoke about the impact women have had in their lives and professions. From inspiring families and shaping traditions to leading industries and pursuing dreams fearlessly, they highlighted the importance of recognising women's contributions and ensuring that their voices, ambitions and talents continue to be valued and celebrated across every field.

For me, womanhood is about strength, resilience, and the courage to keep moving forward no matter what life brings. Every woman plays multiple roles as a professional, a caregiver, a dreamer, and yet she continues to give her best with grace and determination. On this Women's Day, I celebrate every woman who believes in her dreams, supports other women, and creates her own path with confidence and kindness.

— Snehlata Girish Vasaikar, actress

The strongest influence in my life has always been the women around me, from my mother and grandmother to the many talented women I've worked with in kitchens across the world. Their resilience, compassion, and dedication inspire me every day. Women's Day is a reminder to celebrate their strength and to ensure that every woman's voice, dream, and contribution is valued.

— Vikas Khanna, Indian-American celebrity chef and restaurateur



Vikas Khanna with his mother

Women's Day is not just about celebrating women for the roles they have traditionally played, but about recognising the space they are rightfully claiming across every field today. From boardrooms to kitchens, laboratories to film sets, women are shaping the future with confidence, intelligence, and leadership. The real celebration lies in creating systems and environments where talent and ambition can thrive without barriers. When women move forward, societies move forward with them.

— Ranveer Brar, chef, television personality, author, restaurateur and actor



Ranveer Brar poses with his mother



Kunal Kapur alongside his sister

Food has always been a beautiful reflection of love, tradition, and care qualities that women have nurtured for generations. The recipes we cherish today carry the stories and wisdom of the women who came before us. This Women's Day, I salute their passion, strength, and the incredible role they play in shaping our lives.

— Kunal Kapur, chef and restaurateur

ENGLISH VINGLISH

Directed by Gauri Shinde, the film features Sridevi as Shashi, a homemaker mocked for not speaking English. During a trip to New York, she enrolls in a language class and gradually regains her confidence and self-respect.



Photos: IMDB

Films where women challenge patriarchy

From *English Vinglish* to *Thappad*, these films highlight women questioning norms, finding their voice & challenging patriarchy

Indian cinema has a long tradition of women-led stories, from classics like *Mother India* and *Bandini* to more contemporary narratives. Over the years, filmmakers have explored women's lives, struggles and aspirations with greater depth and sensitivity. These films present women who question social expectations, confront injustice and rediscover their identity. This International Women's Day, revisit some memorable films that portray women's perspectives in powerful and engaging ways while challenging patriarchal norms and celebrating resilience, independence and self-worth.

Directed by Anubhav Sinha, the film follows a young widow navigating grief and family expectations. As secrets unfold, she questions social norms and begins discovering her own voice and independence.



PAGGLAIT

Starring Sanya Malhotra, the film follows a young widow navigating grief and family expectations. As secrets unfold, she questions social norms and begins discovering her own voice and independence.



THAPPAD

Directed by Anubhav Sinha, the film follows Anubhav Sinha, played by Taapsee Pannu, whose life changes after her husband slaps her. She begins questioning years of compromise and the acceptance of domestic violence.

LIPSTICK UNDER MY BURKHA

Set in Bhopal, the film follows four women from different generations seeking freedom, love and independence while pushing back against the restrictions imposed by family and society.



FAKT MAHILAO MAATE

This Gujarati social dramedy follows Chintan, a man who suddenly begins hearing the thoughts of women around him. The experience forces him to understand their struggles and rethink his behaviour and attitudes.

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

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

- OTT Releases**
- NETFLIX**
 - Gabby's Dollhouse S13
 - Blue Therapy S1
 - Boyfriend on Demand
 - Hello Bachhon
- AMAZON PRIME**
 - Young Sherlock
 - Subedaar
- JIOSTAR**
 - Chiraiya
- SONY LIV**
 - Jazz City
- ZEE5**
 - Jab Khuli Kitaab
- Theatrical Releases**
 - Hoppers
 - The Bride

Rani Mukerji exits OMG 3

As per reports, Rani Mukerji has exited Akshay Kumar's *OMG 3* due to creative differences with the director



Moviegoers were super excited for *Oh My Goddess (OMG 3)*, as Rani Mukerji and Akshay Kumar were all set to share screen space for the first time in Amit Rai's directorial. However, on Friday, a report in *Variety* India claimed that the actress is no longer a part of the project, and the talks of her starring in the film were just at the initial stage, and she never signed the papers. However, according to a report in *Bollywood Hungama*, Rani was on board for the film, and even the pre-production had started. But, due to creative differences with the director, the actress opted out of the film. A source told the portal, "She started to have creative differences with Amit Rai. She had a certain way of looking at the script, including post-production, and expected Amit to follow her experience. Amit, on the other hand, had a strong counter perspective on the presentation of the film. The duo eventually could not gel well, leading to a fall-out of sorts."

Photo: Instagram @yashrajfilmstalent

Ranveer returns for revenge



The makers of *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* unveiled the much-awaited trailer of Aditya Dhar's directorial on Saturday, featuring Ranveer Singh on a quest to seek vengeance in a high-stakes mission to dismantle a terror network. The trailer starts with Singh returning with ferocious intensity in dual avatars, Jaskirat Singh Rang and Hamza Ali Mazari, rising to power in *Iyari*. It continues as Rang works from inside the gang to bring down a terror outfit. The trailer ends with him saying, "Now India will decide the future of Pakistan". The upcoming film is a sequel to Dhar's 2025 film *Dhurandhar*, which crossed over Rs 1000 crore at the worldwide box office. It also featured R Madhavan as the strategic mastermind Ajay Sanyal, Arjun Rampal as ISI Major Iqbal, and Sanjay Dutt delivering raw, commanding force as SP Chaudhary. *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* will release on March 19.



Cooking Up A Storm With Divya Dutta

Divya Dutta is always hungry! For good work, as is evidenced in her latest performance in the Telugu web series *Mayasabha*. But what does she eat when she is hungry for food? Let's find out.

My dietary preference: First thing I have when I wake up is hot water with saunf, zeera and ajwain.

My breakfast: I come from the school of thought that you must have a sumptuous breakfast, a good lunch and a light dinner. So it is either *poha* or oats or eggs.

For lunch: I don't have much wheat, so I have *chawal ki roti* with some *sabzi* and *dal*. I don't have curds as I'm lactose intolerant. I have more of the *sabzi* and less of the carbs.

My evening snack is: Around 4 pm, I have black coffee and a fruit because I don't think you should eat fruits after 6 pm.

My dinner: I like lots of colours in my food. I have read that your diet is healthy if you have lots of colour, so if I'm having a soup, I have some boiled veggies along with it. If I'm very hungry, then I'll probably have millet rice or beetroot and greens with *dal* and soup, so the platter looks very colourful.

My favourite desserts are: Mostly Bengali. I like *mishti doi*, *kheer kadam* and *gur ka rasgullas* very much.

My favourite restaurants: Are many. I love Pan Asian food very much and I think I like food very much. I like seafood. The food at Chin Chin Choo, Fable, Conservatory and Mainland China is delicious.

I can cook: Lots of things very well. I make

chana, Punjabi *kadi*, little snackies and *parathas* very well.

My favourite cooks in my family: My *nani* made the most divine *gobi parathas*. My mom started cooking very late, but she had *jaadu* in her hands. I have had a house help for many years now and she has learned all mama's recipes and she makes them very well. We call her Kapuu.

My idea of a romantic meal: A candlelight dinner, holding hands and sipping wine and probably eating cheese, grapes and light munchies.

The weirdest food I have had: I wouldn't remember the weirdest food I've had, but I've been quite experimental.

My favourite beverage: My *ghar ka nimbu paani*. It is very popular in the industry as well. I add some special *masala*.

I feel guilty after having: A midnight snack. I have dinner by seven, so there is an urge to eat as I stay up late. So I eat and guilt follows.

My favourite food: I love Hyderabad *khaana* because of the spices. I was shooting for a film with Anil Kapoor and our DOP was from Hyderabad. He would get two dabbas of his Amma's food; one had *rasam* and *sambhar* and one had like five different kinds of veggies. That was the spiciest food I've ever had, but it was divine. My director and I made a beeline to his van to have that lunch. It was divine. My mouth is still watering thinking of that food.



Recipe of Wooden Log

INGREDIENTS :

- 1 packet of Marie biscuits
- 3 teaspoons cocoa powder
- 5 teaspoons chocolate powder
- 6 teaspoons powdered sugar (or as required)
- 2 teaspoons corn flour
- 4 teaspoons Nutella
- 1/4 cup milk / fresh cream
- 1/2 cup chopped assorted nuts (almonds, cashewnuts and walnuts)

METHOD

In a bowl add cocoa powder, chocolate powder, sugar and cornflour together. Add Nutella, milk or fresh cream and give it a nice mix. Put about 2 teaspoons of the chocolate Nutella mixture between two Marie biscuits and sandwich them. Place it horizontally, like a log, in a dish. Pour the leftover chocolate-Nutella mixture on top of the Marie biscuits. Garnish with chopped nuts and refrigerate for a couple of hours. Cut it slanting so that it looks like a log and therefore it's called a wooden log.

DAY 8 | Gulf states under renewed attack; Tel Aviv hunts for missing navigator Israel hammers Beirut, Tehran

DUBAI

Iran's president rejected a demand by the US for an unconditional surrender on Saturday and apologised for Iran's attacks on regional countries, as Israel and the US kept up their airstrikes targeting the Islamic Republic.

Gulf countries say they have intercepted more ballistic missiles and drones launched from Iran. Saudi Arabia said it stopped four drones attacking the country's massive Shaybah oil field, the second attack in hours. The Saudi Defence Ministry posted on X that 16 drones heading towards Shaybah, one of the largest oil fields in West Asia, were intercepted in the early hours. The ministry did not specify the origin of the drone attack.

The Shaybah field is located in the remote Empty Quarter desert and produces one million barrels of crude per day, according to Saudi Arabia's state-owned petroleum company Aramco.

In 2019, the field, along with other oil facilities in the nation, was targeted in large-scale drone attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Dubai International Airport, one of the busiest in the world, came under drone attack several times, with flyers reporting at least one impact and several interceptions.

Meanwhile, Israeli warplanes hammered Beirut, Lebanon, and Iran's Tehran.

ISRAELI OP IN LEBANON

The Israeli military said its special forces conducted an operation deep inside Lebanon to gather information about an Israeli navigator who has been missing for



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in Beirut, Lebanon

DEVELOPMENTS

The US military's Central Command says it has struck over 3,000 targets in Iran and destroyed 43 Iranian warships since Feb 28

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke to Iran's Masoud Pezeshkian, offered condolences for the deaths and received a report on developments

UK PM Keir Starmer spoke to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and vowed military help—fighter jets, helicopters, and a destroyer—to defend the kingdom, if needed

Also, UK Typhoon jets are scheduled to arrive in Qatar to assist with defensive air patrols

US bomber lands in the UK after warning of surge in strikes on Iran. B-1 Lancer, which can carry 24 cruise missiles, arrived at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire on Friday evening

Evidence from Iran's armed forces shows geography of some countries is openly and covertly at the enemy's disposal. Heavy attacks on these targets will continue.

GHOLAMHOSSEIN MOHSENI EJEI, Iran's judiciary chief

nearly 40 years.

The Israeli army's Arabic spokesman posted on X no evidence was found related to Israeli pilot Ron Arad, who was captured alive after his fighter jet crashed over southern Lebanon in 1986.

According to Lebanon's state media, Israeli forces

landed in the eastern Lebanese town of Nabi Chit late on Friday and were intercepted by members of the militant Hezbollah group, triggering a gunfight that lasted until early Saturday. Ron Arad was believed to have been held in Nabi Chit till 1988, when he went missing.

US approves sale of 12k bombs to Israel

WASHINGTON

The US State Dept has okayed a possible Foreign Military Sale to Israel of munitions and related support services, including 12,000 aerial bombs.

The deal is worth \$151.8 million, it said. Israel has requested to purchase 12,000 BLU-110A/B general purpose 1,000-pound bomb bodies, Xinhua news agency reported, quoting the US State Department statement.

"The Secretary of State (Marco Rubio) has determined and provided detailed justification that an emergency exists that requires the immediate sale to the Government of Israel of the above defence articles and defence services in the national security interests of the United States, thereby



waiving the Congressional review requirements under Section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act," it said.

"The proposed sale will improve Israel's capability to meet current and future threats, strengthen its homeland defence, and serve as a deterrent to regional threats," it added.

The package also includes US government and contractor engineering, logistics, and technical support services, along with other related elements of logistics and programme support, the statement said.

Saudi Arabia warns Iran against 'miscalculation'

The Saudi defence minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, urged Iran on Saturday to "avoid miscalculation" after missile and drone launches at the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia's defence ministry said earlier in the day it had blocked repeated missile launches at an airbase housing US military personnel and drone attacks at a major oil field. The kingdom reported at least two drone attacks this week targeting its Ras Tanura oil refinery.

In a post on X on Saturday after meeting Pakistan's military chief, Prince Khalid said: "We stressed that such actions undermine regional security and stability and expressed hope that the Iranian side will exercise wisdom and avoid miscalculation."

The defence ministry said

FLIGHTS TO DOHA

Qatar Airways said it would operate six flights into Doha on Sunday through a "safe corridor," as the country's airspace remains closed. The state-owned airline said the flights would come from five European cities as well as Bangkok. Qatar's Defence Ministry said it repelled a ballistic missile attack.

ISRAEL: HIT HEZBOLLAH TARGETS IN LEBANON

The latest wave of Israeli airstrikes included targets in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley, the Israeli military said.

The Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah said its fighters clashed with an Israeli force that landed there late on Friday. Israel hasn't commented on the fighting in the Bekaa Valley.

The military said its Saturday strikes hit rocket launchers, weapons storage facilities and two command centres of Hezbollah's Radwan Force in southern Lebanon.

BAHRAIN REPELS FRESH ATTACKS

Bahrain intercepted two missiles and a drone on Saturday, it said. That brought the total to 86 missiles and 148 drones intercepted over Bahrain since February 28.

Meanwhile, President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has said the United Arab Emirates was now "in a time of war" in his first public remarks.

In a strongly worded message, the Emirati leader said that the UAE remains resilient and prepared to defend itself amid the growing security crisis. He declared the nation has "thick skin and bitter flesh—we are no easy prey."

Warnings against '5th column'

Authorities have issued warnings promising use of force against anyone in Iran engaging in actions perceived to harm national security and aid "enemies," as war with the US and Israel enters its second week.

The ministry of intelligence told Iranians a number of "American-Zionist mercenaries" have been photographing missile impact points to send the footage to "terrorist satellite networks" and online pages based outside Iran.

These "soldiers of Israel" were "acting as the fifth column of the Zionist regime and its eyes inside the country", it said, adding, they will be severely punished in accordance with a law amended to dole out heavy sentences in the aftermath of June war, 'Al Jazeera' reported.

US to seize \$15mn tied to Iran oil network

The US has filed civil forfeiture complaints seeking to seize over \$15 million allegedly linked to an illicit Iranian oil distribution network accused of evading American sanctions and using the US financial system to support entities tied to Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

DoJ said the complaints were filed in the US District Court for Columbia, alleging over \$15.3 million was used to fund a network that sold and shipped Iranian oil in violation of US sanctions. As per the complaints, the funds are subject to forfeiture as they were intended to facilitate violations of sanctions imposed under International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

Armed robots take to the battlefield in Ukraine war

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, the war in Ukraine has developed into a high-tech conflict. Swarms of spy and killer drones have set the skies of Ukraine ablaze, and uncrewed boats have crippled the Russian navy in the Black Sea, the BBC reported.

Now, Ukraine has embarked on a massive programme to deploy armed robots on the ground. Uncrewed ground vehicles (UGVs), or ground robot systems as they are known in Ukrainian military parlance, have proven their worth. Armed robots take to the battlefield in Ukraine war.

His battalion has also been using explosive-laden, battery-powered kamikaze UGVs to blow up enemy positions and hideouts. Unlike aerial drones that buzz overhead, they make no sound to warn the enemy of an impending strike. The deputy commander of the 33rd Detached Mechanised Brigade's tank battalion, who goes by the callsign Afghan, claims one Ukrainian UGV armed with a machine gun ambushed a Russian personnel carrier, while a robot defended a Ukrainian position for weeks.

Afghan admits there are limits to the killer robots' autonomy on the battlefield, and says many of them are self-imposed, because of ethics and international humanitarian law.

"Modern UGVs are part-autonomous. They can move on their own, they can observe and detect the enemy. But still, the decision to open fire is made by a human, their operator," Afghan says. "Robots can misidentify the wrong person or attack a civilian. That's why the final decision must be made by an operator."

Which means in most cases on the battlefield armed UGVs are remote-controlled by operators over the internet from a safe distance.

Ukraine's lethal UGVs can be armed with grenade launchers as well as machine guns, and can also be deployed to plant landmines or



barbed wire. But the vast majority of its uncrewed vehicles are still used for their original purpose of delivering supplies and evacuating the wounded. The role of armed UGVs will soon grow exponentially, according to Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Ukraine's former commander-in-chief and now ambassador to the UK.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attack and called for an international response. Russia struck Ukraine overnight with 29 missiles and 480 drones.

10 KILLED IN KHARKIV

At least 10 people, including two children, were killed and 10 others were wounded on Saturday by a Russian missile that hit a five-storey residential building in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, officials said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attack and called for an international response. Russia struck Ukraine overnight with 29 missiles and 480 drones.

Af-Pak border clashes: 118k people displaced, says UN

United Nations: Ongoing military confrontations along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border have triggered significant internal displacement, with an estimated 1,180,000 people forced from their homes amid the recent escalation in hostilities, according to recent reports from a UN refugee agency.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 115,000 individuals have been displaced on the Afghan side of the border, while 3,000 have fled their residences in neighbouring Pakistan. The displacement figures underscore the deepening humanitarian toll of the cross-border violence, reports Xinhua news agency.

Further, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan issued a statement expressing profound apprehension over the ongoing clashes between Afghan and Pakistani security forces. **-IANS**

15 ultras killed in Balochistan

Islamabad: Pakistani security forces have killed 15 terrorists in separate intelligence-based operations in the restive Balochistan, the army said.

Intelligence-based operations were conducted on Thursday after the reported presence of militants. In the first operation in Harnai, 12 terrorists were killed. In Basima, the forces killed three terrorists. **-PTI**

WAR SNIPPETS

FIRES RAGE IN TEHRAN
Tehran's night sky lit up by fires, with thick plumes of smoke coming from the direction of the main commercial airport. Explosions rocked the airport overnight, with eyewitnesses reporting a burning plane on the tarmac.

Residents in the Iranian capital said, "last night was the worst" since Feb 28.

PAKISTAN INCREASES PETROL, DIESEL PRICES

Pakistan govt in an overnight decision has raised petrol and high-speed diesel prices by PKR 55/litre each, the highest-ever hike. It announced the hike with the consolation the country has sufficient petroleum reserves. Now, the ex-depot price of high-speed diesel was fixed at PKR 335.86/ltr for the coming week, up by 20% from PKR 280.86/ltr. The ex-depot price

of petrol was revised to PKR 321.17/ltr from PKR 266.17/ltr, reflecting a rise of 17%.

PAK MAN WITH TIES TO IRAN CONVICTED FOR PLOT TO KILL TRUMP

A Pakistani man with ties to Iran has been convicted in New York for plotting to assassinate US President Donald Trump and other American politicians to avenge the death of Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, killed in 2020. Asif Raza Merchant, 48, was convicted by a federal jury in a Brooklyn court on

Friday of murder for hire and attempting to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries. Merchant faces up to life in prison. US Attorney General Pamela Bondi said Merchant came to America with a plot to kill Trump. The US Justice Department said Merchant was a trained IRGC operative, and he had admitted at trial in 2024 IRGC sent him to the US to arrange for political assassinations. Targets could include Trump, Biden and Nikki Haley. Merchant stated he understood the "target would be Trump", DoJ said.



BEIRUT EVACUEES SLEEP IN TENTS, CARS

In Lebanon, some residents in the southern Beirut suburb of Dahieh left their homes amid evacuation orders and ongoing air strikes by Israel. People from the area, a Hezbollah stronghold, have been sleeping in tents and cars.

Pichai's pay hiked to \$692 million

Google, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Alphabet, has raised CEO Sundar Pichai's total potential compensation to \$692 million over three years, making him one of the highest-paid executives globally, the 'Financial Times' reported. The bulk of the package comes from performance stock units worth \$126 million, split into two tranches. The PSUs are linked to Alphabet's total shareholder return relative to the S&P 100, and could double to \$252 million if performance targets are

exceeded, or yield nothing if benchmarks are missed.

Pichai will receive \$84 million in restricted stock vesting monthly over three years, alongside an annual salary of \$2 million. The tech giant also introduced new stock incentives totalling up to \$350 million, tied to the growth of its autonomous ventures. The Google CEO will receive \$130 million in Waymo stock and \$45 million in Wing Aviation shares, both capable of paying out up to 200% of target value. **-IANS**



Pak: Imran Khan party leaders & supporters jailed

Islamabad: An anti-terrorism court sent 47 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders and supporters to prison for 10 years and a PKR 5,000,000 fine each in absentia for vandalism and violence during the May 9, 2023, protest.

The countrywide protest was launched by workers and leaders of PTI following the arrest of former PM and party founder Imran Khan in Islamabad. A group of protesters also tried to storm the General Headquarters, the seat of the army chief, in Rawalpindi, resulting in vandalism of the properties. **PTI**

NAIROBI RAIN KILLS 23

NAIROBI

Twenty-three people died, flights were disrupted, and the military was deployed as motorists in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, were stranded for hours on Saturday after roads were flooded following heavy rains overnight.

The Nairobi police said some people drowned and others were electrocuted, warning the toll may rise as search and rescue operations continue. Over 100 vehicles were damaged, with some overturning on the roadside.

Kenya Airways said flights were hit, with some diverted



to Mombasa. The military was deployed to assist emergency rescue. Heavy rain began on Friday and continued overnight, submerging vehicles and forcing motorists to wade through waist-deep water to reach higher ground.

TORNADOES SWEEPS US PARTS; 8 KILLED

At least 8 people died after

tornadoes and powerful storms struck Michigan and Oklahoma over the past two days, officials said, as the met office warned more severe weather could impact large parts of the US in the coming days. The deadly storms, which hit between March 5-6, left widespread destruction and prompted emergency warnings in multiple states.

Briefs

300+ people abducted in Nigeria

Islamic militants attacked a town in Nigeria on Friday, abducting over 300 people, including women and children, officials said. The attack took place at Ngoshe in Borno state, as per Bulama Sawa, an official from Gwoza. The attack was likely in retaliation for an operation by the military that killed 3 commanders of the militant Boko Haram group. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Enhance loyalty: Xi

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday called on PLA to enhance political loyalty after the recent purge of the top brass of the military, while a top general called on the defence personnel to resolutely obey the Chinese leader's command. Meeting a largely condensed delegation of military officials of PLA and People's Armed Police Force at the National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament, Xi stressed on fully leveraging the unique strengths of enhancing political loyalty in the military, Xinhua reported.

Briefs

NEW DELHI

Varun bowled too full or too short: Chawla



Mystery spinner Varun Chakaravarty has paid the price for bowling "too full or too short" in the last two matches of the T20 World Cup, believes former India spinner Piyush Chawla. Chakaravarty returned figures of 1/40 and 1/64 against the West Indies and England in the last two games. "I feel sometimes when you get desperate or when you try to do too many things, you end up bowling too full or too short, and that's exactly what's happening with Varun," Chawla told JioStar.

MELBOURNE

Crash forces Verstappen to start 20th



Max Verstappen was cleared by Formula 1's medical team after X-rays on his hands following a crash in qualifying that will see him start 20th in Sunday's Australian Grand Prix. The four-time world champion exited Q1 just seven minutes into the session after losing control of his Red Bull while braking for Turn 1, to get a red flag. Verstappen skidded across the gravel and hit the barriers. "All good, nothing was broken," he said, adding the rear axle suddenly locked up during braking.

PERTH

Sutherland dominates India



Annabel Sutherland followed up her superb century with two key wickets to put Australia women's national cricket team firmly in control against India women' national cricket team on Day 2 of the lone day-night Test on Saturday. Sutherland struck 129 off 171 balls as Australia made 323 for a 125-run lead. India were then reduced to 105 for six at stumps, still trailing by 20 runs. Pratikha Rawal (43*) and Sneha Rana (14*) were unbeaten. Sutherland removed Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues.

FINAL PREVIEW | Suryakumar Yadav-led side aim to retain World Cup crown

History beckons for India, NZ

AHMEDABAD

Team India stand on the cusp of creating World Cup history in the shortest format of the sport with a chance to win back-to-back T20 World Cup titles against New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday.

The Suryakumar Yadav-led side will be up against not just a supremely talented New Zealand outfit but also the superstition of bad luck at the world's biggest cricket stadium that has haunted Indian teams since the infamous night of Nov 2, 2023.

The only blip in India's campaign in this edition also came at this venue in the Super Eight stage against South Africa, where a massive 76-run defeat had threatened to derail their World Cup hopes at one stage.

Thereafter, they have functioned like a well-oiled machine, with the most critical cogs in the wheel, if not all, performing at optimal levels. The explosion and resurgence of Sanju Samson has been the most heartening of them all, with his blockbuster efforts against West Indies in the last Super Eight game and the semifinal against England turning the corner for India.

Abhishek Sharma's patchy form, except in the Zimbabwe match, has been neutralised by the flamboyance and relentless power-hitting from Samson and the incredible skill sets of Ishan Kishan at the top. Skipper Suryakumar Yadav's vital contributions in the middle overs have lent much-needed solidity and stability to India's famed batting line-up. With the likes of Shivam Dube, Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya packing enough punch to slam sixes at



New Zealand's Finn Allen (front) and Tim Seifert in a training session in Ahmedabad on Saturday. PTI

Head-to-head

T20 Internationals

Matches played: **30**

India wins: **18**

New Zealand wins: **11**

No result / tied: **1**

ICC T20 World Cup

Matches: **3**

India wins: **0**

New Zealand wins: **3**

will at any stage of the game, the defending champions have most batting bases covered. Axar Patel's ability with the bat is something one cannot discount either.

In the bow-

ling department, Jasprit Bumrah is pure gold and the spinners, led by Varun Chakaravarty, have been effective and will have a role to play on Sunday although a massive turner is not expected.

Bumrah will be crucial to India thwarting New

Zealand's turbo-charged opening batters Tim Seifert and Finn Allen. The duo can be unstoppable if not taken out early and Indian bowlers will aim to remove at least one, if not both, in the first two to three overs with minimal collateral damage.

The Kiwis have played five International Cricket Council (ICC) tournament finals in the last 11 years and lost four of them, clinching only the World Test Championship final in 2021 when they beat India to claim the silverware. The bogey of being the nice guys of world cricket who finish second is something they will look to address. New Zealand will have to be at their absolute best.

England, SA, WI to leave on ICC charter flights

NEW DELHI

England, South Africa and West Indies are set to depart India over the weekend on chartered flights arranged by the International Cricket Council (ICC) following disruption to commercial air travel due to the ongoing conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran.

A source told PTI that England, who lost to India in the second semifinal on Thursday, are expected to leave Mumbai on Saturday evening on a direct flight to London. West Indies and South Africa are the other two teams still in the country. West Indies were knocked out of the T20 World Cup after India defeated them by five wickets at Eden Gardens on Sunday, while South Africa lost to New Zealand in the first semifinal in Kolkata on Wednesday.

Both teams will travel together from Kolkata on another charter flight, likely to depart on Sunday. They are expected to fly first to Johannesburg, with the West Indies contingent continuing onward to Antigua.

Squads:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarty, Mohammad Siraj, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Rinku Singh, Washington Sundar, Harshit Rana.

New Zealand: Mitchell Santner (capt), Tim Seifert, Finn Allen, Devon Conway, Mark Chapman, Cole McCoinchie, Daryl Mitchell, James Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Michael Bracewell, Jacob Duffy, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Ish Sodhi, Adam Milne.

Ricky Martin to perform

Ahmedabad: Global pop superstar Ricky Martin, alongside iconic Indian performers Falguni Pathak and Sukhbir Singh, will headline a spectacular Closing Ceremony at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 Final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Blending international star power with the vibrant energy of Indian music, the Ceremony will feature large-scale performances from the three world-renowned artists before co-hosts India take on New Zealand in what proves to be a thrilling conclusion to cricket's biggest T20 event.

Falguni Pathak will open the ceremony in style, bringing a local flavour to the Ahmedabad showpiece.

Airfares surge

Airfares on major routes to Ahmedabad, which will host the T20 World Cup final between favourites India and New Zealand on Sunday, have skyrocketed, with cricket fans flocking to the city.

The surge in travel demand has prompted the Indian Railways to introduce special trains to Ahmedabad, said officials on Saturday.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad airfares, which usually hover around Rs 3,000, have surged to Rs 15,000-Rs 17,000. Flights from New Delhi to Ahmedabad are currently priced at around Rs 14,000, while Bengaluru-Ahmedabad fares have also spiked to nearly Rs 13,000, Sharma said. The jump in prices comes amid massive demand from cricket fans.

Santner won't mind breaking Indian hearts

New Zealand captain says team excited to play World Cup final

AHMEDABAD

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner was calmness personified on the eve of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final against India at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Saturday, but did not shy away from acknowledging the magnitude of the occasion they will face on Sunday.

Santner said the entire New Zealand side is excited to face defending champions India and that the Black Caps are raring to go.

"Yeah, I mean we obviously played India a little before the tournament started. It was a good series for us building up to the World Cup, so I guess there are no secrets about what is going to be out there tomorrow. But yeah, first thing, there is always a buzz. Obviously it is a World Cup final, the guys are excited and ready to go," he said.

Santner was candid when asked about the wicket and the effect Jasprit Bumrah could have on the game.

"I haven't had a look at the wicket yet. It is still under cover but one can only assume it is going to be pretty flat and high-scoring. So I think, yeah, in terms of Bumrah, he should be in everyone's conversation the way he has been going.

Yeah, I think England looked pretty hard to hit and he was obviously the game changer for India the other night. But we knew that was going to be the case. He is obviously a world-class bowler. But not just him. I think the way everyone has been rolling in the team,



In terms of Bumrah, he should be in everyone's conversation the way he has been going.

Mitchell Santner
New Zealand skipper

whether it is with bat or ball, everyone has stepped up at different times and as a team that is where you want to be," he added.

The New Zealand captain felt the 4-1 bilateral series defeat to India is something they will look to take cues from ahead of the final.

"I think in terms of the planning and the execution, it was a great series. We were challenged at times, a lot of times throughout that series. But again, you build on what works, what does not work and you take that information going forward. We obviously played on five pretty good surfaces throughout India. Not sure what it is going to play like, but again it is going to be pretty good."

Steyn: NZ deserve 'chokers' tag if they lose T20WC final

NEW DELHI

South Africa pace great Dale Steyn says New Zealand would deserve to inherit the unwanted "chokers" tag if they fail to beat hosts India in the T20 World Cup final in Ahmedabad on Sunday, adding that it would be nearly impossible for the Kiwis to topple the home side.

New Zealand have entered the summit clash for the second time in T20 World Cup history after beating favourites and perennial "chokers" South Africa in the first semifinal at Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

Steyn said New Zealand have made it to the finals of global tournaments more often than the Proteas in recent years, and if they fall short on Sunday the "chokers" tag should be handed over to them. New Zealand played the finals of the 2019 50-over World Cup, the 2021 T20 World Cup and the 2025 Champions Trophy, but came up short on all three occasions.



"Let's be honest here. Everyone likes to call South Africa chokers, but I am going to say it. New Zealand have not won many World Cups themselves and they have been in more finals than we have. So, no offence, New Zealand, but please go on to win this," Steyn said in a chat with AB de Villiers on the latter's YouTube channel.

"Otherwise, I am formally handing over that card to you. It is yours. I love New Zealand, but they will not beat India." The former South African pacer, who has more than 400 Test wickets to his name, believes India are the favourites and said it would take a "monumental choke" from the hosts to lose the title clash.

SKY optimistic, calm ahead of big final

India captain says it's a special feeling to lead the country on the occasion

MUMBAI

India captain Suryakumar Yadav exuded confidence, stating that the team environment was relaxed ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final against New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Saturday.

Suryakumar was speaking to the media during the pre-match press conference ahead of the title clash.

"Yeah, the mood in the camp is very relaxed and very happy. It is a special feeling leading such a wonderful side on home soil, that too in such a wonderful stadium. It is a special feeling and everyone is very excited about it," he said.

Talking about mystery spinner Varun Chakaravarty's struggles in the last few games of the tournament and whether there were concerns ahead of the final, Suryakumar dismissed the idea.

"There is nothing to worry about. We won the match against England. It is a team sport and collectively everyone puts in the effort. Out of the 11 players, not everyone will have a good day. Sometimes someone may



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav poses for a picture with trophy on the eve of the T20 World Cup 2026 final against New Zealand in Ahmedabad on Saturday. PTI

have an off day and the others have to make up for it," the India captain said.

Regarding the Indian batters' issues against off-spin during the tournament, Suryakumar said it was not something the team was overly concerned about.

"We have not discussed it much. If we play with a strike rate of 120 and still reach the final, then I do not mind.

Tomorrow we will have to face off-spin and we will handle it accordingly," he said.

Reacting to New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner's remark that his side would aim to prevent India from posting a total similar to the semifinal against England, Suryakumar said the team was not fixated on a specific score.

"We will try to bat well. If

we reach 200, 225 or 250 it will be good for the team. But we do not go into the dressing room thinking we must score a particular number of runs. We will play according to the demands of the wicket and then defend whatever total we get," he added.

Suryakumar said leading India in a World Cup final at home was a special moment. "It is obviously a special feeling to lead the side into a final, and that too at home. There will be butterflies in the stomach, but if there is no pressure there is no fun. Everyone in the team and the support staff is excited, and I am sure the whole country is excited as well," he said.

With a mixed-soil wicket expected on the centre pitch which will be used for the all-important final, a high-scoring thriller similar to India's semifinal in Mumbai can be expected.

A par score of 200 is very likely and batters from both teams would relish the prospect of smashing records on the grandest occasion in the shortest format of cricket.

India are favourites with 1,32,000 spectators expected to pack the Narendra Modi Stadium.

beyond numbers

Agarkar's three years: The art of taking tough calls

AHMEDABAD

When Ajit Agarkar took over as chairman of India's senior selection committee, the circumstances were anything but routine.

His appointment followed the unceremonious exit of Chetan Sharma, who was caught making loose comments during a television sting operation. The transition came with the intense scrutiny that accompanies every powerful position in

Indian cricket. Three years later, Agarkar's tenure can best be described as eventful — marked by difficult calls, firm convictions and an acceptance that the role of a selector rarely attracts applause.

A selector, in many ways, is like a wicketkeeper. A sharp catch may earn brief appreciation, but a dropped chance invites far louder criticism. There is a certain symmetry in Agarkar's journey. Back in 2020-21, when the chief selector's post had

opened up, it was Chetan Sharma who had pipped him despite Agarkar being an applicant. When the opportunity finally arrived in mid-2023, he inherited the responsibility of restoring trust in a selection process that constantly remains under public glare.

In the broader history of India's selection committees — particularly after the influential tenures of Dilip Vengsarkar and Krishnamachari Srikkanth — Agarkar has been among the

most discussed chairmen.

Over the past three years, India have reached four ICC finals: the 2023 ODI World Cup, the 2024 T20 World Cup, the 2025 Champions Trophy and the 2026 T20 World Cup. The team has already won two of those tournaments and could make it three if they defeat New Zealand in Sunday's final. While players and support staff rightly command the spotlight for on-field performances, the selectors' role in shaping squads for global

tournaments is equally significant.

Agarkar's tenure has featured decisions that demanded conviction. His strong backing of Suryakumar Yadav as a long-term T20I captain over Hardik Pandya was one such call. Even more sensitive was the move to replace Rohit Sharma as ODI captain despite his success and popularity. Selection is rarely about numbers alone. It requires identifying roles, maintaining balance.



India's coach Gautam Gambhir (R) and Ajit Agarkar during a training session on Saturday. PTI

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