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WEATHER

Sunrise 6:10 AM
Sunset 6:40 PM
Moonrise 9:38 AM
Moonset 12:31 AM

Today's Prediction
Maximum 37°C Minimum 22°C
Tomorrow's Prediction
37°C 21°C

MARKET

SENSEX	76617.44	NIFTY	23332.35
GOLD	592.93	SILVER	166.65
	90,750.00		99,815.00
	-103.00		62.00

Rumours being spread that Waqf bill will interfere with Muslim affairs: Shah

Speaking in LS on the Waqf amendment bill, Amit Shah said non-Muslims in Waqf bodies are meant purely for ensuring administration of properties in accordance with stated aims.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju introduced the bill, which seeks to amend the Waqf Act, 1995. Opposition has condemned the bill as unconstitutional, calling it an attack on religious freedom.

New Delhi: The ruling NDA on Wednesday launched a feisty defence of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha amid the opposition's charge that it was unconstitutional and targeted Muslims, as Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that the government had no intention of interfering in their religious matters and was solely driven by the aim of transparent administration of Waqf properties.



The bill has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties, he said tabling the Bill, which was examined and redrafted by a joint committee of Parliament.

The government is not going to interfere in any religious institution. The changes made in the Waqf law by the UPA government gave it overriding effect over other statutes, hence the new amendments were required," Rijiju said amid noisy opposition protests.

of the Waqf Bill," she said to the opposition.

Both ministers asserted that the proposed reforms would ensure the welfare of poor Muslims and women.

The BJP was bolstered by a show of support from its key allies like the TDP, JD(U), Shiv Sena and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), while the INDIA bloc put up a united show in opposing the bill.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the bill is a BJP's ploy for polarisation following its reverses in the Lok Sabha polls, alleging

that it will send a wrong message to the world denting the country's secular image.

The bill will prove to be a "waterloo" for the BJP as some of its allies might be claiming to support the bill but inside they are not happy about the development, he said.

"Bringing Waqf Bill is the BJP's political game, it is a new form of their communal politics. The BJP wants to appease those supporters who are now distancing themselves from the party because of its policies.

Parliament passes Immigration and Foreigners Bill



New Delhi: Parliament approved a bill to regulate immigration, entry and stay of foreigners in India, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod on Wednesday.

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha on March 27, 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote on Wednesday after various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated.

Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityamand Rai attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for "aiding" illegal immigrants enter the country and "facilitating" their stay by including their names in voters' list and ration cards.

This was strongly objected to by the Congress and TMC members, who along with other opposition parties' MPs, staged a walkout from the Upper House.

One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10 lakh.

The Bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India. The proposed legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

During the discussion, Rai said, "As many as 26 members expressed their views on the Bill. It was necessary to bring this Bill to make our universities, education system and economy world class level."

About the suggestion on referring the Bill to the standing committee, he stated that this Bill was brought after deep study of three years.

Trump is set to announce 'reciprocal' tariffs in risky move that could reshape economy

Washington: After weeks of White House hype and public anxiety, President Donald Trump is set Wednesday to announce a barrage of self-described "reciprocal" tariffs on friend and foe alike.

The new tariffs — coming on what Trump has called "Liberation Day" — is a bid to boost US manufacturing and punish other countries for what he has said are years of unfair trade practices. But by most economists' assessments, the risky move threatens to plunge the economy into a downturn and mangle decades-old alliances.

The White House is exuding confidence despite the political and financial gamble being undertaken.

"April 2, 2025, will go down as one of the most important days in modern American history," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at Tuesday's briefing while adding that the new tariffs will take effect immediately.



The reciprocal tariffs Trump plans to announce follow similar recent announcements of 25% taxes on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded tariffs on steel and

aluminum. Trump has also put tariffs against countries that import oil from Venezuela and plans separate import taxes on pharmaceuticals, lumber, copper and computer chips.

None of the warning signs about a falling stock market or consumer sentiment turning morose have caused the administration to publicly second-guess its strategy. Agency

HIGHLIGHT

The new tariffs — coming on what Trump has called "Liberation Day" — is a bid to boost US manufacturing and punish other countries for what he has said are years of unfair trade practices.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro has suggested that the new tariffs would raise \$600 billion annually, which would be the largest tax increase since World War II. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told lawmakers that the tariffs would be capped and could be negotiated downward by other countries, according to the office of Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla. But, White House has yet to confirm policy details, despite Trump saying

India's manufacturing sector growth hits 8-month high in March: PMI

New Delhi: India's manufacturing activity recovered the lost ground lost in February, picking up to its highest in eight months, at 58.1 in March as against 56.3 in the previous month, data released by S&P Global on Wednesday showed. The latest reading showed a substantial improvement in the health of the sector that was above its long-run average. Per the release, the rise was driven by stronger new orders growth as the new orders index recorded an eight-month high of 61.5. March saw total sales expand to the greatest extent since July 2024, with companies remarking on positive customer interest, favourable demand conditions and successful marketing initiatives.

Pranjuli Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said, "India registered a 58.1 manufacturing PMI in March, up substantially from 56.3 during the previous month. Although international orders slightly slowed, overall demand momentum remained robust, and the new orders index recorded an eight-month high of 61.5. Strong demand prompted firms to tap into their inventories,



causing the fastest drop in finished goods stocks in over three years. Business expectations remained fairly optimistic, with around 30 per cent of survey participants foreseeing greater output volumes in the year ahead, compared to less than 2 per cent that anticipate a contraction." Agency

Modi-Yunus meeting likely at BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok

New Delhi: There is a "high possibility" of a meeting between Bangladesh chief adviser Muhammad Yunus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, a senior official said here on Wednesday.



Modi will travel to Thailand on Thursday on a two-day visit, during which he will attend the 6th BIMSTEC Summit (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and hold talks with his Thai counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

Khalidur Rahman, the High Representative to the Chief Adviser for the Rohingya issue and other priorities, was quoted by the Dhaka Tribune newspaper as

saying that Bangladesh has requested a meeting between the two leaders and "we have reasonable grounds to remain hopeful".

He told reporters that there is a "high possibility" of the meeting, the

paper added. The state-run BSS news agency also quoted an unnamed source as saying that talks between the two leaders will be held during the summit.

In New Delhi, sources did not rule out a meeting. Since the interim government headed by Yunus stepped in following the ouster of the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024, the ties between the two countries have seen a slump amid India's concerns over the violence targeting Hindus and a rise of hardline Islamist forces there. Agency

Pakistan violates ceasefire after mine blast along LoC

New Delhi: Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing after a mine exploded along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said on Wednesday.



He said the Indian army responded "effectively" to the ceasefire violation and continues to dominate the LoC where the situation is under control. Official sources said the violation took place at 1.10 pm on Tuesday.

While the Indian Army made no mention of any casualty on the Pakistan side, the sources said five enemy soldiers were injured in the explosion and the subsequent firing between the two sides.

"On 01 Feb 2025, a mine blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector due to Pakistan Army intrusion across LoC". Agency

LoC. This was followed by unprovoked firing and ceasefire violation by Pakistan Army," Jammu-based defence PRO Lt Col Suneel Barwal said in a revised statement.

"Own troops responded effectively. The Indian Army continues to dominate the LoC. The situation is under control," he said.

The earlier statement had mentioned that "a mine blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector due to Pakistan Army intrusion across LoC". Agency

Rumours being spread that Waqf bill will interfere with Muslim affairs: Shah

CONT FROM PAGE-1
He accused the opposition of "fear-mongering" over the bill's provisions, saying this is how they raised a vote bank.

He accused the Congress-led UPA government of effecting many amendments in the Waqf law in 2013 for its appeasement politics, saying these changes made the Act "extreme". Had those changes not been made, the government might not have brought the bill, he added.

He cited a host of instances from across the country about vast properties being claimed by different states' Waqf boards, with a section of people involved in their management making personal gains while doing little for the community. The new law will catch such people and throw them out, he added.

"This money is of the poor Muslims not for a few moneybags," he said, citing the meagre income of Rs 163 crore from Waqf properties.

Citing speeches of several opposition leaders, including RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav, in 2013, he said even they had noted the rampant property grab in the name of Waqf law.

Gogoi argued that the bill had not been adequately discussed with minority representatives.

"In 2023, four meetings of the Minority Commission were held, and yet, there was no mention of the need for a Waqf amendment bill. I ask the government - was this bill drafted by the Minority Affairs Ministry or some other department?"

The opposition MP also raised concerns over Clause 3, which defines individuals practising Islam.

"Minorities are now being forced to prove their religious identity with certificates. Tomorrow, will people from other faiths also have to do this? This is against Article 26 of the Constitution," he said.

BJP's Anurag Thakur said, "This bill is not about Hindu versus Muslim, this is law versus lawlessness, Constitution versus corruption."

Fadnavis Shinde back Waqf Bill Cong says govt wants to hand over land to industrialists

Mumbai:
Maharashtra Chief Minister Fadnavis on Wednesday hailed the introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha, calling the proposed legislation a progressive step that reflects the word "secular" mentioned in the Constitution's preamble.

Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde also came out in support of the bill and stressed it was in the best interest of the Muslim community.

Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis expressed confidence that the bill, tabled in the Lok Sabha by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday for discussion and passage, will eventually get Parliament's nod.

The bill seeks to improve the functioning of Waqf properties (which refer to properties dedicated exclusively for religious or charitable purposes under Islamic law), address complexities, ensure transparency and introduce technology-driven management.

"The bill doesn't hurt religious faith or sentiment of any community. It only corrects the wrongdoings of the past. Women will get representation on the Waqf Board (proposed under the bill). Any wrongdoing in the board couldn't be challenged (under existing law) in courts. This provision has been removed," the BJP leader noted.

Fadnavis maintained that under the existing Waqf Act, lands were taken over by the board



and then by Congress leaders. The bill aims to stop this "loot", he emphasised. The CM said it is foolish to say that industrialists will benefit from the proposed law and dismissed its critics as "syvophants" who want to play appeasement politics. "Those whose conscience is alive will support the bill. If the Shiv Sena (UBT) still follows Balasaheb Thackeray's ideals, they will support the bill," Fadnavis contended.

Mahayuti leaders suffering from 'Ghajini' syndrome grant loan waiver to farmers: Cong

Mumbai:
In a sharp jibe at the Maharashtra government under Deputy CM Ajit Pawar ruled out a crop loan waiver, Congress on Wednesday alleged the BJP-led alliance is suffering from "Ghajini syndrome" and demanded loan waivers for farmers before the next sowing season.

State Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal said Mahayuti allies had promised to grant loan waivers to farmers and raise the stipend for women from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100 during the poll campaign but changed their stance after coming to power.

"Grant loan waivers to farmers before the sowing season. If this so-called triple-engine government has any credibility left, it should secure a special package from the Centre," Sapkal said while addressing a press conference.

He said the "sudden reversal" of Mahayuti's stand vis-a-vis the promises made in the assembly polls suggests their leaders are suffering from "Ghajini syn-

drome", an apparent reference to the 2008 movie whose protagonist suffers short-term memory loss. Ajit Pawar had said the current financial situation of Maharashtra does not allow for a crop loan waiver and asked farmers to pay instalments in time rather than wait for an announcement in this regard.

Last rites of Congress' appeasement politics: Anurag Thakur on Waqf bill

New Delhi:
BJP MP Anurag Thakur on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the Congress in the Lok Sabha for opposing the Waqf bill, saying the proposed law would be the last nail in the coffin of Congress's politics of appeasement.

Participating in the debate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Lower House, Thakur said the time has come to change the Waqf boards as they have become a "hub of corruption" and accused the Congress of once again creating an atmosphere of confusion in the country.

The Bill is not just for a change in law but a clear message -- that the country will be run only in accordance with the Constitution, he asserted.

Thakur alleged that the Waqf Board had to administer properties for the welfare of the Muslim community but the Congress and other opposition parties irresponsibly used the land to set up an empire which they used as

bill for political motives, rather than considering what he called the "injustice" in the way Waqf properties are administered. Only a handful of people have control over the vast Waqf properties across the country, he said. "Only 200 people have control over Waqf properties," he said adding that the land of Hindus, Dalits, tribals and backward classes has been taken over, and no one speaks against this injustice.

Even a criminal enjoys certain safeguards to protect dignity: SC

New Delhi:
Observing even a criminal enjoyed certain protections, the Supreme Court has directed the director generals of police (DGP) of all the states and UTs to strictly adhere to all safeguards available to persons in custody.

A bench comprising Justices Abhanuddin Amanullah and Prashant Kumar Mishra called the police a very vital part of the state machinery, having a direct bearing on the safety and security of the society at large and individuals in particular.

"The need, therefore, for maintaining the confidence of individuals and society-at-large in the police is paramount," it added.

The court referred to

Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis expressed confidence that the bill, tabled in the Lok Sabha by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday for discussion and passage, will eventually get Parliament's nod.

ment, and I urge the community to support it. The Sena (UBT) has strayed from Balasaheb Thackeray's ideology and is now operating under Rahul Gandhi's influence," he claimed. On the contrary, the ruling Shiv Sena takes its decisions openly and independently, and does not engage in politics of convenience, Shinde insisted. "The true faces of those engaging in vote-bank politics for Muslim votes have been exposed through their stance on the Waqf Bill," he argued. Without naming the opposition Sena (UBT), Shinde maintained the Uddhav Thackeray-led party's current plight is

of "convenient" stand it has taken on key issues and due to this it faced reverses in the last year's assembly polls in Maharashtra. "The Shiv Sena's stand is very clear. We are not doing politics of convenience. We take decisions openly," the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised. Instead of keeping Waqf properties in the control of a handful of people (under the existing Act), they can be used for the majority of people (if the proposed legislation comes into force). Colleges, schools and hospitals should come up on donated lands, Shinde said.

such properties are misused, he maintained and asked, "Is there any control of anyone on the Waqf land?" However, the Congress in Maharashtra hit out at the BJP-led government at the Centre over the bill. State Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal alleged the government wants to hand over land to industrialists and builders under the garb of the proposed legislation.

Over 50 foreign varsities applied to UGC for approval: Pradhan

New Delhi:
Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday informed the Rajya Sabha that three foreign universities are currently operating in the country and the University Grants Commission (UGC) is likely to grant approval to 50 qualitative foreign varsities in the coming times in the interest of students.

Replying to supplementaries during Question Hour, the minister said the University Act, 1956 says that UGC can amend its rules going by the needs of the time. "Around 14-15 lakh students of the country study abroad and a lot of our resources go into foreign land. Keeping that in view and to develop higher research within the country, it would be proper to bring in foreign universities. With this in mind, UGC has amended its rules," Pradhan told the Rajya Sabha. He said not two but three foreign universities are operating in India currently. Over 50 qualitative foreign universities are in talks with different state governments and have reached the UGC for permission, he added. "In the coming times, we will evaluate them on our standards and in the coming times we would grant them permission. This is in the interest of students," he asserted. The minister said the government believed in the autonomy of institutions and would maintain that.

India Surpasses US & Europe by Producing 1,681 Locomotives in Financial Year 2024-25

New Delhi:
India Railways has reached a significant achievement in locomotive manufacturing by producing 1,681 locomotives for the financial year 2024-25, exceeding production in the United States and Europe, said a Railway Board official on Wednesday.

This is a rise of 19%, or 209 locomotives more than the 1,472 produced in the previous year, marking the highest production rate ever recorded in the country, they said.

The growth in production is largely attributed to the "Make in India" initiative, which has boosted manufacturing efforts. Over the past ten years, India produced a total of 9,168 locomotives, almost doubling the annual average from 470 to about 917.

Staff Reporter



people. I want to say to him that you have given Waqf boards in the hands of 200 people." Thakur said referring to the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. The Waqf Amendment Bill will be the last rites of Congress' politics of appeasement," he said. "This is neither Pakistan nor the Taliban's country. This is India. Only one law will run in the country -- the Constitution," he said. "This bill is not about Hindu versus Muslim, this is law versus lawlessness, Constitution versus corruption, Bharat versus internal partition. In several countries, the Waqf board works under the centralised framework," Thakur said. The Congress Party and its allies compromised the Constitution for vote bank, he alleged, adding that this bill is against justice and not against

bill for political motives, rather than considering what he called the "injustice" in the way Waqf properties are administered. Only a handful of people have control over the vast Waqf properties across the country, he said. "Only 200 people have control over Waqf properties," he said adding that the land of Hindus, Dalits, tribals and backward classes has been taken over, and no one speaks against this injustice.

"Rahul ji says that the country's wealth is in the hands of few parties of opposing the

Waqf bill interferes in Affairs of minority religions; Aims to seize Waqf properties: AAP MP

New Delhi:
Aam Aadmi Party MP from Sangur, Punjab Gunmeet Singh Meet Hayer strongly opposed the Waqf Bill in Parliament, arguing that it allows the BJP government to interfere in minority religions.

He claimed the bill aims to seize Waqf properties and opened doors for future attacks on other minority religions. Hayer stated that the bill violates Article 14, questioning how the law would determine an individual's private worship.

He criticized the central government for its divided approach towards Muslims, pointing out that there have been no Muslim representatives from the BJP in Lok Sabha or the Uttar Pradesh assembly. He noted that the



government has failed to implement the Sachar Committee's recommendations, which highlight that 70% of Waqf Board properties are occupied and many properties, such as historical mosques and educational buildings, lack necessary documentation. Highlighting the importance of unity in diversity, Hayer referenced the harmony of Malerkotla as an example, urging the government to avoid creating

divisions based on religion. He emphasized his commitment to opposing the bill and fulfilling promises to the people of Malerkotla. Hayer ultimately argued that the bill attacks the Constitution specifically undermining Article 26, which allows individuals to form and manage their own organizations. He expressed his intent to continue his opposition to the bill in the interests of safeguarding minority rights.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform public at large that my client, Sh. K.D. Kashyap, 5/6, Lt. St. Chanan Singh, RZ 2, D-193B, Vinod Puri, Vasant Enclave, New Delhi-110045 has served their all relatives with their son, Bharat Kumar & daughter in law, Archana who is not under control of my clients, therefore my clients detail have from their all movable and immovable properties' obligations, anyone dealing with him in future in any manner should do so their own risk and consequences and my client shall not be responsible for any acts, deeds and things done by son Bharat Kumar and daughter in law Archana.

JAI KUMAR & ASSOCIATES
ADVOCATE & LEGAL CONSULTANT
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SECTOR-16, LAXPURI
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NEWS IN BRIEF

3890 Yamuna Authority allottees get possession of flats

Noida
After the implementation of the recommendations of the Amitabh Kant Committee, 3890 people have got the ownership rights of flats in the builder project of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) area.
The target is to register 6879 in the builder project. After taking advantage of the recommendations of the committee, the builders have deposited Rs 407.90 crore in the account of the authority, but four builder projects are still out of the benefits of the committee. There are about 4200 buyers in these projects.
The authority has received Rs 407.90 crore under 25 percent outstanding amount from seven builder projects. The authority will soon get Rs 621 crore in the next instalment. So far, registration of flats of 3890 people has been done in seven builder projects.
These builders had been demanding registration for a long time, but due to dues on the builder, the demand for registration of buyers was not being fulfilled as the completion certificate was not issued by the authority.
YEIDA CEO Dr. Arunvir Singh said that out of a total of 11 builder projects in the authority area, seven had applied for the benefits of the Amitabh Kant Committee's recommendations. Out of four builder projects, the SDH Homes has sought permission to take advantage of the scheme. The board has issued guidelines for this. Oris Builder has a stay from the Supreme Court. Apart from this, Superch Builders has two projects.

Builder fined for pruning trees

Noida
The forest department imposed a fine of Rs 30,000 on the builder of sector-151, Noida for deep pruning of Arjun trees. The forest department took this action after taking cognisance of a complaint by an organisation.
According to the regional forest officer of Dadri, Chaudhary Praveen Bhartiya, founder of the Corruption Free India Organization, had complained about pruning of trees by a builder. The organisation had told that about two months ago a builder had done deep pruning of Arjun trees in the green belt in front of his project. Due to this, there was a possibility of destruction of trees.
Keeping in mind the issue of environmental protection, the workers of the said organisation had given a letter to the district magistrate to take action. The forest department had conducted an investigation into this.
The pruning of trees was confirmed in the forest department's investigation. Now in this case, the forest department has imposed a fine of Rs 30,000 on the builder.

Delhi govt tightens pollution control measures announces EV push

■ Gupta also announced a significant expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in Delhi, stating that by 2026, the city will have 48,000 charging points—18,000 government-operated and 30,000 semi-private.

New Delhi
Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced in the assembly on Wednesday that the Delhi government will introduce a new policy for issuing Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates to vehicles from other states, in a bid to tackle air pollution.
The move comes in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report titled "Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi," which flagged lapses in the national capital's pollution control mechanisms.
Gupta also announced a significant expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in Delhi, stating that by 2026, the city will have 48,000 charging points—18,000 government-operated and 30,000 semi-private. A new Electric Vehicle Policy will also be introduced soon to push EV adoption in the national capital.



Additionally, six new air quality monitoring centres will be set up to improve pollution tracking and enforcement.
The chief minister revealed plans to establish a new eco-park dedicated to processing electronic waste, aiming to curb air pollution caused by improper disposal of e-waste.
To strengthen the public transport system, Gupta said that 5,500 buses will be maintained by the end of this year, and 11,000 buses will be on the roads by 2026. The routes of public buses will also be re-evaluated to address loopholes in the system.

Delhi Govt directs fire audit of all its buildings ahead of summer

New Delhi
The Delhi government has ordered the fire safety audit of all its buildings, with focus on hospitals and health centres, by the Public Works Department (PWD), officials said on Wednesday.
The audit will cover all safety aspects, including verifying the presence and functionality of fire prevention measures such as fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and fire extinguishers.
"The fire audit should focus on assessing the fire safety measures in place, identifying potential fire hazards, and recommending corrective actions to ensure compliance with fire safety norms," PWD principal secretary said in an order.
The audit exercise is to be completed by April 15, it added.

The emergency evacuation plans of the buildings will be reviewed to ensure they are in place, regularly practised and communicated to all occupants. The exercise will also verify that all occupants, including employees and visitors, have received adequate fire safety awareness, officials said.
A team of experts, including fire safety professionals and engineers, will be formed for conducting the audit with a comprehensive checklist to ensure that all aspects of fire safety are covered during the audit. A detailed audit report on the findings along with recommendations for corrective actions, will be submitted to the Delhi Fire Services (DPS) and the PWD, they said.
Earlier, the DPS issued a directive to all the civic bodies. This latest order is based on an earlier directive issued by the DPS to all the civic bodies last month for the audit of electrical work in all buildings under their jurisdiction.

For fire detection and alarm, the PWD officials have been directed to inspect the functionality of fire detection and alarm systems and ensure they are regularly tested and maintained.

Delhi govt to boost water supply with 249 new tube wells over 1 000 tankers

New Delhi
Water Minister Parvesh Verma on Wednesday announced mandatory biometric attendance for Delhi Jal Board (DJB) employees, the installation of 249 new tube wells, and an increase of 1,327 water tankers to improve supply.
Speaking in the Delhi Assembly session, Verma said a command centre had been established to monitor water distribution, which will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in a few days.
He said that Delhi requires 1,200 million gallons per day (MGD) but currently receives only 990 MGD.
"To address this gap, the government will install 249 new tube wells over the next three months -- 96 will be operational by May, 88 in June, and 65 in July."
"At present, 901 water tankers are in operation, and this number will be increased to 1,327. However, tankers are only a temporary solution, we need to address the root causes of water shortages," Verma said.



"All sectors will be integrated with the IT cell for better monitoring," Verma added. A water infrastructure project in Sangam Vihar, built at a cost of Rs 4 crore under the previous government, remains unused due to multiple leaks, he said.
"Officials have informed me that an additional Rs 5 crore would be required for its repairs and many of Delhi's pipelines are over 80 years old and require urgent replacement," he said.
Verma said that to improve accountability, fingerprint scanners will be installed in all DJB offices for attendance tracking.
In addition, 180 junior engineers will be recruited for maintenance and project work, while the number of labourers in each constituency will be doubled from 10 to 20 to enhance efficiency, the minister said.

He said that Delhi requires 1,200 million gallons per day (MGD) but currently receives only 990 MGD.

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"At present, 901 water tankers are in operation, and this number will be increased to 1,327. However, tankers are only a temporary solution, we need to address the root causes of water shortages," Verma said.

Man posing as Army officer arrested for cheating family of over Rs 8 lakh in Delhi

New Delhi
A 28-year-old man impersonating a lieutenant colonel in the Army has been arrested for allegedly cheating a family of over Rs 8 lakh by promising government jobs, an official here said on Wednesday.
The accused, identified as Sumit Singh, a resident of Delhi's Uttam Nagar, created fake Army documents, was a Lieutenant Colonel's uniform, and used badges and rubber stamps to mislead victims, he said.
Singh was also involved in multiple cases of similar fraud in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, including a rape and cheating case in Lucknow and another fraud case in Haridwar, police said.
The accused, originally from Uttar Pradesh's Jaunpur, also reportedly procured a canteen card and issued fraudulent recruitment letters under the Ministry of Defence, police added.
"A case was registered in Gulabi Bagh Police Station based on the complaint of a 30-year-old woman advocate who alleged that Singh introduced himself as a senior Army officer in July 2024 and promised her a legal position in the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT)," a senior police official said.
He later extended similar job offers to her brother and father, extracting large sums under the pretence of recruitment formalities, the woman said in her complaint.
The accused allegedly demanded money for application fees, mess charges, uniform kits, and other expenses, accumulating over Rs 8 lakh in cash from the victim and her family, officials said. He also took a mobile phone worth Rs 1.6 lakh from the complainant under false pretences, the officer added.
Police said Singh fabricated recruitment letters, used a false identity, and even pressured the complainant to marry him.



Sumit Singh, a resident of Delhi's Uttam Nagar, created fake Army documents, was a Lieutenant Colonel's uniform, and used badges and rubber stamps to mislead victims, he said.

Sumit Singh, a resident of Delhi's Uttam Nagar, created fake Army documents, was a Lieutenant Colonel's uniform, and used badges and rubber stamps to mislead victims, he said.

AAP MLAs Suspended Over Kapil Mishra Resignation Row

New Delhi
The final day of the first Budget Session of the newly constituted eighth Assembly witnessed high drama as AAP MLAs staged a protest demanding the resignation of Delhi Law and Justice Minister Kapil Mishra.
The protest erupted a day after a court directed the registration of an FIR against Mishra over his alleged role in the 2020 Delhi riots.
Carrying placards and raising slogans, AAP legislators stormed into the well of the House, prompting Speaker Vijender Kumar to suspend at least seven of them—Kuldeep Kumar, Sanjeev Jha, Mukesh Ahlawat, Surendra Kumar, Jarnail Singh, Ale Mohammad, and Anil Jha.
Leader of Opposition Atishi, leading the protests, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of shielding Mishra. "All the accused in the riots are in jail. Why is Kapil Mishra not behind bars? We are demanding his resignation, but the BJP is protecting him," she said.
Speaker Gupta instructed the Assembly secretary to verify whether the suspended MLAs remained within the premises and were continuing their protest despite the suspension order. Speaker Gupta during the first session of the eighth Assembly on March 3, ruled that any MLA who is suspended or marshalled out must vacate the Vidhan Sabha premises entirely.
The ruling comes in response to a dispute over whether the suspended legislators could remain in certain areas of the Assembly complex, such as the lawns and the office of the Leader of Opposition.
The protest follows a court ruling by Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasia on Tuesday, which found a "prima facie" case for investigation against Mishra. The court ordered Delhi Police to file a complaint report by April 16.



The ruling comes in response to a dispute over whether the suspended legislators could remain in certain areas of the Assembly complex, such as the lawns and the office of the Leader of Opposition.

Delhi Police dismantles international drug syndicate arrests 7 operatives

New Delhi
Delhi Police: Crime Branch has dismantled a narco-syndicate operating across multiple states and arrested seven key operatives, including three Nepalese nationals, an official said on Wednesday.
The operation led to seizure of above 17 kilograms of charas (hashish) worth approximately Rs 8.75 crore in the international market, police said.
The syndicate was supplying charas from Nepal and Kasol (Himachal Pradesh) to Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.
Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Devesh Chandra Srivastava said the "operation was initiated following tip-off from November 20 regarding the supply of hashish in Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila area." "A police team arrested two suspects -- Prem Thapa and Md Jameel -- recovering 1.92 kg of charas from them. Subsequently, an FIR was registered and further investigation was launched," he added.

PUBLIC NOTICE
MY CLIENT MR. MAHESH AWANA S/O MR MAHEMBER AWANA OWNER A RESIDENTIAL PLOT, AREA MEASURING 83 SQ. YDS I.E. 69 39 SQ. METRS, OUT OF KHASRA NO-236, SITUATED AT VILLAGE ATTA MAIRA CHOLERA BANGAR PARGANA & TEHLI DADR, DISTRICT GAUTAM BUDD NAGAR U.P. THROUGH REGISTERED GIFT DEED DATED 27.03.2025 EXECUTED BY MRS. PREM W/O MR. MAHEMBER AWANA VIDE REG. NO. 1949 AT SRI-III NOIDA U.P. THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROPERTY IS GOING TO BE MORTGAGED WITH FEDERBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED. IF ANY PERSON/BANK/FINANCIAL INSTITUTION HAVING ANY CLAIM / RIGHT, LIEN, ANY OBJECTION WHATSOEVER IN REGARD TO THE ABOVE PROPERTY, SHOULD NOTIFIED TO THE UNDERSIGNED/ADV. VISHAL MEHAN, E-713, KARAKA DOOMA COURT, DELHI-110092 ALONG WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE UNDER ADDRESS THROUGH REGISTERED WITHIN 7 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE FAILING WHICH ANY CLAIM, LIEN OR OBJECTION SHALL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN WAIVED.
VISHAL MEHAN, E-713, KARAKA DOOMA COURT, DELHI-110092

EASTERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice No. Engg/Storm Water Workshop/ Eastern Railway, Lihau, Howrah-711204 for detailed approved and eligible contractors of Railways and those of appropriate list (Part-I of Govt./Public sector) undertaking for the under mentioned works: **Tender No & Name of the Work: Engg/Stormwater24-25LLHR**
1. 240000325. Cost of Tender: ₹ 2,40,000. Nil. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,40,000. Completion period: 270 days. Date and time of Closing of tender: On 24.04.2025 upto 12.00 hrs. The details of tender are available at website: www.reps.gov.in alongwith corrigendum (if any). Tenderers are requested to submit their offers in the sealed envelope to the address mentioned on the above website. No manual offer will be accepted.
MSC-04/2025-26
Tender Notice is also available at website: www.indianrailways.gov.in
Follow us at: www.facebook.com/easternrailwayheadquarter

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
No. 128-W2800/Tender Notice/NR/2024-25/33 Dated:-28.03.2025
The Sr. Divisional Engineer(NIL), Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:
1. Name/Repair and Renovation of CVM office Shabab shed and office including AC Shed and other allied works in the section of SSE/Works/NCLS S/N under AER/NCLS and other allied works in the section of SSE/Works/NCLS S/N under AER/NCLS.
2. Approx cost of work: ₹ 2,20,00,000 (Rupees Two Crore Twenty Nine Lakh Two Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Five Only)
3. Earnest Money to be Deposited: ₹ 2,64,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Sixty Four Thousand Six Hundred Only)
4. Cost of tender document: ₹ 0.00/-
5. Date & time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender: 21.04.2025 at 15:00 Hrs.
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.reps.gov.in
* The tenderers must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.reps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. No manual offers are acceptable. * Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only. 899/25

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-3, Noida-201301 (U.P.) Website: www.noidaiauthorityonline.in
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tender are invited from interested contractors registered with for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaiauthorityonline.in & <https://tender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments/corrigendum etc.
S. No. Job No./Work name AMOUNT (Rs. in Lacs)
1. 64/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2024-25, M/o RSP (Requalification of Butterfly area of sector-16, Underpass), Noida. 21.41
2. 78/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2024-25, M/o park Annual R/o boundary wall footpath and other miscellaneous civil work in vedvan park sector-78), Noida 27.88
3. 81/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2024-25, M/o park R/o Footpath, Main gate and Boundary in Shaheed Smarak Park in sector-29), Noida 18.37
Laxika Gupta (Advocate)
OFFICE AT: Chamber No.-P-44, Post Office Lane Near Central Hall, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054
Which can be uploaded by date 16/04/2025 upto 5:00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 17/04/2025 at 11:00 AM.
Director (Hort.) Noida
Office Sector - 39
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Northern Railway achieved significant success in train operations & passenger services: GM Ashok Verma

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

Northern Railway has achieved significant success in train operations and passenger services during the financial year 2024-2025. They have focused on enhancing connectivity and convenience for commuters by adding new trains and increasing passenger capacity.

According to Ashok Kumar Verma, General Manager of Northern Railway, seven new trains were introduced this year, including two Vande Bharat trains and five Express trains.

"Additionally, six existing trains were extended to



reach more destinations, and the frequency of three trains was increased, providing passengers with more travel options," Verma said.

To accommodate the higher demand for Vande Bharat trains, their payload capacity was also enhanced, with four sets increasing from 16 cars to 20 cars and one set from 8 cars to 16 cars. Moreover, the number of special trains operated rose significantly, with 13,658 special trains run compared to 4,487 the previous year, the official said.

These special services catered to busy travel periods like summer, Holi, and winter rush seasons, leading to a notable increase in services—50.18% for winter rush and 46.29% for Holi specials, they said.

Northern Railway also focused on assisting the

spiritual needs of pilgrims by efficiently managing transportation for the Mahakumbh, running 2,433 Kumbh Special trains to the Prayag area from January 1, 2025, to March 6, 2025. Furthermore, 142 Bharat Gaurav trains were operated to promote cultural and religious tourism.

The General Manager highlighted that initiatives to add coaches led to the addition of 64 coaches across 25 train pairs, generating an extra 9,662 trips, which is a 316% increase from the prior year. The conversion of Integral Coach Factory rakes to Linke Hofmann Busch rakes prioritized safety and comfort, with nine pairs

PWD likely to finalise project report for Delhi drainage master plan by Jun

New Delhi

The Public Works Department (PWD) is likely to finalise a detailed project report for a drainage master plan for Delhi by the end of June, an official said on Wednesday.

According to the city's current and future needs for an effective drainage system, the Delhi government has been working on a new drainage master plan since 2021.

The PWD has divided the city into three basins—Najafgarh, Barapullah, and Trans-Yamuna—and hired consultants to redesign the drainage network.

As part of the plan, these consultants have analysed factors like slopes, depressions, and the existing old and incapable infrastructure to improve drainage efficiency, he said.

While desilting is handled by multiple civic bodies, the PWD maintains 2,064 km of stormwater drains along all the main roads, covering almost 55 per cent of the city's entire drain length of 3,740.31 km. The PWD is the nodal agency on drainage in the city.

Delhi's last drainage master plan was prepared in 1976 when the population of the city was just 60 lakh. According to rough estimates, the population has now gone up to around two crore. In 2023, 308 water logging hotspots were identified by the traffic police due to several factors like unprecedented rainfall; and

lack of proper drainage which led to backflow of water and stagnation at these locations.

"After the DPR is approved by the government, the agency starts the process of inviting tenders from private companies to carry out the work on the ground," the officer said.

The original drainage master plan was prepared by IIT-Delhi in 2018 which largely identified that rapid unplanned urbanisation, shallow groundwater level and low elevation are some of the major reasons resulting in frequent flooding problems in the city.

However, this report was rejected by the previous government as "generic" in nature and a fresh master plan preparation process was commenced.

Last year, the Delhi High Court suggested that only a single agency should be involved in the management of stormwater drains in the city. Earlier, the IIT-Delhi report had identified the involvement of multiple departments in drain management as a problem.

In 2023, unprecedented rainfall caused flooding, with the Yamuna River reaching a record-high flood level of 208.66 metres, surpassing the previous record from 1978.

This caused widespread flooding, further highlighting the urgency of improving the city's flood management systems. As part of pre-monsoon preparations, the PWD has already started desilting work of drains in a phase-wise manner.

The public that significant progress is being made in the case. "We have some leads and are working towards solving the case soon," a police official said. The police are urging anyone with information regarding the case to come forward and assist in the investigation.

This shocking incident has left local residents in fear, with many calling for swift justice.

Northern Railway Steams Ahead with Record ₹23,719 Cr Revenue in 2024-25

Staff Reporter
New Delhi

Northern Railway has announced record growth in revenue for the financial year 2024-25, generating a total of Rs. 23,719.41 crore, which is a 13.05% increase compared to the previous year.

The General Manager, Ashok Kumar Verma, highlighted that this success is due to strong performance in passenger services and freight operations, as well as improvements in operational efficiency.

"NR has achieved Revenue from passenger services amounted to Rs. 12,850.38 crore, supported by regular daily commuters. Freight revenue rose by 16.13%, reaching Rs. 7,757.49 crore thanks to a significant loading of 55.67 million tonnes," GM NR Ashok Kumar Verma said.

Northern Railway also explored new revenue opportunities outside traditional sources. In 2024-25, it earned Rs. 64.44 crore from parking, marking a 39% increase, and Rs. 419.54 crore from catering, which grew by 10.73%. New commercial strategies included awarding contracts for platform naming rights at New Delhi Railway Station and introducing India's first electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities at two



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Additionally, medical outlets and parcel services were installed at key locations to meet the needs of passengers, the official said.

As part of its community service commitment,

Northern Railway launched special initiatives for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, focusing on improved catering and crowd management for pilgrims. Digitalization played a critical role in enhancing user experience, with initiatives like QR codes at counters and 117 Automated Ticket Vending Machine (ATVM) kiosks to simplify ticket purchases.

Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, CPRO, NR said that looking ahead, Northern Railway aims to sustain growth through infrastructure improvements, green initiatives, and advanced technology. With a strong history of connecting people and driving progress, the organization continues to strive for excellence in the railway sector.

Duped Ramprastha city plot buyers protest outside developer's office in Gurugram

Gurugram

Hundreds of aggrieved plot buyers of Ramprastha City in Gurugram, along with their families, gathered outside the Ramprastha Developers' office in Sector 44 on Tuesday to protest against the developer and its directors. The buyers accused the company of duping them for decades by taking advance payments for plots but failing to allot them as promised.

The Ramprastha Group, operating under various companies with its registered office at 114, Sector 44, Gurugram-122002, Haryana, had booked plots measuring between 200 and 600 square yards in Ramprastha City at different times, particularly between 2006 and 2017. Despite taking substantial sums of money from buyers, the company has neither allotted plots nor responded to their repeated requests and grievances.

"A large number of innocent buyers invested their hard-earned money in these plots, paying the full price as demanded by the Ramprastha Group companies. The companies acknowledged the payments by issuing receipts, and in some cases, they even provided preliminary allotment letters for plots in Sectors 92, 93, 95, and 37 C&D in Ramprastha City, Gurugram. Furthermore, the company assured some allottees via emails that plots would be al-



located in Sector 37 C&D after receiving approval from the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HREERA)," said Sanjay Jain, President of the Ramprastha City Buyers Group.

However, despite these assurances, no significant progress has been made regarding the allotment or possession of the plots. The situation has left many buyers in distress, with no clarity on when they will receive the land they had paid for. Several complaints have been lodged with HREERA, but the developer continues to offer false reassurances.

"During a recent HREERA hearing, the developer once again misled buyers by suggesting that they could receive the money with interest instead of allotting plots. This was outrightly rejected by the plot buyers, as they invested in the project with the intention of building their homes. What is even more alarming is that the developer continues to sell plots, deceiving more unsuspecting buyers," said Advocate Garvit Gupta, who represents the buyers' association in the legal proceedings.

Over the years, buyers have made numerous attempts to engage with the company's management, including direct meetings with the directors and Shri Balwant Singh Chaudhary, Chairman of the Ramprastha Group. However, despite these efforts, the company has failed to take any concrete steps toward plot allotment. The demarcation of plots in the respective sectors has not been carried out, final allotment letters have not been issued, and no development work has begun at the site.

Sanjay Arora, Vice President of the association, highlighted the prolonged delay, stating, "It has been more than a decade—19 years in some cases—since buyers made their payments. Many

of the original buyers have now turned into senior citizens, still waiting for justice. Several buyers have filed complaints with HREERA, but the company continues to delay the process under various pretexts. We fear that instead of fulfilling its commitments, the developer might sell the land to other real estate companies, thereby depriving us of our rightful properties."

Adding to the growing concerns, Mr. Mahender Malhotra, Secretary of the group, emphasized the need for urgent government intervention. "We have written to Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and other relevant authorities, urging them to take strict action against the fraudulent practices of the Ramprastha Group. The authorities must immediately halt the developer's unlawful activities and ensure justice for hundreds of buyers who have invested their life savings in these plots with the dream of building and owning a home."

The buyers continue to press for immediate allotment of their plots and stern action against the Ramprastha Group for its alleged fraudulent activities. As legal battles and protests intensify, the affected families remain hopeful that the government and regulatory bodies will step in to protect their rights and put an end to their prolonged suffering.

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Delhi HC allows DNA testing of accused in 2013 murder case

New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has permitted DNA testing of an accused in an over a decade-old murder case to unearth the truth regarding his guilt.

Justice Neena Bansal Krishna ordered the blood-stained shirts of the victim and the accused along with the latter's blood sample to be sent to the forensic laboratory for examination.

The results would comprise the supplementary chargesheet in the trial court, the judge said.

The court was hearing the plea of the victim's father who moved the trial court with the plea of DNA testing to prove the accused had killed his son but faced appointment.

His son died in May 2013, following which the accused was charged for the offence of his murder. The trial court was dealing with the case at the stage of final arguments.

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Max Fashion Makes a Grand Debut at Lakmé Fashion Week with Kalki Koechlin Owing the Runway

Gurugram/Karnal

Max Fashion made a bold and transformative debut at the 25th edition of Lakmé Fashion Week x FDCL with their muse Kalki Koechlin leading the way. This moment marked a pivotal change in Indian fashion, with Max Fashion redefining high-street style on one of the country's most prestigious runways. More than just a runway moment, this was a cultural reckoning—A statement that global fashion is for everyone, embracing style that is accessible, trend-driven, and effortlessly wearable. With



the launch of its Sicilian Summer and Amalfi Escape collections, Max Fashion didn't just redefine high-street fashion—it leveled the playing field, turning aspir-

ation into accessible for millions. "Max Fashion's debut at Lakmé Fashion Week isn't just a milestone; it's a bold affirmation of who we are as a brand," says Pallavi Pandey, Vice President and Head of Marketing, MAX. "We've always believed that fashion should be accessible to all. With Kalki Koechlin as our muse, we're celebrating style as a form of self-expression that belongs to everyone. This debut is about making trend-driven fashion available to millions, whether they shop in-store or online. It's a celebration of style, confidence, and individuality."

From the moment the first model stepped onto the runway, it was clear that this wasn't just another col-

lection launch—it was a movement. A collective breath was held, a ripple of awe coursed through the audience as Kalki Koechlin stepped onto the runway. Draped in a statement look that radiated confidence, rebellion, and effortless style, Kalki didn't just walk the runway—she owned it.

There was no theatrics, no forced grandeur—just raw, unshakable presence. The moment transcended fashion—it was about transformation. Every step revealed a fresh side of you, inviting the world to meet your New You.

Headless Body of Young Woman Found in Suitcase in Faridabad

Sandeep Chauhan
Faridabad



According to police sources, a passerby stumbled upon the abandoned suitcase and alerted the au-

thorities. A police team rushed to the scene and recovered the body, which was immediately sent to the mortuary for an autopsy.

Preliminary examinations suggest that the victim was a woman aged between 25 to 30 years, and the condition of the body indicates that she had been dead for approximately six to seven days. The body was discovered in a decomposed state, wrapped inside a sack, and

was semi-naked, raising suspicions of foul play.

The police have launched a rigorous investigation, scouring missing persons reports from Faridabad and neighboring areas to establish the victim's identity. Forensic teams have been called in to gather crucial evidence from the scene, while officers are also examining CCTV footage from nearby locations in an attempt to trace the perpetrators. Authorities have assured

the public that significant progress is being made in the case. "We have some leads and are working towards solving the case soon," a police official said. The police are urging anyone with information regarding the case to come forward and assist in the investigation.

This shocking incident has left local residents in fear, with many calling for swift justice.

Kejriwal urges youth to join crusade against drugs in Punjab

Ludhiana
National Convener of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called upon the youth of Punjab to play a decisive role in the war against drugs, vowing to continue the battle until the state is completely drug-free.

Addressing a gathering before flagging off an awareness march against drugs, Kejriwal emphasized that the youth must take charge in eradicating this menace. He warned that failure to do so would lead to disastrous consequences for future generations. Encouraging young people to say no to drugs, he highlighted how addiction runs not only individual lives but also entire families.

Kejriwal criticized previous governments for allegedly patronizing drug cartels for illegal monetary gains, accus-



ing top leaders of being complicit in the drug trade. He asserted that these leaders had prioritized personal profits over the welfare of the people, leading to generations being ruined by drug abuse. He further stated that both God and the people of Punjab would not forgive such leaders for their misdeeds.

Highlighting the efforts of the current Punjab government, Kejriwal stated that significant progress has been made in the last 30 days. He mentioned that properties amassed through drug money were being seized and demolished, with law enforcement agencies cracking down heavily on drug

peddlers. He assured that no drug smuggler would be spared and that the strictest possible action would be taken against them.

The AAP leader also revealed that the government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against drug use. He urged the youth to report any instances of drug use or

trafficking through the dedicated WhatsApp helpline number 9779100200. Calling on the youth to take responsibility for their communities, he encouraged them to pledge against drug consumption and sale.

To aid in rehabilitation, Kejriwal said the government is running an Outpatient Opioid Assisted Treatment Program (OOPAT) for drug de-addiction at the OPD level. Additionally, rehabilitation centers are being established across the state to support drug victims. In an effort to steer youth away from addiction, he also announced the opening of playgrounds and gyms in every village of Punjab.

As the fight against drugs intensifies, Kejriwal reaffirmed his commitment to making Punjab a drug-free state and sought the unwavering support of the youth in this crucial mission.

Haryana chief secretary emphasizes 100 pc Aadhaar coverage

Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi on Wednesday chaired a key meeting of the Unique Identification Implementation Committee (UIDIC) here, stressing the need for 100 per cent Aadhaar penetration across the state.

To accelerate Aadhaar registration, Rastogi directed all state government departments, and representatives from various banks and department of posts to ensure the full activation of Aadhaar enrolment kits at the earliest.

He emphasized the optimal utilization of available resources to make Aadhaar services more accessible.

According to an official statement, the chief secretary further directed that special enrollment camps be conducted in both government and private schools to facilitate Aadhaar registration for students.

Additionally, he called for the promotion of the M-Aadhaar App and My-Aad-



haar Portal to enhance digital access for citizens.

Highlighting the importance of Aadhaar-linked authentication, Rastogi asked the School Education Department to run awareness campaigns urging parents to complete Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBU) for their children at the ages of 5 and 15 years.

He also directed all the departments of Haryana to ensure Aadhaar-based authentication of beneficiaries of various services offered at Aadhaar centers and other offices.

Rastogi further directed that Aadhaar-based face authentication attendance system be deployed across all

government departments. During the meeting, Bhawna Garg, Deputy Director General, UIDAI Regional Office, Chandigarh, highlighted the need to increase Aadhaar enrolment among children aged 0-5 years.

The proposed deploying Aadhaar kits at immunization centres, with collaboration between the Health Department and the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD) to ensure full coverage for young children.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from various departments and representatives of banks and postal department.

Mann vows to end drug menace, launches mass awareness campaign

Komal Kamola Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, alongside former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Wednesday flagged off a massive awareness campaign against drug abuse, vowing to eradicate the menace from the state. Addressing thousands of youth who took an oath to fight against drugs, Mann asserted that his government would not allow drug smugglers to thrive at the cost of innocent lives.

"This is a decisive crusade against drugs, and we all pledge to eliminate this curse from Punjab," said Mann during a march aimed at raising awareness. He emphasized that his government had already dismantled drug supply networks and jailed major offenders. Additionally, he highlighted that, for the first time, properties acquired through drug trafficking were being seized and de-



molished as a deterrent. Blaming previous administrations for the worsening drug crisis, the Chief Minister stated that drugs had infiltrated the state's social fabric due to their negligence. However, under the guidance of Aam Aadmi Party National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, he expressed confidence that Punjab would soon be free from drugs.

Mann stressed that the battle against drugs must become a mass movement involving civil society, not just law enforcement. He lauded communities for

passing anti-drug resolutions in villages and urged people to report drug smugglers using the state's newly launched WhatsApp helpline, 9779100200. He assured that informants' identities would be kept confidential.

The Chief Minister praised the Punjab Police for its dedication to safeguarding the state and playing a frontline role in the anti-drug mission. Calling on citizens to actively participate, he urged every resident to become a soldier in this fight to make Punjab completely drug-free.

Bulandshahr on high alert over Waqf Amendment Bill, police intensify patrolling

Avnish Tyagi Bulandshahr

Bulandshahr has been placed on high alert following the introduction of the Waqf Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. In response, the police administration has implemented stringent security measures across the district. Mixed-population areas and Muslim-majority localities are under heightened surveillance, with law enforcement agencies conducting continuous patrolling to prevent any untoward incidents.

Police teams have launched intensive checking operations at multiple locations, stopping and inspecting vehicles while scrutinizing suspicious individuals. The security arrangements have been elevated to the highest level to ensure law and order remain intact. Speaking on the situation, Senior Superintendent



of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar stated that the district police force is on high alert and fully prepared to tackle any challenges arising due to the bill's introduction. He assured that police personnel are actively patrolling all circles within the district, with Circle Officers (COs) and station in-charges personally overseeing security checks. The authorities are maintaining a close watch on anti-social elements and those attempting to spread

rumors or incite unrest. In Bulandshahr city, SP City Shankar Prasad, along with Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Riju, is leading patrolling efforts. In Khurja, SP Dehat Tejveer Singh and CO Vikas Pratap Chauhan are monitoring the situation, while in Sikandrabad, CO Purnima Singh is overseeing security arrangements. Similarly, in Anupshahr, CO Chitranshu Chathan is in charge, and in Syana, CO Prakhar

Pandey, along with Station House Officer (SHO) Yagya Dutt Sharma, is ensuring law enforcement teams remain vigilant.

Authorities have appealed to the public to cooperate with law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and communal harmony. Residents have been urged to report any suspicious activities or individuals spreading misinformation to Dial 112 or their nearest police station. The administration has reiterated that no attempt to disrupt peace will be tolerated, and strict action will be taken against those attempting to instigate violence.

Security arrangements have been significantly enhanced in sensitive areas of the city. To prevent any law-and-order disturbances, the police are maintaining a round-the-clock presence, with officers deployed at key locations. Additional

security measures include the deployment of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) personnel and the use of advanced surveillance tools such as CCTV cameras and drones, ensuring real-time monitoring of the situation.

SP City Shankar Prasad reaffirmed that maintaining peace and security in Bulandshahr is the police administration's top priority. He urged residents to remain calm and avoid believing or spreading rumors. He emphasized that the police are actively monitoring the situation and are fully equipped to deal with any disputes or disturbances swiftly and effectively.

With the district under strict surveillance, authorities continue to work tirelessly to ensure stability, reinforcing their commitment to maintaining law and order in Bulandshahr.

CM Saini attends BJP state-level workshop in Samalkha New Academic Session Commences at DAVCPs, Mandi with Sacred Havan

Chandigarh
Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini attended the state-level workshop of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Seva Sadhna Kendra in Samalkha on Wednesday. Addressing journalists, he announced that Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi would be giving two major gifts to Haryana on the occasion of Baba Sahab Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Jayanti on April 14. The Prime Minister will inaugurate the airport in Hissar and lay the foundation stone for an 800 MW power unit in Yamunanagar.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the people of Haryana would welcome the Prime Minister with open hearts. He praised the



Prime Minister's efforts in strengthening India's global position and working towards the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. He emphasized that the 'triple engine govern-

ment' in Haryana is accelerating development at three times the speed, aligning with the principle of 'Viksit Bharat-Viksit Haryana'.

Speaking on governance matters, the Chief Minister announced that the central government is set to introduce the Waqf Bill, which aims to resolve disputes related to the Waqf Board. He also reassured farmers that the state government is committed to supporting them. He confirmed that all necessary preparations have been made for the arrival of crops in mandis, in-

structing officials to ensure the lifting of crops within 48 hours and timely transfer of payments to farmers' accounts. He also directed authorities to provide essential facilities to farmers at mandis.

On the festive occasion of Navratri, the Chief Minister extended his greetings to the people of the state and wished for their good health and prosperity.

The event was attended by Development and Panchayat Minister Krishan Lal Panwar, Cooperation Minister Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shyam Singh Rana, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Krishan Kumar Bedi, and other dignitaries.

Rajan Panchhi Mandi

The new academic session at DAVCPs, Mandi, commenced with a sacred havan on the school premises, accompanied by the recitation of Vedic mantras. The auspicious ceremony aimed to seek divine blessings for a successful and enriching year ahead.

The havan was graced by the presence of the esteemed Principal, Mr. K.S. Guleria, along with staff members, parents, and students. Purohit Acharya Veda Mitra Shastri and School Acharya Bhavani Negi led the chanting of Vedic mantras, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere. The school's music



teachers added to the piety of the event with soulful bhajans.

Addressing the gathering, Principal Mr. K.S. Guleria extended a warm welcome to students and staff, emphasizing the values of discipline, dedication, and perseverance. He encouraged students to uphold the principles of Arya Samaj, set new

academic goals, and embrace learning with enthusiasm. He also highlighted the importance of teamwork and integrity in achieving success.

The ceremony concluded with prayers for the well-being and bright future of all students, marking the beginning of the academic session on a spiritually uplifting note.

Himalayan Ibex shot by poachers rescued four held in Ladakh Vikramaditya Singh accused of misleading public with false development claims: Rakesh Jamwal

Leh
A Himalayan Ibex with a gunshot injury was rescued and four poachers were arrested from a remote area connecting Leh and Kargil districts in the union territory of Ladakh, police said on Wednesday.

The operation was carried out jointly by the wildlife department and police on March 28, they said.

The Himalayan Ibex is India's largest wild goat.

The Himalayan Ibex was shot by poachers near Tsbil-someyachan in Kanji village, some 140 km from Leh town

on March 28, Khatse Station House Officer (SHO) Jamyang Namgyal told PTL.

Both front limbs of the animal were found broken and it was successfully rescued. Four poachers were also arrested and the weapon of offence was recovered during the operation, he said.

The animal has been shifted to Leh and is undergoing treatment there. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act against the arrested accused, Namgyal said.

Mandi

BJP Chief Spokesperson and MLA Rakesh Jamwal has launched a scathing attack on PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh, accusing him of deceiving the public with false claims of development. Jamwal alleged that Singh has been re-laying foundation stones and inaugurating projects that were already approved and completed during the BJP government's tenure.

Jamwal criticized Singh's visit to Sundarnagar, calling it a "political drama" aimed at misleading the people. He claimed that the minister's actions were merely an at-



tempt to garner undeserved praise by taking credit for BJP-initiated works. He fur-

ther stated that Singh was indulging in "cheap politics" by sidelining elected BJP representatives in the Nagar Parishad Sundarnagar, where 10 out of 13 councillors

belong to the BJP, including the chairman and vice-chairman. Specifically, Jamwal highlighted that Singh laid the foundation stone for the Executive Office's residence, which had already been under construction for six months, and re-inaugurated Dexta Park, which had previously been opened. "This exposes how low the minister can stoop just to gain political mileage," he added.

Taking a jibe at Singh, Jamwal said, "If the minister is so eager to put up plaques in his name, he should at least undertake new projects of his own instead of hijacking BJP-led initiatives."

He expressed confidence that the public would see through what he described as Singh's "false politics" and would deliver a fitting response to the Congress government in the 2027 elections.

Meanwhile, on the occasion of the state-level Devta Mela, Rakesh Jamwal, along with his supporters, sought blessings from various deities, including Devta Kamrunaaj Ji Maharaj and Devta Mahunaa Ji Maharaj. He prayed for the well-being and prosperity of the people of Himachal Pradesh, hoping that divine blessings would continue to shine upon the state.

“Empowering the Muslim Community: Amit Shah’s Vision Through the Waqf Amendment Bill”



By Dr Anil Singh

Dr Anil Singh Editor STAR Views & Author of fourth coming book on The Prime Minister: Discourses in Indian Polity, which will be released today at Auditorium Prime Minister’s Museum & library, Teen Murti Bhawan, New Delhi

On April 2, 2025, Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the Lok Sabha, presenting the government’s rationale behind the significant Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025. In his detailed speech, Shah highlighted the transformative potential of this amendment, aimed explicitly at benefiting the Muslim community through promoting transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity in managing Waqf properties. This legislative move underscores the government’s evolving approach towards dismantling traditional inefficiencies and addressing systemic malpractices that have historically plagued Waqf administration.

Clarifying Misconceptions: Ensuring Religious Autonomy

Shah proactively addressed widespread misconceptions regarding the involvement of non-Muslim members in Waqf Boards. He assured unequivocally, “First of all, no non-Muslim would come into the Waqf. Understand this clearly... There is no such provision to include any non-Muslim among those who manage religious institutions; we do not want to do this.” This reassurance aimed at alleviating fears about potential encroachment on religious autonomy and emphasized the government’s firm respect for religious sanctity and the autonomy of the Muslim community.

Combating Corruption: Towards a Transparent Future

Central to Shah’s address was the emphasis on combating corruption and misuse within the Waqf system, which historically suffered from bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption. The introduction of a centralized digital portal for property tracking, auditing, compliance, and revenue management was highlighted as a landmark measure.



This technological innovation seeks to ensure Waqf assets are appropriately harnessed for the community’s welfare, curbing misappropriation and enhancing accountability across the board.

Inclusivity and Representation: Reflecting Community Diversity

A groundbreaking feature of the bill is its provision for inclusive representation within Waqf Boards, mandating participation from diverse Muslim groups such as Shias, Sunnis, Bohras, backward Muslim communities, and notably women. Amit Shah reiterated that such representation would

ensure broader, more democratic decision-making, reflecting the diverse fabric of the Muslim community. This inclusivity is set to foster better governance, transparency, and equitable distribution of resources.

Empowering Individuals: Strengthening Legal Recourse

An essential reform introduced through the bill empowers individuals by enabling robust legal recourse mechanisms. Shah explicitly criticized earlier restrictive measures that prevented aggrieved parties from seeking judicial intervention. Under the new provisions, “anyone with grievances can approach the court,” thereby strengthening democratic accountability and ensuring justice. This represents a critical shift towards an empowered citizenry capable of holding administrative authorities accountable.

Government’s Commitment: A New Paradigm

Amit Shah’s speech encapsulated the government’s commitment to reform traditional structures marred by inefficiency and malpractice. By modernizing the management of Waqf properties and ensuring transparent usage of these resources for charitable, educational, and socio-economic upliftment, the government underlines a broader vision—creating a more equitable, transparent, and responsive governance model.

Conclusion: An Inevitable Legislative Milestone

Given the government’s absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, the passage of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, appears certain. This bill symbolizes a progressive step towards empowering India’s Muslim community through enhanced transparency, inclusive representation, and strengthened legal frameworks. Amit Shah’s proactive clarifications and assurances have significantly enhanced his stature, earning cross-community appreciation and setting a new benchmark in governance. This legislative move is a clear testament to the government’s commitment to societal transformation through constructive engagement, ensuring resources are managed transparently and beneficially for the intended communities.

Breaking Time Sudoku

What to do

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digit 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.

	1		9			7	8	
	9		3			5		
3					5			2
		1	2	5				8
5				7	9	4		
7			4					5
		3			2		4	
	8	6			7		2	

Solution, Sudoku

2	7	8	1	3	6	4	5	9
9	4	3	5	7	8	1	2	6
5	1	6	2	9	4	3	8	7
6	3	2	8	5	7	9	4	1
1	8	4	9	6	2	7	3	5
7	9	5	4	1	3	2	6	8
3	5	7	6	4	9	8	1	2
4	2	1	7	8	5	6	9	3
8	6	9	3	2	1	5	7	4

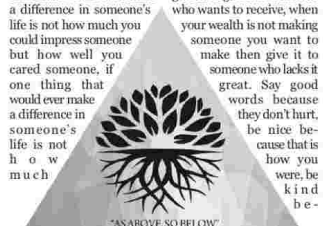
THE WISDOM TREE

By Suveen Kumar

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

If one thing that will ever make a difference in someone’s life is not how smart-mouth you are but how sweet-heart you are, if one think that would ever make a difference in someone’s life is not how much you could impress someone but how well you cared someone, if one thing that would ever make a difference in someone’s life is not how much

smile and they will fall in love, you can just hug and they will forever be yours. When your love is not working for someone you want to give then give it to someone who wants to receive, when your wealth is not making someone you want to make then give it to someone who lacks it great. Say good words because they don’t hurt, be nice because that is how you were, be kind be-



THE WISDOM TREE - BY SUEVEEN KUMAR

favour you got but how much favour you gave to ones who didn’t have any. Have your own rules of life but most importantly, believe in them. Words we speak out of our ego are meant to be overheard, actions we take out of our ego are meant to be ignored, things we give out of our ego meant to be passed on.

cause it is vanishing from the world. You don’t have to have a perfect reason to do good things, to do good things even bad excuses are accepted. Making a difference is not always making things different, it is sometimes keeping things from being different that is beautiful, it is sometimes stopping things from changing to different that is best in form. Moral: The best way to make a difference is knowing what needs to be different and then helping it to be different.

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The plight of HKRNL employees: Another fraud of the govt system



By Priyanka Saurabh

The condition of the employees working under Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam Limited (HKRNL) is getting worse day by day. These employees are recruited on the basis of merit, but they neither get a proper salary nor job security. The government is using them as a temporary solution, but no care is being taken about their rights. The employees working under HKRNL have become just a “temporary solution” for the government. The government is garnering accolades by using them but is not taking any concrete steps towards giving them permanent jobs. When it comes to filling vacant posts in government departments, the government is busy polishing the figures by showing these employees.

Government’s arbitrary decree: HKRNL employees’ jobs in danger

Recently, the government has issued such a decree, which has put the jobs of HKRNL employees in danger. The government is not only shying away from regularizing these employees but is now also taking steps towards removing them. This decision can push thousands of families towards unemployment. The government had earlier guaranteed security till 58 years, but in the month of January, hundreds of HKRNL employees working in various departments were removed. When the removed employees protested, even then the government did not listen to them. Now, the employees



working in the Forest Department were removed from their jobs by Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, giving a big shock on the holy festival of Eid. The additional principal chief conservator of forests, Panchkula Headquarters, has issued an order to terminate the services of these employees with immediate effect.

Main problems

HKRNL employees work like regular government employees, but they get only one-third of the salary. This situation is not only weakening these employees financially but also lowering their morale. The problem of employees not getting salary on time is persistent.

Many times the salary is stuck for months, forcing them to face a financial crisis. These employees are given more work than regular employees, but they are not given any stability. As a result, they are always forced to work in an environment of insecurity. Whenever the demand for filling vacant government posts arises in the Haryana Assembly, the government uses these employees only for juggling figures. The government tries to show that it has provided employment, but in reality these employees are kept only on short-term contracts. While regular employees get all kinds of leaves, HKRNL employees are not even given the facility of leaves. This affects their mental and physical health.

risk of losing job

As per the new order of the government, the process of removal of HKRNL employees has been expedited. This decision is a big blow to thousands of employees who have worked hard for years on cheap wages. Exclusion from other govern-

ment schemes These employees have not been given the right to any government benefits, insurance, pension or other facilities, due to which their future remains completely insecure. Due to job instability and uncertainty about the future, there is a lot of mental stress among the employees. This situation is not only affecting their standard of living but is also having a negative impact on their families.

Possible Solutions

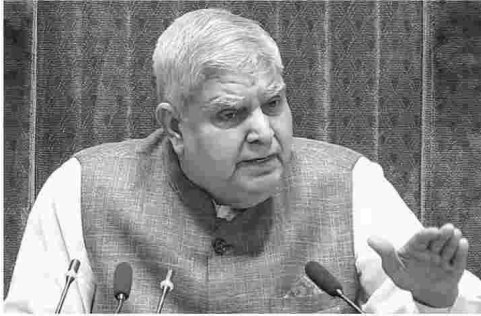
HKRNL employees should be paid wages commensurate with their work. It is unjust that they receive much lower wages than regular employees for the same work. The government should ensure that these employees receive their wages on time so that they can avoid a financial crisis. There should be a policy to make permanent employees who have been working for a long time. This will make them feel more secure and bring more efficiency to their work. Instead of putting an excessive workload on the employees, their work should be bal-

This improvement underscores the efficacy of nationwide policy interventions aimed at retaining students and breaking barriers to education. Enhanced access to schools, targeted schemes for girls, and campaigns promoting the importance of education have contributed to this positive shift.

Governance in democracy can only be by executive not courts: RS Chairman Dhankhar

Dhankhar made the remarks during Question Hour after Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan referred to Supreme Court directions

New Delhi
RS Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday said the government is "ultimate" and governance in a democracy can only be by the executive and not courts as the former is accountable to Parliament and the people who elect it.



Dhankhar made the remarks during Question Hour after Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan referred to Supreme Court directions while responding to DMK member Kanimozhi NVS Somu's demand for decentralising the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET).

Somu had questioned why the government couldn't "restrict tests for entry towards its own institutions

and decentralise where states fill up on the basis of marks scored in state board exams."

Pradhan defended the centralised examination system, noting it was initiated by the previous UPA government. He also said the Supreme Court has given a direction and the medical entrance test is centralised.

"The core of the question is why don't you dismantle NEET exam and give authority to states..." he said.

"The previous UPA government started this model. We have to carry forward that. She was very much part of that government. She could have prevailed upon them," he said, addressing Kanimozhi.

The minister acknowledged challenges in previous NEET examinations but assured that improvements were being made each year. "NTA is doing a tremendous job... It will be a very robust entrance testing mechanism for the country."

At this point, the chairman asked: "Can the government part with its executive authority with the court?"

"Governance in democracy has to be only by executive. Because executive is accountable to Parliament and people in elections.

How can executive governance be done by any other agency?"

"Because (executive) is elected by the people to govern the nation, and therefore give attention to this also. This is a larger issue beyond your ministry. But we cannot have in the country, executive governance beyond the government. The government is ultimate," Dhankhar stressed.

In response to another supplementary question, Pradhan said funds were allocated for broadband connectivity in the 2025-26 Budget to support digital access as emphasized in the National Education Policy.

To a question related to draft UGC guidelines, CPI-M leader John Brittas raised concern over overriding

powers given to Governors in search and selection committee, and lack of academic job security for contractual staff.

To this, the Union Education Minister cited instances where "influential persons from CM offices were appointing their wives and cronies as Vice Chancellor and lecturer."

The minister also highlighted the Modi government's efforts toward social justice, claiming that until 2018, there were no rules for constitutional protection of SC/ST groups in assistant and associate professor appointments. "For the first time, Prime Minister Modi enacted a visionary bill and regulations. There cannot be a category of 'not found suitable candidate,'" he stated.

India's media ecosystem doesn't need validation from foreign bodies: Govt

New Delhi
India has a vibrant press and media ecosystem which does not need validation from foreign organisations, the government told the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan said this in a written response to a question from Congress MP K Sudhakaran, who asked about "India's decline in the Global Press Freedom Index ranking in 2024."

"India has a vibrant press and media ecosystem, which does not need validation from foreign organisations," he said. In its report published last year, global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked India 159th out of 180 countries based on journalists' ability to work and report freely and independently.

India was ranked below Turkey, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which stood at 158th, 152nd, and 150th positions, respectively.

RSF has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organisation of the Francophonie.

Asked about steps taken by the government to safeguard press freedom and journalists' rights, the minister said freedom of speech and expression is protected under Article 19 of the Constitution.

He added that India has a robust judicial system that ensures the enforcement of constitutional provisions.

The minister also said the Press Council of India (PCI), an autonomous statutory body set up under the Press Council Act, 1978, and headed by a retired Supreme Court judge, adjudicates complaints from journalists about curbs on press freedom, physical assaults and attacks on journalists.

Under Section 13 of the Press Council Act, 1978, the PCI can also take suo motu cognisance of urgent issues related to press freedom and maintaining journalistic standards.

Similarly, he said press freedom in electronic media is ensured through a self-regulatory mechanism under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

Nitish Katara murder: SC seeks UP govt response on Vikas Yadav's interim bail plea

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought the Uttar Pradesh government's response on the interim bail plea of Vikas Yadav, who is serving a 25-year jail term in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case.

According to the plea, Yadav sought the reprieve for attending to his ailing mother.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said it would be open for the Uttar Pradesh government to constitute a medical board to examine the condition of his mother admitted at Yashoda Hospital in Ghaziabad.

"The medical board will also consult doctors of the said hospital and peruse the records," the bench said while posting the hearing on April 15.

Yadav's counsel said the mother's condition had deteriorated in February as he placed on record her medical documents.

He said the mother was in the intensive care unit and had refused surgery.

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati said Yadav's mother was in hospital and she could be examined there by the medical board.

Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, appearing for Katara's mother Nilam Katara, who is the complainant, questioned Yadav's conduct and said he had visited AIMS 98 times on medical grounds.



Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, appearing for Katara's mother Nilam Katara, who is the complainant, questioned Yadav's conduct and said he had visited AIMS 98 times on medical grounds.

without any benefit of remission.

He is the son of Uttar Pradesh politician D P Yadav. His cousin Vishal Yadav was also punished for the kidnapping and murder of business executive Katara. The duo was against Katara's alleged affair with Bharti Yadav, sister of Vikas, as they belonged to different castes.

Another co-convict Sukhdev Pehalwan was given a 20-year jail term without any remission benefit. Earlier, the Delhi High Court, while upholding the life imprisonment awarded to Vikas and Vishal Yadav by the trial court, specified a 30-year sentence, without any remission, to both of them. It had awarded a 25-year jail term to the third convict Pehalwan.

The Delhi prisons administration had last year rejected Yadav's remission request after his conduct was found to be "unsatisfactory".

Indian Navy's INS Tarkash Intercepts Vessel, Seizes 2500 KG of Narcotics

Sayan Chatterjee
New Delhi

In a meticulously planned and daring operation, the Indian Navy's frontline warship, INS Tarkash, has dealt a significant blow to international drug cartels by seizing an astonishing 2,500 kilograms of narcotics in the Western Indian Ocean. This historic drug bust underscores India's resolute commitment to maritime security and its ongoing battle against transnational crimes in international waters.

Deployed under the Western Naval Command, INS Tarkash has been conducting Maritime Security Operations in the region since January 2025. The warship has been actively participating in multinational efforts under the aegis of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, a pivotal naval coalition operating under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) headquartered in Bahrain. As part of this mission, INS Tarkash played a decisive role in Operation Anzar Tiger, a coordinated initiative targeting illicit trafficking and organized maritime crime.

On March 31, 2025, Indian Navy's long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, the P-8L, detected multiple suspicious vessels engaged in potential illicit activities in the vast expanse of the Western Indian Ocean. Acting on the intelligence



provided by the aircraft, INS Tarkash swiftly altered its course and moved to intercept the suspected targets. As the warship closed in on the vessels, a series of interrogations and close monitoring identified a dhow—a traditional wooden boat often used in smuggling operations—as a prime suspect. In order to maintain continuous surveillance, INS Tarkash deployed its integral helicopter, which provided aerial reconnaissance and real-time tracking of the dhow's movements. Meanwhile, a specially trained boarding team, including elite Marine Commandos (MARCOS), prepared to board the vessel. In a display of precision and tactical expertise, the Indian Navy's boarding team executed the operation seamlessly, securing the dhow without resistance from its crew.

Following the successful boarding, naval personnel conducted a thorough search of the dhow. Hidden com-

partments within the vessel revealed a massive consignment of narcotics meticulously concealed to evade detection. The seizure included a staggering 2,386 kilograms of hashish and 121 kilograms of heroin, making it one of the largest maritime drug interceptions in recent history.

The apprehended crew members were immediately detained for questioning, and preliminary investigations indicated that the drugs were likely intended for distribution through international smuggling networks. The illicit consignment's estimated street value runs into millions of dollars, marking a significant setback for the criminal syndicates operating in the region. INS Tarkash's decisive action underscores the Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to eradicating maritime crime and ensuring stability in the region. By proactively engaging in counter-narcotics opera-

tions, India continues to play a crucial role in strengthening regional security and upholding international maritime laws.

This latest success highlights India's growing naval capabilities, intelligence-driven operations, and its steadfast resolve to curb organized crime at sea. The interception also serves as a stark warning to global drug syndicates that the Indian Navy remains vigilant and prepared to dismantle illicit networks operating in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

As security challenges persist in the IOR, the Indian Navy remains at the forefront, collaborating with international allies and security coalitions to combat emerging threats. The recent operation by INS Tarkash reinforces India's position as a formidable force in maritime security and showcases its ability to lead complex, high-stakes missions with precision and efficiency.

With maritime security continuing to be a priority for India, the Navy's role in maintaining law and order on the high seas is more critical than ever. As the nation strengthens its global partnerships and enhances its naval capabilities, the success of INS Tarkash stands as a testament to India's unrelenting pursuit of safety, stability, and justice in international waters.

SC grills Telangana assembly speaker for delay in issuing notice on disqualification pleas

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Telangana assembly speaker if he took about 10 months to issue notices on the petitions for the disqualification of BRS MLAs who defected to the Congress.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih also took exception to a purported statement of Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in the assembly that there would be no bye-elections.

"If this is said on the floor of the house, your chief minister is making a mockery of the Tenth Schedule," Justice Gavai observed.

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution relates to provisions for disqualification on the ground of defect.

A division bench of the high court in November last year said the legislative assembly speaker must decide the disqualification petitions against the three MLAs within a "reasonable



seeking the disqualification.

While one of the pleas challenged the November 2024 order of the Telangana High Court on the disqualification of the three MLAs, another petition was filed over the seven remaining legislators who defected.

A division bench of the high court in November last year said the legislative assembly speaker must decide the disqualification petitions against the three MLAs within a "reasonable

time".

The division bench's verdict came on the appeals against the September 9, 2024 order of a single judge.

The single judge had directed the secretary of the Telangana assembly to file the petition seeking the disqualifications before the speaker for fixing a schedule of hearing within four weeks.

On Wednesday, the apex court asked, "If the speaker does not at all act, then the courts in this country, which not only have a power but also a duty as guardians of the Constitution, would be powerless?"

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the office of the speaker, said the first disqualification petition was filed on March 18, 2024 followed by two other such pleas filed on April 2 and April 8 last year, respectively.

He said the first petition was filed in the high court on April 10 last year. "Is this waiting for a reasonable time?" Rohatgi asked. When the bench asked about the time taken in issuing notice on the disqualification petitions, the senior advocate referred to the pendency of matter before the high court. He said the speaker issued the notice on the disqualification petitions on January 16. "Even if he had filed a petition (in the high court) within two weeks, what took you 10 months to issue first notice?" the bench asked further.

SC notes objections to clauses of AIFF draft constitution

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday heard the objections to the clauses of the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) draft constitution prepared by former apex court judge L. Nageswara Rao. Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, amicus curiae in the case, referred to the national sports development code to submit before a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Joydalya Bagchi that only the secretary and the treasurer should be asked to observe the cooling off period. "We want that the constitution of the AIFF should be in alignment with national sports code and FIFA regulations," he said. The hearing remained inconclusive. The draft constitution, prepared by Justice Rao on top court's directions, proposed some radical changes, including a person holding the office for a maximum period of 12 years during their lifetime subject to serving a maximum of two successive terms of four years each.

90.5 per cent of public grievances received in 2024 redressed: Govt in LS

New Delhi

Out of over 29 lakh public grievances received by the government through a dedicated online platform, around 26.45 lakh were redressed in 2024, the Lok Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

The complaints were received on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) -- an online platform where citizens can raise complaints.

"A total of 1,15,52,503 grievances were redressed from 2020-2024 and an annual all-time high of 26,45,869 grievances (90.5 per cent) have been redressed on CPGRAMS portal from January-December, 2024," Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said in a written reply.

The guidelines give directions on the integration of various public grievance platforms, creation of dedicated grievance cells in ministries/departments, appointment of experienced



grievances received (including 6,62,741 brought forward from last year) and of these 23,07,674 were disposed of, Singh said.

In 2022, 28,06,209 grievances (including 8,87,971 brought forward ones) were redressed and of these, 21,43,468 were redressed, the minister said.

The government issued comprehensive guidelines for effective redress of public grievances on August 23, 2024, he said. The guidelines give directions on the integration of various public grievance platforms, creation of dedicated grievance cells in ministries/departments, appointment of experienced and competent nodal officers, emphasis on root cause analysis of grievances and action on feedback, Singh said. It also suggests strengthening the escalation processes by appointing appellate authorities, grievance closure guidelines, with further reduction in the upper limit of time given for resolutions from 20 days to 21 days, Singh said. "Redressal of public grievances is also one of the thrust areas of the special campaign conducted by the government on institutionalising swachhata (cleanliness) and reducing pendency in government offices from October 2-October 31," the minister said.

HPC Meeting Sets Course for Enhanced Water Infrastructure in Uttarakhand

Pawan Lalchand
Dehradun

The 12th High Powered Committee (HPC) meeting concerning the World Bank-assisted Uttarakhand Water Supply Program (2018-2025) in peri-urban areas was held at the Secretariat under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Anand Bardhan. The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of the ongoing project and discussing strategic measures to enhance its implementation.

One of the key directives issued by the Chief Secretary pertained to reducing electricity expenditure on tubewells across the state. Anand Bardhan instructed the Drinking Water Department and other concerned departments to formulate an action plan for installing solar energy systems. He emphasized the importance of identifying and mapping vacant areas



for the installation of solar energy infrastructure. Additionally, he mandated that a groundwater level report must be obtained before installing new tubewells. These reports are to be maintained by the Drinking Water Corporation and Jal Sansthan, particularly for areas experiencing critical

drinking water shortages.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary underscored the necessity of maintaining best practices under the World Bank-aided Uttarakhand Water Supply Program. He directed officials to ensure 100 percent water quality, a continuous water supply, and enhanced

energy efficiency in water pumping systems to reduce electricity consumption. Additionally, he stressed the importance of customer satisfaction and urged authorities to consistently improve the complaint redressal mechanism. In a significant development, the Chief Secretary approved the final

variation in multiple schemes being executed by Uttarakhand Payjal Nigam and Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan.

Officials provided an update on the progress of the project, informing the committee that the Uttarakhand Water Supply Program, which has an overall budget of Rs 1,042 crore, is scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2025. Of the total project cost, the World Bank's contribution stands at Rs 834 crore, while the Uttarakhand government has contributed Rs 208 crore. The program covers 22 cities across five districts—Dehradun, Tehri, Haridwar, Nainital, and Udham Singh Nagar. Under the initiative, the objective is to provide a minimum of 16 hours of water supply per day at a pressure of at least 12 meters, benefiting an estimated population of 4.35 lakh people at 135 liters per capita per day (LPCD).

The project also includes a provision for 100 percent metering with volumetric tariff implementation.

In terms of achievements, officials reported that 22 schemes have already been completed under this initiative, and 108,755 new water connections have been issued. This figure exceeds the initial target by 24 percent, highlighting the program's success. The World Bank has expressed complete satisfaction with the project's implementation and progress so far.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, including the Secretary of Drinking Water, Finance, Additional Secretaries, and representatives from relevant departments. Discussions emphasized the importance of sustaining the project's momentum to ensure the efficient delivery of water services in peri-urban areas of Uttarakhand.

Agra Division Shines at Special Railway Service Award Ceremony



Rajesh Tomar/Akash Jain
Agra

The North Central Railway headquarters recently hosted the prestigious Special Railway Service Award Ceremony 2024, recognizing the exemplary contributions of railway employees. The event, held under the esteemed chairmanship of Shri Upendra Chandra Joshi, General Manager of North Central Railway, was graced by the presence of Mrs. Chetna Joshi, President of the North Central Railway Women's Welfare Organization, along with the Additional General Manager, Principal Heads of Departments, and Divisional Railway Managers from various divisions.

A total of 81 outstanding railway employees were honored for their dedication and relentless service to the railway network. Among them, the Agra Division emerged as a top performer, with Senior Divisional Operations Manager Shri Kuldeep Meena and 13 other employees receiving special recognition for their commendable work. Their invaluable contributions to ensuring the efficiency and smooth operation of railway services were widely appreciated.

A major highlight of the event was the unveiling of the 100th edition of the newsletter 'Pratyush', published by the Public Relations Department of North Central Railway. The milestone edition, formally released by the General Manager, marks an important achievement for the publication, which was first launched in September 2008. The special issue offers a retrospective of the

newsletter's journey, featuring key milestones, significant events in North Central Railway's history, and the first pages of all previous editions.

In his keynote address, General Manager Shri Upendra Chandra Joshi lauded the exceptional efforts of railway employees, particularly during the Diya Mahakumbh held in Prayagraj, which saw the participation of millions of devotees from across the country and abroad. He praised the workforce for ensuring uninterrupted train operations throughout the grand congregation, emphasizing that their efforts were a source of immense pride for the railway network. Extending his congratulations, he reiterated that the Rail Week celebrations serve as an opportunity to evaluate performance and acknowledge the dedication of employees who significantly enhance railway operations. Efficiency dividends were also awarded to divisions and workshops as an encouragement for greater efficiency and excellence. The event commenced with a welcome address by Principal Chief Personnel Officer Shri Anurag Tripathi, followed by the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the General Manager and the President of the North Central Railway Women's Welfare Organization. The gathering was warmly welcomed by senior railway officials, setting the tone for an evening of recognition and celebration.

Adding to the grandeur of the event, a cultural segment featured a mesmerizing Shiva Stuti (Vandana) performed by Ms. Aparajita Patel.

Allahabad University college teachers' body cross swords over talking to media



Prayagraj (UP)

The Allahabad University (AU) and the institution's college teachers' association have crossed swords over making statements in the media.

Days after the AU issued a notification instructing all teaching and non-teaching staff to refrain from making any statements in the media that could tarnish the university's reputation, the AU Constituent College Teachers' Association (ACTA) on Wednesday said the issues raised in its recent meeting regarding teachers' problems have no connection with the circular.

On March 29, the notification issued by the registrar of Allahabad University also warned the teaching and non-teaching staff of appropriate action against those who failed to comply with these directives.

ACTA President Umesh P Singh said the notification did not relate to the concerns raised by the teachers in their meeting.

"While the Indian Constitution grants individuals the right to freedom of expression, this right should not be misused to harm their institution. If any teacher or staff member damages the university's image through their comments, restrictions must be imposed," he said.

However, Singh emphasized that if there are delays in university matters, the

associations of teachers and employees have the right to highlight such issues.

"During our meetings, teachers present their grievances which are then conveyed to the media," he added.

Citing examples, Singh pointed out that the promotion files of teachers from Jagat Taran Degree College have been pending at the university for over a year. Similarly, many promotion cases in other colleges remain unresolved.

Regarding appointments, Singh said an advertisement for the principal's post at Ewing Christian College (ECC) was issued in June-July last year.

According to the rules, the vice chancellor must appoint two experts for the screening process but the related file has been pending for six months. The college has been functioning under an acting principal for the past five years.

On March 25, after a general meeting, ACTA released a statement highlighting teachers' dissatisfaction over prolonged delays in administrative matters.

Many faculty members expressed frustration over having to make repeated visits to the vice chancellor's office for even minor issues. Attempts were made to contact the university's public relations officer for a response but they were unavailable for comments.

Manipur BJP MLAs demand NRC and census review before delimitation

Imphal

Legislators of BJP in Manipur have called for the review of the 2001 census and implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the state undergoes the Supreme Court-mandated delimitation exercise.

The demand comes amid heightened ethnic tensions in the state, where the ongoing violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has claimed over 250 lives and displaced thousands since May 2023.



The demand was raised at a meeting of BJP MLAs on Tuesday, convened in response to the Supreme Court's March 17 directive to

UP gov't implements technological innovations to revolutionize ration distribution system

Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh government has revolutionized the ration distribution system over the past eight years, making it not only efficient but also transparent and corruption-free through digital advancements, an official statement issued here on Wednesday said.

Upholding the core principles of 'Service, Security and Good Governance', the government has implemented technological innovations through the Food and Civil Supplies Department that directly benefit over 1.15 crore ration card holders in the state, it said.

The state government has introduced e-KYC and Aadhaar verification to ensure fairness in ration distribution.

The beneficiaries can now complete their e-KYC at any fair price shop nationwide.

As per the Food and Civil



Supplies Department, 77.37 per cent of the state's ration card holders (1.15 crore), including 10.02 lakh beneficiaries who avail the service in other states, had completed e-KYC by March 2025, it said.

This initiative has not only expanded accessibility, but also helped identify and eliminate ineligible cardholders, ensuring that food grains reach those truly in need.

like MGNREGA to modernize the public distribution system.

So far, 3,534 such centers have been completed, with 2,000 more under construction.

For 2025-26, Rs 200 crore has been allocated to expand their reach, especially in rural areas, it said.

'Annapurna Bhawans' will serve as ration distribution centers and provide multiple public services. Each facility will house two rooms -- one for government ration storage and another for a Common Service Center (CSC) -- offering services such as birth, death, income and caste certificates.

These centers will include general stores, bill payment facilities, broadband services, affordable generic medicines and essential household items.

The government is constructing 'Annapurna Bhawans' under schemes

Man dupes family with job promise, lands in jail

Mathura (UP)

A man who allegedly married a woman and promised her a government job by posing as a paramilitary officer was arrested in Mathura, police said on Wednesday.

The man also allegedly lured young men with promises of government jobs and extorted large sums of money from them. He was arrested late Tuesday night from Samkh Road, they said.

Harish Kumar alias Saurabh Srivastava allegedly built contacts among paramilitary personnel while working as an insurance agent in Prayagraj by frequently visiting police and paramilitary camps to sell policies.

After the woman from Mathura filed a complaint, he

fled but was later caught, police said.

Police said the man, who is accused of carrying out similar frauds in other locations too, is a father of two daughters. He is a resident of Lauvakon village in Prayagraj, Deputy Inspector General Shailesh Kumar Pandey said.

During his arrest, police recovered a car with a police sticker, a fake ID card of an SSB assistant commandant, a CRPF officer's uniform, belt, nameplate, and a UP police cap, two Aadhaar cards, a driving license, and nine debit cards, a dozen Aadhaar cards belonging to other individuals, two laptops containing photos of military personnel and officers, including his own images in uniform, DIG said.

the central government to complete the delimitation process in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland within three months.

Of the 37 BJP MLAs in Manipur, only 12 attended the meeting, all of whom represent constituencies in the Imphal Valley.

Senior BJP MLA Konthoujam Govinda emphasized the need to rectify perceived discrepancies in the 2001 Census before proceeding with the delimitation process.

The demand echoes con-

cerns from the Coordination Committee on Manipur Insecurity (COCOMI), a prominent Meitei civil society organization.

COCOMI has strongly opposed any delimitation exercise before implementing the NRC, arguing that without removing illegal immigrants, the process could undermine the rights of indigenous communities.

On March 25, a coalition of 13 political parties, excluding the BJP and Congress, held a meeting to push for a review of the 2001 Census.

India poised to become a global leader in footwear market: Puran Dawar

Akash Jain/Rajesh Tomar
Agra

India is making rapid strides toward establishing itself as a world leader in the footwear market, with the footwear components sector playing a crucial role in this transformation. This sentiment was expressed by Puran Dawar, Regional Chairman of the Council for Leather Exports (CLE) and President of the Agra Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Chamber (AFMEC), during his keynote address at the 58th edition of Shoe Tech Agra. The event, held at Hotel Madhu Resorts in Agra on Wednesday, witnessed a gathering of industry experts, manufacturers, and government officials.

Puran Dawar emphasized the necessity of continuous improvement in product quality, technological advancements, and innovative designs to ensure that the Indian footwear industry remains globally competitive. He further highlighted the importance of diversifying product offerings, which would enable Indian manufacturers to supply a variety of footwear and components, thereby strengthening their foothold in international markets.

Dawar also underscored the significance of increasing footwear exports and pointed out that the role of footwear components in the industry's expansion is becoming increasingly vital. To establish a strong presence in foreign markets, he suggested that the industry must embrace new products, adopt advanced technological solutions, and expand production capacity.



The exhibition Shoe Tech Agra was officially inaugurated by Puran Dawar, along with distinguished guests, including Vivek Sharma (IRS), Managing Director of the Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI) Noida, Col. Pankaj Sinha, Secretary of FDDI, Gopal Gupta, Vice President of AFMEC, Rajiv Wasan, President of the Confederation of Indian Footwear Industries (CIFI) Uttar Pradesh, Dharmendra Narula, President of the Agra

Shoe Factors Federation, Vijay Saxena, President of the Agra Shoe Manufacturers Association (ASMA), Opinder Singh Lovely, and Sanjay Gupta, President of the Indian Footwear Components Manufacturers Association (IFCOMA).

Sanjay Gupta welcomed the guests and elaborated on the exhibition's necessity, highlighting its role in bringing together key stakeholders from the industry. The vote of thanks was delivered by Deshpande Manohar, General Secretary of IFCOMA, while the program was conducted by Anil Kohli.

On the first day of the exhibition, 60 exhibitors from 12 states participated, drawing a total of 2,622 visitors, including 1,140 trade visitors who benefited from networking and business op-

portunities.

One of the highlights of the event was a seminar on the Indian Footwear Sizing System, conducted by experts from the Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), Senior Principal Scientist Dr. Mathivaman S., Chief Scientist Dr. Mohan R., and Senior Scientist Dr. D. Suresh Kumar. They delivered insightful presentations on the new sizing system, emphasizing the importance of standardization in the industry.

In the second session, NIFT Raebareilly Director Nitesh Singh Bora shared his expertise on emerging fashion trends in the Indian footwear market. The seminar provided valuable insights into improving the sizing and design of footwear to meet international standards and consumer expectations.

A significant discussion during the exhibition focused on sustainable waste management in the footwear industry. Akshay Gunetti, Co-Founder of Green Worms, and Jake C. Joy, Executive of Waste and Material Circularity, shared their experiences in recycling footwear waste while generating employment opportunities for youth.

Gunetti revealed that their organization has engaged 6,200 people in the mission to create a sustainable footwear industry.

Over 30 killed as Israel's military operation in Gaza Strip expanding to seize 'large areas'

Jerusalem
Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defence minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 30 people, nearly a dozen of them children.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement.



The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023. Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2 million people.

Katz didn't specify which areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas.

His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages." The militant group still holds 50 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

"This is the only way to end the war," Katz said.

The Hostage Families Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defence Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza."

The group said the Israeli government "has an obligation to free all 50 hostages to pursue every possible channel to advance a deal for their release." They stressed that every passing day puts their loved ones' lives at greater risk.

"Their lives hang in the balance as more and more disturbing details continue to emerge about the horrific conditions they're being held in — chained, abused, and in desperate need of medical attention," said the forum.

which called on the Trump administration and other mediators to continue pressuring Hamas to release the hostages.

"Our highest priority must be an immediate deal to bring ALL hostages back home — the living for rehabilitation and those killed for proper burial — and end this war," the group said.

Israel continued to target the Gaza Strip, with airstrikes overnight killing 17 people in the southern city of Khan Younis. Another 15 people were killed in a strike in the north of the strip Wednesday, according to officials at hospitals where the bodies were taken.

Officials at the Nasser Hospital said the bodies of 12 people killed in an overnight airstrike that were brought to the hospital included five women, one of them pregnant, and two children.

The Strait Thunder-2025A drills in the central and southern Taiwan Strait focused on blockade enforcement of the estranged island. China claims Taiwan as part of its mainland.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command has successfully completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises carried out on Tuesday and Wednesday, a spokesperson for the theatre command, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

The drills tested the troops' integrated joint operation capabilities, Shi said, adding that the troops of the theatre command remain on high alert at all times and will continue to strengthen combat readiness with intensive training to resolutely thwart all separatist activities seeking "Taiwan independence."

The PLA said earlier that drills, which began on Tuesday, were aimed at showing Beijing's anger against separatist statements by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

The drills serve as a "stern warning and forceful deterrence" against those seeking the island's independence.

China has been angered by Lai's move to prevent China's infiltration and espionage activities in the self-ruled territory, categorising China as a "foreign hostile force" last month.

The drills, the first during the second tenure of US

China concludes high-intensity military drills around Taiwan

President Donald Trump, were strongly criticised by the US, EU and Japan, who said they were opposed to unilateral changes to the status quo, including through force or coercion. They said there is no justification for China's irresponsible threats and military pressure operations near Taiwan.

Refuting the criticism against the drills, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said the accusation of a handful of countries and organisations against China is a mischaracterisation of the facts and truth and an interference in China's internal affairs.

China deplores and opposes this. The Taiwan question is purely China's internal affairs that brook no external interference, he said at a media briefing on Wednesday.

"Taiwan independence" separatist activities and external forces that abet and aid them are the ones that undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. If certain countries and organisations truly want peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, they should follow the prevailing trend of international commitment to the one-China principle, abide by their political commitments made to China, earnestly respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and oppose "Taiwan independence" in any form, he said.

"As long as provocations for 'Taiwan independence' last, our punishment against 'Taiwan independence' will continue. We will never allow anyone or any force to separate Taiwan from China in any form."

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UK foreign secretary urges Kosovo to make progress in talks with Serbia

Pristina (Kosovo)
The United Kingdom's foreign secretary gave assurances of Britain's interest in the Western Balkan region while visiting Kosovo on Wednesday, urging both Kosovo and Serbia to make progress in normalisation talks.

David Lammy was on the second day of a visit to Kosovo where he met with its senior officials, calling on Pristina to form a new Cabinet quickly following the country's February 9 parliamentary election.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti's Self-Determination Movement Party, or Vetevendosje!, won 48 seats in the 120-seat parliament, falling short of a majority.

Lammy assured Kosovar officials that "the UK continues to play its essential role as a key friend and partner of this great nation."

The secretary expressed support for the EU-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia normalisation talks.

"This is a region that matters to Britain," he said at a briefing after meeting with President Vjosa Osmani. "We want a lasting, peaceful normalisation."

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Claims of attack on Chinese Red Cross convoy in quake-hit Myanmar

Bangkok
An opposition militia belonging to the Three Brotherhood Alliance, one of a powerful group that has taken a large swath of Myanmar from the military, reported that the military fired on a relief convoy of nine Chinese Red Cross vehicles late Tuesday.

The relief convoy was bringing supplies to Mandalay city, which was hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. So far, 2,886 people have been reported dead in Myanmar and another



4,639 injured, according to state television MKTV, but local reports suggest much higher figures.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance announced a unilateral one-month ceasefire on Tuesday to facilitate the humanitarian response.

The shadow opposition National Unity Government

of Shan state near Ohn Ma Tee village.

The Tatung National Liberation Army said the Chinese Red Cross had reported its route to the military.

But Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for the military regime, told state-run MKTV that the convoy had not notified authorities of its route ahead of time. While not mentioning the Red Cross, he said security forces had fired into the air to deter a convoy that refused to stop near Ohn Ma Tee village, the site of recent fighting with the INLA.

had already called a ceasefire for its forces.

But attacks have continued since the quake. Most recently, an opposition militia belonging to the Brotherhood Alliance reported that the military fired on a relief convoy of nine Chinese Red Cross vehicles late Tuesday on a road in the northern part

of Shan state near Ohn Ma Tee village.

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BUSINESS

UPI transaction volumes surge 42 pct hit 93 billion in July-Dec 2024

New Delhi
India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) continues to dominate the digital payments landscape with transaction volumes surging 42 per cent year-on-year (YOY) to reach 93.23 billion in the second half of 2024, a recent report has shown.

The 'India Digital Payments report for 2H 2024' report by Worldline showed that three UPI platforms are dominant in terms of volume and value: PhonePe, Google Pay, and Paytm.

In terms of transaction volume, in December 2024, the three apps accounted for 93 per cent of all transactions. In terms of transaction value, they accounted for 92 per cent in December 2024.

"When comparing the volume of UPI transactions in



2H (July-December) 2024 to 2H 2023, it increased by 42 per cent from 65.77 billion to 93.23 billion. During the same timeframe, the value of transactions increased by 31 per cent from Rs 99.68 trillion to Rs 130.19 trillion," the report said.

Besides UPI, other forms of payment under digital payments include credit cards, prepaid cards, mobile payments, and net banking. UPI transactions are cate-

gorised into person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions.

P2P transaction volume rose from 27.04 billion in the second half of 2023 to 35.21 billion in the second half of 2024, representing a 30 per cent increase. During the same period, the value of P2P transactions grew 26 per cent.

The P2M transaction volume grew from 38.73 billion to 58.03 billion, a 50 per cent increase, while the value increased 43 per cent.

"India's digital payments ecosystem is evolving at an unprecedented pace, driven by UPI's widespread adoption, the expansion of POS infrastructure, and the growing preference for mobile transactions.

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"The market seems to be

Investors' wealth surges Rs 3.54 lakh cr as markets rebound

New Delhi
Quality investors became richer by Rs 3.54 lakh crore on Wednesday as markets staged a strong comeback after facing trading session.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 592.93 points, or 0.78 per cent, to settle at 76,617.44. During the day, it surged 655.84 points, or 0.86 per cent to 76,680.35.

Tracking recovery in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped Rs 3,54,507.54 crore to Rs 4,12,98,095.60 crore (USD 4.82 trillion).

"The market seems to be



coming to terms about the outcome of Trump's tariff policy decision, and hence buying was evident across all the sectors. Post the clarity on tariff decision, the focus

will then shift to fourth quarter earnings and the interest rate decision by the RBI next week," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Zomato jumped nearly 5 per cent, followed by Titan which climbed almost 4 per cent.

IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel, and HDFC Bank were also among the gainers.

However, Nestle, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Realty index surged the most by 3.62 per cent, followed by consumer durables (2.62 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.70 per cent), telecommunication (1.22 per cent), teck

(1.18 per cent), services (1.10 per cent), and IT (0.93 per cent).

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.38 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.99 per cent.

"Indian benchmark indices ended higher on Wednesday, edging up ahead of US President Donald Trump's anticipated tariff announcement. Broader markets mirrored the upbeat sentiment, with mid and smallcap indices registering notable gains," Ganesh Garg, Analyst, Lemnong Markets Desk, said.

As many as 2,863 stocks advanced while 1,091 declined and 131 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Edelweiss Life CDO: Women in Sandwich Generation must prioritise financial literacy

New Delhi
Women in Sandwich Generation must take proactive steps to take charge of their financial planning including improving their financial know-how, said Edelweiss Life's Chief Distribution Officer Anup Seth. The company recently released a study which shows 50% women in this generation cite lack of understanding of various financial instruments as a challenge to wealth creation.

Sandwich Generation are individuals between ages 35 and 54 years, providing to 2 generations — ageing parents and growing children.

"Women have long acted as the CFOs of their households, managing daily finances. Yet many



still relegate long-term financial planning to their fathers or husbands, regardless of education or geography. While participation has improved, we need more women to actively own their financial future—and it starts with education," said Seth.

The study, conducted in collaboration with YouGov, also shows that more than half the women in this generation feel they are behind on meeting their financial aspirations. While family remains their priority, aspirations of women in this generation

also give a peak into their individuality; many want to improve their standard of living, fund their child's marriage, travel, start a business, and invest in their higher education.

"Women's aspirations, in general, have evolved in tandem with their proactive participation in the economy. Today, more women hold boardroom and leadership roles, and there is a push to accelerate this momentum. Around 18% of Indian startups are now led by women, and access to formal credit has steadily improved. Government initiatives are also playing a pivotal role in strengthening this ecosystem. As women's ambition and agency continue to rise, we will witness an even

deeper shift in their aspirations—making financial literacy a critical enabler for securing their financial futures," Seth said.

In fact the study highlights how lack of financial literacy is impacting their wealth creation journey. As many as 38% women said they have prematurely liquidated their mutual funds, 32% exited equities/stocks early, 31% surrendered life insurance policies.

These tangible financial struggles also have a psychological fallout. 61% women in this generation constantly worry about running out of money despite having a financial safety net, and 64% feel their savings and investments are never enough for the future.

National Highways Toll collection; UP tops list with Rs 7 060 cr revenue

New Delhi
Uttar Pradesh topped the list of states that reported high revenue collection through toll on National Highways in the April-February period of financial year 2024-25, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

Union Road Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari in a written reply to Rajya Sabha said the government collected highest toll on National Highways crossing Uttar Pradesh at Rs 7,060 crore, followed by Rajasthan at Rs 5,967.13 crore and Maharashtra at Rs 5,135.38 crore up to February 2025.

Gadkari further noted that the government has also decided to implement barrier free Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) System with available technology and use

of existing fee plaza infrastructure at selected sections of National Highways. According to him, the government is committed to addressing various issues pertaining to the levy of user fee and to enhance operational efficiency and promote convenience of the road users at the user fee plaza including the introduction of an Annual Pass within the existing ETC ecosystem.

"The government is working



on the details of the financial impact for the implementation of these passes could be arrived at after details of the pass system is finalized," he said.

Responding to a separate question, Gadkari said the government in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is primarily responsible for development and maintenance of National Highways (NHs).

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Cricket



“Poor death bowling and lack of support for Root cost England, says Jos Buttler”

Struggling KKR, SRH look to reignite campaign

Kolkata
Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders and last season's finalists Sunrisers Hyderabad find themselves in troubled waters, having lost two of their last three games, and both teams will be desperate to revive their campaigns when they lock horns in the IPL here on Thursday.

KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane had initially downplayed concerns surrounding his team following a heavy defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the season opener, insisting there was "no need to panic".

However, with two losses in three matches — considering KKR lost just three games across both home and away legs in their triumphant campaign in IPL 2024 — the mood in the camp is slightly muted.

Pitched battle
The focus has now shifted to the Eden Gardens pitch, which has come under scrutiny after KKR's seven-wicket defeat to RCB.

Former KKR opener Phil Salt and Virat Kohli took the home attack to the cleaners, stitching a 95-run stand off just 51 balls in a one-sided chase of 175. The Cricket Association of Bengal has been under pressure to produce a track that aids KKR's spin-heavy attack, comprising Sunil Narine, Moeen Ali and Varun Chakravarthy.

Chakravarthy, fresh from his exploits in the Champions Trophy triumph last month, struggled on a flat deck against RCB, leaking 10.75 runs per over.

Indian great and Lucknow Super Giants mentor Zaheer Khan has also called for home advantage after Pun-



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jab Kings outplayed them at the Ekana stadium, criticising the pitch by saying, "It seemed PBKS' curator was out

here." Reports suggest the Eden Gardens pitch curator Sujan Mukherjee had declined KKR's request for a spin-friendly track in their opening match, a decision that seemingly backfired.

Chakravarthy, one of their key spinners, leaked 45 runs in that match. While Mukherjee defended his stance, CAB president Srinath Singh Ganguly has since been closely inspecting the pitch alongside the curator, hinting at a possible shift in approach for KKR's upcoming home matches.

Beyond the pitch, KKR's squad composition has raised questions following the mega auction.

Their batting and bowling units have looked out of sync, with key



players failing to deliver. Notably, four players KKR released before the auction — former skipper Shreyas Iyer (PBKS), his deputy Nitish Rana (RR), Phil Salt (RCB), and pace spearhead Mitchell Starc (DC) — have all excelled in the first 10 days of the IPL.

Starc's departure has particularly hurt KKR, as their pace attack appears toothless in his absence.

To compound the frustration, Starc registered a match-winning 5/35 for DC against SRH in their last outing — the Aussie's first T20 five-wicket haul — and the best bowling figures of the season so far.

Australian pacer Spencer Johnson, brought in to replace Starc, has failed

to impress, while Anrich Nortje remains sidelined with a back injury.

Meanwhile, KKR's big-money signing, Venkatesh Iyer, has managed just nine runs from two innings, adding to the team's woes.

Among retained players, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Harshit Rana, and Ramanand Singh have struggled to find their touch.

The team's aggressive batting approach — assuming 200 is the par score on all pitches — has also backfired as a tactical re-evaluation is also the need of the hour before it's too late.

Sunrisers Hyderabad, after a record-breaking 286/6 in their season opener, have struggled to breach the 200-run mark in their last two games.

Samson set to lead Royals, gets NCA clearance for wicket-keeping duties

Jaipur
Sanju Samson is set to return as Rajasthan Royals captain after receiving clearance from the National Cricket Academy (NCA) to keep wickets in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL).

Samson had undergone surgery on his right index finger after being hit by former Royals teammate and England pacer Jofra Archer during India's T20I series against England in February.

He had played in the first three games for Royals only as a specialist batter with Rryan Parag leading the side.

While Samson came in as an Impact player during Royals' season-opener against Sunrisers Hyderabad, he was substituted out in the matches against Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders. In the three matches in IPL so far, he has scored 66, 13 and 20 runs.

"Captain Sanju Samson has received clearance from the National Cricket Academy to resume wicket-keeping duties following a period of recovery," Rajasthan Royals said in a release.

"The clearance comes after a thorough assessment of his fitness by the NCA medical team. With this positive development, Samson will return to his full leadership role and resume captaincy from the team's next match against the Punjab Kings."

Royals are currently placed second last in the points table with one win and two defeats in three matches.

The champions of the inaugural edition in 2008, Royals will take on Punjab Kings in Mullanpur in their next match on April 5.

Chakravarthy drops to 3rd spot in T20 bowling rankings, Pandya tops all-rounders' chart



Kolkata
India's mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy has dropped one place to third spot in the ICC men's T20 bowling rankings, while Hardik Pandya continues to top the all-rounders' chart issued on Wednesday.

With 706 rating points, Chakravarthy trails behind leader Jacob Duffy (723) of New Zealand and West Indies' Akeal Hosein (707).

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (674) and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh (653) are the other two Indians in top-10 at seventh and 10th positions respectively.

Axar Patel is placed at 13th position. Young Indian left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma continued to occupy the second position in the T20 batting rankings, which is being headed by Australia's Travis Head, while England's Phil Salt is at the third spot.

Axar Patel is placed at 13th position. Young Indian left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma continued to occupy the second position in the T20 batting rankings, which is being headed by Australia's Travis Head, while England's Phil Salt is at the third spot.

Two other Indians — Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav — are placed fourth and fifth respectively.

Pandya managed to hold to his top spot among all-rounders with 252 rating points, followed by Dipendra Singh Airee of Nepal and Australia's Marcus Stoinis.

The Rolls-Royce just stayed in third gear: Ponting after skipper Iyer's impact knock

Lucknow
Punjab Kings head coach Ricky Ponting compared skipper Shreyas Iyer to a 'Rolls-Royce in third gear' after the skipper produced a measured half-century to shape his team's big win against Lucknow Super Giants.

Ponting, in an interaction with his team, reminded the players to "not take anything for granted" during the IPL 2025 campaign.

Iyer smashed 52 not out, his second unbeaten half-century in as many games, as PBKS overhauled the 172-run target in 16.2 overs for the loss of two wickets.

Opener Prabhsimran Singh gave Punjab a flying start with a blistering 34-ball 69, while Nehal Wadhwa (43 not out off 25 balls) also picked up some confidence, boosting easy runs towards the end.

"Skipper (Iyer) did it easy again. Rolls-Royce just stayed in third gear for most of the day. Didn't have to go any harder than that. Just steers the ship home. You haven't got an average yet," said the former Australian skipper during the team meeting following the big victory.

Iyer is yet to be dismissed in IPL 2025, having notched up an unbeaten 97 in the opening game against Gujarat Titans. He is currently the second-highest run-getter in the season with 149 runs.

The Australian great asked his players to remain firmly committed to their task as it was a long and gruelling tournament.

"Let's not take anything for granted with anything we're doing. Our attitudes have been spot on. We're just starting to scratch the surface. So let's keep working hard together as a family, as one. And we're going to get better



every day," he added. One of the reasons PBKS were able to shackle the home team batters was the vice-like grip the bowlers maintained right from the first ball, and Ponting said that made a massive difference.

"Bowling first today, Arshdeep's (Singh) first over goes for three. Lockie (Ferguson) backs it up with an over, goes for four (runs). Two overs in the power play 1 for 7."

"We get through the power play, 3 for 35. Four of the overs in power play only went for 13 runs. So, in the fifth over Maxi (Glenn Maxwell) comes on and then on the back of that, Marco (Jansen). So, Marco bowls the sixth over. He absolutely means it. He ended up with the big wicket of David Miller."

"The pleasing thing for me about a lot of the things that are happening around the group, it's when guys are coming in and playing their first game or getting their first opportunity. Lockie was the same today," said Ponting.

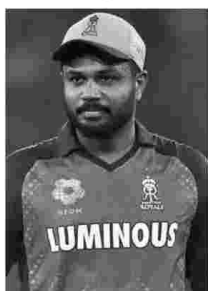
PBKS made one change on Tuesday, handing Lockie his debut for the side. "The whole bowling group was outstanding. And Prabhsimran, I think you have learned a lot about yourself this week as well. I think you've proved to everyone just what a class act you are," said Ponting.

Ponting showered all the praise on Wadhwa (43 not out off 25 balls), saying he had made the most of the opportunity given to him.

"We talk about players making impact, right? You get an opportunity in a T20 game and it's all about making an impact on the game and on the contest when you can."

"He (Wadhwa) only packed one shirt in his bag because he didn't think he was going to be taking much part in the game. He fields the last four overs and then I top him on the shoulder. When I saw that they'd (LSG) made their impact sub as a left-arm off-spinner, I said, mate, you're going in."

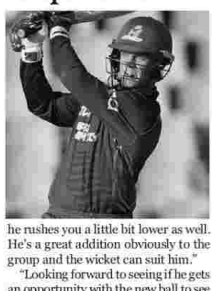
"And I said, make the most of the opportunity. Play your way."



Mumbai
Mumbai Indians' unheralded fast bowler Ashwani Kumar, who became the first Indian to take four wickets on IPL debut, is a "lot quicker than people recognise at first," says his teammate Ryan Rickelton.

The left-arm Punjab seamer took 4/24 on Monday to blow away Kolkata Knight Riders as Mumbai Indians recorded an eight-wicket win which took them to the sixth spot in the points table.

"He's a lot quicker than I think people recognise at first, that's a great attribute he has and he can swing the new ball," Rickelton told the media after the match here at the Wankhede Stadium. "He's a lot quicker than you think and



that other set of skills come through. He's a nice find for MI and really looking forward to seeing how he goes," he added.

Rickelton said the Punjab seamer, who had only played four senior T20 matches, four List A matches and two Ranji Trophy games before his IPL debut, executed his plans really well.

"I've played a few warm-up games with him, keeping (the wickets) to him and batting against him in the nets. He's a really nice bowler. He can swing the new ball and he executed his plan really, really well," he said.

"The group's really happy for him. But yeah, it's cool that he got an opportunity. The group's really chuffed that he managed to get out of the match perform-

ance," he added.

KKR's Ramanand Singh, who is also from Punjab and trains in the same academy as Ashwani, termed him as a "talented cricketer." "Ashwani is a very talented cricketer, he is from Punjab. This IPL is known for the fact that youngsters come and perform here and you can see their talent," he said.

Rickelton, meanwhile, said getting his maiden half-century was a massive relief. The left-handed South African wicketkeeper-batter hit 62 not out off 41 balls with five sixes and four fours.

"Obviously a massive relief, in all honesty. The first two games were on tricky (and) on some tough wickets. But to get out here in Mumbai and have Spencer

(Johnson) turn me inside out was quite a tough battle to get through," he said.

"But once I managed to get through that, it's just really pleasing to get a score. But more relief than anything and to get two points on the board is great for the team."

Rickelton said having joined the MI camp before — he played for MI Cape Town in the SA20 competition — gave him a good experience.

"It's been a nice intro. It's not just coming in blind. It's been an easier transition, but the IPL is a different beast in its own. To mentally work my head around that is a bit of a different one for me and I'm trying to just adapt to the group and luckily I've got a few familiar faces around as well."



Delhi HC stays Anilkumar Prabhakaran's appointment as AIFF secretary general

New Delhi
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday stayed the appointment of Anilkumar Prabhakaran as the secretary general of All India Football Federation on a plea alleging his selection was in violation of the National Sports Code.

Justice Sachin Datta said he would continue with the arguments next week.

The court while hearing a plea filed by Delhi Football Club director Ranjit Bajaj observed there ought to be a stay on Prabhakaran's appointment in the meantime.

"We will continue with the hearing next week but in the meantime there has to be a stay. I will pass an interim stay (order). List on April 8 for further arguments in the matter," the judge said.

Appearing for Bajaj, senior advocate Rahul Mehra and lawyer Shivam Singh sought Prabhakaran's removal from the post and argued he was previously elected as a member of the AIFF executive committee and there-



fore couldn't be appointed.

The AIFF appointed Prabhakaran, who hails from Kerala, as its secretary general July last.

Bajaj's plea said the sports ministry had expressly barred national sports federations from re-appointing previously elected members of executive committees as nominated individuals to an administrative post.

The Centre's counsel said in terms of its February 2022 letter, it was impermissible for a previously elected office bearer to obtain employment on a paid administrative position of their national sports federation concerned.

In terms of the letter, Prabhakaran, holding an elected post of the executive member, would be wholly

barred from taking up the position of paid secretary of AIFF, the counsel added.

The high court had sought responses from the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, AIFF and Prabhakaran on the petition, which said the Centre took action in a similar case at the Table Tennis Federation of India but failed to take a uniform step in the present matter.

The petitioner sought an urgent intervention in the case, alleging a conflict of interest on account of his affiliation with Scoreline Sports.

He (Prabhakaran) is illegally holding the position of secretary general of respondent number 1 (AIFF) despite previously having held a position as an elected member of the executive committee. On August 22, 2022, he was elected as a member of the executive committee of respondent number 1," the petition said.

The plea added his appointment was "bad in law" and contrary to rules laid down in National Sports Code, 2011, and a February 28, 2022 letter issued by the sports ministry.

Reliance to partner with BLAST for Esports business in India



Mumbai
RISE Worldwide Limited ("RISE"), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited ("Reliance"), and BLAST Esports Limited ("BLAST"), a wholly-owned subsidiary of BLAST ApS, today announced an agreement to form a joint venture to conduct esports business in India, according to a release from RISE.

India is the fastest growing gaming market with a massive gamer base of more than ~600 Mn (18% of the total gamers globally). India's gaming market is projected to grow at a CAGR of ~10% to reach US\$ 9.2 Bn by 2025 from US\$ 3.8 Bn in 2024. The global esports market is expected to grow to US\$ 16.7 Bn by 2033 from US\$ 2.8Bn in 2024, exhibiting a CAGR of ~22%. India esports market is in nascent stages and is expected to be a high growth market. The Government of India has officially recognized esports in the country by declaring it as a part of the "multi-sports event" category.

The strategic partnership will help to accelerate this growth by bringing BLAST's globally recognised esports properties and production techniques to India while co-creating new tournament IPs tailored to the fast-growing gaming market.

BLAST is a European-based esports entertainment company and one of the biggest tournament organisers in the world. BLAST works with the world's best game publishers and brands to elevate their prop-

erties into world-class esports experiences. These events unite top-tier teams and the biggest stars in the scene as they compete for glory and multi-million dollar prize pools, with arena stops in 2025 set for vibrant cities like London, Singapore, Austin, and Rio. BLAST is known for its unparalleled production quality and game changing fan-first moments. BLAST events are forecasted to generate 2 billion views in 2025, reach global audiences in 150+ territories and broadcast in 30+ languages.

BLAST currently works with leading game publishers such as Epic Games, Valve, Riot Games, KRAFTON and Ubisoft to produce, market and deliver esports for popular titles in Rocket League, Fortnite, Rainbow Six, PUBG, Dota 2 and Counter-Strike 2 - with all titles having a combined active monthly player base of 350+ million. BLAST is best known for its unparalleled production quality and game changing fan-first moments. Bringing together the best teams and biggest superstars to fight it out for glory and multi-million dollar prize pools.

The strategic partnership will form a new JV entity and it will bring together BLAST's esports media production expertise, publisher relationships, wide suite of highly popular IPs, and Jio's technology expertise, unparalleled distribution reach, and local relationships to host these events on the JioGames platform for sustainable growth and innovation in the industry.

Ben Yedder attempts soccer comeback in Iran after suspended prison sentence



Tehran

Former France international Wissam Ben Yedder is trying to revive his career in Iran after almost a year on the sidelines and a suspended prison sentence for sexually assaulting a woman.

Ben Yedder, who was out of contract, signed a deal with five-time Iranian champion Sepahan FC, the club said in a statement. Terms of their agreement were not disclosed.

The Isfahan-based club said that Ben Yedder, a diminutive forward with excellent finishing skills, underwent medical tests and is now waiting for his international transfer certificate before he can resume his professional career.

Ben Yedder has been embroiled in court cases recently. He was condemned last year after being accused of sexual assault while intoxicated. The court in the southern city of Nice also imposed on Ben Yedder a duty to follow treatment.

The 34-year-old player, a prolific striker who played 19 matches and scored three goals for France, was briefly detained then released after the incident in his car on the French Riviera.

Ben Yedder, who underwent alcohol detox and therapy, has been without a club since his contract with Monaco expired in 2024.

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Indian boxer Jadumani Singh moves to World Boxing Cup semis, 3 others exit

New Delhi
Indian boxer Jadumani Singh Mandangbam punched his way into the 50kg semifinals but three others made opening round exits from the World Boxing Cup in in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil.

The 20-year-old reigning national champion edged past last year's World Boxing Cup silver medalist Ellis Trowbridge of Great Britain with a hard-fought 3-2 split decision win in the 50kg quarterfinals late Tuesday night.

He will now face former Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jallilov of Uzbekistan in the semifinals.

Meanwhile, Asian Games medalist Narender Berwal (+90kg), Nikhil Dubey (75kg), and Jugnoo (85kg) bowed out of the tournament after quarterfinal defeats.



Narender, a bronze medalist at the

2023 Hangzhou Asian Games, put up a strong fight against Kazakhstan's Saparbaj Danyal but lost 2-3 in a close contest despite winning unanimously on the first board.

Nikhil suffered a 0-5 loss to local favourite Kaue Belini, while Jugnoo was on the wrong end of a 1-4 split decision against France's Abdoulaye Traore.

India's campaign continues on Wednesday with Manish Rathore (53kg) set to face Paris Olympian Yusuff Chothia of Australia, Hitesh (70kg) taking on Italy's Gabriele Guidi Rontani, and Abhinav Jamwal (65kg) up against Germany's Denis Bril.

India has fielded a 10-member men's squad in the tournament, with Lakshya Chahar (80kg) exiting on the opening day.

Arjun Bhati aims for Olympic glory after receiving National Youth Award



New Delhi
Indian golfer Arjun Bhati, who was recently honoured with the National Youth Award, expressed his gratitude and reflected on his journey in the sport.

"The young golfer, who has been playing for over a decade, considers this recognition a significant milestone in his career, and is now aiming for Olympic gold."

"I'm very grateful for this award, and it is a very big thing for my family and me. My efforts have borne fruit," Bhati said.

"I was nine years old when I played golf for the first time in my school. I've been playing for the past 11 years now, and the journey has been very nice. I've had a lot of supporters in my journey, and I love this game," he said.

Bhati has long admired legendary golfer Tiger Woods, drawing inspiration from his career. However, when it comes to Indian sports icons, Virat Kohli holds a special place in his heart.

"Tiger Woods has been my inspiration for a very long time," Bhati said. "I personally love Virat Kohli. I love his dedication, fitness levels, physique, and mindset towards his game. He is very inspiring for all the youngsters in the country. He's a

very sweet and genuine person, and his support means a lot to me," he added.

Bhati also praised Kohli's contribution to young athletes through the Virat Kohli Foundation.

"Virat Kohli Foundation helps around 40 children from a lot of different disciplines. The things he's done for the country, I admire him," he noted.

With his eyes set on the future, Bhati has one clear goal—to win an Olympic gold medal for India. "My future goal is to bring an Olympic gold medal for India. I'm trying to make myself better each and every day," he stated.

As he continues to refine his skills and push himself towards excellence, Bhati remains a promising talent in Indian golf, with the ambition and determination to make his country proud on the global stage.

The Department of Youth Affairs, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, confers the National Youth Awards (NFA) on individuals (aged between 15 and 29 years) and organisations for outstanding work and contributions in fields such as health, human rights promotion, active citizenship, and community service, as per a PIB press release.

Hockey India trims core group of women players from 65 to 40

Bengaluru
Hockey India on Wednesday trimmed the senior women's core group for the ongoing national camp to 40 from 65 after evaluating the performances of the players over the past two weeks.

The camp began at the Sports Authority of India centre at Bengaluru on March 23.

While 28 senior players have retained their spots, 12 new players have been selected in recognition of their impressive performances in the 15th Senior Women's National Championship and their efforts in the first phase of the national camp.

The goalkeeping department has four familiar names in Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, and Madhuri Kindo.

They are joined by Samiksha Saxena from Assam, who has been rewarded for her strong performance in the national championships.

In defence, eight players from the existing core group -- Mahima Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Jyoti, and Akshata Abaso Dhekale -- have been retained.

Besides, Anjina Dzungdung from Bengal and Suman Devi Thoudam from Manipur have also been included in the group.

The midfield continues to feature experienced names like Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Salima Tete, Manisha Chauhan, Ajmina Kujur, Sunelita Toppo, Lalremisiami, Sharmila Devi, and Baljeet Kaur.

Four new players -- Sujata Kujur from Bengal, Mahima Tete and Albelia Rani Toppo from Jharkhand, and Pooja Yadav from UP -- have been included following their stand-out performances.

Deepika Soreng, Navneet Kaur, Sangita Kumari, Deepika Renuja Dadaso Pinal, Beauty Dzungdung, and Mumtaz Khan, who have consistently delivered strong perform-



In defence, eight players from the existing core group -- Mahima Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Jyoti, and Akshata Abaso Dhekale -- have been retained.

ances, have been retained in the forward line.

They will be joined by five new strikers -- Dipimonia Toppo from Odisha, Hritika Singh from Madhya Pradesh, Annu and Chandana Jagadish from Karnataka, and Kajal Sadashiv Atpadkar from Maharashtra.

"We have had some really grand sessions and testing. The selectors and the team have done a good job short-listing the best 40 players available. After watching the National Championships, we believe we have identified some good talent and I'm sure they are going to

serve the country well over the long-term." Indian women's hockey team chief coach Harendra Singh said about the selection.

"I am really excited to see how these young girls are going to perform now in the camp and take one big step for their future."

Indian women's hockey team new 40-member senior core group: Goalkeepers: Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, Madhuri Kindo, Samiksha Saxena.

Defenders: Mahima Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Jyoti, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Anjina Dzungdung, Suman Devi Thoudam.

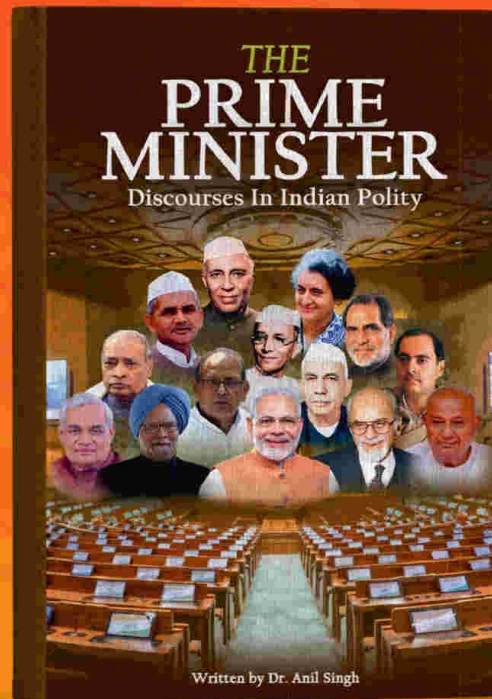
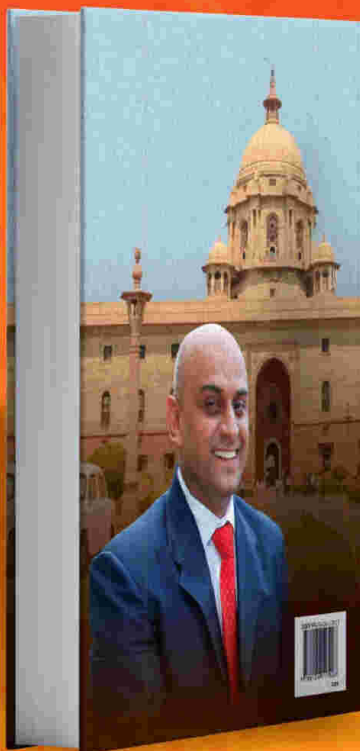
Midfielders: Sujata Kujur, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Salima Tete, Manisha Chauhan, Ajmina Kujur, Sunelita Toppo, Lalremisiami, Sharmila Devi, Baljeet Kaur, Mahima Tete, Albelia Rani Toppo, Pooja Yadav.

Forwards: Dipimonia Toppo, Hritika Singh, Deepika Soreng, Navneet Kaur, Sangita Kumari, Deepika Renuja Dadaso Pinal, Beauty Dzungdung, Mumtaz Khan, Annu, Chandana Jagadish, Kajal Sadashiv Atpadkar.

Book Release

— of —

Dr. Anil Singh



**“THE PRIME MINISTER:
DISCOURSES IN INDIA POLITY”**

Thursday, 3rd April 2025 at 04:30 PM | Auditorium, Prime Minister’s Museum (Teen Murti Bhavan) New Delhi