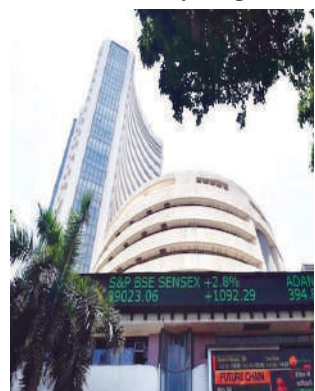




Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

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Govt to launch 'Sahkar taxi' service alternative to Uber and Ola : Amit Shah



New Delhi: The Union government is set to launch 'Sahkar taxi', a cooperative-run ride-hailing service as an alternative to Uber and Ola, across the country.

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah announced this in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

He said this initiative is in line with 'Sahkar Se Samridhhi' and said "In the coming months, we are going to launch a government cooperative sarkar taxi service like Ola and Uber.

The service will register two-wheeler taxis, rickshaws, as well as

four-wheeler taxis. The profits from this service will not go to any corporations but will go solely to the drivers of the vehicles."

The Home Minister emphasized that "Sahkar Se Samridhhi" is not just a slogan, and the Ministry of Cooperation has worked day and night over the past three and a half years to materialise it.

He also stated that a cooperative insurance company is soon going to be formed, which will handle insurance within the cooperative system of the country.

97 Indian fishermen are in Sri Lankan custody: Jaishankar in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday informed the Rajya Sabha that 97 fishermen mostly from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry were in Sri Lankan custody.

Replying to a supplementary question raised by DMK's Tiruchi Siva during the question hour, he said that, "Till yesterday there were 86 fishermen in Sri Lankan custody. Today one more trawler has been apprehended and 11 more have been captured. So, 97 fishermen are in Lankan custody".

He said that 83 fishermen were serving sentences, three are

awaiting trial and 11 of them have been apprehended on Thursday (March 27).

Jaishankar said that the amendments to two Sri Lankan laws in 2018 and 2023 have introduced stricter penalties, including "stiffer sentences, bigger fines, and greater detentions" and these have been posing a challenge in handling issues.

He said that many of those serving sentences are boat owners, skippers, or repeat offenders. On putting a full stop on this issue, the Minister said "Our government has inherited a

problem. This problem began in 1974, when the International Maritime Boundary line was drawn by the then Union Government with consultations with the state government and then in 1976, an exchange of letters happened where the fishing jurisdictions were delineated. So the decision taken in 1974 and 1976 are the root cause of the situation we are facing".

He said that the government engages in periodic diplomatic discussions with the Sri Lankan authorities to secure the release of fishermen.

Road projects worth Rs two lakh crore being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir : Gadkari



New Delhi: Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the road infrastructure projects worth Rs two lakh crore are being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir, which will boost the connectivity in the region.

Replying to supplementaries during question hour in the Lok Sabha, Nitin Gadkari said, "The government is working in converting 25,000 km National Highways into four lanes from two lanes in the next two years." He informed that around 70

per cent of the work of Asia's longest tunnel - Zojila Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir has been completed.

He added that the project which will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh is being constructed at a cost of over 5500 crore rupees.

Zojila Tunnel Project consists of construction of a tunnel of more than 13 kilometers and approaching roads to a tunnel of length over 17 kilometers, totaling a total length of over 30 kilometers.

Speaking about the other road infrastructure in union territory, he said that 105 tunnels are also being built in Jammu and Kashmir to further improve the connectivity.

The Minister informed that the work related to 22 tunnels have been completed and another 14 tunnels are being constructed by the Border Road Organisation in Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier, Congress MP Manish Tewari moved an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha to suspend the regular business of the House to discuss concerns regarding alleged aberrations in the higher judiciary. In the notice, he alleged that aberrations in the judiciary have raised concerns within the legal community and among citizens across the country. However, Lok Sabha Chairman Om Birla rejected the adjournment notices, saying Opposition MPs had sought a discussion on "unusual activities" in the judiciary.

Delhi govt inks MoU to give free NEET & CUET coaching

New Delhi: In a significant step toward empowering students from Delhi government schools, the Directorate of Education on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the presence of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Education Minister Ashish Sood, to provide free coaching for NEET and CUET (UG) 2025.

Speaking after signing the MoU, Gupta said, "This MoU has been signed to provide exclusive 30-day free online coaching for students of the Directorate of Education (DoE) to prepare for NEET-2025 and CUET (UG)-2025, paving the way for their admission into medical colleges and central universities."

This initiative will benefit 1,63,000 students from Delhi government schools, ensuring that the maximum number of



them qualify for these prestigious entrance exams, she said.

Sood said that as part of this effort, the Delhi Government has signed an MoU with BIG, which is a part of NSDC, to offer a 30-day free online crash course—totaling 180 hours, with six hours of coaching each

day—for NEET 2025 and CUET (UG) 2025 aspirants.

The education minister further said that the Delhi government under CM Gupta's leadership remains steadfast in its commitment to securing a bright future for students, encouraging maximum participation.

He said that this pro bono initiative will equip students with the necessary guidance to excel in these crucial exams, significantly enhancing their chances of securing admission into top medical colleges and central universities. Under this initiative, students will receive 6 hours of daily online coaching from April 2 to May 2, 2025, covering subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, General Aptitude, and English. The programme includes PDF notes for structured revision, regular scheduled tests to track progress, and a dedicated doubt resolution mechanism to provide continuous support.

This initiative is a game-changer for students from underprivileged communities, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their academic aspirations.

Eid-ul-Fitr : Haryana govt declares restricted holiday on March 31



Chandigarh: The Haryana Government has declared a restricted holiday under Schedule-II instead of a gazetted holiday on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr on March 31.

A notification has been issued to this effect on Thursday.

The notification states that March 29 is Saturday and March 30 is Sunday, while March 31 is the closing day of the financial year 2024-25.

Odisha Assembly gherao agitation by Congress turns violent; 12 Cops, several Congress workers injured

Bhubaneswar: At least 12 policemen and several Congress workers were injured as the Odisha Assembly gherao protest by the Congress on Thursday turned violent, transforming Mahatma Gandhi Marg into a battleground for hours.

In an attempt to reach the State Assembly, agitated Congress workers dismantled barricades and clashed with police forces deployed near the Lower PMG Square.

The police resorted to a lathi charge, used water cannons, and eventually fired tear gas shells to disperse the Congress workers, who had started throwing chairs at the police, pelting stones, and hurling eggs and tomatoes at them to prevent their march to the State Assembly.

The Congress party had called for the gherao of the Odisha Assembly to demand women's safety in the state and to protest against the rising atrocities against women during the nine months of the BJP's governance.

During the protest, agitated Congress workers allegedly set a police vehicle on fire, but a prompt response from the vehicle's driver managed to douse the flames, Bhubaneswar Commissionerate of Police DCP Jagmohan Meena said.

Speaking to the media, the DCP stated that 12 policemen were injured



and hospitalized as Congress workers pelted stones and threw chairs at the police forces. He added that FIRs would be lodged, and police action would be taken against the Congress workers based on CCTV footage from the protest site.

Earlier, thousands of Congress leaders and workers, led by party President Bhakta Charan Das and Odisha Congress in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu, marched in a padayatra from Ram Mandir to Mahatma Gandhi Marg. Holding placards and banners while shouting slogans

against the BJP government, they gathered at the Congress rally venue to protest against rising crimes against women in the state.

Several Congress leaders criticized the Mohan Majhi government for suspending all 14 Congress MLAs from the House for allegedly raising concerns about atrocities against women. They also condemned the BJP government for refusing to allow a House Committee to probe the increasing crimes against women in the state.

As the meeting continued,

several workers marched in a procession toward the Assembly and broke through barricades erected on Mahatma Gandhi Marg. When the police attempted to stop them from proceeding further, a scuffle broke out between Congress workers and security forces, leading to a violent clash.

The Congress workers threw chairs, pelted stones, and hurled water bottles, eggs, and tomatoes at the police. As the situation spiralled out of control, the police resorted to a lathi charge and used water cannons

to disperse the violent protesters.

When the agitated Congress workers refused to vacate the area and intensified their attack on the police, the latter fired tear gas shells and resorted to another lathi charge, injuring several Congress workers.

Later, Congress President Bhakta Charan Das arrived at the protest site and demanded that the police either allow them to proceed to the Odisha Assembly or arrest them. Das, along with other senior leaders, including Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu, sat on a dharna on the street to protest against the police action on Congress workers.

Eventually, the police took the leaders and workers into preventive custody and later managed to evacuate the Congress protesters from Mahatma Gandhi Marg.

The DCP stated that the Congress agitators attempted to break the barricades and violate Section 163 of the BNS, which had been imposed in the area due to the ongoing Budget Session of the Odisha Assembly.

Although the situation is now under control, security around the State Assembly has been tightened, and police forces have been deployed at strategic locations on all roads leading to the Assembly.

RS Chairman Dhankhar rejects privilege notice against Shah

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday rejected Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh's notice of breach of privilege against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

After laying the papers in the House, soon after the House assembled for the day, Chairman Dhankhar informed the House that Ramesh has objected to a statement made by Home Minister Amit Shah regarding Sonia Gandhi during the discussion on the Disaster Management Amendment Bill, 2024 and has given a notice of breach of privilege in this regard.

The Chairman said, "I have declined with deep anguish that we rush to invoke breach of privilege, rush to media, gain traction, and tarnish images. This House will not be a platform to ruin reputations".

He said that he was dismissing the privilege notice against the Union Home Minister, citing verified records from 1948 that upheld his statement on PMNRF and PM CARES, finding no procedural lapse.

He said that Amit Shah has

placed on the table a press release of the Government of India dated January 24, 1948 to substantiate his statement. This release contains details of the formation of the Prime



Minister's Relief Fund.

The Prime Minister and the Congress president have been involved in the management of the fund. The Chairman said that in view of the available facts, this proposal is rejected.

It may be mentioned that on Wednesday, Jairam Ramesh had moved a privilege notice against Amit Shah accusing him of "casting aspersions" on Sonia Gandhi.

In the letter to the Chairman, Ramesh had said that the statement of Shah tantamounts to "breach of privilege" and is "contempt of the house as well".

Preparations on for President Putin to visit India: FM Lavrov

Moscow/New Delhi: Russian President Vladimir Putin is to visit India, with preparations being made for the visit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced today.

In an online address to the first international conference 'Russia and India: Towards a New Agenda for Bilateral Relations', Lavrov also said that Russia-India relations "have stood the test of time more than once".

Announcing the visit of President Putin to India for the annual summit, he said: "It is symbolic that Prime Minister N. Modi made his first bilateral foreign visit after his re-election last year to Russia. Now it is our turn.

"Russian President V.V. Putin accepted the invitation of the head of the Indian government (PM Modi). The visit of the head of the Russian state to the Republic of India is being prepared."

In his address, Lavrov said that "strengthening the Special Privileged Strategic Partnership with India is one of the priorities of our country's foreign policy. Much attention is paid to the implementation of this task. In practical work, we feel that the Indian side is doing the same."

"The relations between our countries have a long history. We can say that they have stood the test of time more than once. Today, Russia and India are developing equal cooperation



based on sincere, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests. It is difficult to overestimate the contribution of our leaders to this process," Lavrov added.

He said that the two sides are "successfully overcoming the attempts of individual ill-wishers to prevent" the strengthening of the bilateral ties.

"Our relations have a solid material base. Trade and economic cooperation is steadily expanding. In 2024, bilateral trade exceeded \$60 billion," which is the highest level reached so far.

"Political dialogue is developing dynamically. This is facilitated by the fact that Moscow and New Delhi have close or even coinciding views on the objectively emerging multipolar world order, which, in our common conviction, should be based on a variety of development models and compliance by all states with the principles of the UN Charter not selectively, but in their entirety and interrelation," he added.

"Together with our Indian partners, we advocate for the



democratization of international relations, for an increased role of the Global South in economic governance mechanisms, respect for the cultural and civilizational identity of all peoples of the world, and their right to independently determine their own development paths," the Russian Embassy quoted Lavrov as saying.

Russia too shares the philosophy of the Indian foreign policy concept "The whole world is a family", aimed at ensuring international cooperation for the benefit of all mankind based on a balance of interests of all states.

"We value our joint work in the UN, the G20, BRICS, SCO and other multilateral platforms.

On Ukraine, he said: "I would like to separately express my gratitude to the Russian side for the fact that India, and personally Prime Minister Modi, consistently take a balanced position on the Ukrainian crisis and advocate for its resolution through dialogue and the elimination of the root causes of this conflict."

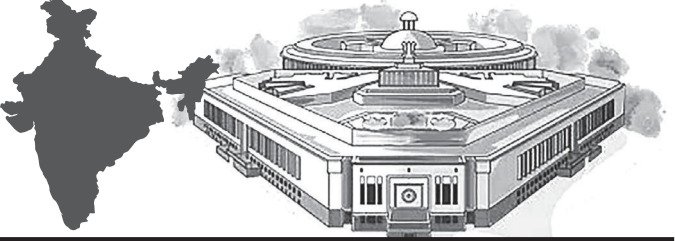
"We fully share this approach and from the very beginning of the

crisis we have been talking about Russia's openness to negotiations, which should lead to the end of the conflict and the establishment of a lasting peace by eliminating its root causes."

PM Modi had visited Moscow in July last year for the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit. The visit took place days after PM Modi was re-elected to the top office for the third consecutive term.

In May last year, Vladimir Putin took office as President of Russia for the fifth time, with his new six-year presidential term set to last until 2030.

Later in October last year, PM Modi and President Putin held bilateral talks again on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan in Russia.



Faith-driven economic growth to power Mirzapur's rapid progress: Yogi



Mirzapur: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday emphasised connecting Mirzapur to the path of development through the core principles of faith and economy.

The CM was attending a programme at BLJ Ground in Mirzapur, marking eight years of the UP government's 'Policy of Service, Security, and Good Governance'. Union Minister Anupriya Patel, Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, along with other officials and public representatives, were also present at the event.

He said, "With the

blessings of Maa Vindhyavasini and the double-engine government, Mirzapur's development has accelerated significantly."

Yogi highlighted the progress achieved in Mirzapur over the past eight years and inaugurated as well as laid the foundation stone for new projects. Besides, he visited an exhibition and felicitated beneficiaries of various government schemes.

He visited Maa Vindhyavasini Dham in Mirzapur on the final day of a three-day programme marking the completion of eight years of the state government. Upon arrival, he first toured an exhibition showcasing ODOP products and various development initiatives in the district. He then inaugurated several new projects aimed at furthering the district's progress.

The CM distributed certificates and honour letters to beneficiaries of government schemes. He also handed appointment letters to Anganwadi workers, house keys to beneficiaries of the PM and Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana and a Rs 5 lakh cheque to a recipient of the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Yojana.

Besides, laptops and tablets were distributed under

the Chief Minister Bal Seva Yojana, while Divyang children received Braille kits and hearing aids.

The programme began with a welcome address by Union Minister Anupriya Patel, who expressed gratitude to the CM for Mirzapur's development over the past eight years and requested the establishment of a ceramic park and a Kendriya Vidyalaya in the district.

The CM said, "Blessed by Maa Vindhyavasini and powered by the double-engine government, Mirzapur's development is unstoppable. Once overlooked before 2017, this land of immense potential will now be seamlessly connected through the Vindhya Expressway, unlocking new avenues for rapid growth."

He highlighted the state's efforts, mentioning that a medical college has already been set up in the district and that a university for undergraduate and postgraduate education will soon be completed in Mirzapur.

Addressing the youth, Yogi assured them that soon, they would no longer need to leave the district for employment. He highlighted plans to expand the ODOP scheme to elevate Mirzapur's craftsmanship and urged collective efforts to promote Chunar's stone carving alongside the district's renowned brass artistry.

Besides, he stressed the importance of creating employment opportunities by supporting small industries." Under the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Yojana, the government is facilitating loans of up to Rs 5 lakh for youth and women to establish their own businesses," he said.

Commending the hospitality of the people of

Mirzapur, Bhadohi and neighbouring districts during Maha Kumbh, the CM said that the economic development driven by faith, as witnessed during Maha Kumbh, would also boost Mirzapur's progress.

He said that since the construction of the Maa Vindhyavasini Corridor, the number of devotees visiting Mirzapur has increased significantly, creating new income opportunities for the local population. "Special preparations are underway for Chaitra Navratri in Mirzapur to ensure a smooth darshan experience for devotees while also boosting the region's economy," he said.

Highlighting ongoing development efforts, he said that projects worth approximately Rs 900 crore are currently in progress in Mirzapur, including the successful completion of the Bansagar project. Besides, he laid the foundation stone for new projects worth nearly Rs 500 crore.

Separatism breathing its last under the Modi gov: Shah

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday welcomed the decision of two Hurriyat affiliated groups - J&K Tahreek-Isteqlal and J&K Tahreek-Istiqamat - for discarding separatism.

On his social media handle X, Shah said, "Another great news from Kashmir Valley".

"Two more groups affiliated with the Hurriyat, namely J&K Tahreek-Isteqlal and J&K Tahreek-Istiqamat, have discarded separatism and reposed their trust in the new Bharat built by PM Shri @narendramodi Ji".

"Under the Modi government, separatism is breathing its last, and the



triumph of unity is echoing across Kashmir," the Home Minister said.

Notably, two days back, Shah had said, "Two organizations associated with the Hurriyat have announced the severing of all ties with separatism".

The two organizations were Jammu Kashmir People's Movement and Democratic Political Movement.

UP gov't to develop Ramayan Park in Ghaziabad

Lucknow: The Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) is set to commence work on Ramayan Park, Sanskriti Darshan Park and Greenwood Park from April in line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision to transform Uttar Pradesh into Uttam Pradesh, official sources said here on Thursday.

Sources said that the master plan for the Ramayan Park has already been finalised. "The park will feature a 5D motion chair theatre and a mirror house, while installations such as holographic projections, a light and sound show and artistic representations of Ramayan-era characters will be developed at a cost of over Rs 26.26 crore," they said.

Similarly, Sanskriti Darshan Park and Greenwood Park will see construction and development projects worth Rs 16.57 crore, with work set to begin in April.

Sources said that the GDA aims to provide visitors with an engaging and educational experience through the Ramayan Park. "This Ramayan-themed park will integrate modern technology with India's rich cultural heritage, offering an immersive journey into the epic. Designed as a historical landmark, the park will attract both residents and tourists, strengthening the city's identity and fostering a sense of community pride," they said.

Sources said that as per the master plan, the park will feature 45 artistic installations, including 15 sculptures of Ramayan-era characters. "It will also include multimedia entertainment elements such as a mirror maze, holographic projections, a 5D motion chair theater and a kids' activity zone," they said.

Sources said that the designated land for the park is located at Koyal Enclave, Loni Bhopura Road, covering an area of 22,700 square meters (5.61 acres). "Revenue generation for GDA will come from entry tickets, parking fees, advertisements, various public amenities. A special highlight of this park will be art installations made from recycled materials, promoting environmental conservation values."

Similarly, Greenwood Park will be developed at Nimbu Park, covering 3.95 acres. This park will include food kiosks, allowing visitors to enjoy a variety of cuisines. Both parks will feature 22 unique art installations.

The development work for both parks is expected to be completed within six months. Besides, Ramayan Park, Sanskriti Darshan Park and Greenwood Park will be equipped with CCTV surveillance, toilet blocks and walking lanes, ensuring a well-maintained and visitor-friendly environment.



Minor fire outside Chennai Egmore Rly station

Chennai: A minor fire broke out outside the Egmore Railway Station in the city.

No major damages were caused in the fire, except some cables were burnt.

A Railway release said a minor fire occurred at 1455 hours outside Egmore Railway Station, near Gandhi Irwin Road.

The fire service was immediately informed, and the fire was brought under control by 1510 hours.

The fire only affected the telecom cable, and this minor incident did not have any impact on train operations or information systems. The cause of fire is under investigation.

4,142 drug smugglers held after launch of 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' : Punjab DGP

Chandigarh: Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav on Thursday said that after the launch of anti-drugs campaign 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' (YNV) by the state government on March one, 4,142 drug smugglers have been arrested after registration of 2,384 FIRs across the state.

He said the launch of Yudh Nashian Virudh also led to recovery of 146.3 kg Heroin, 85.3 kg Opium, 19.95 quintals Poppy Husk, 7.69 lakh Intoxicant Tablets/capsules, 1 kg ICE and Rs 5.83 crores drug money from the possession of drug smugglers.

With the street supply of drugs witnessing a drastic



reduction following intensive crackdown as part of the ongoing war against drugs, the DGP said 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' (YNV) was launched on the directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Yadav said Punjab police

peddlers. Punjab police teams are now rigorously questioning all the arrested drug peddlers to trace and identify the big fish in narcotics trade in the state," said the DGP, while addressing a press conference at police Headquarters here.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Headquarters Dr Sukhchain Singh Gill was also present.

The development came close of heels after the DGP directing all the Commissioners of Police (CPs) and Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) to identify and catalogue the main drug peddlers in their respective districts within seven days.

He revealed that the ongoing crackdown has led to a drastic reduction in street-level drug availability, prompting police to now pursue the big fish behind the supply chain.

Yadav said that all the CPs/SSPs have already been mandated to personally oversee the mapping exercise to prepare details of the suppliers funneling drugs in their respective areas and catalogue them on the basis of interrogation reports, public tips, intelligence inputs, data from the Safe Punjab Helpline and backward and forward linkages unveiled in criminal investigations under the NDPS Act.

UP gov't to launch month-long drive against unauthorised autos from Apr 1

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Transport Department is set to launch a month-long statewide crackdown on illegal e-rickshaws and autos starting from April 1, official sources said here on Thursday.

Sources said that the Transport Commissioner has directed all the District Magistrates, Police Commissioners, and Senior Superintendents of Police to ensure strict enforcement of the drive. "The special campaign will be conducted in all districts, including the state capital, Lucknow," they said.

It may be noted that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath chaired a review meeting on law and order on Sunday, during which he issued key directives to strengthen enforcement at the

ground level. He directed that the verification of tempo and e-rickshaw drivers be taken up on priority.

Emphasising road safety, he underlined that minors must not be allowed to operate vehicles under any circumstances. He also called for tenant verification and immediate action to prevent overloading at zero points.

To ensure effective implementation, he directed that Transport Department officials be included in the district-level task forces. Acting on these directives, the Transport Department will launch a month-long special campaign in April.

In a letter addressed to all DMs, Police Commissioners, and SSPs/SPs, Transport Commissioner Brajesh Narayan Singh has said that a joint campaign against unregistered and illegal e-rickshaws and autos will be conducted from April 1 to April 30. He has directed the officials to ensure strict enforcement against underage driving during the campaign.

Furthering the preparations, the Transport Commissioner convened a meeting with departmental officers on Thursday. In view of maintaining law and order and ensuring revenue compliance, he directed all Additional Transport Commissioners, RTOs, and ARTOs to conduct intensive district-level drives.

He said that regular monitoring of the campaign is to be ensured, with weekly reports to be submitted to the government every Friday.

Bihar gov't rules out SC/ST fund diversion

Patna: Bihar government said that the funds meant for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe welfare were not being diverted.

While replying to a question of CPIML member Satyadeo Ram in Bihar assembly on Thursday, the Minister Shrawan Kumar shared the details of the fund earmarked in the budget for the financial year 2021-22,

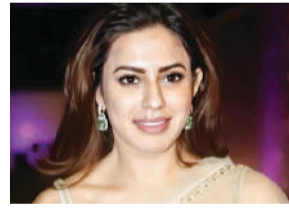
2022-23, and 2023-24. Through his supplementary Ram, referring to the CAG report, said that Rs 4 thousand crore was diverted in the energy sector, road construction, and others, which he said was a misuse of the fund. Ram demanded to frame a special act to check the misuse of the SC/ST fund.

Another member, Sandeep Saurabh, said that

Gold dealer Sahil Jain sent to DRI custody in Ranya gold smuggling case

Bengaluru: A special court on Thursday remanded gold dealer Sahil Jain to the custody of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) till March 29 in connection with the high-profile gold smuggling case involving actress Ranya Rao.

Meanwhile, Ranya's bail plea, which was reserved earlier, is set to be pronounced today by the 64th CCH Sessions Court.



Ranya was arrested on March 3 at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, after DRI officials seized a significant quantity of

gold in her possession. Subsequently, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered an FIR based on a complaint by Abhishek Chandra Gupta, Additional Director of DRI.

According to the complaint, two foreign nationals were apprehended at Mumbai Airport on March 6 while attempting to smuggle 21.28 kg of gold worth Rs 18.92 crore into India. Investigators suspect a larger smuggling network with possible links to Dubai. The FIR against Ranya and others has been filed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, along with various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita (BNS). The complaint also raises concerns over potential involvement of public servants and a coordinated syndicate operating from abroad. Further investigations are underway.

Odisha: Railway Safety Commissioner inspects Boudh-Purunakatak rail line of Khurda Road Bolangir Rail project

Bhubaneswar: Commissioner of Railway Safety, Brijesh Mishra has conducted an inspection of the newly constructed rail line between Boudh and Purunakatak, a distance of 26.888 km, to review the safety aspects of the newly laid rail line of ongoing Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line project.

This inspection is a crucial step towards ensuring the timely completion of the project, which is set to improve connectivity in remote and aspirational regions of Odisha.

East Coast Railway (ECoR) sources said out of the total 301 km stretch of the Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line, 240 km has been completed and commissioned and fit for train operations.

The Commissioner Railway



Safety (CRS) inspected this newly laid Rail Line on March 25 and 26 and gave his sanction for commissioning of the section.

The CRS has inspected the safety parameters of the newly laid Railway Track, Signalling System, Bridges and declared the newly laid rail line section fit of the on-going 301 km Khurda Road-Bolangir rail line project.

A team of senior Railway officials of East Coast Railway assisted CRS during the inspection.

The Railways has been constructing the line from both the sides, i.e, from Khurda Road and Bolangir for early completion of the project.

ECoR sources said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw consistently monitors the progress

and commissioned and fit for train operations.

In the newly constructed stretch between Purunakatak and Champapur 9 major bridges, 2 Road Over Bridges (ROBs), 15 Road Under Bridges (RUBs), and 35 minor bridges, all essential for facilitating safe and efficient rail operations, were completed.

The construction activities are now progressing rapidly in the remaining sections. To expedite the completion, work is being carried out from both ends simultaneously, ensuring adherence to the project's ambitious timeline.

Of the total 301 km, the remaining 62 km section between Purunakatak and Daspalla, which includes tunnel construction through dense jungle and

sanctuary areas, is progressing steadily.

The completion of these tunnels is expected to be a major breakthrough for the project.

The Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line project is poised to significantly enhance transportation and economic development, particularly in the more remote and underserved regions of Odisha.

By improving connectivity between key towns and cities, the rail line will facilitate smoother movement of train traffic, while also contributing to regional economic growth.

The project has gained close attention from the Ministry of Railways, which is committed to delivering this vital infrastructure on schedule.

The successful completion of the Boudh-Purunakatak section is a major step forward and demonstrates the dedication of Indian Railways in overcoming engineering challenges to deliver critical infrastructure in the most difficult environments.

After completion of related infrastructure and amenities, decision on running train services will be taken on the newly laid sections. Trial run has already been conducted to ensure the track's fitness for regular train operations.

As the project continues to progress, the Khurda Road-Bolangir Rail Line remains a key initiative for enhancing connectivity and creating new opportunities for economic development across Odisha.

OUR CITY

Briefs :

Brella case: Bail hearing rescheduled for April 1

New Delhi : Delhi district court deferred the hearing of the bail application filed by the parents of Pankaj Lamba, accused of murdering his wife, Harshita Brella, in London, to April 1. On March 19, Darshan Singh and Sunil Devi, Lamba's parents, were sent to police custody and later to judicial custody. Jai Dev Solanki, counsel for Brella's family, appeared before additional sessions judge Gurmohina Kaur and told, "A petition related to the case was scheduled for hearing in Delhi High Court today and the investigating officer in the case was to appear. Hence, the court scheduled the hearing of the matter for April 1." Meanwhile, Delhi High Court, hearing a petition filed by Sonia Dabas, sister of Brella, on Wednesday, asked the central govt to file a status report in the matter and keep the court informed of new developments. Radhika Bishwajit Dubey, central govt standing counsel, representing the external affairs ministry and Delhi Police, assured the court that steps were being taken to trace the absconding accused and a fresh report would be filed. In Feb, the court directed the external affairs ministry to appoint a nodal officer to liaise with the petitioner and investigation agencies in the UK. The next hearing in the high court will be on April 1.

Jamia dismisses assistant professor after he is arrested by cops for rape

New Delhi : Jamia Millia Islamia has dismissed an assistant professor after police arrested him on a rape complaint on Tuesday. He allegedly raped a woman, promising marriage. In an official statement issued on Wednesday, the university said the accused teacher was a contractual employee of the political science department. The administration dismissed him after receiving the confirmation of his arrest, following the complaint at New Friends Colony police station. "Jamia Millia Islamia has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of violence against women. We express our strongest condemnation of the alleged incident," the university stated. "Jamia Millia Islamia has a duly constituted internal complaints committee under POSH Act — Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013," it said, adding that it also takes steps to create awareness about the committee to make it accessible to all stakeholders. On Tuesday, police arrested the assistant professor from Jamia Nagar. Police said the woman lodged the complaint several weeks ago, and the case was registered on Tuesday. According to her statement, they met each other on a matrimonial website last year and started living together after he promised to marry her.

Pilot project for road network plan awaits MPD41 nod

New Delhi : Over two years after the Delhi Development Authority and Municipal Corporation of Delhi collaborated on a road network plan (RNP) in the three unauthorised colonies of Khirki Extension (south Delhi), Saroop Nagar Extension (north Delhi) and East Azad Nagar (east Delhi), the project remains stalled, pending notification of Master Plan Delhi 2041. The first step in regularising the approximately 1,800 unauthorised colonies in Delhi, this pilot involved widening 6-metre, 9m and 12m roads in the

Bar Associations seek criminal probe against Justice Yashwant Varma Cash Row

New Delhi : In a significant development concerning Justice Yashwant Varma Cash Row, multiple High Court Bar Associations have issued a joint statement urging Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna to initiate a criminal investigation against Justice Yashwant Varma.

Additionally, they have requested the withdrawal of the Collegium's recommendation to transfer Justice Varma to the Allahabad High Court.

The joint statement, signed by the Presidents of the Bar Associations of the High Courts of Delhi, Allahabad, Kerala, Karnataka, and Gujarat, acknowledged the CJI's efforts in promoting transparency, particularly by making the report of the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court and related materials publicly available on the Supreme Court's website.

The Bar Associations requested the withdrawal of Justice Yashwant Varma's transfer order to Allahabad High Court.

They also demanded the removal of all administrative responsibilities assigned to him, in addition to the judicial work that has already been withdrawn.

The Associations demanded that the criminal investigation should be initiated against Justice Varma.

The statement emphasized that criminal law must be set in motion, as applicable to any government servant.

The Bar Associations highlighted that, according to the Delhi High Court Chief Justice's report, certain articles were removed



from Justice Varma's premises on March 15, 2025. They argued that if criminal proceedings had been initiated earlier, crucial evidence would not have been destroyed.

The statement further warned that in crimes of this nature, multiple individuals could be involved, and failure to register a case would hinder further prosecution.

The joint statement also declared that the Presidents of the Bar Associations would convene a meeting in Allahabad if the transfer order is not revoked.

This step, they stated, aims to establish accountability standards for judges of the higher judiciary and to reassess the Supreme Court's in-house procedure, which was approved in 1999. The Associations demanded to review the Restatement of Values of Judicial Life (1997) and Bangalore Principles (2002). Other developments in the case are that a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed seeking the registration of an FIR against Jus-

stice Varma.

The PIL also challenges the three-member committee formed by CJI Khanna for an in-house inquiry.

Justice Yashwant Varma came under scrutiny on March 21, following reports that a fire at a store room which occurred on the night March 14 in his official bungalow and led to the discovery of sacks filled with cash.

On March 22, CJI Sanjiv Khanna constituted a three-member committee to investigate the matter under the in-house procedure. This decision followed a report from Delhi High Court Chief Justice DK Upadhyay, who recommended a deeper probe.

The Supreme Court subsequently published on its website the Delhi High Court CJ's report, Justice Varma's response and Photographs and videos submitted by the Delhi Police Commissioner.

The timeline of the event is as follows: On March 14, a fire occurred at Justice Varma's residential office at 11:30 PM while he was out

of town.

On March 15 (4:50 PM), The Delhi Police Commissioner informed Delhi High Court Chief Justice Upadhyay about the fire.

On March 21, News reports surfaced about the discovery of large amounts of cash at Justice Varma's premises.

On March 22, The CJI formed a three-member inquiry committee.

On March 24, The Delhi High Court withdrew Justice Varma's judicial work following Supreme Court directions.

On March 25, the Allahabad High Court Bar Association began an indefinite strike, protesting the Collegium's recommendation to transfer Justice Varma.

Justice Yashwant Varma's stand on this has been that he has denied possession of the cash, alleging that the accusations are part of a conspiracy against him.

With growing concerns over judicial integrity and transparency, the Supreme Court's next steps in this case will be closely watched.

SC orders joint inspection of Delhi Indraprastha Apollo Hospital's records

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered a joint inspection of Indraprastha Apollo Hospital's records following allegations that it has failed to provide free treatment to poor patients, as mandated under the government land lease agreement.

The Court has directed the Union of India and Delhi government to conduct a thorough review and submit a report detailing the number of economically weaker section (EWS) patients treated at the hospital over the past five years.

A bench comprising Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kottiswar Singh issued the directive, outlining the scope of the inspection and seeking specific information, including, Whether the hospital's lease deed has been renewed after expiry and, if so, under what terms and conditions.

The Bench further questioned that if the lease has not been extended, what legal measures have been taken to reclaim the government-owned land.

The Court directed that a team of experts should be sent to verify the total bed strength and assess outpatient footfall records for at least the past five years.

The Apex Court asked to furnish de-

tails on the number of poor patients provided indoor and outdoor treatment, based on recommendations from state authorities, over the past five years. The Court also instructed the hospital to fully cooperate with the inquiry and allowed its management to submit a status report addressing the aforementioned issues.

The dispute dates back to 1994 when a 15-acre land parcel in Sarita Vihar, Delhi, was leased to Indraprastha Medical Corporation Ltd. at a nominal rate of Rs.1 per month. The Delhi government held a 26% stake in the project. The lease agreement required the hospital to provide free treatment to 1/3rd of indoor patients and 40% of outdoor patients from the economically weaker sections. However, allegations arose that the hospital failed to comply with these obligations, prompting the All India Lawyers Union (Delhi Unit) to file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Delhi High Court. In 2009, the High Court ruled that the hospital was not fulfilling its obligations and issued directions to ensure free healthcare services for the poor. The hospital management, claiming it operated as a commercial entity, challenged the High Court order

before the Supreme Court.

Despite the Supreme Court's directions in 2009 to enforce compliance, concerns persist that the free treatment mandate has not been met.

Noting that the hospital's 30-year lease from 1994 has now expired, the Supreme Court has taken fresh steps to assess compliance and potential legal consequences.

During the hearing, the bench strongly reprimanded the hospital management, warning that if it continued to evade its lease obligations, the hospital's administration could be transferred to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

The Court expressed concern that a hospital meant to function on a no-profit, no-loss model had instead become a commercial venture, effectively denying access to underprivileged patients.

Additionally, when the hospital's counsel pointed out that the Delhi government, as a 26% shareholder, also profited from the hospital's revenue, Justice Surya Kant remarked that such a situation was "most unfortunate."

The matter is now pending further review based on the inspection report to be submitted by the Delhi government and the Union of India.

Parvesh Verma Vs Atishi In Delhi Assembly Over "Bhai" Comment

New Delhi : The Delhi Assembly this afternoon witnessed a massive uproar after BJP MLA Parvesh Verma took a dig at AAP's Atishi as she interrupted him during the Question Hour. Mr Verma, the Delhi Public Works Department (PWD) Minister, was answering a question on the pilgrimage schemes and the financial support provided by the government for various religious trips when he was interrupted by Ms Atishi, who is also the Leader of Opposition.

"Before addressing this (the question), I want to clarify a few facts. In the previous financial year, 2024-2025, the previous government, which heavily advertised its pilgrimage scheme, allocated a budget of Rs 80 crore for the Chief

Minister's Pilgrimage Scheme. However, shockingly, not a single rupee was spent - zero expenditure. This proves that the scheme was only for publicity," Mr Verma said.

Ms Atishi, the former Delhi chief minister, and some AAP lawmakers then stood up and started speaking, forcing the BJP leader to take a pause.

"Kahan se laaye ho bhai (where did you get her from brother)," Mr Verma then asked AAP MLAs in an apparent dig at Ms Atishi.

The senior AAP leader then again stood up and said it was an "unparliamentary language".

"I only said 'bhai'. How is it unparliamentary?," Mr Verma shot back, with Speaker Vijender Gupta backing him up.

As the uproar continued, Mr Gupta marshalled out AAP MLAs Vishesh Ravi and Kuldeep Kumar.

Earlier today, Ms Atishi had written to Mr Gupta, expressing concern over the rejection of opposition members' special mentions on law and order issues.

Criticising the decision, she questioned why discussions on rising crime in the capital, including cases of rape and shootings, are being prevented from being raised in the assembly.

"If rape happens in Delhi or bullets are fired in the streets, should this not be discussed in the assembly?," she wrote.

She also claimed that it was the first time in the history of the Delhi Assembly that such crucial issues had been dismissed.

Booze, betrayal and murder: Delhi man killed by friends over suspicion of being police informer

New Delhi : A 31-year-old man was murdered by his three friends, who suspected him of passing information to the police. The incident occurred in Northwest Delhi's Alipur.

According to the police, two of the accused were apprehended recently, leading them to believe that Chandan was the informant. They lured him to an isolated spot, got drunk, and then killed him, dumping his body under a construction pump house.

The police arrested the three accused, identified as Suraj (24), Ankit (20), and Abhishek (22), who lived in Swaroop Nagar.

Police received information about the incident at 12.39 pm on March 23. "We received information about Chandan Rai's disappearance from his

brother Sanju," police said. CCTVs near the missing person's home were scrutinised, but no fruitful information could be retrieved.

On Wednesday, Chandan's wife, Suman, arrived at the Swaroop Nagar police station and suspected that her husband might have been kidnapped by his friends, who were also their neighbours, Suraj, Ankit, and Abhishek. A case was registered, and the trio was detained.

"We obtained CCTV footage showing the three accused and Chandan together," police said. "When we questioned them, they claimed that Chandan left for Mangolpuri to meet someone after drinking." However, after thorough interrogation, they broke down and confessed to the murder.

Inflation, unemployment hurting common man: Opposition in RS

New Delhi : Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday strongly condemned the general budget for the financial year 2025-26, arguing that it lacks provisions to address rising inflation and unemployment. They also accused the government of discriminating against states and expressed concerns that the increase in tariffs by the United States would negatively impact the country's economy. Congress member and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram, while initiating the debate on the Appropriation (No.3) Bill 2025, said although the budget was presented eight weeks ago, it has not been discussed anywhere.

He said, "Wherever I go, wherever I speak, no one remembers the budget, no one discusses it."

He said, "On fiscal policy, I would like to highlight that when this government assumed office in May 2014, the fiscal deficit at the end of the previous year was 4.5 percent, according to their official numbers. In the middle of this government's tenure, the FD improved to 3.4 percent in 2018-19. But at the end of 2024-25, it will be 4.8 per-

cent. So, effectively, the country's economy is back to where it started".

"The government, of course, will say COVID happened, and I agree—COVID did dent the economy of the country. But every government faces crises. Despite global economic growth, domestic economic activities have experienced a slowdown," he said. He stated that while inflation and unemployment continue to trouble common people and youth, the budget has reduced allocations for education and healthcare. The country is experiencing salary stagnation, causing even employed individuals to struggle with inflation. He said that protectionism is detrimental to the economy and unfavourable for global trade.

Referring to US President Donald Trump's announcement to raise taxes on Indian products starting April 2, he noted that despite the budget lowering tariffs on several American products, Trump remains unwilling to compromise.

He said the government has announced the removal of the Google tax starting tomorrow and is also planning to lower duties on sev-

eral other products. This will result in economic losses for the country, while the increase in duties in the US will also impact imports. He said while Canada has strongly opposed Trump's tariff hikes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has remained silent on the matter. He urged the government to brief the Opposition on its plans to address Trump's announcements, cautioning that the tariff war could escalate into a trade war.

BJP's RPN Singh stated that the budget aims to put money in the pockets of common people to increase their purchasing power. The job of the government is not just to fill its treasury. For five years the opposition has been saying only one thing that nothing is being done for the middle class but now when the government has worked for the middle class, it is saying that this is nothing.

Income up to Rs 12.75 lakh will be tax-free. Similar decisions will continue to be made during the Modi government's tenure in the coming days, he added.

Trinamool Congress's Sagarika Ghosh criticised the budget, stating that the common man's income has

seen no real growth over the past decade. She highlighted soaring inflation and, pointing to rising vegetable prices, claimed that Indian workers receive the lowest wages globally.

"Where are the good days?" she questioned, adding that while the government speaks about "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" the reality is that the budget for women's welfare has been reduced.

Referring to the NDA as the "National Delimitation Alliance," she accused the central government of discriminating between BJP-ruled states and those governed by other parties.

She said that a "tsunami" is approaching on April 2 as Trump prepares to impose new taxes. Slamming the government's 'Aache Din' slogan as mere "Jumla", she labelled demonetisation a failed policy and described the government as both ineffective and driven by empty slogans.

DMK's M Mohammed Abdullah said that inflation and unemployment are increasing due to the policies of this government. The country's economy is crumbling due to financial mismanagement, and MSMEs are bearing the brunt. They

Editorial

Intense summer across the country

Although seasonal change is an integral part of nature, in the current era, this change brings with it a picture of crises. Citizens are constantly afraid of the increasing intensity of each season and the disasters that arise from it. Due to the damage caused by heavy rains, the discomfort caused by the bitter cold and the scorching heat, seasonal change is becoming a matter of concern. This year's summer has started showing its intensity in the month of March itself, and the temperature has reached above 40 degrees in many parts. Therefore, it is difficult to predict how hot the next three months will be. Due to the rising temperature, citizens will have to face many problems such as drying up of water bodies, shortage of water and fodder for animals, deaths due to heatstroke, lack of vegetables and inflation. This inflammation is not limited to temperature increase only, but it also has an impact on the social and economic levels. It is necessary to understand the reasons behind this increasing heat. Global warming is considered an important reason for the increasing temperature. The climate is changing due to human intervention. Due to increasing pollution, carbon dioxide emissions and deforestation, the temperature of the earth is increasing rapidly. As a result, even places that were previously cold are now suffering from the heat of the sun. Immediate measures must be taken to prevent this change, otherwise the future may be even more difficult.

Carbon dioxide is the largest greenhouse gas, and its increasing amount traps heat on the surface of the earth. As the intensity of sunlight increases, this stored heat becomes more intense. That is why the global temperature has increased by an average of 1.5 degrees Celsius in the last few decades. Due to this warming, water evaporates rapidly, water sources are drying up and the country is experiencing severe heat. Plants act as a natural cooling agent on the earth. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and create moisture in the air, thus controlling the temperature. However, due to increasing human intervention, large-scale deforestation is taking place. Especially in India, while deforestation is taking place on a large scale, the rate of reforestation is very low. As a result, soil moisture is lost, water storage decreases and temperatures increase. This is definitely a warning sign. The heat island effect is becoming more pronounced due to the increasing pace of urbanization. The temperature in cities remains higher than in rural areas. The main reason for this is that concrete, steel and other building materials absorb sunlight and release more heat. Moreover, urban areas heat up more due to heat emitted from industrial estates, vehicles and mechanical equipment. Along with this, the problems of water storage are also increasing day by day. The average rainfall is decreasing due to climate change. Even if it rains, it falls suddenly and in large quantities, which creates the problem of unseasonal rains. Due to poor water storage, rivers and lakes are drying up, resulting in more intense heat waves. Therefore, if we want to control this serious problem of heat, it is essential to take environmentally friendly measures.

Air pollution and greenhouse gases are the consequences of modern lifestyles. Industry and transport, in particular, are causing a lot of air pollution, resulting in an increase in the amount of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide in the atmosphere. These gases trap heat and increase the temperature of the earth. As a result, the frequency and intensity of heat waves are increasing.

Realizing the seriousness of this problem, international agreements such as the Paris Agreement came into being. Under this agreement, participating countries have pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 2050. However, there are many obstacles in implementing these goals. That is why controlling climate change has become a difficult challenge.

Considering the intensity of the heat this year, everyone needs to take care of themselves. Because, extreme temperatures have a major impact on health and lifestyle. Heat waves are increasing problems such as stroke, heart disease and blood pressure. Especially children, the elderly and the sick are suffering a lot.

Apart from this, the increasing heat is also having a major impact on the agricultural sector. The ever-changing weather is harming agriculture, reducing production and thus increasing inflation, deepening the financial crisis. A recent study found that the frequency of storms, typhoons and unseasonal rains may also increase in the coming period. For example, in the spring of 2025, some areas will suffer from extreme heat, while others may also see severe cyclones and snowfall, say scientists. This means that the weather will become more unstable in the coming period.

Modern measures such as 'smart cities' and 'green infrastructure' can be useful in controlling heat waves. Planting trees along the roads, plantations, and erecting 'green roofs' on buildings can help control the temperature in cities. In addition, using environmentally friendly technologies such as solar energy and water harvesting methods can help to find some solutions to the heat problem.

Recent research has also found that solar activity, solar winds, and the motion of the moon also affect the Earth's temperature. This is also likely to lead to major changes in climate instability over time.

In short, the increasing heat is not only related to pollution and industries, but there are many natural and human causes behind it. Therefore, global cooperation and responsible lifestyles are necessary to reduce global warming. If we take the right steps at the right time, we can avoid these heat waves; otherwise, it will be difficult to avoid this crisis.

Goli Pop Soda successfully enters USA, UK, Europe, and Gulf markets with strong consumer response

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, proudly announced the global resurgence of the traditional Indian Goli Soda, rebranded as Goli Pop Soda. This iconic beverage, once a household staple, is making a remarkable comeback on the global stage, driven by its innovative reinvention and strategic international expansion.

The product has already made strong inroads in global markets, with successful trial shipments to the USA, UK, Europe, and Gulf countries. A strategic partnership with Fair Exports India has ensured steady deliveries to Lulu Hypermarket, one of the largest retail chains in the Gulf region. Thousands of bottles have been stocked across Lulu outlets, receiving an overwhelmingly positive response.

In the UK, Goli Pop Soda has swiftly evolved into a cultural phenomenon, appealing to consumers who embrace the fusion of traditional Indian flavors with a modern twist. This development represents a significant step in showcasing India's rich beverage heritage on the global stage.

To commemorate this milestone, APEDA supported the flag-off ceremony organized by ABNN on 4th February 2025, marking the official global launch of Goli



Pop Soda. The event reaffirmed India's commitment to promoting authentic, high-quality products and reinforcing its presence in the international beverage market.

The revival of Goli Soda, which had nearly disappeared due to the dominance of multinational beverage companies, marks a significant milestone in India's efforts

to promote and export authentic, homegrown food and beverage products. By blending nostalgia with modern packaging, Goli Pop Soda has successfully reintroduced the essence of this beloved drink to contemporary consumers worldwide. What sets Goli Pop Soda apart is its innovative packaging, featuring a unique pop opener that recreates the nostalgic fizzy burst Indian consumers fondly remember. This thoughtful rebranding has captivated international markets, positioning the drink as an exciting and trendy product. Additionally, APEDA facilitated and featured Goli Pop Soda at the International Food & Drink Event (IFE) London 2025, held from 17th-19th March 2025. The event provided Indian entrepreneurs and exporters a valuable platform to connect with international buyers, explore new business collaborations, and promote India's diverse agricultural and processed food products globally.

With the resurgence of Goli Soda, Goli Pop Soda is not just a drink—it is a testament to India's rich culinary heritage and vibrant beverage industry. The product's growing success in global markets proves that homegrown Indian flavors can compete with international giants, opening new avenues for Indian exports and further solidifying India's leadership in the global food and beverage sector.

Six day "International Workshop on Land Governance"

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs under their Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program and the Haryana Institute of Public Administration (HIPA), is organizing an "International Workshop on Land Governance" from 24th March to 29th March, 2025 at HIPA Complex in Gurugram, Haryana. The workshop will bring together delegates from 22 countries across Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia to explore innovative approaches for addressing land governance challenges globally. This six-day international workshop will showcase India's pioneering SVAMITVA Scheme, which has successfully mapped rural inhabited areas using drone technology

to provide legal ownership documents to property owners. More than 40 senior officials from 22 participating countries, including Turkmenistan, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Fiji, Mali, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Mongolia, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, São Tomé and Príncipe, Liberia, Ghana, Armenia, Honduras, Eswatini, Cambodia, Togo, and Papua New Guinea will exchange best practices on land governance during the workshop.

The International Workshop will entail discussions on advancements in land governance and sustainable development and feature comprehensive sessions on drone-based land survey techniques, high-resolution mapping, and

geospatial technologies that can transform land administration. Technical sessions will include hands-on demonstration of drone survey methods, data processing techniques, ground verification processes and GIS integration. Survey of India experts will conduct field demonstrations of flight planning and drone surveying in a nearby village, offering participants practical exposure to this technology. The International Workshop on Land Governance will also feature field visits and exhibitions to provide participants, hands-on exposure to modern land governance technologies. To showcase cutting-edge technologies, a Drone Vendors' Exhibition will be organized on March 24 - 25, 2025, wherein 10 drone vendors will set up stalls,

displaying innovations in drone-based land mapping and survey techniques. The exhibition will showcase survey-grade drones for high-precision mapping, advanced drone surveying processes and technology, and GIS tools and applications for data-driven land management. State Governments will present digital innovations in end-to-end process automation, while demonstrations of Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS) [CORS network has been established by Survey of India as public infrastructure, which provides 5cm accuracy positioning services for developmental works. This technology can be leveraged for sustainable development and disaster management] and Rovers will highlight real-time, high-accuracy

land surveying techniques.

Industry partners including Survey of India, State Land Revenue Departments, National Informatics Centre, Geo-Spatial World, Hexagon, Trimble, Aereo, Marvell Geospatial, Idea Forge Tech, and AWS will participate as knowledge partners, exhibiting cutting-edge technologies and solutions for land governance. In addition, a series of classroom demonstrations will take place, including drone use cases, ortho-rectified imaging, feature-extracted maps, and ground verification technologies. These demonstrations will provide participants with insights into high-resolution mapping, data validation, and property card finalization, contributing to a deeper understanding of modern land

governance practices.

This workshop recognizes the universal challenge of land governance, noting that according to a 2017 World Bank report, only 30% of the global population holds legally registered land titles. By contrast, India's SVAMITVA Scheme has pioneered a comprehensive approach to mapping inhabited rural areas with 5cm accuracy at a resolution of 1:500, positioning India as a potential model for other nations. It will help in achieving Sustainable Development Goals related to land rights, with participants learning from India's SVAMITVA model to empower their own citizens with clear land ownership documentation thus creating more reliable land administration systems.

World water Day 2025

Marking World Water Day, the Ministry of Jal Shakti, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and the Government of Haryana, launched the much-anticipated sixth edition of Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain-2025 in Panchkula, Haryana. The event aimed to emphasise water conservation and management through community participation and innovative strategies and witnessed the enthusiastic participation of over 10,000 citizens, stakeholders, and water sector professionals from across the country. Organised by the National Water Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, this is the first time the campaign gets its launch outside Delhi — symbolising a broader outreach to the grassroots.

The campaign, themed (Peoples' Action for Water Conservation - Towards Intensified Community Connect) underscores the importance of water security, rainwater harvesting, and



groundwater recharge in the face of climate change and growing water challenges. A major highlight was the nationwide virtual launch of Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2025 across the country, with special emphasis on 148 focus districts. This was followed by the launch of the "Jal-Jangal-Jan: Ek Pratikritik Bandhan Abhiyan" (Water-Forest-People: The Intrinsic Bond campaign), in collaboration with the Ministry of



Environment, Forest and Climate Change, aimed at restoring ecological connections between forests, rivers, and springs. AV films were also launched on these initiatives, under Jal Shakti Abhiyan, MoEFCC and Government of Haryana.

The event witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries,

Modi.HMoJS remarked that earlier, issues of water availability and quality were not part of mainstream national discourse. Today, due to PM's leadership, clean drinking water in adequate quantity is reaching citizens' doorsteps across India. Shri Patil underscored the need for recharging water sources, adding: "We often speak of (saving wealth), but more important is (saving water)." He reiterated that community participation is key, and true water security can only be achieved when every citizen contributes.HMoJS advocated for the principle of "Catch the Rain where it falls", stating that water from each village must be recharged within the same village. If implemented effectively, this approach can resolve water scarcity at both local and national lev-



els. participatory water management.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Nayab Singh Saini, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, reaffirmed the state's commitment to sustainable water governance. The CM highlighted Haryana's efforts in water-efficient agriculture, micro-irrigation, and rejuvenation of traditional water bodies. The CM praised the Jal Shakti Abhiyan as a powerful platform for turning awareness

In her address, Smt. Shruti Choudhary, Hon'ble Minister for Irrigation & Water Resources,

Haryana, stressed that water conservation must become a true Jan Andolan (people's movement). She outlined Haryana's recent re-

forms in the water sector and emphasized the vital role of local governance, women, and youth in protecting and sustainably



into action, and committed that Haryana would lead by example in implementing rainwater harvesting, recharge structures, and

managing water resources. The minister also called for integrating traditional knowledge with modern science to address today's water challenges.

An award ceremony was held to felicitate progressive farmers, women champions, Water User Associations (WUAs), NGOs, and Self Help Groups for their outstanding contributions to water conservation and management. The Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain - 2025 has laid the foundation for an inclusive, strategic, and people-driven approach to water conservation. On World Water Day, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of (Every Drop Counts) and moved decisively toward a secure and sustainable water future under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Briefs :

25 injured in road mishap in Sonapat

Sonapat : As many as 25 youths sustained injuries in a mishap that occurred on the Saidpur-Jatola road in the Kharkhoda area after a bus, in which the youths were sitting, collided with a truck during overtaking. The police reached the spot and rushed all injured to the civil hospital in Kharkhoda. The youths were on their way to the Maruti plant for apprenticeship. The bus left for the Maruti plant at the IMT-Kharkhoda from Barota village police post in the wee hours on Wednesday. As the bus reached near the State Bank of India on the Saidpur-Jatola road, it hit a truck, when the driver tried to overtake the truck. The front portion of the bus got badly damaged while 25 youths sitting in the bus sustained injuries. People gathered at the spot and the police reached the spot after getting information. They rushed the injured ITI students to the civil hospital and private hospitals in Kharkhoda. Maximum injured have been discharged after getting first aid. SI Jaljeet, incharge, Saidpur police post, said that the accident occurred in the morning and no complaint was received. "All youths are safe and no one sustained serious injuries in the accident and almost all have been discharged," he added.

Narnaul's forgotten martyrs: Here is why Shaheed Smarak project faces delay

Rohtak : The Naseebpur Shaheed Smarak project is an initiative to create a war memorial in Naseebpur village in Mahendragarh district to commemorate the martyrs who fought in the 1857 revolt. The project aims to develop a comprehensive memorial park, which includes facilities such as an open-air theater, an attractive entrance, and other elements that will highlight the historical importance of the region. Naseebpur village holds significant historical value due to its role in the 1857 revolt. It was one of the key locations where local freedom fighters, including Rao Tularam, led battles against the British colonial forces. The village is thus considered a place of historical importance, and the war memorial project seeks to preserve and showcase this legacy. The Naseebpur Shaheed Smarak project was announced by the former Haryana chief minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, in November 2016, during his visit to Mahendragarh district. The project aims to honour the sacrifices made by those who fought during this crucial period of India's history. As of now, the project is still in the planning and development stage. The consultancy process for the development of the memorial is underway, with two companies having already submitted their presentations. However, the consultancy is yet to be finalised. However, the project has already faced significant delays. The controversy surrounding the Naseebpur Shaheed Smarak project revolves around the delays in its execution despite the announcement made in 2016. The project faced further complications after Naseebpur village came under the Urban Local Bodies (ULB), which delayed the process.

Intentional absence from court to invite stringent action: HC

Chandigarh : Taking note of the increasing trend of accused persons failing to appear before trial courts after securing bail, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has framed a uniform approach to deal with such defaults.

The court has said stringent action can be taken, including the imposition of costs in proportion to the accused person's financial capacity, in cases where absence is found to be intentional and aimed at evading legal proceedings.

Justice Sanjay Vashisth said it had in a number of cases been experiencing situations where the accused stopped appearing before trial court in the criminal cases after being released on bail, compelling the court to issue non-bailable warrants by cancelling the bail already granted. In some cases,



such accused were declared 'proclaimed person/offender'. The Bench added it had formulated and applied a uniform method after examining the facts from several cases by satisfying itself that "such accused would appear before the court concerned to en-

able it to proceed further, instead of delaying the proceedings to await the presence of accused". For streamlining the process and preventing unnecessary delays, the Bench ruled that trial courts must assess each case individually to determine whether

the absence was willful or due to genuine reasons. Justice Vashisth said intentional or unintentional default of the accused could be dealt with by examining the facts from "case to case" he was involved in. "Where it is realised that absence or prolonged ab-

sence of such accused is intentional to evade the process of law, he/she can be penalised after examining the nature of crime in which he is facing the proceedings and thereupon by imposing some cost amount subject to his/her capacity to pay," the court added.

Recognizing the need to ensure compliance with legal procedures, Justice Vashisth asserted the primary object of every court was only to examine the commission of crime in question vis-à-vis the accused. "If possible justice be imparted at the earliest without unnecessary delay. It is not expected that undue time would be devoted in securing the presence of absconding accused and also to waste energy by enforcing the special mechanism to arrest such accused, the court observed.

Shopkeeper gets 20-yr jail for raping 5-year-old girl

Gurugram : A special POCOS court in Nuh has sentenced a shopkeeper to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping

a five-year-old girl. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the convict, with an additional six-month jail term if the fine is not paid.

The incident occurred in February 2020 in a village under the jurisdiction of Bicchore police station. According to Nuh police spokesperson Krishan Kumar, the victim had gone to the shop to buy decorative items at her mother's request. When the girl did not return for a long time, her mother went to the shop and found the accused, Sahil, sexually assaulting her.

Upon seeing the

mother, Sahil fled the scene. The family immediately alerted the police, and the girl was rushed to the hospital. The police registered a case and arrested Sahil days later. During the investigation, authorities



gathered crucial forensic evidence and recorded statements from 12 witnesses. Though some witnesses turned hostile during the trial, the court relied on strong scientific and circumstantial evidence to convict the accused. "The trial lasted nearly five years, with forensic evidence playing a pivotal role. Based on the proof and witness testimonies, the POCOS court convicted Sahil on Monday and sentenced him to 20 years in prison on Tuesday," the police spokesperson said.

Anganwari workers and helpers stage protest in Karnal

Karnal : The Anganwari Workers and Helpers Union staged a protest in front of the Mini-Secretariat on Wednesday, raising their demands with slogans. The protest, which will continue for two more days, was led by state president Rupa Rana and conducted by district vice-president Reena.

The union leaders alleged that the anganwari workers were provided with mobile phones with 3GB RAM by the department. However, due to frequent updates of the Poshan

Tracker app, these phones are not functioning properly. While updating Take Home Ration (THR) records, the system requires the same person's photo to be uploaded every time, but different family members, such as the grandmother, mother, father and other family members collect the ration. The department has also mandated OTP verification, but many poor families hesitate to share OTPs due to fears of cyber fraud. Besides, the phones provided to Anganwari workers lack sufficient capacity,

making it difficult to operate the app smoothly, causing significant inconvenience. During the protest, Rana raised several other demands, including immediate reinstatement of dismissed workers, filling vacant positions in the department, increasing the promotion quota from 25 per cent to 50 per cent, providing additional honorarium for workers assigned tasks outside their designated centres, filling vacant helper positions at the earliest, ensuring timely payment of honorarium.

Suman Bahamani takes charge as Mayor of Yamunanagar-Jagadhri

Yamunanagar : Suman Bahamani took charge as the Mayor of the Yamunanagar-Jagadhri Municipal Corporation on Wednesday. Former Education Minister Kanwar Pal Gujjar, BJP district president Rajesh Sapra and BJP leaders Rosy Malik Anand and Krishna Singla were present when Bahamani took charge. The Mayor was present with her husband, Satpal Bahamani, and other family members. Additional Municipal Commissioner Dr Vijay Pal Yadav and other officers of the MC



welcomed her at the office. Bahamani said active partic-

ipation of citizens would be ensured in the development of the twin cities of Yamunanagar and Jagadhri. "Our government will work with the cooperation of the public. Their problems and suggestions will be given priority. Transparency and accountability will be the basis of our working style," Bahamani added. She said cleanliness initiatives would be undertaken, and, under the Swachh Shahr Swasth Shahr Abhiyan, the cleanliness system of the district would be made more effective.

Bhukkal raises concern over poor condition of sports stadiums in Jhajjar

Jhajjar : Former Education Minister and local Congress MLA Geeta Bhukkal while speaking at the Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday highlighted the poor condition of the Swami Dayanand Saraswati Sports Stadium in Jhajjar and the lack of basic infrastructure and essential facilities at various stadiums across the district.

She said the stadiums, located in villages such as Birdhana, Bahu, Matanhail, Kablana, Koyalpur, Sarsoli, Kheri Hoshdarpur, and Jamalpur, were suffering from neglect, adversely impacting the training and development of local athletes. During her address in the Vidhan Sabha, Bhukkal raised ques-

tions regarding the timeline for the improvement of the dilapidated boxing hall at the Swami Dayanand Saraswati Sports Stadium. She pointed out that the stadium was in desperate need of basic facilities, including proper equipment, track, toilets, drinking water and a proper drainage system. Bhukkal emphasised that despite Jhajjar residents like Manu Bhaker and Aman Sehrawat bringing glory to the state and the nation by winning three medals at the Paris Olympics, the district continued to lack the necessary sports infrastructure. She expressed concern that the inadequate facilities were forcing budding athletes to

seek training elsewhere. The Congress MLA also said she had raised similar concerns in the previous session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha, where the state government had assured her that the condition of the stadiums would be improved. However, she claimed that these assurances were not fulfilled.

Bhukkal urged the state government to fulfill its promises so that the local youth could hone their talents in their home district. In response, Sports Minister Gaurav Gautam stated that a cost estimate of Rs 61.83 lakh for the maintenance and earth filling of Swami Dayanand Saraswati Sports Sta-

dium was under consideration, with work set to begin once approved. He added that maintenance and painting work of the boxing hall had already been completed.

Gautam also mentioned that stadiums in Birdhana, Bahu, Koyalpur, Sarsoli, Kheri Hoshdarpur, and Jamalpur were at present being developed, and the Panchayat at Department at present provided only basic facilities such as tracks and boundary walls. Further maintenance and new infrastructure work would be carried out by the Development and Panchayat Department or the respective gram panchayats.

Police arrest 15 cyber criminals

Gurugram : In a significant breakthrough, Nuh police have arrested 15 individuals and recovered 13 mobile phones and 24 fake SIM cards from their possession. The police have registered 12 FIRs against the accused at the Cyber Police Station. According to the police, the accused ran a fraudulent operation where they duped people by hiding their identities on social media platforms. They posted advertisements selling goods such as tyres, suits at discounted prices and offered jobs under the guise of Nataraj Pencil, while also claiming to sell cows and buffaloes.

The criminals used fake SIM cards and mobile phones to threaten victims into transferring money in fraudulent accounts. The ar-



rests were made following a special operation led by 13 teams from the Nuh police, who took action against the accused over two days, on Tuesday and Wednesday. The operation spanned various locations in the district, including Nalhar village, Nuh-Hodal Road, the Mumbai-Vadodara Expressway, Shikarava Road Akeda, Delhi-Alwar Road, Nuh-Tauru Road and Salaheri. The accused, identified as Soyeb, Waris, Nasim, Hasin Khan, Lukman, Alim, Hakam,

Faisar, Alim, Mustkim, Sohail Khan, Ashiq, Sahil, Sahyar Katariya and Samim, are residents of different villages in Nuh district. During interrogation, the cyber criminals confessed to scamming people from several states, including Assam, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

They used fake SIM cards from states like Assam and Bihar to carry out their operations. All the accused have been presented in court and sent to judicial custody.

Two Illegal colonies over 40 acres razed in Rohtak



Rohtak : Under its ongoing campaign, the district authorities on Wednesday demolished two illegal colonies being developed on 40 acres on the HSPV Sector 7-37 Dividing Road here.

During the drive, temporary road networks, 15 foundations, 14 constructions, sewerage lines, interlocking tile roads and electric poles were removed from both illegal colonies. Officials and staff from the District Town Planner's office, along with police forces, were present to prevent any untoward incidents.

Deputy Commissioner Dheerendra Khadgata stated that a continuous campaign was being run against illegal constructions and colonies in the controlled and urban areas of the district. He urged

citizens not to invest their savings in illegal constructions or colonies and also advised them that no buying or selling should take place in any of the illegal colonies identified by the district administration in various revenue estate. "The demolition campaign against illegal colonies and constructions will continue in future, and no illegal constructions or colonies will be allowed to be developed in the district," he added. District Town Planner Sumandeep appealed to the public not to invest in illegal constructions or in colonies being illegally developed by dealers or landowners.

He emphasised that the administration would take departmental action from time to time.

After CM intervenes, Mandi, transport, labour contractors join registration process

Karnal : After the intervention of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, a standoff between mandi transport contractors (MTC), mandi labour contractors (MLC) and the government was resolved over the MTC-MLC tender policy for 2025-26 for handling and lifting wheat. The contractors opposed the policy and refused to register for handling and lifting wheat. The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department has amended some of the conditions. Now, the contractors have joined the registration process for the handling and lifting of wheat, the procurement of which will start on April 1. Here is what you need to know about the MTC-MLC tender policy's previous provisions and amendments made by the department. Transport and labour contractors were infuriated over the tender policy for 2025-26 and initially refused to participate in the registration process. Their hesitation was due to some changes made by the state government in the policy in February, which were opposed by the transport contractors. Despite raising concerns, the contractors found the initial amendments insufficient. When no solution emerged from officials, they approached the Chief Minis-



ter Nayab Singh Saini at his Chandigarh residence last week, demanding further modifications. The CM directed authorities to address their concerns, after which the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department accepted the majority of their demands. Under the policy, every contractor is required to own at least 30 per cent of the trucks required for wheat lifting in each grain market. If they fail to meet this requirement, they must submit a security deposit per missing vehicle. As per the 2024-25 policy, a security deposit was fully refundable at Rs 50,000 per truck. In the new policy drafted in February 2025, se-

curity deposit was raised to Rs 1.25 lakh per short vehicle, with Rs 75,000 refundable and Rs 50,000 non-refundable. After their opposition, an amendment was made and security deposit was reduced to Rs 1 lakh per truck, with Rs 85,000 refundable and Rs 15,000 non-refundable. The contractors further demanded the abolition of this additional security deposit, arguing that they already deposited 10 per cent of the contract value as security, making the extra charge an unnecessary financial burden. On their demand, the government further reduced the security deposit fully refundable to Rs 60,000 per short truck.

Under the previous year's policy 2024-25, the contractors were required to lift the procured wheat within 48 hours, failing which a penalty of Rs 500 per day was imposed but it was mandatory. In February 2025, the penalty was increased to Rs 5,000 per day, which the contractors said was excessive. After protest, the penalty was lowered to Rs 1,000 per day and now further reduced back to Rs 500 per day. The lifting deadline was also changed to 72 hours from 48 hours proposed earlier. The contractors objected to the new requirement of negotiating with all bidders, arguing that it effectively turned the process into a competitive bidding exercise. They demanded that negotiations should be limited only to the L-1 (lowest bidder) contractor, as was the previous practice. However, no change has been made in it.

The contractors accused arhtiyas (commission agents) in certain mandis of manipulating the system by luring the truck drivers for lifting of foodgrains. Despite the contractors providing sufficient vehicles, delays occur due to the manipulation by the arhtiyas. However, the department did not do anything as it is not a policy matter.

Haryana Assembly clears Bill to crack down on illegal travel agents

Chandigarh : The Haryana Assembly today passed a Bill to check the illegal and fraudulent activities of the unscrupulous travel agents engaged in sending the Haryanvi youth to foreign countries through the "dunki route".

The Haryana Registration and Regulation of Travel Agents Bill, 2025, was passed by the Assembly by junking the demand by the opposition Congress to refer the Bill to the Select Committee. The Bill proposes a jail term of up to seven years and fine up to Rs 5 lakh for travel agents found operating without obtaining a registration certificate.

The development comes amid the US deportation of illegal Indian immigrants, a majority of them from Punjab and Haryana, who entered the USA through "dunki route" — an illegal and risky pathway used by travel agents to send people abroad. Introducing the Bill, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini asserted that innocent and unemployed youth of Haryana were being lured into



traps of illegal immigration though illegitimate means. "Many a time, these agents send innocent people to foreign countries illegally and such persons are caught and put behind bars by the police of these countries. Therefore, there is a dire need to curb the illegal activities of such agents," Saini asserted.

Under the provisions of the Bill, the operation of

travel agencies without registration will be a punishable offence and a travel agent operating without registration shall attract a jail term which shall not be less than two years but which may extend to seven years.

There is also a provision for fine between Rs 2-5 lakh. Meanwhile, those found involved in human smuggling or in the preparation of forged documents, shall be

punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than seven years but which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to pay fine between Rs 2-5 lakh.

The Bill proposes to establish a framework to ensure the transparency, accountability and integrity of travel agents and to check their illegal and fraudulent activities, safeguarding the

interests of Haryana residents, Saini said refuting the Congress' claims that the Bill was brought in a haste. Under the provisions of the Bill, obtaining a registration certificate by travel agents is mandatory. Besides, fresh registration certificate will be required if a travel agent opens other offices and branches in the same or other district.

Among other provisions of the Bill, the competent authority may cancel the registration certificate on an application made to it by any person or otherwise on information on various grounds, including that the travel agent has become insolvent or bankrupt; or has been found involved in human trafficking or in preparation of forged documents; or has been convicted by a court for a criminal offence.

Earlier, Congress members, including BB Batra, Geeta Bhukkal and Aditya Surjewala, while demanding that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee, alleged that it contained deficiencies as it was brought in a haste.

INLD's newly appointed district president Surjeet takes charge, vows to strengthen party



Karnal : Former Indian kabaddi player Surjeet Singh Pehalwan, who was appointed as district president of INLD two days back by party's national president Abhay Chautala, assumed office on Thursday, urging party workers to unite and strengthen the organisation.

Senior party leaders, including former district president Yashbir Rana Kuku, party general secretary Ram Kumar Abla, Phool

Singh Manjura, Surjeet Sandhu, Krishan Kuttail, Jaipal Punia, and several others, welcomed him and assured their unwavering support. Expressing gratitude, Surjeet Singh thanked Abhay Chautala and other senior leaders for entrusting him with the responsibility.

"I am honoured to take on this role and will work tirelessly to strengthen the party at the grassroots level," he said.

Three Gujarat cops killed, Punjab ASI hurt in Sirsa highway crash

Sirsa : A tragic accident on Wednesday morning claimed the lives of three Gujarat policemen and left a Punjab Police ASI critically injured on Bharat Mala Road in Sirsa district.

The Gujarat Police vehicle, a Mahindra Bolero (GJ18JB7819), collided with an unidentified vehicle around 5:30 am near the Warring Khera petrol pump.

Local police recovered a number plate from Punjab at the scene, suggesting the involvement of another vehicle, which is yet to be identified.

The Dabwali police, who were alerted immediately, informed the Gujarat Police and rushed the victims to a nearby hospital. Unfortunately, three Gujarat policemen — Prakashbhai from Ahmedabad, Jayendra Singh from Surat, and Sunil

Kumar from Ahmedabad — were declared dead on arrival. ASI JP Solanki of Punjab Police, who was accompanying them, sustained severe injuries and was shifted to a hospital in Bathinda for advanced treatment. According to police sources, the Gujarat officers had arrived in Punjab for an investigation and picked up ASI JP Solanki from the Rama Mandi police station at 4 am. While travelling through Sirsa, their vehicle met with the fatal collision.

The impact was so severe that the officers suffered fatal head and abdominal injuries despite the deployment of airbags. One officer seated behind the conductor's seat was thrown forward due to the crash's force. Locals gathered at the accident site, speculating on the possible causes of the mishap.

Haryana govt schools grapple with poor infrastructure

Chandigarh : The Haryana Government today admitted in the Vidhan Sabha that schools are short of at least 11,475 rooms, including 6,848 classrooms, while the vacancy rate among post graduate teachers (PGTs) stands at 22.6 per cent.

Replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Congress MLA Ashok Arora on the "pitiable" condition of government schools, Education Minister Mahipal Dhanda said as per a review of infrastructure conducted on May 10, 2023, it was assessed that 8,240 classrooms, 5,630 other rooms and 321 boundary walls were required. To bridge the gap, the Education Department sanctioned Rs 473.44 crore in 2023-24 and an additional Rs 306.84 crore in 2024-25. He in-

formed the Assembly that 1,392 classrooms, 1,003 other rooms and 172 boundary walls were scheduled to be completed between April 2023 and January this year. Even if it is assumed that these projects have been completed, 6,848 classrooms and 4,627 other rooms are still required.

Dhanda admitted that work on 1,144 classrooms, 624 other rooms, and 192 boundary walls was in progress and was likely to be completed between June and December this year. Additionally, for 3,237 classrooms, 1,385 other rooms and 118 boundary walls, the work has been approved, and the tendering process is underway. It is likely to be completed between April 2025 and March 2026. To address the remaining infrastructure



gap, further approvals would be issued from the budget allocated for 2025-26, Dhanda said. He further said as per the assessment on May 10, 2023, drinking water was unavailable in 131 government schools, boys' toilets in 1,047 schools, girls' toilets in 538 schools and electricity connections in 236 schools. To address these deficiencies,

Rs 43.48 crore was approved in 2023-24, and at present, these facilities were available in all schools, Dhanda claimed. There are 14,295 government schools in the state. On the shortage of teachers, the minister informed the House that appointment letters for 1,704 PGTs would be issued soon, and 4,550 vacant posts would be filled through promotions. For 3,427 TGT posts, an indent has been

sent to the HKNR, while for the recruitment of 1,456 primary teachers, an indent has been sent to the Haryana Staff Selection Commission. Former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda remarked, "Parents enrol their children in private schools due to the lack of teachers in government schools. However, private institutions charge exorbitant prices for books and other essentials." On the quality of education, Arora pointed out that students from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh perform better than those from Haryana, citing the Annual Status of Education Report-2024. He also raised concerns about the lack of computers and libraries. Congress MLAs Mandeep Chatha and Balwan Singh Daulatpuria also spoke on the issue.

Vidhan Sabha witnesses heated debate over Martyrs' Memorial

Chandigarh : A heated debate unfolded in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha after BJP MLA OP Yadav expressed disappointment over the government's decision to drop the proposal for a Martyrs' Memorial in Nasibpur, Narnaul. Yadav termed it an "insult" to the memory of those who laid down their lives in the 1857 revolution. During the question hour, Yadav reminded Sainik and Ardh Sainik Welfare Minister Rao Narbir Singh that the then Chief Minister had announced the construction of two memorials — one in Ambala and another in Nasibpur — in 2016. While the Ambala memorial is complete, there has been no progress in Nasibpur, where 5,000 people sacrificed their lives.

"The project has been shuffled between multiple departments since its announcement. Now, it is disheartening to learn that the government is no longer considering it. This is an insult to our martyrs,"



said Yadav, a close associate of Union Minister Rao Indrajit Singh. In response, Minister Rao Narbir clarified that a memorial was built in 1989 and its maintenance falls under the local panchayat's jurisdiction. However, since it now lies within municipal limits, Yadav could request the civic body to undertake beautification. "The government respects our martyrs. However, it has decided to maintain memorials only at district headquarters. Since this one is not at a district headquarters, it does not

fall under our current plan. That said, if there was an announcement, we will verify and try to work something out," he assured. Health Minister Arti Singh Rao supported Yadav's demand, but Speaker Harvinder Kalyan disallowed further discussion. Taking the opportunity, Transport Minister Anil Vij invited members to visit the Ambala memorial and detailed efforts to identify the names of martyrs. In response to a question by Congress MLA Shishpal Keharwala, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini clarified that

Haryana Government employees can create content on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, provided it is of a "purely literary, artistic or scientific character." However, employees can retain only up to Rs 8,000 annually, with one-third of any additional income to be deposited in the state exchequer. Nuh MLA Aftab Ahmed demanded sector development in Nuh and Tawadu, citing a 2009 land acquisition cancelled in 2017 but restored by a 2024 high court ruling. Education Minister Mahipal Dhanda assured a "favourable consideration" of the matter. Congress MLA Geeta Bhukkal raised concerns over the poor condition of Jhajjar's Swami Dayanand Saraswati Sports Stadium. Sports Minister Gaurav Gautam responded that a Rs 61.83 lakh estimate for its maintenance and soil filling is under review and work will commence upon approval.

Illegal drug factory unearthed in Sonapat; FDA seals premises, seizes huge stock

Sonapat : A joint team of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from Panipat and Sonapat districts unearthed an illegal drug manufacturing factory operating in the Ferozepur Bangar area of Kharkhoda, Sonapat. The factory was found producing medicines without a valid licence, manufacturing spurious antibiotics and other pharmaceutical drugs under the name of companies based in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. The FDA team sealed the factory, seized the manufactured drugs and confiscated machinery used in the production. One accused, Yogesh from Sirsa district, was arrested on the spot.

The raid was carried out after the administration received a complaint about unlicensed drug manufacturing at the location. The team comprised Drug Control Officers (DCOs) Munshi Ram, Sandeep Hooda, Rakesh Dahiya (Sr DCO,



Sonapat Division) and Pawan Kumar (DCO, Panipat).

During the inspection, the team found Yogesh, who identified himself as the plant incharge. Upon searching the premises, officials discovered that the factory was illegally manufacturing several antibiotic tablets and capsules, including Azithromycin, Amoxicillin and Potassium Clavulanate, Cefixime and Lactic Acid Bacillus tablets, Pantoprazole and Domperidone capsules.

These medicines were falsely labelled under the names of manufacturers from Himachal Pradesh,

Haridwar (Uttarakhand), and Maharashtra. "We found seven types of drugs being manufactured under the name of other companies, but no such firms were registered in those states. This indicates that spurious medicines were being produced," said Rakesh Dahiya, senior DCO, Sonapat.

The team sealed a massive stock of finished medicines, including 131 kg of Rick-250 tablets, 57 kg of Penzole capsules, 2,500 boxes of Polo 625, 542 strips of Rick-25, two boxes of Micoceff-15,200 and 10 boxes of Rumentin 625 tablets. Additionally,

the officials seized a huge stock of packaging foils labelled with 14 different tablet names, branded medicine boxes and manufacturing equipment.

When asked to provide documentation, Yogesh failed to produce any drug manufacturing licence or legal records.

"The factory was running illegally without any valid licence. We have arrested one accused, and his interrogation is underway. The names of two more suspects have come to light during the investigation," Dahiya said. Preliminary findings indicate that the firm was producing counterfeit medicines, as no official registration of the claimed manufacturers was found in Maharashtra, Uttarakhand or Himachal Pradesh.

The FDA has collected samples of the seized medicines and sent them for laboratory testing in Chandigarh. Further legal action will be taken based on the results, authorities confirmed.

Cow vigilante Bittu Bajranghi booked for hate speech in Faridabad

Gurugram : Cow vigilante Bittu Bajranghi, an accused in the Nuh violence case, has come under the police radar once again over his controversial antics. This time, he announced a reward for the person who brings the severed neck of Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman.

After Bittu released this statement on social media, the Faridabad police swung into action and an FIR was registered against Bittu under various sections at the Saran police station on Monday.

According to the police, Bittu Bajranghi posted a video containing provocative state-

ments on Facebook. In the video, Bajranghi can be purportedly seen appealing to all Hindu brothers that whoever severs the neck of SP party leader MP Ramjilal Suman, will be given a suitable reward by the Gau Raksha Bajrang Force.

Bittu Bajranghi is the national president of the Gau Raksha Bajrang Force and when this post went viral on Facebook, it reached the police officials. The video was sent via WhatsApp to the official number of inspector Krishan Kumar, the SHO of Saran police station. The SHO filed a complaint against Bittu Bajranghi for hurting the religious sentiments.

Haryana Assembly passes Bill to check match fixing passed

Chandigarh : The Haryana Assembly today passed a Bill proposing a jail term of up to five years for those indulging in match fixing or spot fixing in sports.

Introducing the Bill, the Haryana Prevention of Public Gambling Act, 2025, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said most of the gambling laws in India were outdated in view of the advance technology and betting syndicates were playing havoc with the finances of the general public. "It has become necessary for introducing stringent punish-

ment for those involved in the organizing gambling," he said.

The Bill provides for the prevention and punishment for those indulging in public gambling, betting in sports or elections, match fixing or spot fixing in sports. As per the provisions of the Bill, "whoever indulges in match fixing or spot fixing in sports, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three years and may extend to five years and shall

also be liable to pay fine which shall not be less than Rs 5 lakh". A subsequent offence will invite an imprisonment up to seven years.

The Assembly also passed the Haryana Honourable Disposal of Dead Body Bill, 2025. Introducing the Bills, CM Saini said keeping in view the right and dignity of the dead person, nobody would be allowed to raise any demand or bait for pursuing any demands by way of any protest or agitation by not



performing the timely last rites of the dead body. In case of family members disowning a body, last rites would be performed by public authority if required. The Haryana Assembly also passed the Haryana Contractual Employees (Security of Service) Amendment Bill, 2025. Now, any contractual employee drawing salary for at least 240 days in a calendar year shall be deemed to have worked for the entire year. The employees completing five years services on full time basis as on August 15, 2024, will be eligible for security of service.



Zimbabwe to host South Africa & New Zealand in multi-format contest

Harare, Mar 27 (UNI) Two Test matches each against South Africa and New Zealand are in order for Zimbabwe, alongside competing in a tri-nation T20I series.

The series kicks off with Zimbabwe taking on South Africa in the longest format of the game for the first time since 2017 at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo in a gripping two-match Test series.

The two sides will then join New Zealand for a T20I tri-series, set to begin on July 14, where each team will face one another twice over two weeks, with the top two advancing to the final on July 26 to compete for the trophy.

Zimbabwe will then shift back to red-ball cricket, taking on New Zealand in a two-match Test series at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo, marking the first time the two sides meet in the longest format since 2016, an ICC report said.

Speaking on the contest against the Proteas and the Black Caps, "This is the biggest international home season we have had in years, and it is an incredible opportunity for our players to test themselves against two of the world's cricketing powerhouses," said Zimbabwe Cricket Managing Director Givemore Makoni.



"Hosting South Africa and New Zealand for both Test cricket and an exciting T20I tri-series is a fantastic development for the growth of the game in Zimbabwe," he said.

"We are looking forward to welcoming the teams and putting on a great spectacle for our passionate cricket fans," Makoni added.

Zimbabwe vs South Africa 1st Test, 28 June - 2 July - Zimbabwe vs South Africa, Queens Sports Club 2nd Test, 6-10 July - Zimbabwe vs South Africa, Queens Sports Club Tri-nation T20I series: 1st T20I, 14 July - Zimbabwe vs South Africa, Harare Sports Club 2nd

T20I, 16 July - South Africa vs New Zealand, Harare Sports Club 3rd T20I, 18 July - Zimbabwe vs New Zealand, Harare Sports Club 4th T20I, 20 July - Zimbabwe vs South Africa, Harare Sports Club 5th T20I, 22 July - New Zealand vs South Africa, Harare Sports Club 6th T20I, 24 July - Zimbabwe vs New Zealand, Harare Sports Club Final, 26 July - Number 1 vs Number 2, Harare Sports Club Zimbabwe vs New Zealand 1st Test, 30 July - 3 August - Zimbabwe vs New Zealand, Queens Sports Club 2nd Test, 7-11 August - Zimbabwe vs New Zealand, Queens Sports Club.

FIFA announces bumper prize money for Club World Cup

Geneva : FIFA, world football's governing body, announced details of the 2025 Club World Cup's 1-billion-US-dollar prize money, with the tournament champion set to receive up to 125 million dollars.

The inaugural 32-team FIFA Club World Cup will take place in the United States from June to July 2025.

FIFA stated on Wednesday its new flagship tournament is projected to generate 2 billion dollars in revenue, with 1 billion dollars allocated to participating clubs and an additional 250 million dollars going to a global solidarity fund for club football.

"The distribution model of the FIFA Club World Cup reflects the pinnacle of club football and represents the biggest-ever prize money for a football tournament comprising a seven-match group stage and playoff format with a potential payout of



125 million U.S. dollars foreseen for the winners," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

A 525-million-dollar share will be divided among all participating teams, while the remaining 475 million dollars will be distributed

based on tournament performance.

The 32 clubs will receive varying participation fees determined by a ranking system incorporating sporting and commercial criteria.

Top European clubs could earn up to 38.19 mil-

lion dollars just for participating, while Oceania's Auckland City would receive the minimum 3.58 million dollars.

Infantino also claimed that all event proceeds would be reinvested in club football worldwide.

WCA's revenue cap plan threatens BCCI's financial dominance

New Delhi : The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) could face a significant reduction in its financial and strategic influence if the World Cricketers' Association (WCA)'s proposal to cap each country's revenue share at 10% is implemented.

The proposed redistribution aims to ensure a more equitable financial structure among all cricketing nations, directly impacting India's current dominance in the sport's global governance.

At present, the BCCI receives approximately 38% of the total revenue share from the International Cricket Council (ICC), a figure reflecting India's market strength and the financial contribution of its cricketing ecosystem.

However, under the proposed structure, this allocation would be drastically reduced, potentially affecting BCCI's ability to fund domestic cricket, maintain its decision-making influence in ICC affairs, and negotiate bilateral series on favourable terms.

The ICC's current revenue-sharing model largely benefits the BCCI due to India's massive cricketing audience, lucrative broadcasting deals, and the financial



muscle of the Indian Premier League (IPL). However, if the WCA proposal is accepted, cricket's economic balance could shift significantly, benefiting smaller boards that struggle for sustainability.

BCCI officials have privately expressed concerns that such a cap would dilute India's financial leverage, which has traditionally played a role in shaping ICC policies, tournament structures, and the global cricket calendar.

With a restricted budget, investments in India's domestic cricket infrastructure, player de-

velopment programmes, and grassroots initiatives could also be affected.

Apart from financial restructuring, the WCA has also proposed the creation of fixed international windows for bilateral series. A key recommendation is a three-week dedicated window for international cricket, a move that could have repercussions on IPL scheduling.

If implemented, this rule may reduce the availability of overseas players for the IPL, as other national boards would prioritise their international commitments.

Additionally, other franchise

leagues—such as Australia's Big Bash League (BBL), South Africa's SA20, and the UAE's ILT20—could demand similar exclusive windows, potentially limiting IPL's access to top international stars.

The IPL, a \$10 billion industry, is central to BCCI's revenue model, with media rights and sponsorship deals contributing significantly to the board's financial strength. Any disruptions to its schedule or player pool could affect broadcasting revenues, franchise valuations, and overall tournament appeal.

While the WCA's recommendations remain under discussion, the BCCI is expected to strongly oppose the revenue cap, citing India's disproportionate contribution to global cricket revenues. Senior board officials are also likely to push for a flexible scheduling approach to protect the IPL's primacy in the cricketing calendar.

With ICC's financial model set for a potential overhaul, the coming months could witness intense lobbying from BCCI and other major boards, as they seek to retain their influence while accommodating growing calls for equitable revenue sharing.

Moeen Ali lauds de Kock after opener carries bat in KKR's first win

Guwahati : In a dominant display at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium on Wednesday night, the Kolkata Knight Riders cruised to victory, chasing down the Rajasthan Royals' 151 with eight wickets and a comfortable 15 balls to spare.

For Moeen Ali, making his debut for KKR, the win was a testament to the team's warmth and collective spirit.

"I love meeting new people and being in new environments," Quinton de Kock remarked after his incredible unbeaten 97—the highest individual score for KKR in run-chases.

"It is about finding your feet within the team. Sometimes the team accepts you later, but here with KKR they have accepted me with open arms, so it feels good," he said.

Ali echoed similar sentiments, describing the performance as an 'all-round great performance, a great team win' at the post-match press conference. His own contribution was crucial, claiming two wickets while bowling with remarkable control. "My job was to try and bowl tight as I can," he explained. "I'm used to bowling with somebody who's better than me and has more mystery," he added while praising the prowess of Varun Chakravarthy. Ali was full of praise for de Kock, whose innings decisively sealed the match. He called it 'an amazing innings' and noted how the South African wicket keeper made batting look effortless:



"Quinton is an experienced player who has been around for a while now. It was an amazing innings, and he made the Rajasthan Royals bowlers, especially Jofra Archer, look like they were bowling quite slow." For Ali, the victory was particularly sweet after losing their previous game. "It's just nice to get a win within your first couple of games so you don't overthink things," he said. The pitch, which offered something for everyone, played into KKR's strengths, with Ali describing it as having 'a bit of swing, a bit of seam' and just enough spin.

Reflecting on joining a championship-winning franchise, Ali was emphatic with his words: "When you go to teams that have won the trophy, they know what they're doing. They've won it three times. Everything is calm."

With this comprehensive victory, Moeen Ali and Quinton de Kock have already shown they are perfectly at home in the Knight Riders' winning culture. The side will now fly out to Mumbai for their third match of the TATA IPL 2025, against the Mumbai Indians on March 31.

Teenager Alexandra Eala beat Iga Swiatek in Miami Open

Florida : Five-time major champion Iga Swiatek was on the end of a monumental shock as Filipina teenager Alexandra Eala continued her dream run to reach the Miami Open semi-finals. Second seed Swiatek, playing with increased security in Miami after being verbally abused by an "aggressive and taunting" fan, was completely out of sorts as she lost 6-2 7-5 to the world number 140. The 23-year-old's serve was broken eight times as she continually struggled to hold serve, while her baseline game was shaky and led to a host of forehand errors. Eala, 19, remained composed and focused as she completed the biggest win of her career. "It might be one of the biggest upsets I've been on the side of the court for," said former British number one Tim



Henman, watching in his role as a Sky Sports analyst. Poland's Swiatek recently spoke out about the emotional toll she has faced in recent months, having served a one-month ban for a doping offence and not wanting to "step on the court" as a result. This defeat means she has not reached a final since winning the French Open in June. Eala, who was given a wildcard to play in Miami,

will play American fourth seed Jessica Pegula in the semi-finals after she defeated Britain's Emma Raducanu. Next week Eala will break into the world's top 100 for the first time. "My mind is really blank, I don't think I've processed what I've just done," Eala told Sky Sports afterwards.

"In the end I'm still the same player I was two weeks ago."

Red Bull confirm Tsunoda to replace Lawson

London : Red Bull have confirmed that they will demote Liam Lawson and replace him with Yuki Tsunoda with immediate effect.

The decision comes after Lawson had completed just two grands prix for Red Bull, and three months after Tsunoda was passed over for the New Zealander as a replacement for Sergio Perez.

Tsunoda will partner Max Verstappen at Red Bull from the next race in Japan on 4-6 April, while Lawson will return to second team Racing Bulls as teammate to French rookie Isack Hadjar, the BBC reported.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said in a statement:

"It has been difficult to see Liam struggle with the RB21 at the first two races and as a result we have collectively taken the decision to make an early switch."

Red Bull are third in the constructors' championship after two races, behind McLaren and Mercedes.

And Verstappen has expressed his belief that their car may be only the fourth fastest in the field.

The Dutchman was a close second behind race-winner Lando Norris' McLaren in the wet season-opening Australian Grand Prix, and fourth at the Chinese race last weekend.

Lawson qualified 18th in Melbourne and crashed out of the race. In China, he qualified last for both the sprint and the grand prix, and finished 14th and 12th.



His finishing position in the grand prix in Shanghai was boosted by the disqualifications of both Ferraris and Pierre Gasly's Alpine, without which he would have been 15th.

Horner's statement said: "We acknowledge there is a lot of work to be done with the RB21 and

Yuki's experience will prove highly beneficial in helping to develop the current car."

The decision to swap Lawson and Tsunoda was made on Monday at a meeting of Red Bull bosses in Dubai, including Horner and the chief shareholder Chalmers Yoovidhya.

When Red Bull made the decision to pay off Perez two years before the end of his contract at the conclusion of last season, they chose Lawson because they believed.

Tsunoda lacked the mental fortitude to be Verstappen's team-mate and that Lawson had more potential.

They picked Lawson despite

the fact.

The 23-year-old New Zealander had completed just 11 grands prix over two seasons for Red Bull's second team.

At the time, Red Bull's car had fallen from competitiveness and, although Verstappen clinched a fourth consecutive world title, he won only twice in the final 14 races of the 2024 season.

The car appears not to have improved in relative competitiveness over.

The winter, and Verstappen's continuing to complain it has balance problems that affect its performance.

Red Bull have long been renowned for the ruthlessness with which they handle their young driver programme, but even in that context dropping Lawson after two races is extraordinary.

Horner's statement said: "We have a duty of care to protect and develop Liam and together we see that, after such a difficult start, it makes sense to act quick-

ly so Liam can gain experience as he continues his F1 career with Racing Bulls, an environment and a team he knows very well."

Tsunoda's debut for the senior team will come at his home race at Suzuka, a track that is owned by Japanese car company Honda, which is Red Bull's engine partner and has long been a backer of the driver's career.

His promotion is an opportunity to secure his F1 career, at a time when his future in the sport was looking uncertain.

Honda is moving to Aston Martin for 2026 and there is no space for Tsunoda at that team.

If he can prove himself at Red Bull, he has the opportunity to show.

The team's bosses that he should be considered as a future driver for their team despite their long scepticism over his ultimate potential.

Lawson will be advised that his demotion is an opportunity for him.

To rebuild his career, in the same way as earlier Red Bull rejects Gasly and Alex Albon have done.

Gasly was demoted to the second Red Bull after just half a season in 2019 in a swap with Albon, who was given a season and a half before being demoted to reserve driver in place of Perez.

Gasly has since moved to Alpine and Albon to Williams, and both have thrived.

Perez no longer has an F1 seat after being dropped at the end of last season with a pay-off worth many millions of dollars.

Kaori Sakamoto fifth in Worlds short program

Washington : Defending champion Kaori Sakamoto of Japan placed fifth in the women's short program at the 2025 World Figure Skating Championships in Boston, while America's Alysa Liu topped the standings with 74.58 points.

China's An Xiangyi, making her worlds debut, finished 27th with 47.52 points and did not qualify for the free skate.

Sakamoto, the 2022, 2023 and 2024 world champion and 2022 Olympic bronze medalist, scored 71.03 in the short program on Wednesday. The 24-year-old, who also earned a silver at the 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin earlier this year, trails Liu by 3.55 points heading into Friday's free skate.

Liu led a tight podium race, narrowly edging Japan's Mone Chiba (73.44) and Isabeau Levito of the U.S. (73.33). Japan's Wakaba Higuchi sits fourth (72.10). Failing to make the top 24, An, 18, missed the chance of advancing to the free skate.

"There was excitement competing at my first worlds, but also pressure to fight for an Olympic spot," An said. "I'm disappointed I didn't skate well today." In the pairs, Japan's Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara, the 2025 Four Continents champions, led with 76.57 points, followed by Italy's Sara Conti and Niccolo Macii (74.61) and Germany's Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin (73.59).



MARKET

BSE Sensex

Close	77,606.43	Percent change	0.41%
Previous close	77,288.50	Open	77,087.39
High	77,747.46	Low	77,082.51

Nifty 50

Close	23,591.95	Percent change	0.45%
Previous close	23,486.85	Open	23,433.95
High	23,646.45	Low	23,412.20

Nifty 500

Close	21,407.95	Percent change	0.62%
Previous close	21,275.45	Open	21,218.40
High	21,447.90	Low	21,195.70

Nifty Next 50

Close	63,442.55	Percent change	1.57%
Previous close	62,460.80	Open	62,298.55
High	63,606.70	Low	62,165.50

Nifty 100

Close	24,145.05	Percent change	0.64%
Previous close	23,990.40	Open	23,934.90
High	24,194.75	Low	23,919.40

Nifty Bank

Close	51,575.85	Percent change	0.72%
Previous close	51,209.00	Open	51,084.70
High	51,714.35	Low	51,050.85

Nifty Midcap 100

Close	51,839.40	Percent change	0.37%
Previous close	51,646.15	Open	51,423.40
High	51,954.55	Low	51,286.85

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Hero Motocorp	3,772.05	3.46
Bajaj Finserv	2,005.75	3.21
IndusInd Bank	673.55	2.78
Adani Enterpris	2,363.35	2.19
HDFC Life	681.90	2.02

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Tata Motors	668.55	-5.61
Sun Pharma	1,731.45	-1.56
Eicher Motors	5,345.75	-1.07
Bharti Airtel	1,724.70	-0.80
Kotak Mahindra	2,128.65	-0.76

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Apr 04	88,364.00	726.00 0.83
Silver May 05	100,600.00	1,114.00 1.12
Crudeoil Apr 21	5,979.00	-12.00 -0.20
Naturalgas Apr 25	327.10	-6.80 -2.04

BSE Sensex ends over 300 points up; Nifty50 near 23,600

Mumbai : The Indian stock market saw a positive close on Thursday, with key benchmark indices finishing in the green. The BSE Sensex briefly surpassed the 77,700 mark during intraday trading, while the Nifty50 climbed beyond 23,600. By the end of the session, the Sensex settled at 77,606.43, reflecting a gain of 318 points or 0.41%, whereas the Nifty50 closed at 23,591.95, rising by 105 points or 0.45%.

Among the top gainers on the Sensex were Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, NTPC, L&T, and Power Grid. On the other hand, stocks of Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Bank, and M&M were among the biggest losers.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, noted that domestic markets maintained a positive momentum throughout the



day, largely supported by continuous foreign fund inflows and strong buying in blue-chip stocks. However, he highlighted that the recent announcement of a 25% tariff on automobile imports by former U.S. President Donald Trump negatively impacted auto stocks while also raising concerns within the pharmaceutical sector. Despite these challenges, the broader market remained resilient, driven by expectations of double-digit earnings

growth in FY26. Easing inflation and declining interest rates are projected to strengthen the domestic economy. Investors are now closely watching the ongoing US-India trade discussions, which began on Wednesday, as they aim to clarify key aspects of the bilateral trade agreement.

On the global front, markets experienced a decline after Trump's announcement of higher import tariffs on automobiles. He justified the move

as a step toward boosting domestic manufacturing, though it adds complexities for auto-makers in the U.S., many of whom rely on international supply chains. As a result, General Motors (GM) saw its shares tumble 6.5%, while Ford declined by 3% during pre-market trading on Thursday. European indices also reflected weakness, with France's CAC 40 slipping 0.6% to 7,982.08, Germany's DAX falling 0.8% to 22,661.50, and the UK's FTSE 100 dropping 0.7% to 8,632.12. Meanwhile, U.S. stock futures hinted at a slight rebound, as S&P 500 futures edged up 0.1% and Dow Jones Industrial Average futures gained 0.2%.

In Asia, Japanese stocks faced headwinds, with the Nikkei 225 index closing 0.6% lower at 37,799.97, led by notable declines in automobile stocks.

Bureau of Indian Standards intensifies crackdown on E-Commerce firms

New Delhi : Intensifying its crackdown on E-commerce firms against substandard products, the Bureau of Indian Standards conducted a search and seizure operation at the warehouses of Amazon Sellers Pvt Ltd, located in Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Delhi, on March 19.

The operation, lasted over 15 hours and more than 3,500 products, both without an ISI mark and marked with fake ISI labels, were seized. The total estimated value of the seized products like geysers, food mixers and other electrical appliances is around Rs. 70 lakhs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said in a statement.

The search and seizure operations were conducted by the Delhi Branch of the National Standards Body of India, BIS.

In another raid conducted at Instakart Services Pvt Limited, a Flipkart subsidiary located in Trinagar, Delhi, unearthed a stock of

sports footwear packaged for dispatch without the necessary ISI mark and date of manufacture.

Approximately 590 pairs of sports footwear, worth around Rs. 6 lakhs, were seized during this operation.

In the last one month, the BIS team has conducted similar operations in different parts of the country and seized various substandard items in Delhi, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Lucknow, and Sriperumbudur.

These raids are part of the Bureau of Indian Standards' ongoing efforts to enforce compliance with quality standards for consumer protection. Currently there are 769 products notified for compulsory certification by various regulators, and line ministries of the Govt of India. It is prohibited to manufacture, import, distribute, sell, hire, lease, store, or exhibit (for sale) these products without a valid license or Certificate of Compliance (CoC) from BIS.

Wardwizard Innovations & Mobility Ltd expands fleet operations

Kolkata : Wardwizard Innovations & Mobility Limited, a leading electric vehicle manufacturer operating under the brands 'Joy e-bike' and 'Joy e-rik', is further strengthening its presence in fleet operations and last-mile delivery mobility.

Following the successful deployment of 100 electric two-wheelers in Hyderabad, the company, in partnership with SpeedForceEV, is now deploying 400 electric two-wheelers across Kolkata, Pune, and Ahmedabad, according to a media statement here on Thursday.

The success of the Hyderabad deployment has generated significant demand from various industry players and regions across India.

Wardwizard's comprehensive end-to-end solutions, coupled with its extensive service network, have ensured record uptime for vehicles, enhancing operational efficiency and enabling delivery partners to exceed revenue expectations.

This latest expansion will further strengthen the Quick Commerce and E-



Commerce sectors by optimizing delivery operations for leading industry players.

Expanding beyond two-wheelers, Wardwizard, in collaboration with SpeedForceEV and Cabcys (a ride-hailing platform), will also deploy 200 L5 passenger electric three-wheelers in Maharashtra.

This initiative aims to provide auto drivers with greater earning opportunities while offering daily commuters faster and more cost-effective transportation options.

Additionally, Wardwizard Innovations & Mobility has recently collaborated with AmpVolts, a key partner instrumental in this expansion. AmpVolts' extensive EV charging network will play a crucial role in

ensuring seamless operations for the deployed fleet, further reinforcing Wardwizard's commitment to building a comprehensive and sustainable EV ecosystem.

Speaking on the expansion, Yatin Gupte, Chairman & Managing Director, Wardwizard Innovations & Mobility Limited, said, "The noteworthy success of our Hyderabad deployment has proven the efficiency and reliability of our integrated fleet solutions. With the deployment of 400 electric two-wheelers and the plan to deploy 200 L5 passenger electric three-wheelers in the ride-hailing sector, we are enhancing efficiency for both delivery partners and daily commuters through reliable, high-per-

formance EVs. Features like a long-range battery and seamless charging make it an ideal solution for last-mile mobility. With low operational costs, our fleet partners can maximize savings while contributing to a greener future. We aim to deploy 5000 L5 Passenger electric three-wheelers in the ride-hailing sector across various Indian states in FY 25-26. Our partnerships with SpeedForceEV, AmpVolts and Cabcys strengthen our vision of making electric mobility accessible, reliable, and financially rewarding for all stakeholders."

With this latest expansion, Wardwizard Innovations and Mobility Limited is set to redefine last-mile delivery mobility and expand into the ride-hailing sector while reinforcing its position as a pioneer in India's electric fleet ecosystem. Looking ahead, the company plans to accelerate its deployment strategy, targeting a larger fleet presence across key metropolitan cities and expanding its partnerships to further integrate smart mobility solutions into India's logistics landscape.

Luminous partners with SBI to expand solar financing in India

New Delhi : Power backup and solar energy solutions company Luminous Power Technologies on Thursday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with public sector lender State Bank of India (SBI) to expand its access to solar financing for citizens all over India.

By partnering with SBI, India's largest lender with an extensive distribution network of over 22000 branches, Luminous aims to streamline the consumer journey from financing to installation, ensuring a hassle-free transition to solar energy, the company said in a release.

Luminous alliance with SBI will be a long-standing partnership spanning over next two decades. As part of the partnership, Luminous has been onboarded by SBI as its recommended partner in its dedicated portal for solar loans. Furthermore, the partnership extends across various financing subcategories, including solar solution finance and supply chain finance, ensuring accessible and tailored financial solutions for diverse energy needs. Covering all segments MSME, corporate, institutional, commercial and industrial, the collaboration strengthens financial support for sustainable energy adoption.

Under the agreement, loans of up to Rs 10 crore will be made available to eligible customers across all sectors, eliminating financial barriers to solar adoption.

Customers will also benefit from



reduction in loan processing fees and enjoy a special rate of interest on the loaned amount, making it the most competitive financing option in the market. The loans disbursed will be for a duration ranging up to 10 years, and interest rates will be charged based on the customer credit profile, with the maximum loan value that can be availed being Rs 10 crore.

Speaking about the partnership, Preeti Bajaj, CEO & MD, Luminous Power Technologies, said, "We are excited to partner with the State Bank of India in facilitating solar financing and

end-to-end solar installation and service support to consumers across commercial and industrial verticals. Last year, we had identified solar financing as a key gap area in our nationwide survey, the Solar Spectrum of India. Acting on the insight, this collaboration will empower people to transition to sustainable solar energy solutions, marking a crucial step in bridging the gap between solar aspirations and affordability. By integrating financing seamlessly into the solar journey, we are enabling more individuals and businesses to adopt clean energy with ease and confidence."

Zaggle acquires 38.34 pc stake in Mobileware Technologies

Hyderabad : Zaggle Prepaid Ocean Services Limited, a leading spend management company, has acquired a 38.34 per cent stake in Mobileware Technologies, strengthening its position in the digital payments ecosystem.

As part of the deal, Zaggle invested Rs 15.60 crore to acquire a 26 per cent stake on a post-issue and fully diluted basis. Additionally, the company purchased a 12.34 per cent stake from Mobileware's promoters for Rs 7.25 crore, bringing its total shareholding to 38.34 per cent, a company statement said on Thursday. Mobileware Technologies is a key player in India's digital payments sector, providing solutions such as UPI, IMPS, AEPS, BBPS, and the API banking platform TransXT. The partnership will enable Zaggle to enhance its payment solutions and expand its offerings in



embedded finance. Dr Raj P Narayanan, Founder & Executive Chairman of Zaggle, emphasised that the investment aligns with the company's strategy to co-develop advanced payment solutions. Mobileware's expertise in UPI and NPCI-certified platforms will complement Zaggle's vision of delivering seamless, integrated payment experiences. Mobileware Co-founder Satyajit Kanekar

stated that the investment marks a significant step in transforming digital payments infrastructure, with a focus on innovation, security, and scalability.

Zaggle recently reported a 29.6 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 19.7 crore in Q3 FY24 and raised Rs 595 crore through a Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) to drive strategic acquisitions and achieve its USD 1 billion revenue target.

Shriram General Insurance intensifies battle against insurance fraud

New Delhi : With a view to curb rising fraudulent and bogus claims, non-life insurance company Shriram General Insurance Company (SGI) on Thursday said it has strengthened its claims investigation team for investigating third party motor claims.

A Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal (MACT) is a special court established under the Motor Vehicles Act to adjudicate compensation claims arising from motor vehicle accidents, providing a faster and less expensive alternative to civil courts for victims of road accidents. Unfortunately, many claims that come up for settlement at the MACT are fraudulent or bogus claims.

The Claim Review team will thoroughly examine the claims to spot inconsistencies. While claims found to be bonafide will be forwarded for processing and settlement, claims that raise any suspicion will be handed over to the Investigation team for in-depth investigation into the submitted documents and evidence. Upon completion of the investigation, claims deemed fraudulent will be escalated to the Legal team for defence in the tribunal, the company said in a release.

The teams under the leadership of Mr. Ashwani Dhanawat, Execu-



utive Director, SGI to thoroughly examine claims that are filed and will be supported by latest AI Tools that will help them in fraud detection. The three teams, comprising of personnel

with relevant experience are Claim Review, Claim Investigation and Legal to handle legal proceedings.

Mr. Ashwani Dhanawat, Executive Director, Shriram General Insur-

ance said, "Shriram General Insurance remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard shareholder value and policyholder trust. By prosecuting those who seek to exploit the system, we are not only protecting our stakeholders but also ensuring that resources are preserved for genuine claimants who rely on us during their time of need."

Bonafide claims will see faster settlement. Few days ago, SGI's took prompt action to ensure swift claim settlement for the family of Surat-based Dilipbhai Maganbhai Patel, who died in a road accident. SGI expedited settlement process of the third party claim worth Rs. 46 lakhs and ensured that the family received monetary compensation in 15 days flat.

"SGI set a benchmark by settling a motor TP claim in 15 days. The quick and efficient settlement by SGI provided much-needed relief to the grieving family. This underscores SGI's commitment to protecting shareholder value and policyholder trust," Dhanawat said.

The Investigation team has unearthed a slew of bogus claims and the Legal team successfully secured SGI's exoneration from liability by the Tribunal.