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Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

Year 14, Issue 245 | Delhi, Saturday 7 March 2026 | 8 PAGES | ₹ 2.00

PM Modi to launch development projects worth Rs 33,500 crore in Delhi on March 8

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for multiple development projects worth around Rs 33,500 crore in the national capital on March 8, according to an official government release issued on Friday.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to begin the programme at around noon, during which he will also address a public gathering. Before the main event, Modi will visit the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) Type-5 quarters at Sarojini Nagar and hand

over keys of newly constructed flats to women allottees.

A significant portion of the projects relates to the expansion of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation network, with metro initiatives worth about Rs 18,300 crore set to be inaugurated or launched.

The Prime Minister will inaugurate two new corridors: the 12.3-km Majlis Park-Maujpur Babarpur stretch of the Pink Line and the 9.9-km Deepali Chowk-Majlis Park stretch of the Magenta Line.

Officials said the new

corridors are expected to improve urban connectivity across several parts of the capital, including Burari, Jagatpur-Wazirabad, Khajuri Khas, Bhajanpura, Yamuna Vihar, Madhuban Chowk, Haiderpur Badli Mor, Bhalaswa and Majlis Park.

In addition, the Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for three new corridors under Phase V-A of the Delhi Metro expansion. These include the routes from R K Ashram Marg to Indraprastha, Aerocity to Indra Gandhi International Airport Terminal 1, and Tughlakabad



to Kalindi Kunj, covering a combined length of around 16.10 km. Government officials said these corridors

would provide direct connectivity to key areas of the city and improve travel between Noida, South Delhi and the airport.

Alongside the metro expansion, projects worth about Rs 15,200 crore under the GPRA Redevelopment Plan will also be inaugurated or have their foundation stones laid. The redevelopment works are being carried out at major government residential clusters such as Netaji Nagar, Kasturba Nagar and Srinivaspuri, apart from Sarojini Nagar.

According to the

government, the initiative forms part of an ambitious plan to modernise housing and infrastructure for central government employees and administrative offices. "The projects have been redeveloped through an innovative self-sustaining financial model that ensures the redevelopment is carried out without burdening the public exchequer," the official statement said.

Under this model, a limited portion of the project area is being monetised through commercial and residential development to fund the entire redevelopment

programme. The revenue generated will be used to construct modern government housing, along with supporting infrastructure and public facilities.

Officials said the redevelopment plan will provide more than 9,350 modern flats for government employees and create nearly 48 lakh square feet of office space. The government said this is expected to enhance administrative efficiency while also generating long-term monetisation potential for public assets in the capital.

Saudi Arabia intercepts drones and missiles in Al-Kharj and Riyadh

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia's air defenses intercepted and destroyed four missiles and five drones targeting various locations across the Kingdom early Friday, the Ministry of Defense said.

In a series of posts on X, the Ministry said that three ballistic missiles had been launched toward Prince Sultan Air Base in Al-Kharj governorate. In subsequent updates, officials said one drone was shot down in the Eastern Province and another in Al-Kharj.

Later in the morning, the ministry announced that a cruise missile was intercepted in Al-Kharj, followed by the downing of three additional drones in the Eastern Riyadh region.

The attacks came hours after Saudi forces neutralized three cruise missiles aimed at Al-Kharj and thwarted a drone strike over the Ras Tanura refinery in the Eastern Province. Al-Kharj, located about 80 kilometers southeast of the

capital Riyadh, is a key industrial hub.

On March 3, Saudi defenses claimed to have intercepted eight drones near Riyadh and Al-Kharj. The same day, drones struck the US Embassy in



Riyadh, causing a small fire and minor structural damage. Iran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Alireza Enayati, denied Tehran's involvement in the incident during a statement on Thursday.

The escalation follows a large-scale attack launched by Israel and the United States against Iran on Feb 28, which has prompted retaliatory strikes by Tehran against regional targets.

The conflict, which intensified sharply on February 28, 2026, has spread beyond Saudi Arabia's borders. All GCC member states have reported attacks, with Iranian strikes across the Gulf region reportedly killing at least nine people.

Kuwait's air defense forces also repelled a missile attack on the country, the Kuwaiti Defense Ministry said on Friday.

"Air defense forces intercepted missiles in Kuwait's airspace," the ministry said in a statement.

According to the statement, some fragments of the missiles caused minor material damage, but there were no casualties.

Kejriwal, Goyal, Birla appear Before Delhi assembly Privileges committee in 'Faansi Ghar' row

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party national convener and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, former Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goyal and former deputy speaker Rakhi Birla on Friday appeared before the Delhi Assembly's Committee of Privileges in connection with the controversy over the authenticity of the "Faansi Ghar" inaugurated inside the Assembly premises in August 2022.

Former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, however, did not appear before the committee despite earlier indicating that he would attend the proceedings. According to officials, the three leaders appeared before the committee, took an oath of secrecy and placed their statements on record regarding the matter under examination.

Committee of Privileges Chairperson Pradyuman Singh Rajput said the individuals appeared before the panel after earlier failing to attend its proceedings. Rajput questioned how a decision to establish a structure described as a "Faansi

Ghar" could have been taken without any historical or factual basis.

He said those who held high constitutional offices were unable to present any documentary evidence before the committee to support their claims. He further said that making unverified claims



about the existence of a "Faansi Ghar" not only misled the public but also hurt the memory of freedom fighters. The committee will now deliberate on the next course of action based on the statements recorded during the meeting. The Privileges Committee comprises BJP MLAs Pradyuman Singh Rajput, Surya Prakash Khatri, Abhay Kumar Verma, Ajay Kumar Mahawar, Satish Upadhyay, Neeraj Basoya, Ravi Kant, Ram Singh Netaji and

Surender Kumar.

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta said misleading information regarding the Delhi Legislative Assembly, particularly about the existence of a "Faansi Ghar" and references linked to freedom fighters, had been used to misguide the public. Gupta said the issue was formally raised and referred to the Privileges Committee for examination. He noted that the individuals concerned had earlier failed to appear before the committee despite being summoned. He said the committee will give its report on whether the repeated absence of the summoned individuals amounts to contempt of the House and breach of privilege.

The Speaker added that if the historical authenticity of the structure referred to as the "Faansi Ghar" remains unsubstantiated, the matter should be addressed with transparency and factual clarity, as it raises important questions of accuracy and public accountability.

Congress criticises govt over reported US 'waiver' for Russian oil purchases



New Delhi: Senior Congress leader K C Venugopal on Friday criticized the union government over reports related to India's purchase of Russian oil, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of compromising the country's energy sovereignty and foreign policy independence.

In a post on X, Venugopal said it was "deeply humiliating" for India to require a waiver from the United States in order to buy oil from Russia, which he described as a long-standing partner of the country.

"In Amrit Kaal, the Indian PM has to beg before other countries to purchase oil from where he wishes to," Venugopal wrote. "It is deeply humiliating for India's sovereignty and international standing that it needs a US 'waiver' to purchase oil from a time-tested partner like Russia."

The Congress leader further alleged that the government was failing to stand up to pressure from United States authorities and accused the prime minister of allowing other nations to influence India's energy choices. "Instead of standing up to the US dictating terms, Compromised PM Modi is handing our energy sovereignty on a platter to other countries," he said.

Calling for an independent foreign policy approach, Venugopal urged the government to prioritize

national interests while making strategic decisions related to energy imports. "India must take a strong independent stance and decide what is in supreme national interest—not allow other countries to dictate our foreign policy and force us to beg them for permission," he added.

India significantly increased its imports of discounted crude oil from Russia following Western sanctions on Moscow after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022. Since then, energy trade between the two countries has become a major component of India's crude import basket.

At the same time, India has maintained diplomatic and economic relations with both Russia and Western countries, including the United States, often emphasizing its strategic autonomy in foreign policy decisions.

The issue of energy security and crude sourcing has remained politically sensitive, with opposition parties frequently questioning the government's handling of international pressure and its implications for India's economic and strategic interests. The government has consistently maintained that its energy policy is guided by national interest and aimed at ensuring affordable supplies for the country.

US grants temporary waiver to India for buying Russian oil

New Delhi: The United States on Friday announced a temporary 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil currently stranded at sea, a move aimed at stabilising global energy supplies amid rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the measure was designed as a short-term step to ensure the continued flow of oil into global markets without providing substantial financial gains to Moscow. "President Donald Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded," Bessent said in a statement. "To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil. This deliberately short-term measure will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government as it only authorizes transactions involving oil already stranded at sea," he added.

Bessent described India as an essential partner of the United States and said Washington expects New Delhi to increase purchases of American crude in the coming months.

"India is an essential partner of the

United States, and we fully anticipate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of US oil. This stop-gap measure will alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," he said. The decision comes as India reviews its energy security amid the growing risk of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil shipping routes.

Earlier this week, India's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri convened senior officials and executives from state-run energy firms to assess the availability of crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and refined petroleum products.

According to officials, the meeting reviewed contingency plans and decided that India would seek waivers from the United States to continue importing Russian oil if necessary to meet fuel requirements in the event of disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Indian officials are believed to have successfully taken up the matter with Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S. Paul Kapur who visited New Delhi just before the Holi festival.

Roughly half of India's crude oil



imports — estimated at about 2.5 to 2.7 million barrels per day — along with nearly 60 per cent of its LNG supplies transit the strategic waterway between the Gulf and the Arabian Sea. The Strait has once again come into focus amid escalating tensions between the United States and Iran following reports of the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, raising concerns about possible tanker harassment, missile strikes or even temporary closure of the passage.

India imports the bulk of its energy from Gulf producers such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait. Analysts say the country's vulnerability lies less in a complete cut-off of supplies and more in cascading disruptions such as price spikes, shipping delays and rising freight costs that could affect the competitiveness of its exports. Since 2022, Russian crude has emerged as a crucial buffer for Indian refiners whenever supplies from the Gulf have faced disruptions. Imports from the United States, Guyana and other non-Gulf producers have also expanded, giving Indian refiners greater flexibility to diversify their crude basket.

Rahul Gandhi pays tribute to IAF officers killed in plane crash

New Delhi: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Friday expressed deep sorrow over the death of two Indian Air Force officers, Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvush Duragkar, who were killed in a plane crash while on duty.

In a post on social media, Gandhi described the loss as "extremely sad and painful" and paid homage to the officers for their service to the nation.

"The news of the martyrdom of brave Indian Air Force personnel, Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvush Duragkar, in a plane crash is extremely sad and painful," he wrote.

Gandhi said the country would always remember the sacrifice made by the two officers and extended his sympathies to their families. "I pay my heartfelt tributes to these brave sons of India and express my deep condolences to the bereaved families," he



added. Expressing solidarity with the grieving families, the Congress leader said the entire nation stands with them during this difficult time. "In this moment of grief, the entire nation stands with them," he said.

The crash claimed the lives of Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvush Duragkar, both serving officers of the Indian Air Force. Authorities are expected to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident.

The deaths of the two officers have prompted condolences from political leaders and citizens alike, with tributes pouring in for the personnel who lost their lives in service of the nation.

Government schemes have reduced risks for farmers, strengthened rural economy: PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that various initiatives launched by the union government have reduced risks for farmers and provided them with basic economic security, while emphasizing that agriculture will remain a key pillar of India's long-term development strategy.

Speaking at the third post-Budget webinar focused on agriculture and rural prosperity, the prime minister highlighted the impact of flagship welfare schemes and called for greater efforts to transform the farm sector through diversification, exports and sustainable practices.

"Various government schemes have lowered risks for farmers and given them basic economic

security," Modi said, adding that the Centre had disbursed more than Rs 4 lakh crore to farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

The prime minister stressed that agriculture plays a strategic role in India's development journey and said policy efforts would continue to focus on increasing farmers' income and strengthening the rural economy. "Agriculture is a strategic pillar for India's long-term development journey," he said.

Highlighting the government's emphasis on rural prosperity and women's empowerment, Modi said the country aims to significantly expand the number of rural women earning sustainable incomes through self-

help groups. "Our government is focused on rural prosperity, and India has set a goal to add another three crore 'Lakshpati Didis' by 2029," he said, referring to the initiative aimed at helping women from self-help groups earn an annual income of at least Rs 1 lakh.

Modi also underlined the importance of crop diversification to enhance farmers' earnings and ensure sustainable agricultural growth. "We are focusing on crop diversification and need to encourage states to increase their focus on the farm sector," he said.

Calling for a shift towards environmentally sustainable farming methods, the prime minister said India must strengthen chemical-free and natural farming practices,

particularly with an eye on global markets. "We need to strengthen chemical-free farming and natural farming with a focus on exports," he said.

He further stressed the need to expand high-value agriculture while improving quality, branding and standards of Indian agricultural products. According to the prime minister, these steps would help make the sector more competitive globally and open up new opportunities for farmers.

"India's agriculture sector needs to become more export-oriented," Modi said, urging farmers and stakeholders to take advantage of the country's diverse climate conditions that allow the cultivation of a wide variety of crops.

The government has been promoting several programmes in recent years aimed at boosting farm incomes, improving rural infrastructure and expanding agricultural exports. Initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme provide direct income support to small and marginal farmers, while other programmes focus on crop insurance, irrigation, digital agriculture and the promotion of natural farming.

The post-Budget webinars are part of the government's efforts to engage stakeholders and discuss the effective implementation of key announcements made in the union Budget, particularly those related to agriculture, rural development and inclusive economic growth.



Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy felicitated for implementing SC categorization

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was felicitated by members of the Madiga Employees Coordination Committee at a programme held at Shilpakala Vedika in Hyderabad on Friday, thanking the government for granting legal backing to the categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SCs).

Ministers Damodar Rajanarsimha and Adluri Laxman along with MLAs Kale Yadaiah, Vemula Veeresham and Lakshmi Kant Rao, attended the event. Representatives of the Madiga community honoured the Chief Minister for implementing SC categorisation.

Addressing the gathering, Revanth Reddy said the Congress government came to power in the 2023 elections with the aim of establishing people-centric governance and improving the lives of citizens.

He noted that the issue of SC categorisation had remained unresolved for many years and that several activists had sacrificed their lives during the struggle for justice.



The Chief Minister said he had been supporting the demand for categorisation for more than two decades and stood by the Madiga community despite political pressures. He pointed out that Telangana

became the first state to implement SC categorisation following directions from the Supreme Court.

Revanth Reddy said that while categorisation may not resolve all issues, the government would also

address concerns related to promotions, higher education, and land rights.

He emphasised that government employees should act as the "eyes and ears" of the administration and ensure that welfare schemes reach the poor.

Stressing the importance of education, the Chief Minister said socially and economically backward communities could progress through quality education.

He added that the government is taking steps to strengthen the education system and improve facilities in government hostels.

Calling on the community to protect their legally guaranteed rights, Revanth Reddy urged them to actively participate in the rebuilding and development of Telangana.

He assured continued support to disadvantaged sections and said the opportunity to serve as Chief Minister should be used to uplift the poor and marginalised.

JD-U workers concerned over Nitish Kumar's Rajya Sabha decision

Patna: Senior leader of Janata Dal (United) and the party's chief spokesperson Neeraj Kumar on Friday said that the decision of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to contest the Rajya Sabha election has naturally caused concern among party workers and the public.

Speaking to media persons ahead of the JD-U legislature party meeting in Patna, Neeraj Kumar said that Nitish Kumar enjoys immense public trust and that strengthening this trust remains a challenge.

"Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is also the national president of the party. Filing nomination for the Rajya Sabha is within his authority, but party MPs, MLAs and MLAs are politically apprehensive and disturbed over the development," he said.

He added that the meeting of the legislature party had been convened in view of the prevailing situation, where legislators and parliamentarians would express their views.

Referring to the NDA's electoral slogan, Neeraj Kumar said the alliance had won elections with the call of "2025 to 2030 again under Nitish," underlining that Nitish Kumar remains the moral strength and central leader of the party.

"He is our leader, and protecting his political legacy and the trust he has built among the people is our responsibility," he said.

He recalled that even when Nitish Kumar was not the Chief Minister on an ear-



lier occasion, he had reassured the people of Bihar and party workers with the words "Main hoon na" (I am here), which had strengthened their confidence in his leadership. The JD(U) spokesperson said the exact political course of action would become clear only after the legislature party meeting.

"It is natural for the public and party workers to feel concerned, and for NDA partners it is a challenge to further strengthen the trust that Nitish Kumar has built," he added. Neeraj Kumar said that although Nitish Kumar has taken many major political decisions in the past, he has always followed the tradition of consulting senior party leaders before finalising such decisions.

"In the current situation, knowing the opinion of party legislators is an important aspect,"

he said, adding that Nitish Kumar would ultimately take the final decision. He also clarified that legislators would express their views in the meeting. "History is a witness that no one can pressurise Nitish Kumar. Everyone knows his style of functioning," he said.

According to him, party workers have become uneasy and their confidence needs to be restored. "There is anger and emotional hurt among workers, and addressing this sentiment is a challenge for the party leadership," he said. Highlighting Nitish Kumar's political background, Neeraj Kumar said the Chief Minister has upheld the moral values of the socialist movement and has also worked with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, learning the principles of coalition politics.

Awareness is essential to reduce dropouts and promote girls education: UP Governor

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel emphasised the need for effective implementation of the "KG to PG" concept in the field of education, stating that a strong and continuous educational foundation from early childhood to higher education is essential for the overall development of students. She underlined that such an approach would help ensure that children receive quality education at every stage of their academic journey.

The Governor said that

coordinated and sustained efforts are required to achieve the goal of universal enrolment in early childhood education. She stressed that all children aged three years should be enrolled in Anganwadi centres so that they receive proper nutrition, pre-school education and early childhood care, which play a crucial role in shaping their cognitive and social development.

She further noted that ensuring the enrolment of all six-year-old children in Class 1 is equally important

for strengthening the primary education system. According to her, early enrolment helps create a structured learning environment for children and reduces the chances of school dropouts in later years.

The Governor made these remarks during an interactive session held at Jan Bhawan, where she met a 21-member delegation of media representatives from the states of Karnataka and Tripura. The interaction provided an opportunity for journalists to engage with her on a wide range of issues

related to governance and social development. During the session, the Governor shared her experiences and insights on subjects such as education, health services, women's empowerment and social awareness initiatives being carried out across Uttar Pradesh. She highlighted several programmes aimed at improving the quality of life and access to basic services for citizens.

Speaking about the challenge of school dropouts, she emphasised that awareness and encouragement among parents and

communities are essential. She pointed out that when families understand the importance of education, particularly for girls, they are more likely to ensure that children continue their studies without interruption. The Governor stressed that special attention must be given to promoting girls' education, noting that educated girls contribute significantly to the progress of society.

Wars and violence are man-made catastrophes that claim innocent lives: Mirwaiz

Srinagar: Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who claimed that he has been placed under house arrest, on Friday said wars and violence are man-made catastrophes that lead to the loss of countless innocent lives.

He also expressed deep concern over the continued restrictions in the Valley, particularly on a Friday during the holy month of Ramadan.

In a post on X, Mirwaiz said that in these greatly blessed days, when thousands of people come to mosques seeking blessings

and guidance, the pulpit of the historic Jamia Masjid remains silent while all lanes and by-lanes leading to the mosque have been barricaded. He described the situation as "very sad and unfortunate." Mirwaiz said that the sorrow being felt in Kashmir today is not only because of these restrictions but also due to the grave developments unfolding in the region. He noted that Muslims across the world are deeply aggrieved and anxious over Israeli and American aggression in the region. He said that Israel and the United States appear intent

on reshaping the region to suit their interests and, in pursuit of this objective, are willing to go to any extent.

Referring to the killing of a head of state and prominent spiritual leader, Ayatullah Khamenei and the attack on the sovereign nation of Iran, Mirwaiz said these developments have plunged the entire region into crisis and grief.

Mirwaiz noted that people across Jammu and Kashmir, from the Valley to Jammu, Ladakh and Kargil have expressed strong condemnation of this aggression and have voiced solidarity be-

yond divisions, standing together as one 'Ummah'.

"The Ummah cannot be divided in moments like this. When injustice is inflicted upon one part, the pain is felt by the entire body," he said.

Expressing solidarity, Mirwaiz said he stands with the people of Iran, the Palestinians, and all those bearing the brunt of aggression in the region and beyond.

Emphasising that every human life is precious, he said wars and violence are man-made catastrophes that lead to the loss of countless innocent lives.

'Sarus Circuit' to be developed in Mainpuri and Etawah to boost conservation, eco-tourism in UP

Lucknow: The government of Uttar Pradesh has initiated the development of a Sarus Circuit aimed at conserving the Sarus crane while simultaneously promoting eco-tourism in the region. The project is designed to protect the natural habitat of the Sarus crane, the state bird, while creating new opportunities for sustainable tourism.

The Sarus Circuit is being developed across important wetland regions in Mainpuri district and Etawah district, which are known to host large populations of the Sarus crane. These wetlands serve as crucial breeding and feeding grounds for the species. Under the initiative, several wetland areas in Mainpuri will be included in the circuit. These include Kirthua, Sahas, Kurra Jarawan, Soj and Saman, which are recognised as key habitats for migratory and resident birds. In addition, the Sarus Circuit will also cover important wetland sites such as Sarsai Nawar and Parauli Ramayan in Etawah district. These areas have long been known for their rich biodiversity.

Briefs :

AAP criticises transfer of LG Saxena, says tenure marked by obstruction of Delhi govt

New Delhi : The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday said the transfer of Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to Ladakh marked the end of what it described as a tenure marked by interference in the functioning of the elected government and obstacles to several public welfare initiatives. Reacting to the development, AAP Delhi State President Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that Saxena spent much of his tenure raising issues against the Delhi government and initiating investigations which, according to him, did not stand scrutiny in court. Referring to the exercise policy case, Bharadwaj claimed that the investigation initiated during Saxena's tenure had "collapsed in court" and alleged that the matter had been pursued through certain officials. Bharadwaj further criticised Saxena's handling of environmental issues, particularly the pollution of the Yamuna, and said the outgoing Lieutenant Governor had earlier projected himself as an expert on the matter. He also accused Saxena of causing hardships to people in the city during his tenure. AAP MLA and Chief Whip of the party's legislative wing, Sanjeev Jha, also criticised Saxena's tenure, alleging that several initiatives of the Delhi government faced delays or obstacles during this period. He cited issues such as teacher training programmes abroad, the Delhi Ki Yogshala scheme, Mohalla Clinics, the Farishtey Dilli Ke scheme, and the one-time water bill settlement programme.

Kejriwal to appear before Delhi Assembly Privileges Committee

New Delhi : Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is set to appear before the Privileges Committee of the Delhi Legislative Assembly at 3 pm on Friday in connection with the ongoing "Phansi Ghar" controversy, which has sparked a political row between the AAP and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The controversy dates back to 2022 when, under the Aam Aadmi Party government, a section of the Assembly complex was inaugurated as a British-era gallows site. The BJP, however, has disputed this claim, alleging that the structure is actually a "tiffin room." BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh had also alleged during the 2022-23 winter session that nearly Rs 1.4 crore was spent on the "non-existent Phansi Ghar." On Thursday, the AAP demanded that the BJP-led Delhi government live-stream the proceedings of the hearing when Kejriwal appears before the Privileges Committee on Friday, arguing that the public should be able to watch the process.

Delhi CM, Cabinet ministers and BJP state chief welcome new LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with cabinet ministers and the Delhi BJP chief welcomed the appointment of Taranjit Singh Sandhu as the new Lieutenant Governor of Delhi and expressed confidence that his vast diplomatic and administrative experience will benefit the national capital. Taking to social media platform X, Gupta congratulated Sandhu on assuming the important responsibility and said his long diplomatic experience would greatly benefit the people of Delhi.

Development and environment must complement each other, says Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Om Birla on Friday said that development and environmental protection must be viewed as complementary rather than opposing goals, stressing that water conservation is essential for securing the future of humanity and requires collaborative action from all stakeholders, including public representatives and citizens. Addressing the Water Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2026 in New Delhi, the Lok Sabha Speaker highlighted the importance of sustainable development and global cooperation in addressing growing water challenges.

He noted that international initiatives such as the International Water Forum are playing an important role in fostering global dialogue and solutions related to water security.

"Development and environment must not be seen as opposing forces, but as complementary," Birla said, adding that water conservation is central to ensuring the well-being of future generations.

Emphasising the role of citizens in environmental stewardship, Birla said meaningful change would



only come when people become conscious and responsible about water conservation, energy efficiency and environmental protection.

"Real change will be possible only when citizens become aware and responsible toward water conservation, energy efficiency and environmental protection," he said. Birla observed that water, energy, health and environment are deeply interconnected sectors and that addressing such complex challenges requires a coordinated and integrated policy approach.

Stressing the need for policy coherence, he said inclusive development demands "transversality" across departments and poli-

cies to ensure harmony and effectiveness in governance. "For inclusive development, transversality between departments and policies is essential," he said, noting that collaboration among institutions and sectors is crucial for sustainable outcomes.

Highlighting practical measures for conservation, Birla advocated the adoption of the mantra of "Reduce, Reuse, Recharge and Recycle" to manage water resources more efficiently.

He also referred to government initiatives such as 'Catch the Rain' campaign and the Jal Jeevan Mission, emphasising that their success depends heavily on public participation.

The Speaker also point-

ed to India's expanding renewable energy sector as a key pillar of the country's climate commitments.

He noted that the nation's progress in solar energy, wind energy and green hydrogen technologies is contributing significantly to sustainable development and strengthening environmental resilience.

A sustainable future can only be achieved through the power of youth and strong global cooperation," Birla said, adding that a scientific approach, transparent governance and social responsibility are essential to balancing economic growth with environmental protection.

He also highlighted the deep cultural and spiritual significance of water in Indian traditions, describing it as a life-sustaining element that has long been revered in the country's civilisational ethos.

Stressing the importance of Janbhagidari (public participation), Birla said efforts toward water conservation and environmental protection must involve people at every level of governance, from panchayats to Parliament, to bring about lasting and meaningful change.

AAP MLAs, workers protest outside Delhi Assembly after being denied entry

New Delhi : Members of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), including several MLAs and party workers, staged a protest outside the old Delhi Vidhan Sabha on Friday after they were allegedly denied entry into the Assembly premises. The demonstration took place when former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal arrived at the Assembly to appear before the Privileges Committee in connection with the "Phansi Ghar" row. Kejriwal later recorded his statement before the committee regarding the matter.

The protest was led by Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharadwaj, who was joined by several AAP leaders, MLAs and supporters. The protesters raised slogans against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, accusing it of adopting an authoritarian approach by preventing opposition legislators and workers from entering the Assembly complex.

Addressing the media during the protest, Bharadwaj alleged that the government was deliberately avoiding live streaming of the committee proceedings. According to him, the authorities feared that Kejriwal



might present facts before the public during his appearance before the committee.

He further claimed that it was unprecedented for a legislative committee to summon its own former Speaker and a former Chief Minister. Bharadwaj said that during the tenure of the AAP government, Assembly committees functioned with greater transparency and often allowed media representatives to observe their proceedings.

Bharadwaj also alleged that officials appearing before Assembly committees earlier were permitted to bring members of their teams. However, he said the current situation was different, claiming that even journalists and MLAs were not being allowed inside the Assembly premises on the day of the hearing.

Leader of Opposition in

the Delhi Assembly Atishi also criticised the BJP government, stating that the Assembly should prioritise issues affecting residents of the national capital. She referred to problems such as pollution, sewer overflow, garbage accumulation, damaged roads and rising private school fees.

Atishi alleged that instead of addressing these concerns, the government was focusing on summoning Kejriwal before the committee. She claimed that the move was aimed at diverting attention from governance issues in the city.

AAP MLA and Chief Whip Sanjeev Jha also accused the government of ignoring pressing civic problems such as water shortages, pollution, sanitation and the poor condition of roads in Delhi.

Paramilitary Forces, Delhi Police deployed in Uttam Nagar after man's death during Holi sparks tension

New Delhi : Following the death of a 26-year-old man in a Holi-related clash between two families, the Delhi Police have sent paramilitary and police teams to the Uttam Nagar area, officials said on Friday.

According to the police, four people have been arrested along with the detention of a juvenile, and a probe is underway to track down other individuals linked to the case, they said.

Security in the vicinity was beefed up and more forces were deployed as a preventive measure to ensure law and order, an official said.

During the Holi celebrations, tensions between two families of different communities boiled over into a clash, leaving multiple people injured in the incident.

A 24-hour ultimatum has been issued to the police by a Hindu political outfit, seeking the immediate arrest of all accused in the death of 26-year-old Tarun.

Tarun was allegedly attacked by members of the other family, resulting in serious injuries, and later he succumbed in the hospital.

Preliminary police reports suggest the fight broke

out over a stray splash from a water balloon.

According to Tarun's relatives, an 11-year-old girl on their terrace tossed a water balloon at family members below.

But it accidentally fell onto the street and splashed colored water on a woman from the neighboring family.

Tarun's grandfather, Maan Singh, who was also injured in the clash, alleged that the woman started verbally abusing them and soon called several family members who allegedly attacked those celebrating Holi.

He claimed that while the conflict seemed to subside initially, a group later confronted and attacked Tarun as he returned home after playing Holi with friends.

"They beat him mercilessly and even struck his chest with a large stone while he lay on the road," Mr Singh alleged.

Tarun's uncle, Ramesh, alleged that he had no knowledge of the earlier clash when a group of eight to ten people attacked him with sticks, rods, and stones.

Tension gripped the lo-

cality later in the day as the deceased's relatives and local residents gathered outside the Uttam Nagar police station, calling for strict action against the accused.

A Hindu political outfit joined the demonstration outside the police station, raising slogans and calling for the swift arrest of everyone implicated in the incident.

Protesters surrounded the Uttam Nagar police station for several hours. Later, a large crowd, including some of Tarun's relatives, returned to the locality and allegedly tried to confront the accused, triggering tensions in the area.

Police personnel stepped in and dispersed the crowd before the situation could escalate.

Police said the situation is being closely monitored, with CCTV footage being reviewed and statements from witnesses being recorded.

An FIR has been registered in the case, police said.

"Our teams have arrested four individuals and apprehended a juvenile," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Kushal Pal Singh stated.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta reviews Rs 3,786 Cr. development projects, directs faster execution

New Delhi: Delhi CM Rekha Gupta on Friday directed officials to speed up development works in the national capital and said there will be no shortage of funds for projects, but negligence will not be tolerated.

Chairing a high-level review meeting at the Delhi Secretariat, Rekha Gupta reviewed development projects worth about Rs 3,786 crore being implemented under the Chief Minister Development Fund (CMDF), the Delhi Village Development Board (DVDB) and the Trans-Yamuna Area Development Board (TYADB). Gupta asked department heads to complete the tendering and documentation process by the end of March so that most of the works can be completed before the monsoon season.

She said development work must move faster and its impact should be visible on the ground.

The meeting was attended by DVDB Chairman Raj Kumar Chauhan, TYADB Chairman Arvinder Singh Lovely and senior officials of several



departments. According to the chief minister, a total of around Rs 3,786 crore worth of development projects have been approved under the three schemes. She said the government's priority is to ensure that the allocated budget is effectively used for development works and that project processes start quickly with the beginning of the new financial year. Under the CMDF scheme, 3,812 development projects have received administrative approval with an estimated cost of about Rs 1,798.85 crore.

These projects include

Flood Control Department, the Delhi Jal Board, the Public Works Department, the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL), with the majority of projects being executed by the MCD. For the development of villages in Delhi, 707 projects worth about Rs 1,557 crore have been approved under the Delhi Village Development Board. These projects aim to strengthen basic infrastructure and improve living conditions in rural areas. Of these, 411 projects are being implemented by the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, 293 by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and three by the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation.

PWD sanctions storm water drain projects worth over Rs 177 Cr. to strengthen Delhi's drainage network

New Delhi: The Public Works Department (PWD) has sanctioned a series of major storm water drain remodelling projects worth over Rs 177 crore to strengthen Delhi's drainage infrastructure and reduce waterlogging during the monsoon season.

The projects have been approved under the New Master Drainage Plan and have received Administrative Approval and Expenditure Sanction for upgrading storm water drains across several areas of North and North-West Delhi.

According to officials, the works will focus on remodelling and strengthening existing drains using modern precast reinforced concrete (RCC) technology to ensure faster construction, better durability and improved water flow capacity.

Key locations where the drainage network will be upgraded include Gyan Shakti Mandir Marg, Chhoturam Marg, the Camp Chowk-Azadpur H-Point stretch on Mall Road, Police Station Road in Sultanpuri, Maharaja Aggarsen Marg, Jain Nagar to Rohini Sector-22 Red Light, Sultanpuri-Nangloi Road, Sultanpuri

Main Road and Jagdamba Road, along with several roads in Rohini Sector-16 and Sector-17.

PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said the projects are part of the government's long-term plan to address persistent waterlogging problems in several parts of the national capital.

"For years, residents in many areas have faced serious problems of waterlogging during heavy rains. These projects are part of a long-term solution under the Master Drainage Plan to modernise Delhi's storm water infrastructure and ensure smoother flow of rainwater," he said.

The minister said the focus is not only on building new infrastructure but also on upgrading existing drains that have become inadequate due to rapid urban expansion.

"By remodelling these drains with modern precast RCC technology, we aim to improve capacity, durability and ensure faster execution of work," he added.

Officials said the works will be executed in phases with close monitoring to ensure quality and timely completion. Once completed, the up-

graded drainage systems are expected to significantly improve the flow of storm water and reduce flooding risks in several densely populated areas of the city.

The sanctioned projects include remodelling of the storm water drain on Gyan Shakti Mandir Marg at a cost of Rs 12.33 crore and the Chhoturam Marg stretch from Avantika Red Light to Vishram Chowk costing Rs 17.88 crore.

The major Camp Chowk to Azadpur H-Point corridor on Mall Road will see storm water drain remodelling at a cost of Rs 46.45 crore, while the drain on Police Station Road in Sultanpuri from the Bus Terminal to the Flood Control Drain will be upgraded at a cost of Rs 13.72 crore.

Similarly, storm water drain remodelling on Maharaja Aggarsen Marg has been sanctioned at a cost of Rs 19.59 crore, while drains on both sides from Jain Nagar to Rohini Sector-22 Red Light will be remodelled at a cost of Rs 22.66 crore.

The Sultanpuri-Nangloi Road stretch from Railway Station to Bus Terminal via Jalebi Chowk will be upgraded at a cost of Rs 24.50 crore.

Editorial

A farce of laxity of the institutions?

It has been a month since the untimely death of Ajit Pawar, a fiery leader on the political horizon of Maharashtra and the president of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). However, instead of clearing the fog of suspicion surrounding this incident that has passed behind the curtain of time, it is getting darker day by day. When a senior leader dies accidentally in such a way, the institutions are expected to work on a war footing and transparently to find out the reasons behind it. However, what is going on in the name of investigation in this case, the angry question is now being raised whether this is a real investigation or just a farce of an investigation. Due to the discrepancies in the preliminary report, a series of suspicious incidents and the delay in the investigation, the question is being raised whether this accident was a simple accident or there is some big secret hidden behind it. Ajit Pawar's nephew and MLA Rohit Pawar has done the work of unraveling this entire matter, and the vague answers from the government to the questions raised by him that 'investigation is underway' are sharpening the needle of suspicion. On January 28, at around 8:45 am, Ajit Pawar's plane crashed while landing at Baramati airport, and from there, the discussion started on whether there was a major accident behind it. Rohit Pawar has repeatedly presented evidence, considering the seriousness of the matter, but the shocking thing is that the police have refused to even register his complaint. If the issues and complaints raised by a public representative are being ignored by the police administration, then it cannot be ruled out that the threads of this matter are very deep. The first preliminary report given by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board (AAIB) is the biggest mockery of this investigation. In this report, a strange conclusion has been drawn that the plane crashed after hitting a tree. Both Rohit Pawar and Chhagan Bhujbal have strongly objected to this claim. Given the height of the bushes on the runway of Baramati airport and the flight altitude of the aircraft, the exact tree it hit is being questioned. More surprisingly, this technical report mentions Baramati as a 'district' and Baramati as a 'municipality'. It is hard to imagine how seriously an agency that lacks basic knowledge of geographical and administrative information would investigate the death of a former deputy chief minister.

The conduct of the airline company 'VSR Venture', which is at the heart of this case, is the height of irresponsibility. A month after Rohit Pawar's persistent allegations, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has banned the company's aircraft, which means that there were definitely serious flaws in the company's procedures. However, the question of why this action was taken so late remains unanswered. According to the sensational revelation made by Rohit Pawar, the aircraft of this same company had violated international rules in January 2023 while carrying the then Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and senior officials of the state administration to Davos. Those countries had warned of shooting down the aircraft for entering the airspace of Iran and Iraq without permission. Why was strict action not taken against the company that had put the life of the Chief Minister of the state in such a state? It has now become imperative to find out whose blessing this company was so brave.

Another incident that raises questions about the credibility of the VSR company is a photograph released by Jai Ajit Pawar. In which the owner of the company himself is seen sleeping comfortably in the pilot's chair in the cockpit of the aircraft. Allowing anyone to behave in such a sensitive place like the cockpit of the aircraft is a clear violation of aviation safety rules. Despite such serious evidence, the DGCA has only grounded a few aircraft and has not taken a complete ban or criminal action against the company. Rohit Pawar is asking the question of what invisible force is working behind the scenes to support this company, and it has also become a question in the minds of the public. Rohit Pawar has so far held four press conferences and connected many links in the context of this accident. According to his latest claim, the airport was reconnoitered before the accident, which is an important thread that gives a criminal twist to this case. Ajit Pawar was a prominent figure in Maharashtra politics, and the government's evasion regarding the investigation into his death is fueling many doubts. Rohit Pawar has demanded a CBI inquiry into the matter, but there has been no positive response from the government so far. It is the responsibility of the government to appoint a high-level agency for any impartial investigation, but here the picture has emerged that the investigation is only a sham. This mystery is increasing due to the political interests of the owner of the VSR company and the discrepancies found at the accident site. When such technical errors and delays are made in the investigation, the message goes out to the public that there is an attempt to hide something behind it. The people of Maharashtra have every right to know the truth about the death of Ajit Pawar. This is not just the death of a political leader, it is a serious matter related to the security of the state and the implementation of aviation regulations. The role of the VSR Venture Company in this case, the suspicious requisition before the accident and the ridiculous errors in the AAIB report, if we combine all these factors, the direction of the investigation seems to be lost. Unless the investigation of this case is handed over to an autonomous body like the CBI, it is impossible to put a complete end to these questions. If the truth about the death of a public leader is being suppressed in the midst of power negotiations and political turmoil, it will be a great tragedy for democracy. Therefore, the government needs to stop its hushed-up stance and take concrete steps to bring the culprits to justice, otherwise the 'farce of the investigation' will be recorded in history as the final truth of this matter. The truth about Ajit Pawar's death is not just the demand of a family or a party, but the right of the people of Maharashtra. The delay in the investigation, technical errors in the report and suspicious developments are all casting a shadow of doubt in the minds of the people. If a fair and thorough investigation is not conducted into this matter, it will not only be a question of the death of a leader, but also the faith in democracy will be shattered. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to take a clear and transparent stance and bring out the truth. Otherwise, history will remember this matter as a 'farce of the investigation'.

National Arogya Fair 2026 concludes in Shegaon



The four-day National Arogya Fair 2026, organised by the Ministry of Ayush in collaboration with the All India Ayurvedic Congress at Shegaon, Buldhana district of Maharashtra from 25-28 February 2026, concluded successfully yesterday, reaffirming India's commitment to holistic healthcare and rural empowerment through its traditional systems of medicine. The Fair, inaugurated by the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, at the sacred Visava Maidan of Sant Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan, emerged as a vibrant confluence of healthcare outreach, scientific dialogue, farmer engagement and public participation. Over four days, the event witnessed enthusiastic participation from citizens, practitioners, researchers, industry representatives, students and thousands of farmers from Buldhana and the wider Vidarbha region.

In her inaugural address, the President described health as the highest form of happiness and underlined that Ayush systems offer a comprehensive lifestyle framework rooted in harmony between body and mind. She emphasised that preventive and holistic

healthcare is central to reducing disease burden and strengthening the nation. On the occasion, she conferred the Lifetime Ayurvedic Gaurav Samman upon eminent practitioners for their outstanding contribution to Ayurveda, honouring their decades of service in advancing traditional medicine and public health.

The Governor of Maharashtra, Shri Acharya Devvrat, described Ayurveda as a timeless scientific tradition rooted in India's ancient



knowledge systems and stressed the importance of authenticity and quality in practice and medicines.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush, Shri Prataprao Jadhav, who personally visited

the Fair on almost all four days, described the National Arogya Fair as a "Mahakumbh of Indian traditional medicine systems." Interacting extensively with practitioners, farmers, entrepreneurs and members of the public, he reiterated that Ayush is not merely a system of treatment but a nationwide movement for preventive healthcare, rural prosperity and global wellness leadership.

Shri Jadhav highlighted that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Ministry is strengthening evidence-based research, quality assurance and global outreach in Ayush systems. He underscored the immense potential of Ayush tourism and stated that India can emerge as the "crown of the world" in holistic wellness through Ayurveda, Yoga and natural therapies, generating employment and boosting rural economies.

A major highlight of the Fair was the extensive healthcare outreach provided free of cost to the public. Dedicated OPD counters across Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Sid-

ing growing awareness and acceptance of Yoga as a preventive and promotive healthcare tool. The Ayush Aahar segment promoting region-specific, balanced dietary practices based on Ayush principles also received positive response from visitors. The Ministry's pavilion showcased the work of its Research Councils, National Institutes and the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), presenting scientific research outcomes, public health initiatives, academic programmes and digital outreach efforts. Interactive displays on medicinal plants, herbal products and simple home-based remedies attracted considerable interest, especially among rural visitors and self-help groups. A distinctive feature of the National Arogya Fair 2026 was its focused engagement with

and authentic Ayush medicines. Visitors appreciated the opportunity to receive expert advice on lifestyle disorders, chronic conditions and preventive care under one roof.

Live Yoga demonstrations and Yoga therapy sessions drew enthusiastic participation from all age groups. A Yoga competition organised during the Fair saw spirited involvement of youth and students, reflecting growing awareness and acceptance of Yoga as a preventive and promotive healthcare tool. The Ayush Aahar segment promoting region-specific, balanced dietary practices based on Ayush principles also received positive response from visitors. The Ministry's pavilion showcased the work of its Research Councils, National Institutes and the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), presenting scientific research outcomes, public health initiatives, academic programmes and digital outreach efforts. Interactive displays on medicinal plants, herbal products and simple home-based remedies attracted considerable interest, especially among rural visitors and self-help groups. A distinctive feature of the National Arogya Fair 2026 was its focused engagement with

farmers. Special sessions on "Ayurvedic Farming: Production, Value Addition and Marketing" provided technical guidance on medicinal plant cultivation, post-harvest management and assured market linkages. Approximately 2000 farmers participated in the dedicated workshop organised in coordination with agricultural institutions and experts. The signing of multiple Letters of Intent, including a significant buy-back arrangement for turmeric procurement, marked a concrete step towards strengthening supply chains and ensuring remunerative returns to cultivators. Farmers and participants from the Vidarbha region expressed appreciation for the initiative, noting that diversification into medicinal plant cultivation offers a sustainable and profitable

able avenue alongside conventional agriculture. Many described the Fair as a timely intervention that connects healthcare advancement with income enhancement and environmental sustainability.

Throughout the four days, the Fair functioned as a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange, public awareness and direct service delivery. Expert lectures, therapy showcases, industry exhibitions and interactions between policymakers and grassroots stakeholders reinforced the integrated vision of health and livelihood.

The successful conclusion of the National Arogya Fair 2026 at Shegaon reflects the Ministry of Ayush's continued commitment to bringing traditional systems of medicine closer to the people, while simultaneously strengthening research, quality standards and farmer participation in the Ayush value chain.

By combining free healthcare services, scientific engagement, youth participation through Yoga competitions and structured support for medicinal plant cultivation, the Fair has demonstrated how Ayush systems can contribute simultaneously to public health, rural development and India's emergence as a global hub for holistic wellness.

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global hub for holistic wellness.

Built for What's Next at Main Stage

Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia will represent India at the Mobile World Congress 2026 scheduled to be held from March 2 to March 5 in Barcelona. The global event is regarded as one of the largest and most influential gatherings in the fields of technology and telecommunications.

Mobile World Congress brings together policymakers, technology leaders, telecom operators, innovators and industry stakeholders from across the world to discuss the future of digital connectivity, emerging technologies and next-generation communication infrastructure.

During his visit, Scindia will inaugurate the Bharat Pavilion at MWC 2026, which will serve as a platform to showcase India's growing telecom manufacturing capabilities and its rapidly expanding

digital innovation ecosystem.

The pavilion will highlight India's progress in areas such as telecom equipment manufacturing, digital infrastructure, 5G technology development and innovative communication solutions developed by Indian companies and startups.

The Union Minister will also unveil the curtain raiser for the India Mobile Congress 2026, India's flagship forum for digital technology and telecommunications. The announcement will promote the upcoming event and invite global participation from technology companies, researchers and policymakers.

As part of the Congress programme, Scindia will deliver an address in the GSMA Ministerial Programme during a Main Stage session titled "Built for What's

Next." The session will bring together global leaders to deliberate on future-ready digital infrastructure and emerging technology frameworks.

The discussion is expected to focus on the evolving telecommunications landscape, including next-generation networks, artificial intelligence integration, digital transformation and the need for resilient and scalable communication systems.

Scindia will also deliver the closing keynote address at the GSMA Ministerial Stage on the theme "Breaking the Cost Barrier." His address will highlight the importance of building affordable, inclusive and scalable digital connectivity models that can be adopted globally.

The keynote is expected to emphasise India's experience in ex-

panding digital infrastructure at scale and providing affordable connectivity to millions of users across urban and rural areas.

During the visit, the Union Minister will also participate in a CEO dinner hosted by India. The event will bring together global telecom leaders and industry executives to explore opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

The interaction with global CEOs is expected to underline India's commitment to building trusted partnerships and promoting international cooperation in the technology and telecommunications sectors.

In addition, Scindia will undertake focused booth visits and attend technology demonstrations organised by leading global and Indian companies participating in the event.

One of the key highlights of his visit will be the launch of the T31600-D3 Hyper-scalable DCI Platform at the booth of Tejas Networks, marking a significant milestone in India's advanced telecom product development.

The launch will showcase India's growing capability in developing high-end telecommunications equipment and strengthening domestic manufacturing in the sector.

Apart from participating in conference sessions, the Union Minister will also hold high-level bilateral meetings with key stakeholders from the global telecom industry. These meetings are expected to explore potential cooperation in areas such as universal connectivity, resilient communication infrastructure and digital technology development.

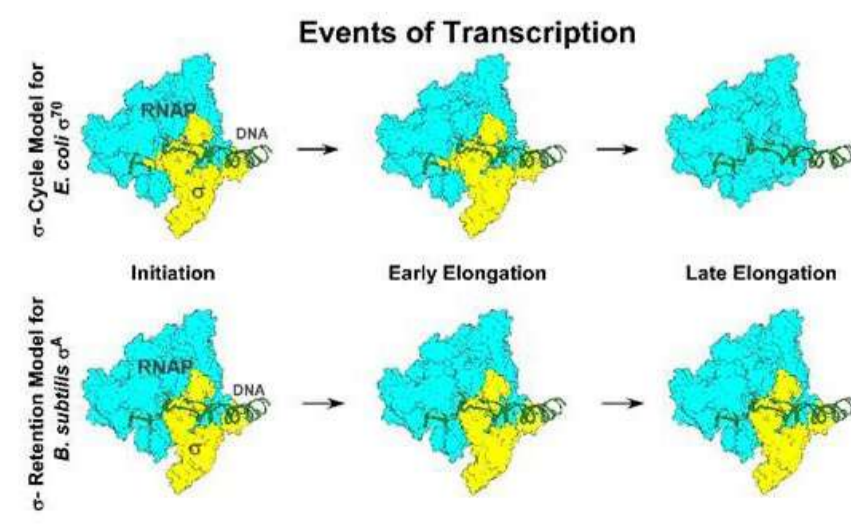
Indian scientists helped rewrite a 50-year-old biological rule

A new study overturns a central textbook model of bacterial gene regulation and unveils new paths for understanding bacterial gene regulation and its evolution.

This could help designing better antibiotics or regulatory inhibitors that block infection mechanism and design microorganisms that produce biofuels, biodegradable plastics, or therapeutic compounds efficiently.

For nearly 50 years, biology has related the story of how bacteria turn their genes on with the help of the so-called "σ (sigma) cycle" – factors that bind RNA polymerase to initiate transcription and then dissociate to allow elongation. This concept was built largely on observations of bacterial strain *E. coli* σ70. However, Researchers from the Bose Institute, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Rutgers University reveal that the cycle is not a universal phenomenon.

In a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) they have reported that, contrary to decades of scientific belief, the principal transcription initiation factor in *Bacillus subtilis*—σA—and a modified version of the *Escherichia coli*



σ 70 factor remain bound to RNA polymerase throughout transcription, rather than being released after initiation.

"Our work shows that in *Bacillus subtilis*, the σ A factor stays attached to RNA polymerase all the way through the transcription

process," said Dr. Jayanta Mukhopadhyay, corresponding author from the Bose Institute. "This fundamentally changes how we think about bacterial transcription and gene regulation."

Using a combination of modern tech-

niques like biochemical assays, chromatin immunoprecipitation, and fluorescence-based imaging—the researchers watched the sigma factor's behaviour in real time. They found that *Bacillus subtilis* σ A and an *E. coli* σ 70 variant lacking a part called I.1 remain stably associated with transcription complexes. This is in stark contrast to full-length *E. coli* σ 70, which is released stochastically during elongation.

"These findings provide compelling evidence that the long-accepted σ cycle does not apply to all bacteria," added co-author Aniruddha Tewari of Bose Institute. "It opens new avenues for understanding bacterial gene regulation and its evolution."

The discovery has broad implications for microbiology, potentially influencing how researchers approach bacterial physiology, stress response, and the development of antibiotics targeting transcription.

The study, was authored by Aniruddha Tewari, Shreya Sengupta, Soumya Mukherjee, Nilanjana Hazra, from Bose Institute and YWE and RHE and Yon W. Ebright, Richard H. Ebright, and Jayanta Mukhopadhyay from Rutgers University, USA.



Briefs :

Advocate Murder Sparks Protest in Jhajjar

Jhajjar : An advocate was stabbed to death by unidentified attackers near Chhara Chungi late Wednesday night, triggering outrage among the legal fraternity.

The victim, Devraj Chahar from Silani village, had been practising at the Jhajjar District Courts for more than a decade. According to preliminary information, he was called to the spot on the pretext of discussing a legal case. When he arrived, he was allegedly attacked with a knife by the assailants, who fled after the assault.

Chahar was first taken to a nearby hospital and later referred to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Rohtak, where he succumbed to his injuries. Police registered a murder case based on a complaint filed by his father and began an investigation to determine the motive behind the crime.

Authorities have formed three teams to track down the attackers. Meanwhile, members of the Jhajjar and Bahadurgarh Bar Associations suspended work in protest and demanded immediate action to arrest those responsible for the killing.

The legal fraternity and the local residents of Silani village are reeling from a profound sense of shock following the cold-blooded murder of a seasoned legal professional. Devraj Chahar, a dedicated advocate who had been a familiar face at the Jhajjar District Courts for over ten years, was tragically killed in the line of duty under suspicious circumstances. The incident occurred late Wednesday night near the Chhara Chungi area, a location that has now become a grim reminder of the rising insecurity faced by professionals in the region.

The sequence of events leading up to the tragedy suggests a deeply calculated and premeditated plan by the perpetrators to lure the advocate into a vulnerable position.

Congress Announces RS Candidates Across States

New Delhi : The Congress on Thursday announced its candidates for the March 16 Rajya Sabha elections from several states, including senior party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi from Telangana, Anurag Sharma from Himachal Pradesh and Karamvir Baudh from Haryana.

Baudh, who does not belong to any faction within the Haryana Congress, was earlier secretary of the Scheduled Caste cell of the All India Congress Committee and is seen as a candidate backed by the party's central leadership.

In Himachal Pradesh, Kangra district Congress chief Anurag Sharma, considered close to Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, has been nominated. The decision came despite expectations that former state party chief Pratibha Singh might receive the nomination for herself or her son Vikramaditya Singh.

In Chhattisgarh, the party has renominated tribal leader Phulo Devi Netam, while Vem Narendar Reddy, adviser to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has also been nominated. The candidate list has generated considerable discussion within party circles, especially due to the selection of Baudh and Sharma.

Selja Flags Massive Faculty Shortage in Haryana Universities

Sirsa : Congress MP Kumari Selja has raised concerns over the large number of vacant teaching posts in universities across Haryana, warning that the shortage was affecting the quality of higher education.

She pointed out that Kurukshetra University had nearly 50 per cent of its teaching posts vacant. Chaudhary Bansi Lal University in Bhiwani had around 69 per cent vacancies, while Chaudhary Devi Lal University in Sirsa and Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University in Jind had about 60 per cent of teaching positions unfilled.

Selja said the shortage of faculty had severely impacted academic standards in these institutions.

Criticising the Haryana Government's 2026-27 Budget, she said the allocation for education had sharply declined from 21.77 per cent during the Congress government in 2013-14 to just 10.80 per cent in the current Budget.

According to her, the reduction in funding combined with staff shortages



reflected the government's declining focus on strengthening public education.

She warned that such policies encouraged the expansion of private institutions and weakened the public education system.

Selja also highlighted problems in government schools, saying nearly 90 per cent of them were functioning without principals or headmasters.

She said the absence of leadership in schools affected both administration and

teaching quality, ultimately harming students' learning environment.

The MP also criticised the Budget for ignoring the needs of farmers, particularly cotton growers, by reducing allocations meant to support them.

Calling the Budget a collection of slogans rather than a concrete development plan, she expressed disappointment over the lack of clear policy direction.

Selja will chair a meet-

ing of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) at Panchayat Bhawan in Sirsa at 10 am on March 6. Before the meeting, she will meet members of the public at the PWD Rest House to hear their grievances.

The meeting will review development projects under various central government schemes, with senior district officials and representatives from multiple departments expected to attend. Later in the afternoon, she will preside over another DISHA meeting at the DRDA Hall in Jind, and on March 7 she will attend a programme organised by the District Bar Association in Fatehabad.

Senior Congress leader and Member of Parliament Kumari Selja has issued a stern warning regarding the deteriorating state of higher education in Haryana, pointing to a massive deficit in teaching staff across the state's premier universities. During a recent public address, she highlighted that the sheer volume of unfilled academic positions is now directly undermining the quality of education available to students.

This shortage, she argued, is not merely a localized issue but a systemic failure that threatens the future of the state's intellectual capital and research capabilities. The statistics provided by the Sirsa MP paint a grim picture of the current educational landscape, with several key institutions operating at less than half their required capacity.

Rohtak Reclaims Center Stage in Haryana's Rajya Sabha Battle

Rohtak : Often hailed as the political heartbeat of Haryana, Rohtak has once again consolidated its influence over the state's power dynamics.

In the current race for two Rajya Sabha seats, the district's prominence is undeniable, with two of the three main contenders hailing from its soil. This trend is further reinforced by the fact that the outgoing BJP MP, Ram Chander Jangra, also calls Rohtak home, ensuring the district remains the focal point of the high-stakes election scheduled for March 16.

The Congress has placed its bets on Karamvir Singh Boudh, a candidate whose roots trace back to the village of Bhaini Maharajpur in Rohtak. While Boudh spent much of his professional life in Ambala as a government official, his nomination is seen as a strategic move to maintain a strong presence in the home turf of former Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda.

Local residents describe Boudh as a man who has remained connected to his origins, frequently returning for

community events, which has generated a sense of pride among his fellow villagers.

Adding a layer of intrigue to the contest is the entry of Satish Nandal, a prominent construction businessman and BJP state vice-president, who has filed his nomination as an Independent. Nandal's candidacy is particularly significant given his history as a persistent political rival to Bhopinder Singh Hooda.

Having challenged Hooda in three previous Assembly elections in the Garhi Sampla-Kiloi constituency, Nandal's jump into the Rajya Sabha fray effectively relocates their long-standing local rivalry to a statewide stage.

Political analysts suggest that the emphasis on Rohtak-based candidates is part of a broader effort by the BJP to erode the traditional dominance of the Hooda family in the region. Despite significant campaigning, the BJP has struggled to secure Assembly seats within Rohtak district over the last two election cycles.

Four Youths Killed in Rohtak Road Accident

Rohtak : Four youths in their early twenties lost their lives after a speeding car collided with their motorcycle near Chuliyana village on Wednesday evening.

According to police officials, the victims were returning home on their motorcycle when the accident occurred near the village. The car reportedly struck the motorcycle with great force, killing two of the youths on the spot while the other two sustained severe injuries.

The injured were rushed to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Rohtak for treatment, where they later succumbed to their injuries. The driver of the car fled the scene immediately after the accident. The deceased have been identified as Sonu Kumar, Mohan, Raj Kumar and Rajesh, all resi-

dents of Ismaila village in Rohtak district. Police have registered a case against the unidentified car driver and launched efforts to trace him. After the completion of post-mortem examinations, the bodies of the victims were handed over to their families. A pall of gloom has descended over Ismaila village following a horrific road accident that claimed the lives of four local youths late Wednesday evening. The victims, all in their early twenties, were traveling together on a single motorcycle when a speeding car collided with them near Chuliyana village. The force of the impact was so severe that it resulted in an immediate tragedy, leaving the local community in a state of profound grief and shock as news of the fatalities spread



through the district.

The incident occurred as the four friends were making their way back home after the day's activities. According to reports from the local police, the motorcycle was struck by a fast-moving car that appeared to be traveling well above the safe speed

limit for the area. The collision was nearly head-on, causing the riders to be thrown several meters from the point of impact. Two of the young men died instantly due to the catastrophic nature of their injuries, while the remaining two were left in a critical state on the road-

side. Emergency services were alerted by passersby who witnessed the aftermath of the crash, and the two survivors were quickly transported to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak. Medical professionals at the trauma center worked tire-

lessly to stabilize the victims, but the internal damage proved too extensive. Despite the intensive medical intervention, both youths succumbed to their injuries shortly after arrival, bringing the total death toll from the accident to four.

In the immediate chaos following the collision, the driver of the car responsible for the accident chose to flee the scene rather than offering assistance or calling for help. This hit-and-run aspect of the tragedy has added a layer of public anger to the existing sorrow.

Witnesses provided some descriptions of the vehicle, but the driver managed to disappear into the night before a police perimeter could be established. Authorities are now utilizing all available resources to track

down the vehicle and its owner. The deceased have been identified by the authorities as Sonu Kumar, Mohan, and his brother Raj Kumar, along with their friend Rajesh.

All four were residents of Ismaila village, where they were well-known and liked by their neighbors. The loss of four young lives in a single incident has devastated the village, with many residents gathered at the victims' homes to offer support to the grieving families who are struggling to process the sudden and violent loss of their sons.

Law enforcement officials have officially registered a criminal case against the unidentified driver under relevant sections of the law pertaining to death by negligence and rash driving.

Congress Claims Haryana Government Under Financial Stress

Chandigarh : The Congress on Thursday alleged that the Haryana government was facing financial stress while opening the debate on the state Budget during the ongoing Assembly session.

Congress MLA Raghuvir Singh Kadian initiated the discussion and argued that the Budget allocations reflected serious financial pressure on the government. He pointed out that under the new education policy, the sector should receive six per cent of the state's Gross State Domestic Product. However, the current Budget allocates only 1.9 per cent.

Kadian said similar reductions were visible in other crucial sectors such as health and agriculture, raising concerns about the government's priorities.

He also questioned why the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal issue was not mentioned in the Budget speech and asked whether the omission had anything to do with the Chief Minister's recent visits



to Punjab. Defending the Budget, BJP MLA Ram Kumar Kashyap described it as progressive and said it would help accelerate the state's development.

Congress MLA Nirmal Singh also criticised the government, accusing it of making promises that were not backed by concrete action.

After the general discussion concluded, BJP MLA Pramod Vij moved a resolution expressing gratitude to the Central government for reducing GST slabs.

The resolution was in-

duced by Vij along with Independent MLA Savitri Jindal and BJP MLAs Ghanishyam Das Arora and Jagmohan Anand.

Congress MLA Ashok Arora from Thanesar criticised the move and said the BJP legislator should also thank the Prime Minister for imposing GST on agricultural implements, tractor parts and fertilisers.

He said it was the first time since Independence that agricultural items had been brought under the tax net. Arora further suggested

that the Prime Minister should apologise for collecting excessive revenue through GST over the past eight years since the tax regime was implemented in July 2017.

Congress MLAs Jassi Petwar and Vikas also expressed similar views during the discussion on the resolution.

The Haryana Legislative Assembly witnessed a high-decibel confrontation on Thursday as the Congress party launched a scathing attack on the state government's fiscal management. During the opening of the budget debate, opposition leaders alleged that the state is currently reeling under significant financial stress, which they claim is reflected in the lackluster allocations across various departments.

This formal critique sets the stage for a contentious session as the ruling BJP attempts to defend its economic roadmap for the coming fiscal year. The selection of Bhatia is particularly telling given the high expectations surrounding Bishnoi and Choudhry. Kuldeep Bishnoi, who famously migrated from the Congress to the BJP in 2022 after a high-stakes cross-voting episode, has found him-

BJP Shifts Focus from Dynasts to Cadre in Rajya Sabha Picks

Hisar : The Bharatiya Janata Party's latest nominations for the Rajya Sabha in Haryana have sent a clear signal that the era of relying on political dynasties may be waning in favor of organizational loyalty.

By bypassing high-profile leaders like Kiran Choudhry and Kuldeep Bishnoi, the party high command has chosen to reward its core cadre, specifically former Karnal MP Sanjay Bhatia.

This move, finalized as nominations closed on Thursday, suggests a significant recalibration of the state's political power structure as the party prepares for the vacancies appearing this April.

The selection of Bhatia is particularly telling given the high expectations surrounding Bishnoi and Choudhry.

Kuldeep Bishnoi, who famously migrated from the Congress to the BJP in 2022 after a high-stakes cross-voting episode, has found him-

self increasingly on the periphery of the party's top-tier plans.

His influence was further dampened after his son, Bhavya Bishnoi, failed to secure the family's traditional stronghold of Adampur in the most recent Assembly elections. Similarly, Kiran Choudhry, who currently holds one of the seats falling vacant, was overlooked for a second term in favor of a leader viewed as more deeply embedded in the party's internal machinery.

Political analysts suggest that the BJP is adopting a more pragmatic and perhaps ruthless approach to its alliances with established political families.

Observers point out that while the party is willing to accommodate heavyweights when their immediate support is mathematically necessary—much like the previous tactical alliance with Dushyant Chautala's JJP—it is equally quick to pivot back to its own "homegrown" leaders once those objectives

are met. This "use and pivot" strategy has left several legacy politicians struggling to maintain their relevance in a landscape now dominated by organizational discipline rather than family name.

The upcoming contest has now been formalized as a triangular battle involving the BJP's Bhatia, the Congress's Karamvir Singh Baudh, and Satish Nandal, an Independent candidate with deep ties to the saffron party.

This arrangement not only secures the BJP's interests but also creates a complex voting dynamic that could further marginalize traditional opposition influence.

By promoting loyalists over dynasts, the BJP leadership is effectively attempting to insulate its state unit from the unpredictable demands of individual political families, ensuring that the party's central ideology remains the primary driver of its electoral machine.

Greater Faridabad Transforming into NCR's New Global Hub

Faridabad : The landscape of Greater Faridabad, frequently referred to as Neharpar, is undergoing a massive metamorphosis as it positions itself as a premier urban center within the National Capital Region.

Recent policy shifts and a surge in infrastructure spending, highlighted in the Haryana 2026 Budget, have identified this area as a primary growth engine for the state. Government officials are now actively working to replicate the "Global City" success of Gurugram, focusing on high-tech urban amenities and sustainable

living to accommodate a rapidly expanding population and a burgeoning economy.

According to Vipul Goel, the Urban Local Bodies Minister and local representative, the administration is firmly committed to bridging the developmental gap between Faridabad and its neighbor, Gurugram.

He emphasized that while the city has always possessed immense latent potential, the latest budgetary provisions have provided the necessary momentum to finally realize its status as a world-class destination.



This strategic push is designed to ensure that Faridabad is no longer viewed as a secondary sat-

ellite town but as a stand-alone economic powerhouse. The most significant catalyst for this change is a series of massive connectivity projects that are currently reshaping regional travel. In a landmark decision this February, the state government finalized the alignment for a 64-km high-speed transit corridor. This Namu Bharat RRTS-cum-Metro system is set to link Gurugram, Faridabad, and Noida, effectively stitching together the major nodes of the NCR and reducing cross-city travel times to under an hour. This corridor is expected to unlock massive real estate and commercial value along its path. Proximity to the upcoming

Noida International Airport at Jewar is another factor driving investor interest toward Greater Faridabad. The planned Faridabad-Jewar Expressway will slash travel time to the new aviation hub to less than 45 minutes, making the region an attractive base for multinational corporations and frequent travelers. Furthermore, the area is already reaping the benefits of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, which has turned the local industrial sectors into a hotspot for logistics and manufacturing investments. The long-term vision for the city is anchored in

the Faridabad Master Plan 2031, which meticulously organizes the expansion into a self-sustained sub-city. Sectors 66 through 89 have been carefully zoned to balance life and work, with the higher-numbered sectors dedicated to modern residential complexes and the lower-numbered zones reserved for industrial innovation. Complementing this physical growth are digital initiatives under the Smart Cities Mission, which are introducing high-tech waste management and intelligent traffic systems to ensure the city remains livable as it scales.

Doctors' Strike Disrupts Health Services in Karnal

Karnal : Medical services across the district were severely affected on Friday as doctors continued their strike, bringing most operations at the government hospital to a halt.

Doctors under the banner of the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association (HCMSA) suspended emergency services, OPD consultations, laboratory tests, maternity care and even post-mortem services. They also staged a protest on the premises of the District Civil Hospital.

The strike was launched after a doctor posted at the Gharanda Community Health Centre, Dr Prashant Chauhan, was allegedly assaulted by police personnel while he was on duty. Doctors are demanding the registration of an FIR against Gharanda SHO Deepak Kumar and four other police officials involved in the incident. Meanwhile, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Gharanda has started an inquiry into the matter. Superintendent of Police Narender Bijarniya suspended the SHO and transferred him to the police lines while the investigation continues.

CCTV footage that has surfaced reportedly shows the SHO slapping the doctor. A video recorded by a bystander also captured the



SHO questioning the doctor as he was being taken away in a police vehicle.

However, SHO Deepak Kumar has denied the allegations. According to him, the doctor had misbehaved during a phone conversation and used abusive language. He claimed the doctor was later released after expressing regret over the incident.

HCMSA district president Dr Sanjay Verma said the strike would continue until action was taken. He added that doctors from the Indian Medical Association and Kalpana Chawla Government Medical College

were also in contact with them regarding the issue.

Earlier on Thursday evening, SP Bijarniya had held a meeting with HCMSA representatives and the Civil Surgeon and assured them that appropriate action would be taken. The suspension of medical services caused considerable inconvenience to patients, many of whom returned home without treatment. Rajbir, a local resident, said poor people depended on the Civil Hospital for treatment as private hospitals were too expensive, and the strike had caused significant hardship

for patients and their families.

The healthcare system in the district faced a near-total collapse on Friday as government doctors intensified their protest, leaving thousands of patients stranded. What began as a localized grievance has snowballed into a major standoff between the medical community and the police department. Under the leadership of the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association (HCMSA), the strike has moved beyond mere symbolic protests to a complete shutdown of essential services, includ-

ing emergency response, maternity wards, and even the processing of post-mortem examinations, creating a critical vacuum in the district's public health infrastructure.

The roots of the unrest trace back to an incident at the Gharanda Community Health Centre involving Dr. Prashant Chauhan. The medical fraternity alleges that Dr. Chauhan was not only manhandled but also forcibly detained by local police while he was attempting to discharge his professional duties. This perceived violation of a doctor's safety within a clinical environment has touched a raw nerve, leading to demands for a formal criminal case (FIR) against the Gharanda Station House Officer (SHO) and four of his subordinates. The association maintains that mere administrative suspensions are insufficient to address the gravity of the alleged assault. In an attempt to contain the escalating tension, the district administration has moved into high gear. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Gharanda has officially launched an inquiry, and Superintendent of Police Narender Bijarniya has taken the step of suspending SHO Deepak Kumar, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Local Youth from Bithmara Village Achieves Milestone in Civil Services

Hisar: The district of Hisar has found a new reason to celebrate as local resident Rahul Pattar successfully cleared the prestigious Civil Services examination. The results, announced recently by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), revealed that Rahul secured an impressive 379th rank at the national level. This achievement has brought immense pride not only to his immediate family but also to his native Bithmara village, located in the Uklana block, where residents gathered to mark the success of one of their own. Rahul's journey toward the administrative services is a testament to academic dedication and a clear professional vision. After completing his foundational education in his hometown, he moved to the national capital to pursue higher studies in engineering. He earned his BTech degree from the renowned Delhi Technological University (DTU), an institution known for producing high-caliber technical professionals. However, rather than following the traditional path of a corporate engineering career, Rahul chose to pivot toward public service. The decision to forgo lucrative job offers in the tech sector was a deliberate choice supported by his family. His father, Rajesh Pattar, shared that Rahul had harbored the ambition of becoming a civil servant since his early college days. Instead of joining the work-

force immediately after graduation, Rahul dedicated his full energy to the rigorous UPSC preparation process, viewing the Civil Services as a platform where he could make a more direct and meaningful impact on society.

Rahul is an alumnus of Jindal Modern School in Hisar, where he completed his primary and secondary schooling. His teachers and peers remember him as a focused student with a consistent academic record. This strong educational foundation played a crucial role in helping him navigate the complex and multifaceted syllabus of the UPSC exams. His success is being viewed by local educators as an inspiration for current students in the district, proving that students from local schools can compete at the highest national levels. The support system at home was instrumental in his success, provided by his father, who runs a local business, and his mother, Usha Devi, a dedicated housewife. The Pattar household has been filled with visitors and well-wishers since the news broke, as the community celebrates the culmination of years of hard work. Rajesh Pattar noted that his son remained disciplined throughout the preparation phase, often spending long hours studying to master the diverse subjects required for the examination. Interestingly, this was Rahul's second attempt at the

competitive exam, and his performance shows a significant upward trajectory in his understanding of the UPSC's requirements. While securing the 379th rank is a massive achievement that almost guarantees a spot in the prestigious services, Rahul remains ambitious about his future. His father mentioned that while the family is overjoyed with the current result, Rahul is already considering appearing for the examination again.

The drive to improve his ranking stems from a desire to join specific top-tier cadres within the Indian administrative framework. By taking another attempt, Rahul hopes to break into the top bracket of successful candidates, which would allow him greater flexibility in choosing his service and regional posting. This mindset of continuous improvement reflects the high standards he sets for himself and his commitment to reaching the very top of the administrative hierarchy. In Bithmara village, the atmosphere is one of festive joy, as Rahul is seen as a role model for the youth in the Uklana block. Village elders have praised his humility and his connection to his roots despite his academic travels to Delhi. His success story is being shared widely across the district, highlighting the trend of engineering graduates from Haryana increasingly making their mark in the civil services, bringing a technical.

Karnal Celebrates as Ananya Rana Secures Elite UPSC Rank

Karnal: The city of Karnal is erupting in celebration following the announcement of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) 2025 results, which saw local talent Ananya Rana secure an exceptional 60th rank nationwide. While the news brought immense joy to her family, friends, and former teachers, Ananya herself received the news while away in Nagpur, where she is currently undergoing professional training for the Indian Revenue Service (IRS). Her journey to the top tier of the civil services is a story of relentless perseverance, marking her fourth attempt at one of the world's most challenging competitive examinations.

Ananya's previous success in the 2023 UPSC exams, where she earned the 280th rank, had already placed her in the prestigious IRS (Income Tax) cadre. However, her drive to serve the nation in an even more impactful capacity led her to continue her preparations alongside her ongoing training. This latest achievement is the culmination of years of academic excellence, rooted in a family environment that deeply values education and



public service. She is the daughter of Professor SP Bhatti, a senior academic at Dyal Singh College, and Dr. Sonika Bhatti, who serves as a Principal at a state institute in Nilokheri.

Her academic record has been nothing short of brilliant since her early schooling days at Dyal Singh Public School, where she topped her Class 12 board examinations.

Ananya continued her streak of excellence during her undergraduate studies at Dyal Singh College, earning a gold medal from Kurukshetra University. Her thirst

for knowledge then took her to the prestigious IIT Gandhinagar, where she completed her Master's in Chemistry, once again securing a gold medal for her outstanding performance.

This solid scientific foundation provided her with the analytical skills necessary to navigate the diverse UPSC syllabus.

Beyond the national stage, Ananya had already proven her mettle at the state level by qualifying for the Haryana Civil Services (HCS), where she was selected as an Assistant Excise and Taxation Officer. Her fa-

ther, Professor Bhatti, expressed immense pride in her daughter's consistent track record of high-level achievements, noting that her discipline has been the key to her success.

Throughout her journey, Ananya dedicated between eight to ten hours daily to her studies, maintaining a rigorous schedule even while managing other professional commitments.

In her message to the aspiring youth of India, Ananya emphasized the importance of setting clear goals and working toward them with unwavering focus.

Triangular Fight for Haryana Rajya Sabha Seats

Chandigarh : Political activity intensified in Haryana on Thursday after three candidates filed nominations for two Rajya Sabha seats from the state that will become vacant in April, setting up a triangular contest.

The ruling BJP has nominated former Karnal MP Sanjay Bhatia, who is considered close to Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. His selection surprised several hopefuls within the party, including Kuldeep Bishnoi and Kiran Choudhry, who were also believed to be in contention for the ticket.

The Congress also sprung a surprise by nominating Dalit activist Karamvir Singh Baudh. Senior party leaders had earlier hinted that a Scheduled Caste candidate could be fielded to maintain caste balance in the state.

Leader of Opposition Bhopinder Singh Hooda belongs to the Jat community, while Haryana Congress president Rao Narender Singh represents the Ahir community and falls in the OBC category.

The contest became more intriguing when BJP state vice-president Satish



Nandal entered the race as an Independent candidate.

His move disrupted the calculations of several aspirants, including Gopal Kanda, who were reportedly seeking the BJP's backing for the election.

Initially, the party had been reluctant to allow one of its office-bearers to contest independently.

However, Nandal appears to enjoy support from within the BJP and belongs to the Jat community from

Rohtak. Political observers believe his candidature may be an attempt to counter the influence of Bhopinder Singh Hooda in the region.

Bhatia was the first to submit his nomination papers in the presence of BJP incharge Satish Poonia, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, state party president Mohan Lal Badoli and other senior leaders.

Reacting to the situation, Bhatia said the election had now become a triangular

contest and that every candidate had the democratic right to file nomination papers. He added that the candidate who secured the required votes would ultimately win.

After several hours of suspense, Nandal filed his nomination accompanied by three Independent MLAs—Savitri Jindal from Hisar, Rajesh Joon from Bahadurgarh and Devender Kadyan from Ganaur—who currently support the BJP-led government

Rahul Gandhi's Pick Boudh Files Rajya Sabha Nomination

Chandigarh : Karamvir Singh Boudh, a Dalit activist backed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, filed his nomination papers on Thursday as the party's candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat from Haryana.

Boudh, who heads the Jai Bhim Mission and the Confederation of SCs, STs and OBCs of Haryana, was selected ahead of several senior leaders including former state Congress president Uday Bhan and Rao Dan Singh.

His lack of affiliation with any faction within the divided Haryana Congress unit is believed to have worked in his favour.

Once the party decided to nominate a Dalit candidate, Congress SC cell national chairman Rajendra Pal Gautam strongly supported his candidature.

The announcement of Boudh's nomination surprised many Congress



MLAs, as he was not widely known in state political circles.

On Thursday morning, he joined party legislators for breakfast at the residence of Leader of Opposition Bhopinder Singh Hooda before heading to the Assembly to file his papers.

State incharge BK Har-

iprasad, Haryana Congress president Rao Narender Singh and senior leader Randeep Surjewala were present during the filing of the nomination.

Hooda signed as the first proposer, and 33 out of the party's 37 MLAs were present. Vinesh Phogat, Aditya Surjewala, Paramvir Singh

and Mohd Ilyas were absent.

With two Rajya Sabha seats and a 90-member Assembly, a candidate needs 31 first-preference votes to secure victory.

Boudh dismissed concerns about the third candidate in the contest, Satish Nandal, who is contesting as an Independent with BJP

support. He said all MLAs had gathered at Hooda's residence and there was no possibility of cross-voting.

The issue of cross-voting has been sensitive for the Congress after the 2022 Rajya Sabha election, when the party's candidate Ajay Maken lost due to cross-voting.

Earlier in 2016, the invalidation of 12 Congress votes due to an ink controversy had led to the defeat of Congress-backed Independent candidate RK Anand.

Describing Rahul Gandhi as a "Jannayak", Boudh said that without the contribution of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, he would never have been able to reach this position.

Born into a poor Dalit family, Boudh faced social and financial hardships during his early life.

His father had served in Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army.

Yamunanagar Civic Body Cracks Down on Plastic and Public Meat Cutting

Yamunanagar: The Municipal Corporation of Yamunanagar-Jagadhri (MCYJ) launched a rigorous enforcement drive on Friday, targeting environmental violations and public health concerns across the twin cities. Under the direct supervision of top district administrators, a specialized team of sanitation inspectors conducted surprise raids, resulting in the issuance of challans to seven different vendors. This action is part of a broader government initiative to eliminate single-use plastics and ensure that food handling practices comply with local sanitary bylaws, particularly near sensitive locations.

The enforcement team began their operation on the busy Railway Road, where they focused specifically on the use of prohibited materials. Several fruit vendors were caught using single-use plastic items and banned polythene carry bags, which led to immediate financial penalties. Officials emphasized that the use of such non-biodegradable materials

is a major contributor to urban pollution and drain blockages. The vendors were warned that repeated offenses would lead to more severe consequences, including the potential confiscation of their inventory and temporary suspension of their trading rights.

The drive then moved toward the Radaur Road area, where the team addressed a separate but equally serious set of violations. Two vendors were found operating temporary stalls where they were openly cutting meat on the roadside. Authorities noted that this practice is strictly prohibited, especially when conducted in public view or in the vicinity of religious institutions. The sanitary inspectors issued on-the-spot fines to these vendors, reminding them that meat processing must be done within designated, hygienic facilities that adhere to established health and religious sensitivity guidelines.

Littering was another key focus of the afternoon raid, with multiple shop-

keepers penalized for dumping commercial waste directly in front of their establishments. The MCYJ team observed that instead of using proper disposal systems, some vendors had created makeshift garbage heaps on the pavement. The inspectors spent time educating the local business community on the importance of using standardized dustbins and maintaining the cleanliness of the area immediately surrounding their shops to prevent the spread of disease and maintain the city's aesthetic appeal.

Additional Municipal Commissioner Dheeraj Kumar issued a public appeal following the operation, urging residents and business owners alike to take personal responsibility for the city's cleanliness. He stated that making Yamunanagar and Jagadhri clean and beautiful is a top priority for the corporation, but it requires active cooperation from the public. Kumar warned that the administration would maintain a "zero-tolerance" policy toward open littering.



Brook hails England fight after semi-final loss to India

Mumbai : England skipper Harry Brook insisted he was "extremely proud" of his side's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign after they pushed the hosts all the way in a high-scoring contest that ended in a narrow defeat for the visitors at the Wankhede Stadium here. Chasing a daunting 254, England stayed in the hunt until the final over before eventually falling short by seven runs, ending a spirited run in the tournament as India made their way into the final, where they'll be defending their trophy. Reflecting on the result, Brook praised the fight his side showed throughout the competition. England almost sealed the win at the Wankhede, ending up with 246/7 on the board, thanks to Jacob Bethell's blinder of a knock. "Disappointed, but extremely proud. Couldn't ask



for much more as a captain to be honest. "We haven't been out of any game in this competition all the way until the last over. I'm extremely proud of the way the boys have stuck to their guns. "They've done everything that we've asked of them. We've got some extremely good players in there, some extremely tough characters as well, to play some of the innings that we have done in this competition and deliver some of the overs that we have done as well."

"We've had a very good campaign and unfortunately it's not paid off." England's chase was kept alive by a valiant knock from Bethell, whose explosive innings made sure England stayed in the hunt until the very end. Bethell struck a whirlwind 105 off just 48 as he took on the Indian bowlers for a swing over after over, racking up seven sixes and eight fours at 218.75, according to ICC. Brook hailed the 22-year-old's temperament and predicted a bright future for him in England colours. "He's a phenomenal player, as we've seen tonight in a high-pressure situation against India on their home turf as well. The way that he played that innings there was just phenomenal." "He was in his own bubble and it's an amazing feeling."

Ravi Shastri pinpoints key to recent success of Sanju Samson

Mumbai : Former India coach Ravi Shastri has revealed what he thinks is the main reason behind the recent success of Sanju Samson at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Samson has been on the fringes of India's best T20 outfit in recent years and missed selection during the early portion of the T20 World Cup when Ishan Kishan was preferred as opener and Rinku Singh was in favour. But Samson has contributed consecutive Player of the Match performances to help guide India into the final of the T20 World Cup against New Zealand, with his most recent innings coming in the knockout semi-final with England in Mumbai when he struck seven sixes in a superb knock of 89. While Samson's upturn in form has surprised many, Shastri has not been taken aback with the recent output of the hard-hitting right-hander as the former India coach has noticed a clear shift with his approach. Shastri believes Samson is more mentally tough when batting and his recent results at the T20 World Cup have been due to this shift. "I think finally realising and coming to terms with the fact that he needs to be more consistent," Shastri said on The ICC Review. "He's got to be wiser with his shot selection and he's got to back his strengths. "The thing with Sanju is he's got every shot in the book, but lapses in concentration. "I think he's toughened up mentally and there's never anyone who's doubted his skill or talent ever since he made the side. "What people have been disappointed is that the run of consistency that should have been there by now isn't there, but he's come of age now." And while Samson has shown glimpses of his prowess in the past, Shastri believes his best form is still ahead given his role in the India team is now clearly defined.

"He's still just 31 years of age and a genuine match-winner," Shastri noted. "And when you see shots like (today) that is being played, there's class, there's touch there, there's power there, there's brute force. It's just unbelievable." While the form of Samson has been a pleasant surprise for India, the recent efforts of fellow opener Abhishek Sharma are of some concern heading into Sunday's final of the T20 World Cup against New Zealand. Abhishek has managed to score just 89 runs from seven innings at the T20 World Cup to date, but Shastri believes it's too late to make a change to India's XI and the No.1 ranked T20I batter must be persisted with in the tournament decider against the Black Caps. "I think they've just got to stick with him now," Shastri noted. "Don't make any changes as the side's having a good run. Stick with that and just tell him believe

Record-breaking 612 athletes qualified for Milan-Cortina Winter Paralympics

Cortina D'Ampezzo: The international sporting community has reached a historic milestone as the world prepares for the commencement of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games. International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons officially announced that a staggering 612 athletes representing 56 national and regional committees have qualified for this prestigious event. This surge in participation highlights the growing global interest in para-winter sports and marks a significant leap forward in the movement's reach across various continents. The timing of this achievement is particularly poignant as it coincides with the 50th anniversary of the very first Paralympic Winter Games. President Parsons expressed his immense pride in the fact that this golden jubilee will be celebrated with the largest and most diverse field of competitors ever seen in the history of winter para-sports. The growth from the early days of the movement to this record-breaking turnout in Italy serves as a testament to the dedication of athletes and organizers who have champi-

oned accessibility and excellence in winter athletics over the last five decades. A major contributor to this year's massive scale is the delegation from China, which has arrived with a formidable presence of 167 members. Within this group, 70 athletes are prepared to compete in 71 separate events across all six featured sports. This represents China's largest ever delegation sent to a Winter Paralympics held outside its own borders, following its successful hosting of the previous games. Their extensive participation across such a wide variety of disciplines underscores the nation's rapid development as a powerhouse in the para-winter sports arena. Beyond the established nations, the 2026 Games are being praised for their inclusive expansion into new territories. The IPC has been working diligently to foster para-winter sports in regions where snow and ice activities were previously underrepresented. This effort has culminated in the exciting debut of five National Olympic Committees at these games. For the first time, athletes from El Salvador, Haiti, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Portugal will walk in the parade of nations, marking a truly global shift in the demographics of the competition. The competitive schedule for the Milan-Cortina Winter Paralympics officially spans from March 6 through March 15, offering a packed itinerary of 79 medal events. These events are distributed across six core sports, ensuring that the best athletes in the world have a platform to showcase their skills. The geographic layout of the games is designed to utilize the natural strengths of the Italian landscape, with multiple venues across the region hosting specialized disciplines according to their unique terrain and infrastructure. In the host town of Cortina, the focus will be on the high-adrenaline events of para alpine skiing and para snowboard, along with the tactical precision of wheelchair curling. These venues are expected to draw large crowds, as the town has a storied history of winter sports excellence. The challenging slopes and well-maintained rinks in Cortina provide the ideal backdrop for athletes who have spent years training for this singular moment of international competition. Simultaneously, the scenic Val di Fiemme will serve as the battleground for endurance-based sports, including para biathlon and para cross-country skiing. These disciplines require a unique blend of physical stamina and, in the case of the biathlon, extreme mental focus under pressure. The natural trails of the valley are renowned for their beauty and difficulty, promising a rigorous test for the skiers as they navigate the snowy paths in pursuit of Paralympic gold. The urban center of Milan will not be left out of the action, as it prepares to host the intense and fast-paced matches of para ice hockey. Known for its physicality and strategic depth, para ice hockey is often a fan-favorite event, and the facilities in Milan are ready to accommodate the large audiences that typically follow the sport. The inclusion of a major metropolitan hub like Milan ensures that the Paralympic spirit reaches a broad and diverse urban demographic. Adding to the unique structure of these games, wheelchair curling has the distinction of being the very first event to kick off the competitive action.

Santos signs Uruguayan midfielder Oliva

Rio De Janeiro : Santos has completed the signing of Uruguayan midfielder Christian Oliva from Uruguay's Club Nacional, the Brazilian Serie A club said. The 29-year-old agreed to a deal that runs until the end of 2028, Santos said in a statement on Thursday. "I come from a big club, with a lot of pressure," Oliva told a news conference. "I know how to handle under pressure. On the field it is more or less like that." Oliva made 84 appearances in his second spell for Nacional following his 2024 move from Argentina's Talleres. His career has also included spells at Spain's Valencia, Italy's Cagliari and Mexico's Juarez, according to Xinhua. "It is a great source of pride to be here, where Pele and Neymar played, among many others," he said. "I will honor this shirt and I want to bring joy to the club. I am in good physical condition, I had been playing and had a good preseason. I played three matches and I am ready for my debut." Brazilian Serie A giants Santos have officially bolstered their midfield with the



acquisition of Christian Oliva from Uruguay's Club Nacional. The 29-year-old Uruguayan midfielder has committed to the club with a long-term contract that extends through the end of 2028. The announcement, made on Thursday, marks a significant addition to the squad as they look to strengthen their tactical depth for the upcoming season. During his introductory news conference, Oliva dis-

played a high level of confidence and a readiness to embrace the high expectations of the Brazilian league. He noted that having spent time at a major institution like Nacional, he is well-acquainted with the intense pressure that comes with representing a historic club. He assured fans and management alike that he knows how to translate that pressure into performance on the pitch, emphasizing that he thrives in competitive environments. Oliva's journey to Santos follows a productive second stint at Nacional, where he featured in 84 matches after transferring from Argentina's Talleres in 2024. His professional resume is notably diverse, featuring experience across some of the world's most competitive leagues, including Italy's Serie A with Cagliari, Spain's La Liga with Valencia, and a tenure in Mexico with Juarez. This international experience is expected to provide Santos with a seasoned presence in the center of the park. Expressing his deep respect for the club's heritage, Oliva mentioned that playing for the same team that legends like Pelé and Neymar once represented is a tremendous source of personal and professional pride. He pledged to honor the iconic jersey and dedicated himself to bringing success back to the fans. The midfielder also confirmed that he is in peak physical condition, having completed a full preseason and participated in three recent matches, making him eligible for an immediate debut.

Japan next on India's roster for AFC Women's Asian Cup



Perth : The Indian senior women's national team will face the mighty Japan in their second Group C match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 at the Perth Rectangular Stadium here in Australia, on Saturday. India currently stand third in the group despite the 1-2 loss against Vietnam in their first match, after Japan defeated Chinese Taipei 2-0. Historically, Japan, eighth in the FIFA Women's World Rankings, have had a clear advantage over the Blue Tigresses (ranked 67th), having won all three previous meetings. The Nadeshiko have scored 19 times in these three meetings. The last one was a 0-7 loss in the Olympic qualifiers in 2023. India have had two matches to recover from their match against Vietnam, and getting

her players back into prime condition for the Japan encounter is high on head coach Amelia Valverde's list of priorities. She said, "Of course, we will adapt to whatever situations arise. Right now, the first focus has been recovery, because we had a very demanding match physically. Valverde is wary of the threat that Japan, who have won the Asian Cup in 2014 and 2018, and the World Cup in 2011, pose. "We know Japan are a team that really like to keep possession, with a lot of dynamism. They like to dominate the game, but we have to prepare our own game. We hope to deliver a strong performance, to be very competitive again, as we were last Wednesday," said Valverde. "At certain moments the game may demand that we be flexible from a tactical point of view. "We will try, from the first minute of the game. I've mentioned in the past that the three opponents we face in our group are very different from each other," she said. "We need to focus our energy on our own team. We want to try to manage the game and take it in the direction we believe is best, while adapting to their characteristics." India midfielder Sangita Basfore was intent on correcting the mistakes made in the Vietnam game, and move forward. "We made a big effort against Vietnam, we did everything we could on the field, but now we have analysed the game and the mistakes made in it," said Sangita. "The plan is to improve in the next game and take those learnings forward into the next match against Japan."

From Kho Kho to Hockey, Rutaja's inspiring rise in Indian Women's Hockey Team

Hyderabad : At just 23, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal has already established herself as a regular in the senior Indian Women's Hockey Team, emerging as an influential presence in the midfield and has been included in the squad for the upcoming FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers Hyderabad, scheduled from March 8 to 14. Hailing from Phaltan, a small village in the Satara district in Maharashtra, Rutaja's journey into hockey began somewhat unexpectedly. "Before hockey, we

used to play Kho Kho in school. It is very popular in Maharashtra. Our teachers noticed that we could run well and had good stamina, and they encouraged us to get into hockey. From there my journey began," she shared. "I started playing when I was around 12 years old. I had to give a fitness and endurance test to get into my academy in Pune. I passed the test and that is where I started playing hockey," she added. Coming from a village where women playing

sports was uncommon, Rutaja acknowledged the support she received during her early years. "In my village it was not very common for girls to play hockey. At that time families were still thinking whether they should send their kids outside for sports or not, but a coach in our village supported us and encouraged us to go ahead," she said. From there Rutaja made her way from state and national level tournaments to the Junior Women's Hockey Team where she helped India win the

Women's Junior Asia Cup in 2023 and earned a spot in the Senior camp. Rutaja has now been part of the senior national camp for over two years and believes the experience has helped her grow significantly as a player. "There are many similarities between the junior and senior camps, but the intensity needed to train with senior players is much higher. Being in the camp for the last couple of years has helped me improve a lot," she explained. Despite operating primarily in the middle of the

park, her intelligent movement inside the circle makes her a constant goal threat, as she has already registered seven goals in her 20 appearances for the senior side. This is majorly because Rutaja also has plenty experience playing as a forward under her belt. "I am currently playing as a midfielder, but earlier I used to play as a forward. In the team, sometimes there are more players in one position and fewer in another, so we have to be ready to adapt and contribute wherever the team needs us," she explained.

Tasmania skittled, but in hunt for Sheffield Shield chase

Hobart : Tasmania need 278 more runs against Victoria for a crucial win in their quest to make the Sheffield Shield final after earlier being routed for just 91. Openers Caleb Jewell (24 not out) and Mac Wright (15 not out) had the Tigers 0-47 at stumps on day two at Bellerive Oval in pursuit of a victory target of 325. Sixteen wickets fell on Friday, with Tasmania losing 5-23 after resuming their first innings at 4-52 before Victoria made 193 all out in their second dig. Victoria's quicks Fergus O'Neill (3-17)



and Sam Elliott (3-22) did most of the damage.

Elliott started the morning carnage when he trapped Charlie Wakim (15) lbw, before O'Neill bowled Test all-rounder Beau Webster (five) three overs later. Australia's short-form spinner Matt Kuhnemann top-scored for Tasmania with 23 after being sent in as a nightwatch the previous evening. Victoria were under the pump early, with first innings century maker and leading Shield season run scorer Sam Harper gone in the second over for a duck. Wickets fell regularly,

with Peter Handscomb (47) the only member of his side's top six to put up any real resistance. He shared a 50-run partnership with O'Neill (44) but was out caught in the gully off the bowling of Riley Meredith. Gabe Bell finished the best of the Tasmanian bowlers with figures of 3-40 that included the scalps of Victoria's top three. "That last hour was crucial and being none down at stumps. We think the pitch is only going to get better as the game goes on," Bell said.



MARKET

BSE Sensex			Nifty 50			Nifty 500			Nifty Next 50			Nifty 100			Nifty Bank			Nifty Midcap 100		
Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change	
78,918.90	-1.37%		24,450.45	-1.27%		22,481.30	-0.95%		67,476.65	-0.36%		25,134.90	-1.12%		57,783.25	-2.15%		57,393.35	-0.69%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
80,015.90	79,658.99		24,765.90	24,656.40		22,697.80	22,621.55		67,722.20	67,559.05		25,420.10	25,316.20		59,055.85	58,629.60		57,792.55	57,692.15	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
79,753.03	78,812.18		24,700.90	24,415.75		22,701.60	22,456.45		68,078.30	67,392.90		25,375.20	25,101.70		58,807.15	57,696.40		58,104.50	57,336.55	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Bharat Elec	468.45	1.84
Reliance	1,404.80	1.11
ONGC	278.95	0.94
Sun Pharma	1,799.40	0.83
NTPC	380.60	0.67

Top Losers

Company	Current	%Loss
ICICI Bank	1,313.40	-3.26
Eternal	232.57	-3.15
Shriram Finance	1,007.50	-3.08
Axis Bank	1,315.80	-2.47
UltraTechCement	11,987.00	-2.45

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Apr 02	159,930.00	257.00 0.16
Silver May 05	263,620.00	1,429.00 0.55
Crudeoil Mar 19	7,940.00	624.00 8.53
Naturalgas Mar 26	284.00	10.40 3.80

Benchmark indices slip over 1pc, Nifty down at 24,450

Mumbai : Indian stock market on Friday failed to sustain gaining momentum and slipped over 1 per cent. Nifty was down at 24,450 amid selling pressure across the sectors.

At close, the Sensex was down 1,097 points or 1.37 per cent at 78,918.90, and the Nifty was down 315.45 points or 1.27 per cent at 24,450.45. Broader indices outperformed with Nifty Midcap index falling 0.7 per cent, and Smallcap index down 0.2pc.

The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slipped to Rs 450 lakh crore from Rs 453 lakh crore in the previous session. Among the sectors, most of the indices ended on a mixed note. On the declining side were Auto, realty, PSU Bank, and private bank indices falling 1-2pc. Defence index surged nearly 3pc, while Capital Goods index rose 1.3pc and Power index gained 0.4pc.

On Nifty, the key gainers



were Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, NTPC, ONGC, and Sun Pharma among others. ICICI Bank, Eternal, Shriram Finance, Axis Bank, and Ultra-Tech Cement were the top losers. Over 250 stocks touched their 52-week low including Coface Lifesciences, Sonata

Software, Procter and Gamble Hygiene and Health Care, Berger Paints, Alkyl Amines, Cyient, among others. Most of the real estate stocks were on the losing end. Among the key names, Godrej Properties dropped 3.8pc, Raymond Realty declined nearly 3pc, Prestige

Estates fell 2.7pc, Lodha Developers slipped around 2pc. Among the rail stocks, IRCON traded over 1pc higher in the early trade, while those of RVNL climbed 3.17pc. RailTel, RITES, IRFC traded 4.2pc, 3.5pc and 1.5pc higher, respectively.

Cost of vegetarian thali remained stable year-on-year in Feb: Crisil

New Delhi: In February, the cost of a home-cooked vegetarian thali was flat on-year while a non-vegetarian thali declined 3 per cent, said a Crisil report released on Friday.

The premier rating agency in its 'Roti Rice Rate' report noted that despite a decline in the prices of onion, potato, and pulses, the cost of veg thali remained stable as tomato prices rose sharply.

"Tomato prices rose 43 pc on-year to Rs 33 per kg in February as mandi arrivals between November 2025 and January 2026 fell 32 pc on-year due to delayed transplantation affecting crop yield and tightening supplies," the report said.

Onion prices fell 24 per cent on-year due to an influx of late kharif onions, while limited shelf life forced immediate market disposal amid subdued exports.

Crisil noted that potato

prices fell 13pc year-on-year as the crop has entered peak harvest phase, coinciding with continued liquidation of cold storage stock from the previous rabi season.

Pushan Sharma, Director of Crisil Intelligence, said, "The cost of vegetarian thali remained stable on-year in February as lower onion, potato, and pulse prices offset a sharp rise in tomato prices. Tomato prices surged due to delayed transplantation, which impacted crop development and yields. This was reflected in a 32pc on-year decline in crop arrivals in mandis between November 2025 and January 2026."

Sharma also noted that the ongoing Middle East uncertainties and potential trade disruptions may soften demand for basmati rice in the near term, exerting downward pressure on onions.

Reliance consumer products inks deal to make Fazer's premium chocolates

Mumbai: The Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Consumer Products Limited (RCPL) officially announced here on Friday that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Finland's leading foods company Fazer, to establish a long-term strategic partnership in India to produce, market and distribute branded premium chocolates using Fazer's recipes.

Fazer is a leading FMCG company in Northern Europe, which is renowned for its high-quality chocolates, confectionery, bakery and plant-based products. In

2025, Fazer Group had net sales of 1,200 million Euros.

The partnership with RCPL is expected to combine Fazer's iconic heritage brands, innovative product portfolio, and world's finest chocolates, with RCPL's substantial scale and access to nearly 3 million retail outlets across India, as well as deep expertise in the Indian market.

Commenting on the development, Reliance Consumer Products (RCPL) Director T Krishnakumar said, "Partnering with Fazer is a strategic step towards introducing one of the world's finest

chocolates to Indian consumers. This will also accelerate RCPL's growth in chocolates and confectionery markets. By combining Fazer's globally trusted brands and manufacturing excellence with RCPL's local production capabilities, robust distribution network and deep consumer insights, we are well positioned to bring world-class products to Indian consumers and elevate the overall category experience."

Elaborating on the deal, Fazer President & CEO Christoph Vitthum said, "This partnership would be a

great opportunity for Fazer to offer our unique products to the fast-growing Indian market. With RCPL handling commercialisation and distribution in India we could establish a premium position in the chocolate market and a foundation for a broader scale, nation-wide roll-out with a leading and highly capable local partner. Entering the sizable Indian chocolate market through this strategic partnership, could have the potential to accelerate our international growth significantly."

Fazer has a focused growth strategy with contin-

uous expansion and significant international growth targets at its core. With operations in the Nordics and Baltics, Poland, and China as well as with exports to more than 40 countries worldwide, Fazer already has an established global presence.

Fazer has been actively pursuing opportunities to expand not only organically but also through mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deals, and it remains committed to exploring all avenues that enable the company to strengthen its position in both existing and new markets.

Silicon Labs expands Hyderabad facility, deepens wireless R&D presence

Hyderabad: Silicon Labs, a global innovator in low-power wireless connectivity, has announced the expansion of its facility in Hyderabad by about 50 per cent, strengthening its global engineering and research capabilities in wireless technologies.

Headquartered in Austin, the company said the expansion reflects its long-term commitment to India's growing technology ecosystem and its increasing reliance on the Hyderabad centre for research and development.

The expanded facility was inaugurated in the presence of Laura E. Williams, highlighting the strengthening economic and technological collaboration between India and the United States. According to the company, the expanded site includes new laboratories and additional operational space designed to support the organisation's rapidly growing engineering workforce in the region. The new infrastructure will help accelerate Silicon Labs' work in low-power wireless solutions, which are widely used in applications such as smart homes, industrial automation, connected devices and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, Matt Johnson said the Hyderabad centre has emerged as a key part of the company's global innovation network.

"Hyderabad has become a critical hub in our global engineering and operations footprint," Johnson said while highlighting the importance of the centre to the company's long-term growth strategy.

He added that the expansion represents a strategic investment in talent, innovation and global collaboration, enabling the company to continue delivering secure and energy-efficient wireless technologies to customers worldwide. The company noted that its workforce in India has more than tripled since its first established operations in Hyderabad in 2020, reflecting the region's strong engineering talent pool and supportive technology ecosystem. Today, the Hyderabad facility supports multiple functions including research and development, engineering, product operations, sales, technical marketing and information technology. Commenting on the expansion, Manish Kothari said the enlarged facility will further enhance the company's ability to innovate and execute complex engineering projects.

"Scaling our Hyderabad

site is about building more capacity for invention and execution," Kothari said, noting that the new infrastructure would strengthen the company's R&D capabilities.

He added that the facility now includes advanced laboratories for wireless design, validation and system integration, which will help engineers test and refine next-generation connectivity technologies.

The expansion also introduces additional collaboration spaces aimed at encouraging cross-functional teamwork among engineers and supporting future hiring plans as the company continues to grow its operations.

Senior executives present during the inauguration ceremony included Dean Butler, Radhika Chennakeshava and Nestor Ho.

Addressing the gathering, Laura E. Williams said that the continued expansion of U.S. technology companies in India reflects the deepening strategic and economic partnership between the two countries. She noted that collaborations in advanced technology sectors such as semiconductors and wireless connectivity are playing an important role in strengthening innovation, investment and job creation across both nations.

India emerging as global business hub due to its policy reforms

New Delhi: India now emerged as a key enabler for ease of doing business in the world due to its policy reforms and regulatory programmes aimed to give a conducive environment to growing businesses.

As per the government data, business registrations in India grew by 27 per cent from 1.55 lakh in 2020-21 to 1.98 lakh in 2025-26 as on February 3.

The RBI's Business Expectation Index which has consistently stayed above the neutral benchmark of 100 through FY 2024-25 and into July to September (Q2) of FY 2025-26 indicates positive sentiment regarding future output.

These indicators suggest the continued resilience of industry sentiment and point towards a business environment where firms remain confident about their growth.

These results are linked with continued efforts of the government and its strategic focus towards making India's business ecosystem conducive. The government's strategic focus on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) is fundamental to fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and wealth creation. Recognising the importance of EoDB, the government has made 'improving the business environment' a strategic priority.

India's reform driven growth is

strengthened towards multiple schemes such as Start-up India, Credit Guarantee Scheme, Credit Assessment Model (CAM) launched by public sector banks, Amendment of Insurance laws, RBI Master's Directions, Securities Markets Code 2025 (SMC) and others. Talking about the ongoing business environment trends in the manufacturing sector, Virender Kumar, Vice President of Marketing, Arete Group said in a note, "India's manufacturing sector remains a key pillar of economic growth, contributing 16-17pc to GDP while driving employment exports and industrial expansions. As the country advances its ambition of

becoming a global manufacturing hub, sustained policy reforms are creating a more enabling, investment-friendly environment for businesses to scale." He noted that the initiatives such as Startup-India, Credit Guarantee Scheme, and digital credit assessment models, are building a transparent, tech-enabled and investor-friendly ecosystem. In past years, the government has eased regulatory frameworks for promoting small businesses to start. Initiatives like Startup-India allows companies to obtain recognition as startups from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Education as service has significant potential to contribute to India's export earnings: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said that education as a service has significant potential to contribute to India's export earnings and help them take high quality Indian education to the rest of the world.

Addressing the Vice Chancellor's conclave on 'Reimagining Internationalisation of Higher Education for Viksit Bharat 2047' here, Goyal said that he would like to engage with Vice Chancellors and hear their ideas and thoughts on the future of higher education in India.

"The future growth engines of the world are likely to be countries that are less developed or developing, such as India. Therefore, exposure to India would help students from developed countries in their future careers," said Goyal.

Minister Goyal sees growing recognition of this trend while negotiating service chapters in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

"Nearly two-thirds of global trade is now covered by India's FTAs because the country has engaged with

more developed and evolved economies," the minister noted.

"If India is currently contributing around 20 per cent of global growth and has emerged as an engine of growth, then in the future the younger generations across the world will increasingly need to work with countries such as India."

The Minister said that India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was the result of extensive nationwide consultations and reflects the government's vision to align the country's education system with global standards.

Addressing a gathering of Vice Chancellors, the minister said the policy was drafted after wide-ranging discussions with educationists, experts, and stakeholders from India and abroad under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Nearly three lakh suggestions and feedback were received during the consultation process, each of which was carefully examined before the policy was finalised.

Goyal noted that the policy emerged after years of deliberation and reflects the Prime Minister's consulta-



tive style of functioning.

He said the reforms have opened India's education system to global opportunities by encouraging international campuses to set up in the country and enabling collaborations between

foreign and Indian universities for dual-degree programmes.

The policy also promotes cross-border student exchanges so that Indian students can gain exposure to education systems abroad while

international students can experience India's academic environment.

Highlighting the need to attract more foreign students, the minister suggested flexible programme models such as students spending part of their academic tenure in India and the remainder in their home institutions.

According to him, such arrangements would help students from developed nations understand the social, cultural and economic dynamics of developing countries like India.

Describing Vice Chancellors as "architects of India's future", Goyal said higher education leaders play a vital role in shaping the next generation. He stressed that universities must continuously update their curricula and teaching methods to remain aligned with emerging global trends. Teachers, he added, should also undergo retraining and relearning to stay updated with future-oriented knowledge.

The minister emphasised that outdated curricula cannot prepare students for future challenges. Institutions must remain agile and focus on areas such as artificial intelligence,

quantum computing and machine learning, which will drive India's growth as a global technology powerhouse.

Goyal also called for the inclusion of subjects like international trade and India's Free Trade Agreements in academic curricula so that students better understand opportunities in the global economy. He expressed confidence that knowledge of international law and trade rules would help young Indians contribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat during the Amrit Kaal.

He said that with improved teaching standards and modern facilities, India can reverse the current trend where around 28 Indian students go abroad for every one foreign student coming to India. The country, he said, has the potential to attract nearly 1.3 million international students in the coming years.

The minister concluded by urging stronger collaboration between academia, government and industry to internationalise higher education and transform India into a global education hub by 2047.