



The Age of Truth

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PG 02

In a war-like situation, priorities of Parliament and govt should be set accordingly: Akhilesh Yadav

PG 03

Delhi BJP chief welcomes HC decision to hear plea against discharge of Kejriwal in liquor policy case



PG 6

Three Candidates Remain in Fray for Haryana Rajya Sabha Seats



PG 7

Suryakumar calls India's T20 WC campaign 'wonderful journey'



PG 8

Sensex crashes 1,352 pts, Nifty down 422 amid geopolitical concerns

PM calls for innovation-driven growth and inclusive opportunities at post-budget webinar

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India is steadily moving toward an innovation-driven economy and stressed the need to strengthen links between education, technology and employment while ensuring inclusive opportunities for all sections of society.

Addressing a post-Budget webinar via video conferencing on the theme "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas - Fulfilling Aspirations of People," the Prime Minister highlighted the government's focus on preventive healthcare, skill development and sports as key pillars of national development.

"India today is working with a vision of preventive and holistic health," Modi said, noting that the country's healthcare ecosystem has significantly strengthened in recent years.

He pointed to the expansion of medical education and public health services across the country.

"Over the past few years, the country's health infrastructure has become stronger. Hundreds of

districts now have new medical colleges, and through the Ayushman Bharat scheme and Arogya Mandirs, access to healthcare services has been expanded to villages across the country," he said.

The Prime Minister also referred to the growing global interest in India's traditional wellness systems.

"Our traditions of yoga and Ayurveda are becoming popular all over the world," he said, underlining the role of traditional knowledge systems in promoting holistic healthcare.

Emphasising the need to align education with emerging economic opportunities, Modi said the country must move faster in connecting its education system to the real-world economy.

"We must accelerate the process of linking our education system with the real-world economy. We need to increase our focus on areas such as AI and automation, the digital economy, and design-driven manufacturing," he said, adding that India is steadily progressing

toward an innovation-driven economic model.

Highlighting the importance of inclusivity in technological advancement, the Prime Minister said access to opportunities must



reach every section of society.

"As we prepare for futuristic technologies, it is extremely important that no daughter is forced to stop due to a lack of opportunities," he said.

Modi also underscored the role of sports in nation-building, noting that it has increasingly been recognised as a vital component of development

ecosystem," he said, adding that sports infrastructure is being strengthened across the country.



The webinar forms part of the government's broader effort to translate the announcements made in the union Budget into actionable strategies across key sectors of the economy. The event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, domain experts

and other stakeholders to deliberate on implementing the priorities outlined in the budget and ensuring that policy initiatives move quickly from announcement to execution.



Such consultations have become a regular feature of the government's post-budget outreach in recent years, aimed at strengthening engagement with industry and experts.

Officials said the discussions are intended to build consensus around policy goals while identifying practical pathways for implementing the government's

development agenda.

Under the overarching theme of inclusive growth, the programme included multiple breakout sessions covering sectors such as education and skilling, health and AYUSH, and tourism and hospitality.

The discussions are expected to focus on strengthening the link between education and employment, expanding skill development initiatives and creating opportunities in emerging industries likely to shape the future workforce.

Among the initiatives under discussion is the development of Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) content creator labs, which are being promoted as part of India's push to build a globally competitive digital creative ecosystem.

The initiative aims to encourage innovation, support young creators and position India as a major hub in the rapidly growing global creative technology industry.

Healthcare is another major

focus of the deliberations.

Sessions are exploring ways to expand the pool of allied health professionals and caregiver training programmes, along with proposals to develop regional medical hubs that could strengthen healthcare infrastructure and improve access to specialised services across different parts of the country. Expansion of institutions under the traditional medicine framework of the Ministry of AYUSH is also expected to be part of the policy dialogue.

Tourism and hospitality have been identified as another key growth area. Officials said discussions include strategies for hospitality skill development, the creation of sustainable tourism trails and the promotion of heritage tourism across regions.

Plans to strengthen the Buddhist tourism circuit in the North-Eastern region are also expected to be examined as part of the government's broader effort to leverage cultural and spiritual heritage to boost tourism and regional development.

Lok Sabha adjourned for day amid Opposition protests over demand for debate on West Asia crisis

New Delhi: Proceedings in the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day on Monday following repeated disruptions and sloganeering by Opposition members demanding an immediate discussion on the escalating conflict in West Asia, even as the Chair indicated it was ready to allow a no-confidence motion moved by the Opposition.

The House witnessed a turbulent start to the second half of Parliament's Budget session, with Opposition MPs raising slogans and insisting that the Chair first permit a detailed debate on the West Asia situation. Despite assurances from the Chair that the Opposition's no-confidence motion would be taken up, members continued to press for a discussion on the international crisis and its implications for India.

Earlier in the day, the Lok Sabha was adjourned

twice, first till noon and later till 3 pm, after protests broke out during a statement by External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on the rapidly evolving situation in the Gulf region. Jaishankar was briefing the House on the government's assessment of the crisis and its potential impact on India when Opposition MPs repeatedly interrupted the proceedings, chanting "we want discussion".

Opposition parties argued that the gravity of the situation warranted a full-fledged debate in Parliament rather than a statement by the government. They raised concerns about the possible effects of the conflict on global energy supplies and the safety of millions of Indians living and working in West Asian countries.

The disruptions forced the Chair to first adjourn the House until noon. When proceedings resumed,

protests continued, and the House was again adjourned until 3 pm soon after Jaishankar completed his statement.



Outside Parliament, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh criticised the government for not allowing an immediate discussion in the Upper House as well. "As expected the External Affairs Minister made a suo motu statement on the situation in the Rajya Sabha on which no questions can be asked or clarifications sought. The entire Opposition wanted an immediate discussion on the

West Asian situation. This was denied and hence the Opposition walkout after protests," he said.

Opposition parties have

been demanding debates on several issues that they say require urgent parliamentary scrutiny. These include the conflict in West Asia, concerns over electoral roll revisions in West Bengal and the broader implications of global geopolitical tensions for India's economy and diaspora.

Monday's proceedings also carried added political significance as the Lok Sabha

was scheduled to take up an Opposition-sponsored resolution seeking the removal of Speaker Om Birla. Several Opposition parties backing the motion have accused Birla of functioning in a "partisan" manner, an allegation strongly rejected by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

The BJP issued a whip directing its MPs to remain present in the House during the discussion and possible voting on the motion, signalling a likely confrontation between the treasury benches and the Opposition.

With tensions already high over procedural issues and demands for debates on key national and international developments, the repeated adjournments on Monday suggested that the remainder of the Budget session could witness further sharp political clashes inside Parliament.

Mojataba Khamenei appointed Iran's Supreme Leader: Iran Army, people declare loyalty to Mojataba

Tehran/New Delhi: Ayatollah Mojataba Khamenei has been appointed the Supreme Leader of Iran following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who was killed in Israeli-US airstrike on February 28.

Iran's Mehr News Agency (MNA) said 'The Assembly of Experts of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced Ayatollah Seyyed Mojataba Khamenei as the third Leader of the Islamic Revolution early on Monday.' In a statement, the Assembly of Experts said that immediately after the 'martyrdom' of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and despite wartime conditions, enemy threats, and a bombing of the Assembly's offices, it did not hesitate in selecting a new leader.

In line with its constitutional and internal duties, the Assembly swiftly took the necessary steps to convene an extraordinary



session and appoint the successor, the statement added. Following Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's 'assassination,' a three-member temporary leadership council—including President Masoud Pezeshkian and Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejeli—led the country until a new leader was chosen. Iranian Army, officials and people pledged allegiance to Ayatollah Seyyed Mojataba

Khamenei, MNA said. In statements early Monday, various officials and organizations in Iran declared their loyalty to the newly-selected leader. General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces in a statement, while pledging allegiance to Mojataba Khamenei, affirmed that it would stand against the enemies conspiracies and spare no effort in defending the country.

Saudi Arabia condemns Iranian attacks, affirms right to safeguard security

Riyadh: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Monday strongly condemned the recent Iranian attacks targeting the Kingdom, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and several Arab, Islamic, and friendly countries, describing them as "unacceptable and unjustifiable under any circumstances."

In a statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that the Kingdom reserves its full

right to take all necessary measures to protect its security, sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens and residents, and to deter further aggression.

The Ministry highlighted that the attacks, which targeted civilian infrastructure, airports, and oil facilities, threaten regional security and stability and constitute blatant violations of international law and charters.

Addressing recent remarks by

the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who claimed there were no plans to attack neighboring countries, Saudi Arabia stated that these declarations have not been reflected in practice.

The Kingdom noted that Iranian attacks continued despite the President's statement, citing unfounded claims regarding Saudi military activity.

Saudi Arabia clarified that its fighter jets and refueling aircraft

were engaged solely in air patrols to monitor and protect the airspace of the Kingdom and GCC states from Iranian missiles and drones.

The Kingdom emphasised that the ongoing Iranian attacks constitute a significant escalation, with serious implications for bilateral relations, and warned that Iran's actions do not reflect prudent measures to prevent further regional escalation, in which Iran would stand to lose the most.



Indian carriers plan 50 flights on Monday amid evolving West Asia airspace situation

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation is closely monitoring the evolving situation in the West Asia region that is affecting air travel between India and several Middle Eastern destinations.

According to the Ministry, airlines are making necessary operational adjustments in view of the prevailing conditions to ensure passenger safety and the orderly conduct of flight operations.

Passenger movement data for March 7, 2026 showed that a total of 51 inbound flights operated by Indian carriers arrived in India from the region, carrying 8,175 passengers. For March 8, 2026, Indian carriers — Air India, Air India Express, Indigo, SpiceJet and Akasa — planned 49 inbound flights from airports in the region. These included Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Muscat and Jeddah, subject to operational feasibility and prevailing conditions. As per the current status, Indian carriers are planning to operate 50 flights on Monday.

The Ministry said airlines are continuously assessing the ground situation at other airports in the region so that additional flights can be operated if required. It added that the Ministry remains in constant coordination with airlines and other stakeholders. Airfares are also being closely monitored to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable and that there is no undue surge during this period. Passengers have been advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines for the latest updates regarding flight schedules. The Ministry said it will continue to monitor the situation closely and issue further updates as necessary.

UN Sec Gen says world economy at grave risk, could go beyond control; Trump says small price to pay, only 'fools' would differ

New Delhi: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned against continued military strikes across the Middle East, saying the world economy is at grave risk, and the situation could spiral beyond anyone's control.

However, US President Donald Trump said it is a "small price to pay for the US, world safety and peace, and only fools would think differently."

"It is time to stop the fighting and get to serious diplomatic negotiations," the UN Chief said, adding that the unlawful attacks by all sides are causing tremendous suffering for civilians across the whole Middle East region.

The UN Secretary General's statement came as US President Donald Trump said short-term oil prices would drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iranian nuclear threat is over.

"Short-term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, are a very small price to pay for the US and world safety and peace. ONLY FOOLS WOULD THINK DIFFERENTLY," Trump said on his social media platform.

"Crude prices have spiked to their highest levels in at least 14 years, exceeding 100 USD per barrel for the first time since 2022, as the Iran war ensnares countries critical to the

production and movement of oil and gas from the Gulf," EuroNews said.



Representative to the UN, Amir Iravani urged the Security Council to "act now, firmly, clearly and without delay — failure to act will have catastrophic consequences.

Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Arsenio Dominguez, said about 3,000



vessels and 20,000 seafarers are caught in the region. He warned of a global "knock-on" effect from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz through which 20 per cent of the world's oil is traded.

The crucial Strait of Hormuz global shipping corridor marking the entrance to the Persian Gulf is essentially closed due to the threat of strikes from Iran and elsewhere.

According to reports, the current global energy situation, especially since the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, is extremely precarious, as the conflict has triggered a massive supply shock following the effective closure of the Strait.

Brent crude oil skyrocketed over 23 per cent on March 9, surpassing 114 USD per barrel.

Approximately 20 per cent (one-fifth) of global crude oil and natural gas supplies have been suspended due to the conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz, which normally handles 15–20 million barrels of oil daily, is at a near standstill. Major energy facilities in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Israel (Haifa refinery) have been targeted. India, China, Japan, and South Korea account for 75 per cent of oil and 59 per cent of LNG flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

India imports roughly 47–50 per cent of crude from West Asia. Every 10 USD/barrel increase in oil prices will add 13–14 billion USD to India's annual import bill. India has approximately 250 million barrels of crude and products in reserve, providing a buffer for seven to eight weeks.



In a war-like situation, priorities of Parliament and govt should be set accordingly: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party (SP) National President Akhilesh Yadav said that when the Budget Session of Parliament was recessed, the circumstances were different, but today, due to the war-like situation, the country is facing new challenges.

In such a crisis, the priorities of Parliament and the government should be set accordingly.

On Monday, via social media, Akhilesh Yadav said that at this time, the first priority is to present India's clear position and opinion in the event of war.

Furthermore, the question of mortgaging foreign policy under pressure is also serious.

He said that India's traditionally independent foreign policy has always been



driven by national interests. Akhilesh Yadav said that India should have the right to self-determination even in matters of vital supplies like oil.

If decisions are made

based on foreign pressure or US orders, it raises questions about the country's sovereignty and self-reliance.

He also stated that ensuring the safety of Indian

citizens working or visiting war-affected areas is the government's foremost responsibility.

Concrete steps should be taken to ensure the safe and speedy return of all

stranded Indians to India.

The Samajwadi Party president stated that some journalists and media personnel who accompanied the Prime Minister on his foreign tour have also been unable to return due to the outbreak of hostilities. The government should ensure their safety and make arrangements for their safe return to the country.

Akhilesh Yadav also stated that in a war situation, the risk of disruption to the supply of essential commodities increases. Therefore, the government should take effective steps to ensure regular and assured supply of essential commodities and control their rising prices, so that the general public is not burdened with additional economic burden.

Three drug smugglers arrested in Manipur border town

Imphal: In a major anti-narcotics operation, security forces arrested three alleged drug smugglers during a raid conducted at a hotel in Moreh, a border town adjoining Myanmar, officials said on Monday.

Moreh, located in Manipur, is considered a sensitive border point due to its proximity to Myanmar and its role as an important transit route for cross-border trade. However, authorities have also reported frequent incidents of illegal activities, including drug trafficking and smuggling operations, in the region.

According to police officials, the raid was carried out on Sunday based on specific intelligence inputs regarding the movement and concealment of narcotic substances in the town. Acting on the information, security forces launched a targeted operation at a hotel suspected to be used by drug traffickers.



The operation was conducted by a joint team of personnel from Manipur Police along with other security agencies. Officers surrounded the premises and carried out a detailed search of the location. During the raid, three individuals allegedly involved in drug trafficking activities were taken into custody. The swift action prevented the suspected smugglers from escaping and ensured the seizure of the contraband materials. The arrested individuals have been identified as Letminlun Khongsai, Jamgoulen Haokip, and Deikholam

Chongloi. Officials said the suspects are believed to be part of a network engaged in the transportation and distribution of narcotic substances in the region.

Security personnel conducted a thorough search of the hotel room and the suspects' belongings as part of the operation. The search led to the recovery of a significant quantity of contraband substances and other items believed to be linked to the smuggling activities. Among the materials seized were 2.3 kilograms of WY tablets, a synthetic drug commonly trafficked in the northeastern region. The tablets are widely known in the illegal drug market and are often smuggled across international borders. In addition to the narcotic substances, officials also recovered ₹2,00,200 in cash from the accused persons.

10 closed sugar mills revived in Bihar, more to reopen soon: Samrat Choudhary

Patna: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary today said that 10 closed sugar mills in the state have already been revived, and efforts are underway to restart more mills in the coming years.

Addressing the Cane Technology Seminar held at Gyan Bhavan in Patna, Choudhary said that a state once believed to be unsuitable for industries is now witnessing revival under the NDA government. He said that nine to ten sugar mills have already resumed operations in Bihar during the NDA regime.

Referring to the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, the Deputy Chief Minister said that union Home Minister Amit Shah had promised to revive 25 sugar mills in the next five years, and the work toward fulfilling that commitment began soon after the formation of the new government.

Choudhary said Bihar once had a large number of sugar mills and was also known for large-scale production of jag-

gery (gur). However, he alleged that most of the mills were shut down during the Congress and RJD regimes. He added that under the resolve of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, efforts are being made to revive the sugar industry in the state.

The Deputy Chief Minister noted that around 90 percent of sugar mills in Bihar are linked to the cooperative sector. The government plans to strengthen its infrastructure through loans, under which up to 90 percent financing will be provided, while cooperatives will have to contribute only 10 percent.

He also informed that the draft of the Incentive Policy 2026 is being prepared to promote the sugar industry. The government aims to boost sugarcane cultivation and sugar production so that farmers' income increases and workers from Bihar get employment opportunities within the state.

Emphasising the role of technology,

Choudhary said that the time has come to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a strength, adding that technology should become an integral part of life as well as agriculture, including the sugarcane sector. He said the government is working continuously to promote technology-driven agriculture, which is essential for the holistic development of farmers.

He added that provisions for establishing a Centre of Excellence were made in the previous state budget and necessary funds have already been allocated.

The centre will soon be completed, enabling the agriculture sector to benefit from modern technologies.

Choudhary also emphasised the importance of cash crops, saying that, along with paddy, crops like sugarcane should be promoted to enhance farmers' income. He noted that farmers in states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat and Haryana have improved their livelihoods through cash crop cultivation.

Kerala Police launches 'Nirbhaya Nisha' to ensure safe night travel for women

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala Police have launched the Nirbhaya Nisha initiative, a pioneering program designed to endi, where State Police Chief Rawada Chandrashekar flagged off the program, marking its roll-out across fourteen districts. As part of the launch, 28 Force Gurkha jeeps, driven by women police officers, were deployed to strengthen the initiative's operational readiness. The program specifically addresses the safety challenges women face when traveling between 9 pm and 5 am for work, education, medical appointments, family commitments, or personal needs, providing them

sure safe and independent travel for women at any hour across the state.

The inauguration took place at Manaveeyam Vee-

with secure and coordinated public transport support. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who had inaugurated the pilot project on February 24, described Nirbhaya Nisha as a model initiative for women's safety. He emphasised that while Kerala is known for peace and harmony, greater strides are needed in women's empowerment. Through this initiative, the Kerala Police aim to instill confidence among women traveling at night, leveraging modern technology and extensive safety mea-

asures. Emergency and support mechanisms include the Emergency Response and Support System (ERSS), the SOS button in

the Pol mobile app, the 112 helpline, district control rooms, mobile control vehicles, highway patrols, and Pink Patrol vehicles.

BJP seeks fewer poll phases, polling booths in high-rise complexes in memorandum to ECI

Kolkata: A delegation of the West Bengal unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday submitted a detailed memorandum to the Election Commission of India (ECI), demanding key changes in the conduct of the upcoming elections in the state, including holding the polls in fewer phases and setting up polling stations within large high-rise residential complexes. The three-member delegation — comprising Sisir Bajoria, Tapas Roy and Jagannath Chattopadhyay — presented the demands before the full bench of the ECI during its visit to the state. In its memorandum, the party urged the poll panel to conduct the election in a single phase or, at the most, two phases within a short time span instead of the "long drawn 7-8 phases over six weeks" that have been seen in the past. The BJP argued that reducing the number of phases would help curb violence and ensure better administrative control during the election process. Another major demand made by the party concerns polling arrangements in high-rise residential complexes. The BJP requested that polling stations be set up within the premises of large multi-storey housing complexes as per ECI norms on a mandatory basis. The memorandum alleged that in previous elections, local police stations had often obtained refusal letters from such complexes, preventing the establishment of polling booths there and forcing residents to vote elsewhere. The BJP also called for a ban on the West Bengal Police Welfare Organisation, alleging that it functions as a frontal outfit of the ruling party in the state and exerts pressure on police personnel. According to the memorandum, the organisation allegedly coerces police staff into surrendering their ballot papers and is-



sues unofficial instructions that influence election-related activities. The party demanded that the organisation be banned and its offices sealed. On polling day procedures, the BJP proposed the introduction of a two-stage voter identification system. Under the proposal, voters would first be verified by Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel stationed outside the polling station before being checked again inside by the presiding or polling officers. The party said this would help prevent impersonation and bogus voting. The memorandum also recommended that agents of political parties should sit outside the room where polling is conducted rather than inside it, which it claimed is the practice in West Bengal. According to the BJP, such a measure would help maintain order inside polling rooms and prevent undue influence during the voting process. In addition, the party demanded that every polling station be supervised exclusively by CAPF personnel, without the presence of state or city police or volunteers in any capacity, including for queue management. It also suggested that polling officers should comprise an equal mix of state and central government employees to maintain neutrality. Other recommendations included deploying CAPF well in advance for area domination and confidence-building measures, identifying sensitive booths based on past incidents of violence or unusually high turnout, installing webcams at polling stations, and conducting counting only in district.

Kishan Reddy writes to Telangana CM seeking PPA for NTPC Ramagundam Thermal Power Project

Hyderabad: Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy has written to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy urging the state government to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with NTPC Limited for the 3x800 MW thermal power project proposed at Ramagundam as part of its second phase. In the letter, Kishan Reddy requested the Telangana government to cooperate with NTPC in implementing the project and to allow the company sufficient freedom to mobilise the coal required for the complete 5x800 MW power project.

He recalled that in 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and dedicated to the nation two thermal power units of 800 MW each (1,600 MW) at Ramagundam, built with advanced ultra-supercritical technology at a cost of around Rs 12,000 crore.

As part of the second

phase, NTPC has taken steps to establish the remaining three units with a combined capacity of 2,400 MW. Like the first phase, about 85 percent of the electricity generated from the second phase is expected to be supplied to Telangana.

The union Minister noted that Telangana recorded an unprecedented power demand of 18,139 MW on March 3, 2026, and that demand is expected to increase further in the coming years. He also referred to the recent presentation made by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, who emphasised the need to increase thermal power generation in the state by 5,000 to 6,000 MW to maintain grid stability. Kishan Reddy further pointed out that the Deputy Chief Minister had also projected that the state's electricity demand could reach one lakh MW by 2047, and that the state cabinet has already taken a decision to establish a

2,400 MW thermal power project.

Highlighting NTPC's expertise, the union Minister said the company has extensive experience in establishing thermal power plants using advanced ultra-supercritical technology at relatively low cost. He also recalled that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had earlier praised the Ramagundam project during discussions on the power sector in the State Assembly. Kishan Reddy said that if NTPC is given adequate freedom to mobilise coal for the entire 5x800 MW project, the company would be able to generate quality electricity at a lower cost and help meet Telangana's growing power needs.

He added that several southern states are also entering into PPAs with NTPC due to its ability to produce electricity efficiently and economically.

The union Minister

Briefs :

Police busts counterfeit protein supplement racket in Delhi, two held

New Delhi : The Delhi Police busted a racket involved in manufacturing and supplying counterfeit protein supplements in Delhi and the National Capital Region, and arrested two men, an official said on Sunday. The police arrested Mohit Tiwari and Mohit Dixit, both residents of Brahmpuri in northeast Delhi, from the Brahmpuri area on March 6, and recovered about 100 Kg of fake nutritional supplements and over 55 Kg of raw materials from their possession. According to the police, a case was registered at the Crime Branch police station against them. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that they were involved in manufacturing counterfeit protein supplements and led the police to illegal factories operating in the locality, the officer said. Police said the accused were preparing fake protein supplements using raw materials such as maltodextrin, cocoa powder and flavouring agents, and sold them in the market under labels of reputed brands. "A total of around 100 kilograms of counterfeit protein supplements and about 55 kilograms of raw materials used in their preparation were recovered during the operation," the officer said. Besides, the police also recovered packaging materials, empty jars, hologram stickers, flavouring agents and two mixing machines, he said.

Man shot dead in broad daylight in Bawana

New Delhi : A 24-year-old man was shot dead near a banquet hall in broad daylight in the Bawana area on Sunday, the police said. The deceased has been identified as Bhupender (24), a resident of Panaa Basti Wada, Pooth Khurd, Delhi. The incident took place near Raj Vatika in the Pooth Khurd area, they said. "After getting information, a police team rushed to the spot and found the man lying critically injured with a gunshot wound. He was shifted to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival," a police officer said. "We have registered an FIR and initiated further investigation. Police teams have been deployed to gather manual and technical intelligence to identify and apprehend the accused involved in the incident," the officer said, adding that investigators are scanning CCTV footage from nearby areas. A case was registered under Section 103(1) of the BNS and other relevant section at the Bawana police station.

8 more arrested in Uttam Nagar Holi clash that left youth dead

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Monday said that it has arrested seven more people and apprehended a minor in connection with the death of a youth, in a clash on Holi, in West Delhi's Uttam Nagar. The deceased, identified as Tarun, died after sustaining severe injuries in the clash that was allegedly triggered by a dispute between two families from different communities over a balloon, in the JJ Colony area on March 4, according to police.

So far, a total 14 have been arrested, while two minors have been detained, DCP Dwarka Kushal Pal Singh said. The arrested individuals were identified as Sayra (40), Sarifan (50), Salma (36), Suhail (21), Sameer Chauhan (20), Firoj (22) and Ismile (50). Earlier on Sunday, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi carried out a demolition drive and razed illegal portions of the house linked to the main accused.

Delhi BJP chief welcomes HC decision to hear plea against discharge of Kejriwal in liquor policy case

New Delhi: Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday welcomed the decision of the Delhi High Court to admit for hearing the petition challenging the discharge of former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and others by a lower court of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam.

Addressing a press conference in the national capital, Sachdeva said the manner in which the High Court stayed certain remarks made by the CBI court against CBI officials has raised questions over the lower court's verdict. Sachdeva said that although judicial processes may take time, truth ultimately prevails.

He added that the question of whether the government led by Arvind Kejriwal was involved in irregularities in the liquor policy will now be examined by the Delhi High Court through proper legal arguments.

The Delhi BJP President said the party has full respect for the lower CBI court but



maintained that the High Court's decision to stay the remarks against CBI officials indicates concerns regarding the earlier verdict.

Citing discussions among senior legal experts, Sachdeva alleged that several shortcomings had been pointed out in the lower court's decision. These included the alleged disregard of the report of the Ranjan Gogoi Committee by the Delhi government, claims that an accused, Zakir Khan,

attempted to influence public opinion through fake emails, and the alleged recovery of evidence related to hawala payments during the Goa elections from mobile phones linked to Kejriwal and Sisodia.

He also said that by allowing proceedings initiated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to continue, the High Court has strengthened the judicial process in the matter.

Sachdeva further re-

marked that discharge or acquittal by a lower court is not unusual in corruption cases.

He cited examples of leaders such as Lalu Prasad, A Raja and Kanimozhi who were earlier discharged by lower courts but later faced convictions or major legal consequences.

The Delhi BJP chief added that celebrations following such decisions often prove short-lived as legal scrutiny continues in higher courts.

MCD launches 10-day drive to clear garbage, C&D waste from railway tracks and roads

New Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has launched a special 10-day intensive sanitation drive across the national capital aimed at removing garbage and construction and demolition (C&D) waste from railway tracks, roads, lanes, and other vulnerable public spaces. The initiative is part of a broader effort to improve sanitation and reduce dust pollution in the city.

According to civic officials, the campaign focuses on clearing municipal solid waste, C&D debris, and other garbage from several critical locations, including roads, service lanes, open plots, drain embankments, and areas situated along railway tracks in different zones of the city.

Authorities said that the drive is being carried out simultaneously in multiple parts of Delhi to ensure that accumulated waste is removed quickly and efficiently. The campaign also aims to prevent the dumping of debris in public areas that contributes to environmental pollution.

Special priority during



the campaign is being given to the removal of garbage accumulated along railway tracks, which often becomes a major sanitation concern and poses risks to both commuters and nearby residents.

Another key focus area of the drive is the removal of construction and demolition debris dumped on roads and other public spaces. Such debris often contributes to dust pollution and obstructs pedestrian movement as well as traffic flow.

Officials stated that Zonal Deputy Commissioners have already conducted detailed assessments of waste accumulation along railway tracks. These assessments were carried out in coordination with railway authorities to identify locations requiring immediate attention.

Following the surveys, respective municipal zones have started clearing operations to remove garbage and debris from the identified areas. Sanitation teams have been deployed with the necessary equipment and vehicles to expedite the process.

As part of the drive, sanitation workers are actively clearing C&D waste and garbage from roads, lanes, and by-lanes, ensuring that public spaces remain clean and accessible.

Teams are also lifting municipal solid waste from areas near railway tracks, which often become dumping grounds due to their relatively isolated locations.

In addition to this, the campaign includes the clean-

Delhi opens new chapter in organ donation, city govt signs MoU with Centre

New Delhi: Delhi government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of India under the National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP), paving the way for the establishment of the State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) in the national capital.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the agreement marks an important step toward strengthening the organ donation and transplant ecosystem in Delhi.

According to her, once SOTTO is established, the entire system of organ donation and transplantation in the capital will become more structured, efficient and better coordinated.

The Chief Minister explained that organ transplantation in India currently functions under a three-tier framework established under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994 and the 2014 Rules.

At the national level, the system is managed by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), while Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (ROTTO) operate at the regional level and State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTTO) function at the state level.

She explained that until now, many coordination tasks related to organ transplantation in Delhi were being carried out through NOTTO.

However, despite the presence of a large number of transplant centers in the capital, a separate SOTTO system had not yet been established.

The establishment of SOTTO will create a separate and robust system at the state level to handle organ transplantation related tasks.

With SOTTO in place, the Chief Minister said Delhi will be able to streamline several key processes, including organ allocation and waiting list management, coordination between transplant hospitals and organ retrieval centres, promotion of deceased organ donation, and the creation of green corridors to transport organs swiftly when required.

The organisation will also maintain transplant records and ensure proper reporting of transplant activities.

Gupta added that the government will also intensify efforts to raise awareness about organ donation. Information, education, communication (IEC) and awareness campaigns will be conducted to encourage more people to pledge organ donation.

Training programmes will also be organised for transplant coordinators and hospital staff to strengthen their skills and capacity. These measures, she said, will help improve the implementation and monitoring of the National Organ Transplant Programme.

The Chief Minister further said that the MoU with the central government will bring several forms of support for Delhi.

This includes financial assistance for setting up and running SOTTO, one-time infrastructure support to establish offices and IT systems, and regular grants to cover manpower and operational costs.

In addition, the Centre will support the expansion of organ donation awareness campaigns and training initiatives for transplant professionals.

Government hospitals in Delhi

will also receive assistance to develop organ retrieval centres and transplant facilities, further strengthening the city's transplant infrastructure.

The CM said the establishment of SOTTO will make the organ donation and transplant system in Delhi more organised, transparent and efficient.

It will improve transparency in organ allocation and waiting list management while also strengthening coordination among hospitals.

"This system will play a crucial role in promoting deceased organ donation and enabling quicker implementation of measures like green corridors when needed," she said.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the initiative will help ensure that life-saving organs reach patients in need on time, giving many of them a second chance at life. She added that the Delhi government will continue working to turn organ donation into a people's movement, while strengthening healthcare institutions and expanding awareness so that more lives can be saved through this initiative.

Unseasonal heat grips Delhi, temperature touches 35.3°C: IMD

New Delhi: Delhi continued to reel under unusually warm conditions, with the maximum temperature crossing 35°C for the third consecutive day.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the city's base weather station at Safdarjung Observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 35.3°C on Monday, nearly 7°C above the normal for this time of the year.

According to IMD data, this is the third straight day of appreciably above-normal temperatures in the national capital. The mercury had risen to 35.7°C on Saturday, an unusually high reading for the first week of March.

In comparison, last year

the temperature crossed the 35°C mark only in the second week of March, on March 14, when it touched 36.2°C. In recent years, the closest early instance was in 2021, when the mercury exceeded 35°C on March 11.

The weather department has forecast a further rise in temperatures in the coming days, with the maximum in Delhi likely to reach around 38°C by Wednesday.

While Delhi is experiencing a warmer-than-usual March, conditions are even more severe in parts of north-western India.

"Severe heatwave conditions prevailed at many places over Saurashtra and Kutch, at a few places over the Gujarat region, and in

isolated pockets of Himachal Pradesh on March 9," IMD officials said.

Temperatures crossed 40°C at several locations in the region. Rajkot and Surendranagar recorded 41.6°C each, followed by New Kandla (41.4°C) and Ahmedabad (41.2°C).

Meteorologists attribute the early spike in temperatures to weak western disturbances. Some experts have also flagged the increasing likelihood of the development of El Niño conditions later this year. El Niño, a periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean, can influence weather patterns across the world, including India's monsoon.

Delhi CM meets family of Uttam Nagar victim, assures strict action

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday met the family of young man, who was killed in the recent incident in Uttam Nagar, at the Delhi Secretariat and expressed deep condolences.

In a post on X, Gupta said the Delhi government stands firmly with the victim's family during this difficult time and shares their grief.

During Holi celebrations in southwest Delhi's Uttam Nagar, 26-year-old Tarun has died after sustaining severe injuries in the clash that was allegedly triggered by a dispute between two families from different communities over a balloon.

The Chief Minister said ensuring justice for the family is the government's top priority and clear directions have been issued to ensure strict and swift legal action against all those involved in the crime.

She also said the Delhi government will provide all possible assistance and support to the family, adding that necessary steps are being taken to ensure the safety and protection of the victim's family.

Gupta said such inhuman and violent incidents will not be tolerated in Delhi and strict action against the accused will send a clear message that there is no place for crime in the national capital.

AAP's claim of being 'kattar imaandar' is being exposed, says Delhi Minister

New Delhi: Delhi's Education Minister Ashish Sood on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the alleged liquor policy scam and the recent judicial developments linked to it.

"The Delhi High Court on Monday granted an interim stay on a lower court order that had directed departmental action against a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officer involved in the investigation of the Delhi excise policy case," Sood said at a presser at Delhi Secretariat.

"The High Court has stayed the order and paused further proceedings for the time being", Sood added.

He said AAP had started its political journey claiming to fight corruption, but alleged that it did not make any serious effort to curb corruption. He also referred to a discussion at the India Islamic Centre on February 24, 2014, where he claimed the party leadership avoided addressing questions related to corruption.

The minister said the path for investigating a major corruption case involving public money in Delhi has now opened and that investigating agencies and courts would soon deliver their conclusions. Drawing a comparison with cricket, he remarked that AAP leaders started celebrating too early and declared themselves "kattar imaandar" (strictly honest). He said that after an appeal filed by the CBI, the High Court stayed the remarks made against the investigating agency's officials. Sood also alleged that key evidence related to the case was destroyed, claiming that 170 mobile phones and 43 SIM cards were allegedly discarded to erase evidence linked to the liquor policy case. Citing a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the minister said the audit pointed



to a potential loss of around Rs 2,202.68 crore to the government. According to him, the report noted that under the previous liquor policy the government earned about Rs 329.90 per bottle, while under the new policy, the revenue dropped to around Rs 8.32 per bottle. Meanwhile, the retailers' margin increased from Rs 33.35 to Rs 363.27, he claimed.

Sood said that due to these factors the government eventually withdrew the policy, yet AAP continued to maintain that there was no corruption involved. He added that the High Court's observations indicate that the law will take its course and the investigation will proceed further. While AAP has repeatedly projected itself as "kattar imaandar", he said the truth is gradually emerging. The minister also said that investigating agencies have questioned hundreds of individuals in connection with the case and recorded several statements. He alleged that AAP has consistently tried to give the issue a political colour and play the "victim card". Sood said that AAP must answer before the people of Delhi why mobile phones and SIM cards were destroyed, why the liquor policy had to be withdrawn, and why there was a significant decline in government revenue. He added that the court proceedings mark an important development in Delhi's political landscape as the facts surrounding AAP's claims continue to come under scrutiny.

Delhi High Court stays trial court observations made against CBI in excise policy case

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has granted significant relief to central investigative agencies in connection with the alleged Delhi excise policy scam by staying the adverse observations made by the trial court against the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and its investigating officer. The matter was heard by a bench headed by Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma, who examined the petition filed by the CBI challenging the trial court's order that had discharged several accused in the case.

During the proceedings, the High Court or-

dered a stay on the observations made by the trial court against the federal investigative agency. The remarks had been included in the order passed by the trial court while discharging the accused in the alleged scam.

The High Court also directed the trial court to defer further proceedings related to the money laundering case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) until it decides the petition filed by the CBI against the discharge order.

The court's direction effectively pauses further developments in the related proceedings until the High

Court completes its examination of the challenge raised by the investigative agency. In addition, the High Court issued notices to all the accused who were discharged in the case, asking them to file their responses to the CBI's petition. The court has sought detailed replies from the discharged individuals to examine the legal validity of the trial court's decision and the arguments presented by the central agency.

The High Court has scheduled the next hearing in the matter for March 16, when it will continue to hear submissions from both

sides and review the legal issues involved.

The petition before the High Court was filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, challenging the order of the trial court in connection with the alleged Delhi Excise Policy scam. Earlier, the Rouse Avenue Court had discharged or acquitted 21 accused persons in the case, including Arvind Kejriwal, who had been named in connection with the investigation. The trial court had also made certain observations about the conduct of the investigation carried out by the CBI and its officials, which the

agency subsequently challenged before the High Court. During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing on behalf of the Central Government, strongly criticised the alleged irregularities linked to the policy. Mehta told the court that the case involves one of the biggest scams in the country, emphasising the seriousness of the allegations surrounding the excise policy. He further argued that the matter had far-reaching implications and described the alleged scam as a "national shame," urging the court to examine the issues carefully.

Editorial

New strategy in politics?

The acquittal of Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal in the alleged liquor scam that has rocked Delhi's political circles is not just the result of a legal battle, but a spark that will create a big storm in Indian politics in the coming period. Assembly elections in many states of the country are scheduled to be held in the coming year and in 2027. It will be interesting to see whether Kejriwal's release at such a crucial juncture will come in handy for the BJP or become a headache for them. However, who is most worried about this incident is the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi. The six-and-a-half-year saga behind them is not over, and Kejriwal's re-entering the fray is being seen as a sign of a new crisis for the Congress.

There is a general perception that the case against Kejriwal and the treatment he received have shown the country to what extent they can go if the interests of Delhiites are compromised. However, a group of political observers see it differently. It is being expressed that as part of the long-term politics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Kejriwal has not been left free for now. Kejriwal is certainly 'back in business' now, but it would be hasty to conclude that he has returned to power directly. He will have to contest from scratch once again to regain his lost glory. Kejriwal, who was previously known as a simpleton and 'muffler man', has now completely changed and with it the political situation in the country has also changed.

A senior Congress leader, while commenting on the working style of Modi and Kejriwal, had made a strange equation that 'Modi is big Kejriwal' and 'Kejriwal is little Modi'. He said that both these leaders have the same caste and way of communicating. There was never a reaction from the Prime Minister on this statement, because he avoids direct interaction with the media. However, Kejriwal has never liked being compared to Modi. However, it cannot be denied that both these leaders are very eloquent in 'theatrics' i.e. dramatic presentations. Kejriwal's choked voice and tears in his eyes as he talks about how he is 'golden hundred' after coming out of jail and how his honesty is supreme are considered part of his dramatic history.

Kejriwal's political strategy has always been complex. He often pretends that his main battle is with the BJP, but in the actual election arena, he has made the BJP's path easier by diverting Congress votes. From Goa to Gujarat and from Delhi to Punjab, political circles always accuse Kejriwal of indirectly helping the BJP by wooing the Congress votebank. Although the votes his party gets are not decisive, they are enough to keep the Congress out of power. Still, he always asserts that only he has the courage to join hands with the BJP. Because of this arrogance, he never felt it right to remain in the 'India' alliance of the opposition parties or accept anyone's leadership. While it is true that they brought a new grammar of public welfare to the country, the fact that 'no matter how much a frog swells, it cannot become a bull' illustrates their limitations.

The identity of the Aam Aadmi Party is no different from that of a regional party, but Kejriwal always cultivates the arrogance of having won the recognition of a national party within ten years of its formation. It has become difficult to hide the downfall of his party after being ousted from power in Delhi.

The simplicity with which he entered politics has been tarnished by his 'Sheesh Mahal' case and the allegations of liquor scam. Kejriwal, who called the Congress corrupt and agitated for Lokpal with a gun on Anna Hazare's shoulder, forgot his own gurus and the movement as soon as he came to power.

He established his own dictatorship in the party by showing his colleagues like Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav the way out. Today, his hold on the 'AAP' is as strong as Modi's hold on the BJP, where no one is allowed to breathe against him.

Kejriwal's 'theatrics' are compared to Mehmood or Junior Mehmood in the entertainment world. History shows that no one can become a great leader by imitating or just acting.

Kejriwal, who grew up in politics wearing the Gandhi cap of Anna Hazare, has lost a lot of his credibility. However, a group of political experts believe that if Kejriwal really makes a sincere effort for opposition unity, he can create miracles in the elections. He is not a quiet personality.

Kejriwal, who went into exile for some time due to the stain of the liquor scam, is now active again, which will definitely bring new life to politics. With the BJP currently facing a mountain of challenges, everything depends on which path Kejriwal takes. The picture is still open, because even though the lower court has acquitted him, the Delhi government has moved the High Court.

Therefore, the legal sword is still hanging over him. The elections in Punjab next year will be the biggest challenge for him. Although he is currently in power there, the Congress is preparing to correct the mistakes made last time and make a comeback. BJP leaders in Punjab have become unpopular and Captain Amarinder Singh has also upset the people of Delhi by praising the Congress.

In such a situation, Kejriwal has become in a state of 'time is short and the stakes are high'. Although the failure of the BJP's Rekha Gupta government in Delhi is a plus for Kejriwal, it will soon be clear whether his feet remain on the ground in national politics or he will float in the air again. It will be interesting to see who the one-time 'muffler man' will now wrap up or he will be wrapped up himself. Kejriwal's release is a complex turn in the journey of Indian democracy.

The future moves of this leader, caught between allegations of corruption on one side and claims of public welfare on the other, will determine the direction of not only his party but also the politics of many states.

Whether morality is sacrificed in the game of power or truth wins, only time will tell. However, it is certain that this comeback story of Arvind Kejriwal is the beginning of a new chapter of 'power play' in Indian politics.

BEE Commemorates 25th Foundation Day



The 25th Foundation Day of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India, was celebrated today at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, in the presence of senior dignitaries, policy-makers, partner organisations, and stakeholders from across the country.

Shri Manohar Lal, Cabinet Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Shri Pankaj Agarwal, Secretary (Power), delivered the keynote address. Senior officials from Central Ministries, State Governments, State Designated Agencies (SDAs), and partner institutions were also present.

Recalling the famous saying, "Prevention is better than cure," Shri Manohar Lal remarked that the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) functions as a preventive institution for the power sector. Every unit of electricity conserved today directly contributes to reducing the need for additional generation capacity and lowering emissions. By adopting energy-efficient

practices, we not only protect the environment but also secure a cleaner and more sustainable future for coming generations. He also lauded BEE for its significant contribution to advancing energy efficiency initiatives in the country.

Shri Manohar Lal highlighted India's significant progress in meeting its climate commitments and strengthening energy efficiency as a core pillar of national development. He noted that India has reduced the emissions intensity of its GDP by 36% from 2005 levels and achieved 52% non-fossil fuel installed capacity ahead of the 2030 target.



He outlined key achievements under major BEE initiatives, including the Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO), the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) Scheme, the transition to the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE), the AD-EETIE scheme for MSMEs, the Standards & Labelling (S&L) Programme, the Energy Conservation and Sustainable Building Code (ECSBC), and transport sector efficiency measures.

Emphasising the way forward, he underscored the role of energy efficiency in achieving the vision of

Viksit Bharat @2047, while drawing attention to emerging areas such as data centres and Artificial Intelligence, which require efficient and sustainable energy management solutions.

Shri Pankaj Agarwal, Secretary (Power), outlined the evolving contours of India's energy landscape, marked by rising demand, expanding non-fossil capacity, and increasing digitalisation. He described energy efficiency as India's "First Fuel" and a key instrument for balancing energy security, affordability, and sustainability.

He highlighted BEE's initiatives in cooling efficiency through S&L and ECSBC, industrial decar-



bonisation through the Carbon Market and the AD-EETIE scheme, the establishment of energy efficiency hubs, and fuel efficiency improvements in the transport sector.

Earlier, delivering his welcome address, Shri Krishna Chandra Panigrahy, Director General, BEE, reflected on the Bureau's journey and reaffirmed its commitment to accelerating energy efficiency adoption across all sectors of the economy.

On the occasion, the BEE@25 logo was formally released to mark BEE's entry into its 25th year. The

logo symbolically reflects the core principles of energy efficiency, sustainability, and forward-looking innovation. The design prominently integrates the "@25" motif to signify the milestone year while incorporating visual elements that represent energy, growth, and environmental responsibility. The dynamic styling and colour scheme convey continuity, impact, and the Bureau's evolving role in India's energy transition. The commemorative logo will be used across official communications, outreach campaigns, publications, and awareness initiatives throughout the year, serving as the visual identity for the 25th year celebrations and

dination among stakeholders under various energy efficiency programmes. The portal is expected to enhance transparency, improve reporting mechanisms, and support data-driven decision-making within the implementation framework.

The Minister also launched the BEE Star Label Mobile Application, developed in collaboration with CLASP. The application will enable consumers to scan the QR code affixed to star-labelled appliances to instantly access authentic product information, including energy performance, model details, and compliance status. The app aims to enhance transparency, strengthen consumer awareness, and promote informed purchasing decisions by making energy efficiency information easily accessible at the point of sale. This initiative is expected to further reinforce the credibility of the Standards & Labelling Programme and encourage greater adoption of energy-efficient appliances across the country.

The celebration also featured a fireside interaction with former Directors General of BEE, moderated by Dr Satish Kumar, President and Executive Director of the Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE). Retired officials of State Designated Agencies were felicitated for their dedicated service and valuable contributions to advancing energy conservation initiatives at the State level.

The 25th Foundation Day celebration reaffirmed BEE's continued resolve to promote energy efficiency as a driver of sustainable growth, national energy security, and environmental responsibility, and to pave the way for a Viksit and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

"Holistic Development of Districts: Transforming Governance for Viksit Bharat"

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), in collaboration with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, is organizing a day long National Governance Conference on the theme "Holistic Development of Districts: Transforming Governance for Viksit Bharat" on March 3, 2026 at Jammu.

Dr Jitendra Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, and Shri Omar Abdullah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, will jointly inaugurate the National Governance Confer-

ence and deliver the inaugural address. The conference will showcase governance models that have received recognition under the various categories of the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration.

Secretary, DARPG Smt Rachna Shah, and the Chief Secretary, Government of J&K Shri Atal Dulloo, will also address the inaugural session, setting the tone for an engaging exchange of ideas and practices.

The event will commence with a session showcasing Prime Minister's Award-winning initiatives for 2023 and 2024, featuring

presentations from districts and institutions including Eluru (Andhra Pradesh), Gomati (Tirupura), Koraput (Odisha) and Kargil (UT of Ladakh). A second technical session will present additional award-winning initiatives covering aspirational blocks, innovation projects, and holistic district development models from Nalbari (Assam), Kupwara (J&K) and the PRISM 10 initiative of Parvathipuram district in Andhra Pradesh.

A dedicated session on Jammu & Kashmir's Best Practices will highlight governance innovations from Kulgam district, RFID-en-

abled Yatra management by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, and the e-Suvidha initiative of Ramban district.

The Governance Conference, expected to be attended by more than 200 delegates from across India, including senior administrators, domain experts, and practitioners in the field of public administration. The National Governance Conference aims to showcase and disseminate innovative governance practices adopted by districts across the country that have significantly improved service delivery, citizen welfare, and local development outcomes. The

conference seeks to provide a platform for District Collectors, Senior Officials, Policymakers, and Experts to share experiences, exchange ideas, and deliberate on strategies for achieving saturation of flagship schemes, integrated development across sectors, and effective grievance redressal mechanisms. Through fostering collaboration and cross-learning, the governance conference strives to institutionalize successful models, scale up impactful initiatives, and accelerate India's journey towards inclusive and citizen-centric governance at the grassroots level.

CSIR and its Laboratories Celebrate National Science Day 2026 Across the Country with Lectures, Demonstrations and Public Outreach

The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and its laboratories celebrated National Science Day 2026 across the nation through a series of engaging activities including lectures, student visits, demonstrations, and public outreach programmes aimed at promoting scientific awareness and curiosity among young minds and the general public.

This year's National Science Day was observed under the theme "Women in Science: Catalyzing Viksit Bharat", highlighting the pivotal role of women in advancing scientific innovation and shaping a developed and self-reliant India.

As part of the celebrations in the national capital, the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB) and the Science Communication and Dissemination Directorate (SCDD), CSIR Headquarters, organised a special programme to commemorate the life and legacy of Nobel Laureate Sir C. V. Raman and his path-breaking discovery of the Raman Effect.

An exhibition showcasing the life, scientific journey, and pioneering contributions of Sir C. V. Raman was displayed along Dr. C. V. Raman Marg, drawing members of the public and creating awareness about India's rich scientific heritage.

Adding a strong experiential dimension to the celebration, scientists from CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), namely Dr. Subashis Panja, Dr. Shibu Saha,



and Dr. Vidyanand Singh, along with Dr. Soumik Siddhanta and Mr. Himanshu Yadav (Ph.D. student) from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi), conducted a live demonstration of the Raman Effect.

The demonstration enabled participants to witness firsthand the phenomenon that revolutionised modern spectroscopy and continues to underpin advancements in science and technology.



This was followed by an engaging lecture session delivered jointly by the scientists from CSIR-NPL and IIT Delhi, who explained the Raman Effect, its scientific

significance. And its wide-ranging applications in fields such as materials science, chemistry, medicine, and industry. The session was attended by enthusiastic school students as well as undergraduate students from Jamia Hamdard, who interacted actively with the experts.

In addition, participating students were taken on a guided visit to various laboratories at CSIR-IGIB, where they were introduced to ongoing research activities and cutting-edge facilities, further enriching their exposure to contemporary scientific research.

In a special public outreach initiative to mark the occasion, the Science Communication and Dissemination Directorate, CSIR Headquarters, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, organised the illumination of the iconic Qutub Minar in the evening.

The monument was specially lit up to spread awareness about National Science Day and to celebrate the transformative role of science in society.

Through these nationwide activities, CSIR reaffirmed its commitment to fostering scientific temper, inspiring young learners, and bringing science closer to society in meaningful.

And engaging ways, in alignment with the national vision of a science-led Viksit Bharat.



Briefs :

Doctors Resume Work in Karnal After Four-Day Strike

Karnal : Government doctors in Karnal resumed their duties on Monday after ending a four-day strike that had severely disrupted healthcare services in the district.

While emergency services had resumed on Saturday following two days of a complete shutdown, outpatient department services remained suspended until Monday.

The strike was called off after six additional security personnel were suspended in connection with the alleged assault on Dr Prashant Chauhan at the Gharanda Community Health Centre during Holi.

Earlier, the station house officer of Gharanda police station, Deepak Kumar, had already been suspended by Superintendent of Police Narender Bijarniya.

After a meeting between Deputy Commissioner Uttam Singh and representatives of the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association, the SP ordered the suspension of an assistant sub-inspector, a constable and four Home Guards.

Following this action, doctors decided to withdraw their strike and resume normal services.

During the first two days of the protest, doctors had suspended all health services in government hospitals across the district, including emergency care, OPD consultations, laboratory tests, maternity services and post-mortems.

This resulted in a complete shutdown of medical services and caused significant inconvenience to patients.

Later, following a statewide call by the HCMSA to suspend only OPD services from March 7, doctors resumed emergency services but kept OPDs closed.

Dr Sanjay Verma, president of the HCMSA in Karnal, said the decision to call off the strike was taken after the suspension of the additional security personnel.

Mother Jumps Into Well With Daughters, Two Dead

Nuh : A tragic incident was reported from Badopur village in the Ferozepur Jhirka area where a woman allegedly jumped into a well along with her three daughters. Two of the girls died while search operations are continuing for the woman and the third child.

The woman, identified as 28-year-old Sahila, had reportedly gone towards the village well on Monday with her daughters Aqsa (7), Sano-fiya (4) and her six-month-old infant.

After hearing the commotion, villagers rushed to the site and informed the Ferozepur Jhirka police. A large crowd soon gathered near the well as rescue teams began the operation.

The rescue work was difficult because the well is around 70 feet deep and filled with water. With the assistance of villagers and police personnel, two of the children were eventually pulled out, but both were found dead.

Their bodies were sent to Al-Afia Hospital in Mandi Khera for post-mortem examination. Police have also called divers who are using oxygen equipment and nets to locate the woman and the remaining child.

Haryana Doctors End Statewide Strike After Suspensions

Karnal : Government doctors across Haryana ended their strike on Sunday evening after six additional security personnel were suspended in connection with the alleged assault on a doctor at the Community Health Centre in Gharanda.

The decision to withdraw the protest was taken during a state-level meeting of the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association.

Superintendent of Police Narender Bijarniya confirmed that four Home Guards, one assistant sub-inspector and one constable were suspended for negligence in duty, while the station house officer had already been suspended earlier.

The strike had begun after Dr Prashant Chauhan was allegedly assaulted by police personnel at the CHC during Holi celebrations, sparking outrage among the medical fraternity.

Doctors across government hospitals in the state had suspended services in protest, significantly affecting healthcare services.

Initially, doctors in Kar-



nal halted all services, including emergency care, before the association later decided to continue only emergency services while suspending OPDs across the state.

Announcing the end of the strike, HCMSA state president Dr Anil Yadav said the decision was taken after detailed discussions with the association's office-bearers.

He said that with the intervention of Karnal Deputy Commissioner Uttam Singh and the suspension of six police personnel, the association decided to call off the agitation with immediate effect. Since the decision was taken on Sunday, all health services were scheduled to fully resume from Monday. Dr Yadav said the association would continue to sup-

port Dr Prashant Chauhan and his family in their legal fight for justice. He added that the organisation would provide all necessary assistance to ensure that those responsible for the alleged assault are held accountable. During the protest period, only emergency medical services were maintained to ensure that critically ill patients were not affected.

Young Woman Critical After Acid Attack in Gurugram

Gurugram : A 24-year-old woman from Nuh was seriously injured after an alleged acid attack near the district civil hospital late on Sunday evening.

The victim suffered severe burns on her face and several parts of her body and was initially treated at the district civil hospital.

According to preliminary information, the woman had come to Subhash Nagar in Gurugram to visit her maternal aunt.

A young man from Nuh reportedly followed her and confronted her, leading to an argument between the two.

During the altercation, the man allegedly assaulted the woman. Later, her family members took her to the district civil hospital for treatment.

At around 8:30 pm, while she was still at the hospital, the accused allegedly threw acid at her and fled from the spot.

Doctors immediately shifted the woman to the emergency ward and provided initial treatment.

Considering the seriousness of her injuries, doctors referred her to the Pandit

Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Rohtak for advanced treatment.

A 24-year-old woman from Nuh sustained critical injuries after an alleged acid attack near the district civil hospital in Gurugram late on Sunday evening. The incident has shocked local residents and raised serious concerns about safety, particularly around public institutions such as hospitals.

According to preliminary information, the young woman had travelled to Gurugram to visit her maternal aunt who lives in Subhash Nagar.

The visit, which was meant to be a routine family trip, soon turned into a tragic incident when a dispute reportedly broke out involving a young man from her hometown.

Police officials said the accused, who is also believed to be from Nuh, allegedly followed the woman to Gurugram and confronted her when she was in the Subhash Nagar area. The confrontation reportedly led to a heated argument between the two.

During the altercation, the accused allegedly assaulted the woman, causing panic among people nearby. Family members later intervened and took the injured woman to the civil hospital in Gurugram so that she could receive medical treatment.

Doctors at the hospital began treating the woman for injuries she had sustained during the assault. At that time, the situation appeared to be under control as she remained under medical observation within the hospital premises.

However, the situation took a far more serious turn later in the evening. According to hospital staff and eyewitness accounts, the accused allegedly returned to the hospital premises while the woman was still receiving treatment.

At around 8:30 pm, the man reportedly approached the victim again and allegedly threw acid at her before fleeing from the spot. The sudden attack created chaos inside the hospital premises as staff members and attendants rushed to help the injured woman.

Woman Attacks Hospital Patient in Case of Mistaken Identity

Gurugram : Police have arrested a 25-year-old woman for allegedly throwing toilet cleaner on another woman at a government hospital after mistakenly believing she was her husband's girlfriend.

The incident came to light on Sunday night when police at Sector-10A station received information from Civil Hospital that a woman had arrived with injuries suspected to be caused by an acid-like substance.

A police team reached the hospital and recorded the victim's statement after doctors declared her fit to speak.

The victim told police she had been living with a man named Pawan in a flat in Sector-72.

She had come to the hospital after allegedly being assaulted by him earlier in the day.

While she was waiting at the hospital, another woman suddenly threw a corrosive liquid at her, damaging her clothes.

Police registered a case of acid attack at Sector-10A police station, while a sepa-

rate case of assault was registered against Pawan at the Badshahpur police station.

Doctors initially treated the woman and referred her to PGI Rohtak, but she was later discharged as the liquid had mainly fallen on her clothes and dupatta.

The accused, identified as Sakshi from Patuhera village in Rewari district, was arrested in Gurugram on Monday.

During interrogation, Sakshi told police she had a dispute with a woman named Meenakshi, who was a friend of her husband.

Believing Meenakshi was present at the hospital, she allegedly recognised her by the colour of her dupatta and threw toilet cleaner without clearly seeing her face.

However, the liquid hit another woman instead. Police said further investigation into the incident is ongoing.

A 25-year-old woman was arrested in Gurugram for allegedly throwing toilet cleaner on another woman at a government hospital after mistaking her for her husband's girlfriend.

HC Doubts CBI Probe in Chhatrapati Murder Case

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has raised serious questions over the Central Bureau of Investigation's probe in the Ram Chander Chhatrapati murder case and granted the benefit of doubt to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh.

In a detailed 111-page judgment, the Bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Vikram Aggarwal observed that the prosecution failed to establish Ram Rahim's role in the conspiracy beyond reasonable doubt, though evidence against the three co-accused remained intact. The court remarked that the case against Ram Rahim largely depended on the inconsistent testimony of a key witness, Khatta Singh, who was presented as his driver.

According to the Bench, the witness's statements kept changing over time and could not be relied upon. The court said his testimony shifted repeatedly "like a



ping-pong ball", making it unreliable as the basis for conviction.

The judges also expressed concern about the conduct of the CBI during the investigation. They indicated that the witness appeared to have been pressured by the agency to give statements as the investigators were under pressure to

conclude the probe. The court emphasised that the responsibility of a premier investigating agency was to uncover the truth rather than pursue methods aimed solely at securing a conviction.

The judgment further noted that Khatta Singh did not initially name Ram Rahim when his statement was recorded in December 2006,

nor did any co-accused mention the Dera chief in their disclosure statements.

Even during investigations related to another murder case involving Ranjit Singh, the witness did not link Ram Rahim with the Chhatrapati killing.

It was only in June 2007, almost five years after the incident, that the witness first

alleged that Ram Rahim had directed the murder.

The High Court also observed that Ram Rahim's status as a prominent religious leader with a large following had created a complex backdrop to the case.

The Bench noted that public figures often attract both admirers and critics, and extreme devotion among followers could sometimes lead to independent actions by individuals acting out of personal zeal.

After examining the evidence, the court said the possibility that the three accused acted on their own could not be ruled out.

The Bench also cautioned courts against being influenced by media narratives and public sentiment while deciding criminal cases.

It reiterated that the guilt of an accused must be proven beyond reasonable doubt, and whenever reasonable doubt arises, the benefit must go to the accused.

Saini Targets Punjab Govt Over Action on Women

Chandigarh : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab over the alleged lathi-charge and use of water cannons against women protesters in Mohali.

Speaking to the media, Saini said the incidents occurred on International Women's Day when women should have been honoured rather than subjected to force.

He claimed that several



women were injured in the action and many were still undergoing treatment in hos-

pitals. Saini alleged that with only eight months left before

the Punjab Assembly elections, the AAP government was focusing on populist announcements rather than governance.

He also accused former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of "looting Punjab" and leaving the state in difficulty.

The Chief Minister further claimed that when he visited Punjab for public programmes, the venues of his events were often shifted multiple times.

Gunshots Fired at Luxury Car Showroom in Gurugram

Gurugram : Panic spread in Gurugram late Saturday night after unidentified assailants opened fire at a luxury car showroom near Hero Honda Chowk. The attackers fired several rounds at the showroom as well as a luxury car belonging to a real estate businessman that was parked outside the premises.

During the incident, the driver sitting inside the car sustained minor injuries when a bullet grazed him. He was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. The firing caused significant damage to vehicles inside the show-

room, and the glass panels at the entrance were shattered. Police reached the scene soon after receiving information and began an investigation. The showroom owner later filed a complaint at Sector-37 police station.

Police said the owner of the BBT company had earlier received extortion threats from the gang in October 2024, when a demand for crores of rupees was allegedly made. An FIR had been registered at that time as well, but no group has so far claimed responsibility for the latest attack. According

to Gurugram police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar, three suspects involved in the firing have been identified as Atul, Deepak and Neeraj, all residents of Kulasi village in Jhajjar district. Witnesses told investigators that the attackers arrived on a motorcycle and first fired at a car parked outside the Big Boy Toyz showroom.

One of the bullets razed the driver, Rajpal. The assailants then fired multiple rounds at the showroom building, damaging luxury vehicles and shattering the glass facade.

Massive Fire Breaks Out at Scrap Yard

Gurugram : A major fire erupted at an open scrap yard in Kankrola village of Gurugram on Monday morning, causing panic in the surrounding area.

The Manesar fire station received information about the blaze and immediately dispatched a team from IMT Manesar to the site.

As the flames intensified, additional fire tenders from Sector-37, Sector-29, Honda Manesar and Maruti Manesar fire stations were rushed to assist in controlling the fire.

Fire Station Officer Lalit Kumar said the fire spread rapidly because the scrap yard contained highly combustible materials such as

plastic, rubber and old machinery.

Thick smoke from the blaze spread to nearby areas, affecting visibility and raising concern among local residents.

Firefighters continued their efforts to contain the flames and prevent them from spreading to nearby structures.

A massive fire broke out at an open scrap yard in Kankrola village of Gurugram on Monday morning, triggering panic among residents in nearby areas as thick plumes of smoke filled the sky.

The blaze spread rapidly through piles of scrap material, prompting an urgent re-

sponse from fire services.

According to officials, the incident was reported early in the morning when flames were first noticed at the scrap yard located on the outskirts of the village. Local residents alerted authorities after seeing dense smoke rising from the site.

The information about the fire was received by the fire department at the Manesar fire station.

As soon as the alert was received, a firefighting team was immediately dispatched from the IMT Manesar fire station to the location.

Upon reaching the spot, firefighters found that the fire had already spread across a large portion of the open

scrap yard. The presence of combustible materials made the situation more challenging for the initial response team.

As the flames continued to intensify, fire department officials requested additional assistance from other fire stations in the area to prevent the blaze from spreading further.

Additional fire tenders were rushed from several nearby stations, including those located in Sector-37 and Sector-29 of Gurugram. Fire units from major industrial facilities in the Manesar area also joined the operation.

Fire tenders from the Honda Manesar and Maruti

Manesar fire stations were deployed to strengthen the firefighting effort. The combined teams worked together to control the rapidly spreading flames.

Officials said that several firefighting vehicles were engaged in the operation as crews attempted to douse the blaze and stop it from reaching nearby structures and facilities.

Fire Station Officer Lalit Kumar, who was supervising the operation, said the fire spread quickly because the scrap yard contained highly flammable materials.

He explained that the yard stored large quantities of plastic, rubber components and discarded machin-

ery parts, all of which can easily catch fire and accelerate the spread of flames.

The presence of these materials created intense heat and thick smoke, making the firefighting operation more difficult and increasing the risk of the blaze spreading further.

Residents living in nearby areas reported seeing large clouds of black smoke rising from the yard, which could be seen from several kilometres away.

The smoke drifted into surrounding localities, reducing visibility on nearby roads and causing concern among people living close to the incident site.

Many residents gathered

at a distance to watch the firefighting efforts as emergency teams worked to bring the situation under control.

Firefighters continued spraying water and using specialised equipment in an attempt to contain the flames and cool down the burning materials.

Their primary focus was to prevent the fire from spreading to adjacent areas, particularly nearby structures that could have been at risk if the flames continued to expand.

Officials also ensured that the area around the scrap yard remained clear so that fire tenders could move freely and carry out the operation efficiently.



Three Candidates Remain in Fray for Haryana Rajya Sabha Seats

Chandigarh : The contest for two Rajya Sabha seats from Haryana has narrowed to three candidates after the deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended on Monday.

The candidates in the race include BJP nominee Sanjay Bhatia, Congress candidate Karamvir Singh Boudh and Independent contender Satish Nandal.

The seats are becoming vacant as BJP members Kiran Choudhry and Ram Chander Jangra are set to complete their terms on April 9.

Satish Nandal entered the contest as an Independent candidate after filing his nomination on Thursday. He had earlier contested the 2019 Assembly elections as a BJP candidate but was unsuccessful.

His entry has added an element of unpredictability to the election. In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the BJP has 48 MLAs, Congress has 37, the Indian National Lok Dal has two



members and three MLAs are Independents.

For a candidate to win, 31 votes are required. While the Congress has sufficient numbers to secure one seat, the possibility of cross-voting could complicate the outcome.

Polling for the Rajya Sabha elections will be held on March 16 between 9 am and 4 pm, with counting scheduled to begin at 5 pm on the same day.

Nandal currently holds the position of state vice-president in the BJP but is contesting the election as an Independent.

To secure victory, he would need 17 second-preference votes from BJP legislators, the support of three Independent MLAs, two votes from the INLD and at least eight votes from Congress MLAs.

While filing his nomination papers, Nandal was ac-

companied by Independent MLAs Savitri Jindal, Rajesh Joon and Devender Kadyan, who support the Nayab Singh Saini government.

Responding to questions about cross-voting, Nandal said he was contesting the election under his constitutional right and would appeal to all legislators for support.

State Congress president Rao Narendra Singh, however, expressed confidence that his party would win the

seat comfortably as it had more than the required number of votes.

Nandal had earlier contested the Garhi-Sampla-Kiloi Assembly seat in 2019 but lost to senior Congress leader Bhopinder Singh Hooda.

Sanjay Bhatia, the BJP candidate, is a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal and is considered close to Union minister and former Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Congress candidate Karamvir Boudh is a retired Haryana government employee and a Dalit activist who has worked on issues related to the Scheduled Castes community. He currently serves as coordinator of the Congress' National Scheduled Castes department and is believed to have the backing of Rahul Gandhi.

The INLD, which has two MLAs in the Assembly, has not yet announced which candidate it will support in the upcoming election.

Tragedy in Nuh: Woman Jumps Into Well With Three Daughters

Nuh : A tragic incident occurred in Badopur village of the Ferozepur Jhirka area where a woman allegedly jumped into a well along with her three daughters. Two of the children had died, while rescue teams are still searching for the woman and the third child.

According to residents, the 28-year-old woman, identified as Sahila, went to the village well on Monday accompanied by her daughters Aqsa (7), Sanofiya (4) and a six-month-old infant.

After hearing noise and cries near the well, villagers rushed to the spot and alerted the Ferozepur Jhirka police. A large number of people gathered as rescue operations began.

The rescue process proved difficult because the well is around 70 feet deep and filled with water. With the help of villagers and police personnel, two children were pulled out but were found dead.

Their bodies have been sent to AI-Afia Hospital in Mandi Khera for post-mortem examination. Police have called divers and are

continuing the search for the woman and the missing child using oxygen cylinders and nets.

Neighbours revealed that Sahila and her husband Shahid had been living separately and frequently argued. They claimed that Sahila had given her jewellery to her father Hanif, which had become a point of conflict between the couple.

The woman had recently returned from her parental home, and an argument reportedly took place between the husband and wife on Sunday evening. Police said the exact cause of the incident is still unclear and all possibilities, including domestic conflict and mental distress, are being examined while statements of family members are being recorded.

A tragic incident was reported from Badopur village in the Ferozepur Jhirka area of Nuh where a woman allegedly jumped into a well along with her three young daughters on Monday. The incident has shocked the local community, with two of the children confirmed dead while rescue teams continue

searching for the woman and the third child.

According to local residents, the woman has been identified as 28-year-old Sahila. She reportedly went towards the village well accompanied by her three daughters earlier in the day.

The children were identified as Aqsa, aged seven; Sanofiya, aged four, and a six-month-old infant. Villagers said the woman was seen heading towards the well before the incident occurred.

Soon afterwards, people living nearby heard loud noises and cries coming from the direction of the well. Alarmed by the sounds, several villagers rushed to the spot to see what had happened.

When they reached the location, they suspected that the woman and her children had fallen into the well. Residents immediately alerted the local police station in Ferozepur Jhirka and sought urgent help.

Police teams soon arrived at the village and began coordinating rescue efforts with the help of local residents.

BJP Assigns Harsh Sanghvi as Observer for Haryana RS Polls

New Delhi : The Bharatiya Janata Party has appointed Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghvi as its observer for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana, where the party has fielded a third candidate, setting the stage for a keen contest for two seats falling vacant next month.

Sanghvi, considered a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is regarded within party circles as a sharp political strategist.

The BJP hopes his presence will help manage the electoral arithmetic and secure support from outside the party ranks.

In Haryana, the BJP has fielded Shyam Bhatia while Independent candidate Satish Nandal has also entered the fray, whereas the Congress has nominated Dalit leader Karamvir Boudh. The ruling party is expected to rely on cross-voting to ensure victory for its third candidate in the contest.

Apart from Haryana, the BJP has also appointed observers for Rajya Sabha elections in Bihar and Odisha. In Bihar, Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sharma of Chhattisgarh and Union Minister Harsh Malhotra from Delhi have been given responsibility for overseeing the polls.

In Odisha, Maharashtra minister Chandrakant Bawankule has been assigned to supervise the Rajya Sabha elections, where voting will take place for seven seats.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has appointed Harsh Sanghvi, the Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat, as its observer for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana.

The decision comes as the party prepares for a closely watched contest for two seats that will fall vacant next month.

The move is seen as part of the BJP's strategy to manage the political dynamics surrounding the election. Party leaders believe that Sanghvi's presence will help

coordinate efforts and ensure effective communication with legislators ahead of the crucial vote.

Within party circles, Sanghvi is considered a trusted aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He is widely regarded as a capable political organiser with strong strategic skills.

The BJP leadership is relying on Sanghvi's organisational experience to oversee the election process and ensure that the party's candidates receive the necessary support from legislators.

The Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana have drawn attention because the BJP has fielded an additional candidate, which could make the contest more competitive.

For the two seats that are going to polls, the BJP has nominated Sanjay Bhatia as its official candidate.

Meanwhile, Satish Nandal has entered the contest as an Independent candidate, adding an interesting dimension to the election.

The Indian National Congress has nominated Dalit leader Karamvir Boudh as its candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat from Haryana.

Political observers say the presence of three candidates for two seats could lead to a competitive electoral battle in the Haryana Legislative Assembly.

In such a scenario, the outcome may depend not only on party strength but also on the possibility of cross-voting among legislators.

The BJP is believed to be hoping that some members from opposition parties or Independent MLAs may extend support to its candidate during the voting process.

Party strategists are therefore working to ensure that the numbers required for victory are secured ahead of the election.

The role of the party observer is considered important in such situations, as the observer coordinates with legislators, party leaders and election managers.

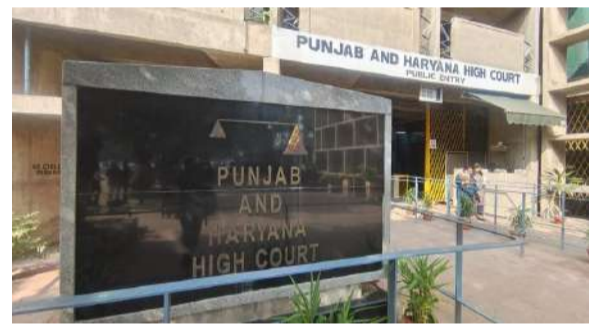
High Court Questions CBI Probe in Chhatrapati Murder Case

Chandigarh : Casting serious doubts on the investigation conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation in the Ram Chander Chhatrapati murder case, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has granted the benefit of doubt to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh.

In a detailed 111-page judgment, the Bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Vikram Aggarwal observed that the prosecution failed to establish Ram Rahim's involvement in the conspiracy beyond reasonable doubt. However, the court maintained that the evidence against the three co-accused remained intact.

The court said that when two possibilities arise—one indicating guilt and the other suggesting innocence—the accused must be given the benefit of doubt as per established criminal jurisprudence.

The Bench also raised serious concerns about the manner in which the CBI handled the testimony of the



prosecution's key witness, Khatta Singh, who was projected as Ram Rahim's driver. The court noted that his statements kept changing over time, comparing them to a "ping-pong ball" shifting from one side to another.

According to the judgment, the witness initially did not name Ram Rahim in statements recorded during the investigation in December 2006. Even the co-accused did not mention his name in their disclosure statements.

The court further noted that when Khatta Singh's statement was recorded in connection with another murder case involving Ranjit

the truth rather than adopting questionable methods to secure a conviction.

The court also examined Ram Rahim's status as a public figure with a large following, observing that influential personalities often attract both admirers and adversaries.

It acknowledged that religious devotion in India can be extremely intense and noted that some followers may act out of extreme loyalty or fanaticism.

After reviewing the evidence, the Bench said the possibility that the co-accused may have acted independently could not be ruled out.

The court further emphasised that judicial decisions must rely strictly on evidence and not be influenced by media reports or public sentiment.

Serious gaps were also identified in the prosecution's case, including the failure to examine an important police officer who had recorded the statement of the injured journalist.

Haryana CM Slams Punjab Govt Over Action Against Women Protesters

Chandigarh : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab over the alleged lathi-charge and use of water cannons on women protesters in Mohali.

Speaking to the media on International Women's Day, Saini said the day meant to honour women had instead witnessed incidents of brutality against them in Punjab.

He alleged that several women were injured during the police action and many

were still undergoing treatment in hospitals.

Saini further said that the Punjab government was focused on making announcements and distributing freebies with only eight months remaining before the Assembly elections.

He accused former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of exploiting Punjab's resources and leaving the state in a difficult situation. The Haryana Chief Minister also claimed that whenever he visited Punjab for public programmes, the venues

were repeatedly shifted or disrupted. He alleged that in some places tents erected for his events were torn down, while in others heavy machinery was used to dig up the ground to obstruct the gatherings. Saini said that while Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann receives full respect during his visits to Haryana, he himself had faced black-flag protests at several locations in Punjab.

He maintained that the people of Punjab were aware of the situation and would give their verdict during the

elections. The Chief Minister also compared welfare schemes in Haryana and Punjab, claiming that several Central government schemes were benefiting people in Haryana but were not being properly implemented in Punjab.

He pointed out that Punjab had earlier announced an increase in old-age pension but the provision was not included in the latest budget.

Saini added that while Punjab provides pension only to people with annual income up to ₹60,000, Hary-

ana allows eligibility for people earning up to ₹3 lakh per year. He also highlighted that residents above 70 years of age in Haryana receive free medical treatment.

The Chief Minister further alleged that people in Punjab were being exploited in a manner similar to what had happened in West Bengal. He also criticised the Punjab government's health scheme offering treatment up to ₹10 lakh, claiming that disease-wise package limits were preventing patients from receiving full benefits.

Three Candidates in Fray for Haryana RS Seats

Chandigarh : With the deadline for withdrawal of nominations ending on Monday, candidates from the BJP, Congress and an Independent contender remain in the race for two Rajya Sabha seats from Haryana.

BJP leader Sanjay Bhatia, Congress candidate Karamvir Singh Boudh and Independent candidate Satish Nandal are contesting the election scheduled for May 16.

The seats will become vacant after BJP members Kiran Choudhry and Ram Chander Jangra complete their terms on April 9.

Satish Nandal, who unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly elections as a BJP candidate, entered the race as an Independent after filing his nomination last week. In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the BJP currently has 48 MLAs, the Congress has 37, the Indian National Lok Dal has two, while three legislators are Independents.

The Congress has sufficient numbers to win one seat comfortably, but the situation could change if cross-voting takes place.

Polling will be conducted on March 16 between 9 am and 4 pm, and counting will begin at 5 pm on the same day.

Nandal told reporters that although he holds the position of state vice-president in the BJP, he is contesting the election as an Independent and will seek support from all legislators



He would require second-preference votes from BJP MLAs along with support from Independents, INLD legislators and some Congress members to secure victory.

When asked about his chances, Nandal said contesting elections was a constitutional right and he would approach every MLA for support.

Congress state president Rao Narendra Singh, however, expressed confidence that his party's candidate would win comfortably.

Nandal had previously contested the 2019 Assembly elections from the Garhi-Sampla-Kiloi constituency in Rohtak district against Congress leader Bhopinder Singh Hooda but lost the contest.

BJP candidate Sanjay Bhatia, a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal, is regarded as a close associate of Union Minister and former Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Karamvir Boudh, a retired government employee and Dalit activist, is known for raising issues concerning the Scheduled Castes community and is believed to be the choice of party leader Rahul Gandhi.

The Indian National Lok Dal has not yet announced which candidate it will support in the election.

With the deadline for withdrawal of nominations ending on Monday, three candidates remain in the fray for two Rajya Sabha seats from Haryana, setting the stage for a competitive contest in the state's legislative assembly.

Candidates from the Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress and an Independent contender will contest the election, which has drawn attention due to the possibility of cross-voting among legislators.

The BJP has fielded Sanjay Bhatia as its candidate, while the Congress has nominated Karamvir Singh Boudh.

Woman Arrested for Throwing Toilet Cleaner in Gurugram Hospital

Gurugram : Police have arrested a 25-year-old woman for allegedly throwing toilet cleaner on another woman at a government hospital after mistaking her for her husband's girlfriend.

The incident came to light on Sunday night when Sector-10A police received information from Civil Hospital Sector-10 that a woman had arrived with injuries suspected to be caused by an acid-like substance.

A police team rushed to the hospital and obtained the victim's medical report. After doctors declared her fit to give a statement, her version was recorded.

The victim told police that she had been living with a man named Pawan in a flat in Sector-72. She alleged that Pawan assaulted her earlier that day, prompting her to visit the hospital for treatment.

While she was at the hospital, another woman suddenly threw a liquid resembling acid at her, damaging her clothes.

Police registered a case of acid attack at the Sector-10A police station, while a separate case of assault was filed against Pawan at Badshahpur police station.

Doctors provided initial treatment and referred the woman to PGI Rohtak, but she was discharged after examination as most of the liquid had fallen on her clothes and dupatta rather than directly on her skin.

On Monday, police arrested the accused, Sakshi (25), a resident of Patuhera village in Bawal of Rewari district, from Gurugram.

During questioning, Sakshi told investigators that she had an ongoing dispute with Meenakshi, a friend of her husband. Believing that Meen-

akshi was present at the hospital, she allegedly identified her by the colour of her dupatta and threw the toilet cleaner without checking her face.

However, she mistakenly targeted another woman. Police said the accused has been taken into custody and further investigation is continuing.

A 25-year-old woman has been arrested in Gurugram for allegedly throwing toilet cleaner on another woman inside a government hospital after mistaking her for her husband's girlfriend.

The incident created panic at the hospital, as the substance was initially suspected to be acid.

Police said the matter came to light late on Sunday night when officials at the Civil Hospital Sector-10 informed the Sector-10A Police Station that a woman had arrived with

injuries believed to have been caused by an acid-like substance.

Following the information, a police team rushed to the hospital to assess the situation and begin an investigation into the incident. Officers also obtained the victim's medical report from the attending doctors.

After doctors declared the victim fit to speak, the police recorded her statement to understand the sequence of events that had led to the incident.

According to the victim, she had been living with a man named Pawan in a rented flat located in Sector-72 of Gurugram. She told the police that the two were staying together and had been in a relationship.

The woman alleged that earlier in the day Pawan had assaulted her during an argument. Following the alleged assault, she decided to visit the hospital to seek medical treatment.

Suryakumar calls India's T20 WC campaign 'wonderful journey'

Ahmedabad: Suryakumar Yadav described India's title-winning campaign in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 as a "wonderful journey", saying the team's transformation after 2024 and adoption of a new brand of cricket played a key role in their historic triumph.

Speaking at the post-final press conference, the India skipper said the month-long campaign had been special despite not beginning exactly as the team had hoped.

"Obviously, it has been a wonderful journey in the last one month, though it didn't start the way we wanted it to start, but then it's part of the sport. Throughout the journey till today, it has been very special and collectively as a team what we've achieved is right in front of you, so very happy with that," he said.

He added that the team would now set its sights on future global tournaments, including the Olympics and the next T20 World Cup cycle.



"Definitely the next goal is the Olympics and also the T20 World Cup that year. Don't forget," Suryakumar said. Reflecting on the team's evolution over the past two years, he said India had changed its approach after the 2024 title win.

"Everything changed post-2024. We played a different brand of cricket in 2024 and from there, we under-

stood how this team needs to move forward and play going ahead. It has been a wonderful journey since then," he said.

He noted that India also lifted the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 during the period and wanted to produce something special in front of home fans in the 2026 tournament.

"We won an ICC Champions

Trophy in 2025 and now in 2026 we wanted to do something special in front of a home crowd right here. We want to continue doing that in the coming years as well," he added.

India, led by Suryakumar Yadav, defeated New Zealand, captained by Mitchell Santner by a massive 96-run margin to successfully defend their title in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final.

India posted a record 255/5, the highest total in a T20 World Cup final. Abhishek Sharma smashed 52 off 21 balls with six fours and three sixes and shared a 98-run stand with Sanju Samson.

Chasing 256, the Kiwis were reduced to 72/5 as Jasprit Bumrah (4/15) and Axar Patel (3/23) struck early despite a counter-attacking 52 off 26 balls from Tim Seifert.

India continued to pick up wickets at regular intervals as New Zealand were eventually bowled out for 159.

Australia urged to protect Iranian football team after Asian Cup elimination

Perth: Football's governing bodies and Australian authorities are being urged to ensure the safety of Iran's women's team as they prepare to fly home from Australia after being eliminated from the Asian Cup.

Hundreds of supporters surrounded the Iranian Lionesses' coach as it left the stadium on the Gold Coast on Sunday evening, with chants of "save our girls".

Fears for Iran's women's team grew after they declined to sing the national anthem ahead of their first match against South Korea last week, according to BBC sport.

This prompted criticism from within Iran, with one conservative commentator accusing the team of being "wartime traitors" and pushing for harsh punishment.

"We all have very reasonable and serious concerns for their safety," said Craig Foster, a former captain of the Australian men's football team and prominent human rights advocate.

He told the BBC, "When any team participates in a FIFA-regulated tournament, whether Asian Football Confederation or any other confederation, they must have the right to safety and external support to express any concerns they have around their safety now or in future."

In their second match against Australia and then again in Sunday's final game against the Philippines, the Iranian team sang and saluted during the national anthem, leading critics to believe they'd been forced to take part by members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp accompanying them as part of the delegation.

Deniz Toupchi, who travelled to support the team for their final match, said of



the decision to initially stay silent: "We didn't expect it to be honest because we know it's a really major [thing] to do."

She added: "We're just proud of them."

Toupchi was one of hundreds of members of Australia's Iranian community in the stands on Sunday. During the anthem, which they do not recognise, they booed and jeered.

Midway through the first half, many also unfurled the Lion and Sun flag, which served as the official state flag before the Islamic revolution in Iran. These had been snuck into the stadium in defiance of signs outside which said only Iran's current official flag could be displayed.

But while the fans enthusiastically supported the players, there was very little interaction between them and the team during the match.

In one notable exception, a player receiving medical attention on the sidelines blew a kiss to the stands, receiving a huge cheer. And while the Filipina team lined up to thank their fans at the end of the match, the Iranians left the pitch promptly. "They can't speak freely because they are threatened," said Naz Safavi, who attended all three matches in which the team played. "We are here to show them that we are fully

supporting them."

With concern rising over the players' treatment once they return home, there is a push to support the women to seek asylum in Australia, if they wish.

It's unclear whether any player would want that – or, if they did, what repercussions there might be for their families as a result.

"They've been held hostage by the Iranian team management in their hotel and they've been denied the opportunity to speak to external community members, friends, family or any support networks, be that lawyers or anyone else," said Foster, who played a key part in helping the Afghanistan women's team flee the Taliban in 2021.

"Some may have concerns, others may not – but what we know is most of them have families back home, some of them have children back home, and even if offered the right to remain in Australia, if they feel unsafe, many of them may not accept that opportunity," he says. "What's most important is that that offer is made." In Sunday's post-match news conference, the team's manager Marziyeh Jafari said: "We are impatiently waiting to return. Personally, I would like to return to my country as soon as possible and be with my compatriots and family."

PL 2026 to commence on March 28

Mumbai: The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season will commence on March 28 and conclude on May 31, marking a two-day delay from the original schedule.

In December 2025, the IPL had informed all franchises that the 2026 edition would begin on March 26. However, the start date has now been revised to March 28, with the grand finale set for May 31.

The IPL Governing Council is expected to meet next week to finalise the full 2026 season schedule. The delay is reportedly linked to the pending announcement of assembly election dates in Assam, West Bengal, and

Tamil Nadu.

Kolkata and Chennai, home grounds for the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) respectively, will be affected, while Guwahati, Assam's capital, is the secondary venue for Rajasthan Royals (RR). The upcoming season of the Indian Premier League is set to begin with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru featuring in the tournament opener, generating significant excitement among fans ahead of the new campaign. The opening match traditionally features the previous season's champions, and this year RCB will take the field as the title holders.

Female para ice hockey players eye 2030 Paralympic inclusion

Milan: The IPC and leading female para ice hockey players has expressed hope that the sport will be included in the 2030 Winter Paralympics. "If you ask me what I would dream for, it's 2030 for sure. I think we can make it work," said Michelle Laflamme, senior manager of World Para Ice Hockey, at a press conference for International Women's Day during the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympics on Sunday. Laflamme said the journey to make women's para ice hockey a Winter Paralympic event began as early as 2022. "We are working day-to-day, trying to advance women in sport," she

said, adding that women around the world are organizing themselves in an effort to reach the Winter Paralympics, according to Xinhua. Their efforts have significantly increased female representation in the sport, which has grown from one percent to over 20 percent of the athlete population. The growth made it possible to organize the first Women's Para Ice Hockey World Championship in Slovakia in 2025. However, according to the IPC, the sport must stage at least two editions of the world championship and have eight teams from three continents to meet the criteria for Paralympic

inclusion. It still needs one more world championship and three additional teams ahead of the 2027 application deadline. Laflamme said countries including India, Kazakhstan, Mexico and China are preparing related programs. "We're determined to have another championship in 2026. Still, as of today, we don't have a secured host for the event," Laflamme said. To encourage more female players to learn and participate in the sport, para ice hockey at the Winter Paralympics has allowed teams to expand their rosters beyond 15 players to include additional female athletes.

Twenty three players sent off after mass brawl in Brazil

Rio de Janeiro: Red cards were issued to 23 players after a mass brawl broke out between Brazilian clubs Cruzeiro and Atletico Mineiro in the Campeonato Mineiro final.

Kaio Jorge scored the winner in Belo Horizonte as Cruzeiro, managed by former Brazil boss Tite, edged rivals Atletico 1-0 to become the champions of the state of Minas Gerais for the first time since 2019, according to BBC sport.

But the match was marred by a violent melee in the dying seconds, which forced security staff and military police to intervene and resulted in 23 players, including Atletico's former Brazil forward Hulk, being sent off respectively.

The mass confrontation began when Atletico goalkeeper Everson pushed Christian to the ground and planted his knee on the chest of the Cruzeiro midfielder, who had collided with him while chasing a loose ball.



Christian's team-mates immediately confronted Everson, shoving the keeper onto the goalpost, triggering wider issues as more players joined in while security staff tried to separate the teams.

Though no red cards were issued by referee Matheus Delgado Candancan during the game, Brazilian media outlet Globo reported, 23 players were sent off later because the fight stopped the match official from showing the cards on the field.

Cruzeiro had 12 players including goalscorer Jorge sent off. Former Atletico

Madrid and Nottingham Forest full-back Renan Lodi and Hulk were among the 11 Atletico players dismissed.

"It's regrettable," Hulk said after the incident. "We cannot set that example because it ends up having repercussions all around the world."

We have a responsibility to safeguard our image and the image of the institution."

Both Atletico and Cruzeiro are winless after four Serie A games this season and sit 17th and 19th respectively in the Brazilian top flight.

Ishan Kishan credits Suryakumar's call for World Cup confidence

Ahmedabad: Ishan Kishan revealed that a phone call from India captain Suryakumar Yadav before the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 played a crucial role in boosting his confidence, as the wicketkeeper-batter delivered a key knock in India's title-winning campaign.

Kishan said Suryakumar had personally called him while the team management was finalising the World Cup squad.

"Surya bhai called me when the team was about to meet. I even took a screenshot because I had a feeling he had called about the World Cup team. He asked me directly, 'World Cup jityega?', Kishan told reporters after the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

"I asked him, 'Bharosa karoge?' (Will you have faith in me?). He said yes, and that was it," he added.

Kishan also revealed that he had been dealing with

personal grief during the tournament after learning that his cousin sister had passed away in a car accident just days earlier.

"To be very honest, before the game I was not planning to say this, but I'll say it. My cousin sister passed away in a car accident, and I got to know about it a few days back. She always wanted me to score big runs," he said. "I was not feeling so good yesterday, but today was a big day. Rather than letting my emotions come above the game, I thought the best thing I could do was score runs for her," he added.

The left-hander said he dedicated his half-century to her.

"When I looked up after scoring my fifty, it was for her. It was like saying this is for my sister. I'm very proud that we won today. I feel for her family, but my close friends are there to take care. There was a lot going on inside me today, and I just



wanted to perform," Kishan said. He admitted that he had struggled emotionally before the match but focused on contributing to the team.

"Since last night, I was not feeling alright and I kept thinking about what had happened. But at the end of the day, you have to keep the team ahead because cricket is not an individual sport. I was just looking to score as many runs as possible," he said. Kishan also praised the positive atmosphere within the Indian dressing room, crediting the leadership group for giving players

freedom and confidence.

"When you see everyone in the team you understand the environment, whether there is fear or confidence. This time the belief throughout the World Cup was very strong. The coach and captain gave everyone freedom and never doubted players, and when you get that backing, you want to change the game yourself," he said.

Reflecting on his personal approach to the game, Kishan said he had stopped overthinking about his role or selection in the team.

"In the last two years, I

have stopped thinking too much. I don't think about where I will bat or whether I will be in the team tomorrow because that is not in my hands. The biggest thing I have learnt is to just keep doing my work and not worry about the result," he said.

Kishan also said he admired Virat Kohli for the way he has sustained his energy and intensity over the years.

"I admire Virat a lot because of the way he has used his energy for so many years. That was important for me to understand what I could change in myself," he added.

India posted a massive 255/5 in the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 with top-order contributions from Sanju Samson, Kishan and Abhishek Sharma. Chasing 256, the New Zealand were bowled out for 159, with Jasprit Bumrah producing a match-winning spell of 4/15 to seal India's emphatic victory.

'Not about me': Healy snubs final knock to pass the baton

Perth: As Phoebe Litchfield and Georgia Voll secured the 25 runs Australia needed to cap off an emphatic Test win at the WACA Ground, Alyssa Healy was nowhere to be seen. The retiring Australia captain was absent from the bench and could not be spied watching from the viewing room.

Having turned down an offer from coach Shelley Nitschke to open the batting, Healy sat alone in the dressing room, soaking up her final minutes as an international cricketer.

"I was in the



change room, just soaking it all in and wanting to take my spikes off, but I knew if

I took my spikes off, I might have to put them back on and pad up," Healy told reporters. "So I was just hanging around hoping to not have to bat and when there was one run to get, I was able to take everything off and just enjoy that moment." It was nice to not (have it) be about me," Healy revealed there had been no shortage of peer pressure from her teammates, and egging on from the Perth crowd, trying to convince her to add to her career tally of 7,333 international runs.

The 35-year-old was having none of it. She had scored 13 in Australia's first innings and enjoyed

a fairytale ending to her one-day career in Hobart one week earlier when she scored 158.

Today, Healy was handing over the metaphorical baton to the next generation, leaving it in the hands

of a pair of 22-year-olds to secure the 10-wicket win. "That didn't need to be a moment today," she said of a potential final knock.

"It's in some way a look into the future that you've got Litchfield and Voll striding out to open the batting again in Test cricket.

"I didn't want that to be disruptive at any point and I was more than happy to do absolutely nothing today and get the win so and I'm pleased to have to have basically done that."

"Shelley did actually ask me at one point if it's something I wanted to do, and I said, 'No, it's not what I'm about, and it's not what the team's about either'. We pride ourselves on being team first."

Healy had never planned on announcing the end of her career ahead of time, instead hoping to smoke bomb her way into retirement.

But the need for Australia to forge ahead with a new T20I leader ahead of the looming World Cup forced her hand, and the Healy farewell tour spanned Brisbane and Hobart before culminating in Perth, where the WACA Ground was decked out with a 'Healy Hill' and hand-held fans featuring Healy's face were handed out.

Upon reflection, the long goodbye

was worth it. If nothing else, a covert retirement plan would never have allowed her to bowl for the first time in international cricket.

"It's been cool," she said of the farewell fanfare. "I'm actually glad that I did announce it, and it's allowed me the opportunity to just enjoy every moment and be grateful for the last 16 years, 20 years when you throw in domestic cricket."

"I've had a very enjoyable career, and the last two weeks of it have just been really special as well. So I'm very lucky."

Healy walks away from international cricket as Australia's third-highest female run scorer across all formats, with only Meg Lanning and Ellyse Perry ahead of her. She executed 269 dismissals as wicketkeeper, a world record in the women's game, and hit nine international centuries from her 299 matches. While a Test ton went begging, Healy has a trophy cabinet overflowing with two ODI World Cups, six T20 World Cups and a host of Ashes victories.

The most emphatic of those was the 2025 series Healy oversaw as captain, when Australia trounced England 16-0 in a multi-format sweep that may never be repeated.

There's no doubt Healy is proud of those achievements – the ever-cheeky skipper was quick on the DM when a social media post made by the team's Instagram channel accidentally forgot one of her World Cup titles last week – but reflecting on her overall legacy, the wicketkeeper-batter took a broader view.

"I've been asked that a little bit over the last few days, and it came out of the blue, it hit me that I think I'm actually most proud of the captaincy and taking on that role," she said.

"It might seem a little bit weird that I'd say that it's a little bit out of character to put myself out there and be really brave, because that's the way that I approach my cricket, but to make that phone call to (selector Shawn Flegler) and say, 'I want to be captain' was a big, massive thing for me."

"I learned so much about myself, about other people, about this team in general, and where I wanted to take this group. I would have loved to hold a couple of World Cups as skipper, but in saying that, that's a selfish one."

"I think what we've been able to achieve culturally with this group leaves them in such an amazing space for the future, so I'm really proud of that."

"I'm really proud of putting myself out there and taking that opportunity, as hard as it was day in, day out."

Asked what is next, Healy said she wasn't sure – and the endless possibilities of life outside the regimented structure of professional cricket is exciting her.

First though, she has one more trophy to win. Healy confirmed she will play for New South Wales in their upcoming domestic 50-over final in Sydney on March 21, where she'll be aiming to win 'Ruth' – the Ruth Preddy Cup – one final time.

"I started my career with New South Wales, and to finish it technically, officially with them, is going to be a really special experience," she said.

"But after that (I'll) rediscover or discover who I am away from cricket."

"There's a little bit of sadness just sitting in the change room and realising that I don't get to come back, I'm not coming back next week and sitting with that group of people."

"That made me sad, more so than anything cricket related... (but) I can genuinely say that I'm sitting here really excited, I'm excited to celebrate a win, and excited for what my life is going to look like."



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	
77,566.16	-1.71%		24,028.05	-1.73%		22,056.55	-1.89%		66,070.65	-2.08%		24,685.65	-1.79%		56,019.80	-3.05%		56,265.50	-1.97%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
78,918.90	77,056.75		24,450.45	23,868.05		22,481.30	21,995.15		67,476.65	66,198.25		25,134.90	24,556.75		57,783.25	56,121.40		57,393.35	56,328.80	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
77,711.35	76,424.55		24,078.15	23,697.80		22,090.70	21,743.15		66,202.40	64,998.80		24,733.15	24,338.75		56,274.15	55,270.60		56,362.80	55,341.70	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Wipro	198.75	1.71
Reliance	1,424.00	1.37
Apollo Hospital	7,779.00	0.71
Infosys	1,315.00	0.50
Sun Pharma	1,807.40	0.44

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
TMPV	332.00	-5.35
UltraTechCement	11,378.00	-5.08
Eicher Motors	7,266.00	-4.65
Maruti Suzuki	13,508.00	-4.60
Bajaj Auto	9,383.00	-4.41

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Apr 02	160,208.00	-1,426.00 -0.88
Silver May 05	263,000.00	-5,285.00 -1.97
Crudeoil Mar 19	9,570.00	1,207.00 14.43
Naturalgas Mar 26	310.40	14.80 5.01

Impact of global crude price rise on inflation not estimated to be substantial: Sitharaman

New Delhi: The impact of global crude price rise on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point as India's inflation is near the lower bound, the Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. In reply to a written reply, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the price of both global crude oil and the Indian basket has been on a declining trajectory for the past one year, till the geo-political clashes commenced in West Asia on February 28, 2026. "Between the end of February and until March 2, 2026, the Crude Oil FOB Price rose from USD 69.01/barrel to USD 80.16/barrel. Given that India's inflation is near the lower bound, the impact on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point," she said. The minister further said that RBI's Monetary Policy Report in October 2025, had estimated that if crude oil prices are higher by 10pc to the baseline assumptions, and assuming full pass-through to domestic prices, inflation could turn out to be higher by 30 basis points. Notably, the crude prices have been rising since February 28



when the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran, which retaliated with attacks on US positions in the region, as well as Israel. In a research note, UBS Global Research said India's state-owned (OMCs) could face mounting earnings pressure as crude oil market volatility intensifies amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia. The brokerage warned that the recent rally in crude oil prices and refining margins is creating conditions reminiscent of the disruptions witnessed during the 2022 oil market shock. It noted that Indian OMCs remain structurally vulnerable to higher crude prices because a significant portion of their profitability depends on fuel marketing margins.

Sensex crashes 1,352 pts, Nifty down 422 amid geopolitical concerns

Mumbai: The Indian stock market witnessed a sharp sell-off on Monday amid rising geopolitical tensions and global market uncertainty, leading to heavy losses across sectors. Benchmark indices ended the session significantly lower, reflecting cautious investor sentiment and broad-based selling pressure. The benchmark BSE Sensex closed at 77,566.16, plunging 1,352.74 points or 1.71 percent after falling to an intraday low of 76,424.55 during the trading session. The steep decline came as investors rushed to book profits and reduce exposure amid increasing global risks. Similarly, the Nifty 50 ended the day at 24,028.05, down 422.40 points or 1.73 percent. The index had slipped to an intraday low of 23,697.80 before recovering slightly in the final trading hours. Broader market indices

performed even worse than the benchmark indices, indicating widespread selling across the market. The Nifty Midcap 100 and the Nifty

listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange fell by more than ₹8 lakh crore, bringing the total valuation down to around ₹441 lakh crore by

reflecting widespread investor concerns. Among key sectors, the Auto, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables, Metal, PSU Bank, Oil & Gas and Private Bank indices recorded declines ranging between 2 percent and 4 percent, indicating heavy selling across cyclical and financial stocks.



Smallcap 100 both declined by around 2 percent, highlighting pressure on mid-and small-cap stocks.

The overall market wealth of investors also declined sharply. The market capitalisation of companies

attracted selective buying interest. On the losing side, automobile and infrastructure-related stocks were among the biggest laggards. Major decliners included Tata Motors passenger vehicle segment stocks, Eicher Motors, Bajaj Auto, UltraTech Cement, and Maruti Suzuki India.

Despite the overall negative market sentiment, a few stocks managed to close in the green on the Nifty index. The top gainers included Wipro, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise, Reliance Industries, and Infosys, which attracted selective buying interest. On the losing side, automobile and infrastructure-related stocks were among the biggest laggards. Major decliners included Tata Motors passenger vehicle segment stocks, Eicher Motors, Bajaj Auto, UltraTech Cement, and Maruti Suzuki India.

India's shrimp exports seen crossing Rs 50,000 cr this fiscal despite US tariff headwinds

New Delhi: India's shrimp exports are projected to cross Rs 50,000 crore in the current financial year, registering a 13-15 percent year-on-year increase after experiencing nearly three years of stagnation. The rebound reflects the industry's success in expanding into alternative markets to counter the impact of higher tariffs imposed by the United States, traditionally the largest destination for Indian shrimp.

Exporters have gradually restructured their market strategies to reduce dependence on a single geography. By strengthening their presence in emerging and non-traditional markets, the sector has managed to revive growth momentum and maintain steady export flows despite adverse trade conditions in the US market.

A significant factor contributing to the rise in export earnings is the sharp depreciation of the Indian rupee against major global currencies such as the US dollar and the euro. The weaker rupee has increased realisations for exporters, allowing them to earn higher revenues even when export volumes rise at a moderate pace.

According to industry projections, export volumes are expected to grow by about 6-7 percent during the current fiscal year. While this growth remains moderate, the increase in global prices and currency advantages is likely to support overall export value.

Industry data indicates that total export volumes expanded by approximately



9.5 percent during the first three quarters of the current financial year. This early momentum helped offset slower shipments in the later part of the year, when global trade uncertainties intensified. Despite the overall growth trend, shipments to the United States have declined significantly due to higher tariffs imposed on imported shrimp. The US remains India's largest shrimp market, but exporters have been forced to recalibrate their strategies as trade barriers increased.

During the first three quarters of the fiscal year, exports to the US dropped by nearly 15 percent, reflecting the impact of elevated tariffs and rising competition from other shrimp-exporting countries. This decline has altered the composition of India's export markets.

As a result, the share of the United States in India's total shrimp exports is expected to fall to around 32-33 percent this fiscal, compared with nearly 40 percent in the previous year. The reduction highlights a gradual shift in market dependence as exporters look to diversify their global reach. Prior to the tariff increase, exporters had

frontloaded shipments to the US until August 2025 to maximise sales under the earlier duty structure. This strategy helped cushion the immediate impact of higher tariffs, although shipments subsequently slowed.

To compensate for weaker demand in the US, Indian exporters have expanded shipments to alternative markets, particularly in regions where trade agreements or favourable regulatory frameworks exist. These include several European countries and emerging markets that have shown increasing demand for seafood products. Improved market access to destinations such as Russia and the European Union has played a key role in sustaining export growth. Free trade agreements, faster regulatory approvals and growing consumer demand for seafood have enabled exporters to tap these markets more effectively.

India's shrimp industry also benefits from high product quality, competitive pricing and large-scale processing capacities, which allow exporters to meet international standards and fulfill large orders from global buyers.

Bokaro Steel Plant gets BIS certification for four 4 new Steel grades

Bokaro: The Bokaro Steel Plant, a major unit of Steel Authority of India Limited, has achieved another significant milestone in strengthening its value-added steel portfolio after four new steel grades received certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards.

Official sources said that the plant has received formal approval from the BIS office in Jamshedpur to extend its existing BIS licence under IS 513 (Part 2). The approval includes the addition of four new grades IS 440 LA, IS 470 LA, IS 510 LA and IS 550 LA along with the previously available IS 410 grade under the same standard.

The certification marks a major advancement in the standardisation of High Strength Low Alloy (HSLA) cold-rolled steel grades produced at Bokaro Steel Plant. Inclusion of these grades under IS 513



(Part 2) ensures that they now comply with nationally recognised quality standards, which is expected to increase their acceptance and demand across key industrial sectors.

The IS LA series steel grades have been technologically developed to provide high tensile strength, improved formability and excellent weldability.

These properties make them particularly suitable for the auto-

motive and heavy engineering industries, where structural strength and weight optimisation are critical requirements.

Director In-Charge of Bokaro Steel Plant, Priya Ranjan, praised the coordinated efforts of all concerned departments, stating that the achievement aligns with SAIL's strategic vision of improving product quality and strengthening its product mix.

He expressed confidence that the development would help meet the evolving demands of the domestic steel market and enhance customer satisfaction.

Executive Director (Works) Anup Kumar Dutta also appreciated the dedicated efforts of the plant's multidisciplinary teams.

He emphasised that the achievement highlights the plant's focused and progressive approach towards strengthening value-added steel production capabilities.

With this development, Bokaro Steel Plant has not only expanded its product portfolio but has also taken a step forward towards self-reliance in advanced steel grades. The BIS certification is expected to reduce dependence on imports and support indigenous manufacturing initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat.

India's growth acceleration not possible without rise in female workforce participation: Report

New Delhi: India's growth momentum is not possible without a substantial rise in female labour force participation rates (FLFPR), said an Axis Bank report released here on Monday.

The 'FLFPR' refers to the percentage of working-age women (typically 15 and above) who are either employed or actively seeking employment.

The report noted that India's FLFPR remains among the lowest in G20 countries, and the worst part is the high

number of those employed in agriculture and unpaid or low-productivity self-employment. "Even among those who get paid, 60 pc of work arrangements are informal, with low participation among urban, educated women," the report said.

Axis Bank said that India is currently near the bottom of 'U' seen when the countries are mapped on FLFPR vs average incomes.

In addition to this, high participation rates in poor countries fall as poverty ends and participation rises again

with incomes as women begin to participate in the workforce for higher-paying jobs.

"In developed countries, major bottlenecks in FLFPR have been addressed by shifts in demand for women's labour, its supply, as well as cultural norms.

Changes in the type of work (more services), removal of legal barriers, and reducing workplace bias raised demand and household automation, education, out-of-home safety, and reproductive control boosted

supply," it said.

The report noted that high-income economies also continue to see gender gaps in pay later in careers, mostly attributable to the 'motherhood penalty', and differences in earnings emerge primarily after childbirth.

Axis Bank highlighted that substantial progress on the supply-side, like inputs that reduce time spent on household work: pucca houses, dense energy access, and piped water.

"Higher-education enrolment ratios for women

necessary to reduce the 'marriage penalty' are rising and are now mostly at par with men in most states."

The report noted certain challenges, such as demand-side constraints, fewer jobs in sectors that are women-dominated, supply-side constraints like unpaid care, safety concerns, and social norms. The report suggested that raising FLFPR needs investment in childcare infrastructure, safer, accessible urban mobility, and formalisation of part-time and full-time work.

Rising crude prices pay pressure earnings of state-run oil marketing companies: Report

New Delhi: India's state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) could face mounting pressure as crude oil market volatility intensifies amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia, according to a research note by UBS Global Research.

The brokerage warned that the recent rally in crude oil prices and refining margins is creating conditions reminiscent of the disruptions witnessed during the 2022 oil market shock.

It noted that Indian OMCs remain structurally vulnerable to higher crude prices because a significant portion of their profitability depends on fuel marketing margins.

UBS said integrated margins for state-owned refiners and fuel retailers such as Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited could come under pressure if crude prices remain elevated while domestic retail fuel prices remain largely unchanged.

According to the brokerage, oil marketing companies have limited flexibility to pass on higher crude costs to consumers because retail fuel pricing in India is influenced by government policy. As a result, any sustained increase in crude prices tends to compress marketing margins, particularly for diesel and petrol, which form a ma-



ajor share of OMC earnings.

UBS said geopolitical disruptions in the West Asia region could continue to push oil prices higher in the near term. The bank has raised its short-term oil price forecasts, estimating crude could average around USD 71 per barrel in the second quarter of 2026 and about

USD 72 per barrel for the full year. However, the brokerage cautioned that upside risks remain significant if disruptions to energy infrastructure persist. In such a scenario, Brent Crude prices could rise above USD 90 per barrel and potentially cross USD 100 per barrel if supply flows remain constrained.

UBS further noted that for Indian OMCs, every USD 5 per barrel increase in crude prices, if not accompanied by retail fuel price hikes, could significantly erode profits by squeezing marketing margins.

Retail fuel prices in India have remained largely stable since May 2022 despite fluctuations in global oil markets. UBS said this limits the ability of oil marketing companies to offset higher input costs.

The brokerage concluded that continued geopolitical uncertainty and limited pricing flexibility could weigh on earnings visibility for India's state-owned refiners and fuel retailers in the near term.

Assurance Intl Ltd unveils relaunch plan of 'ACDelco' for Indian market

New Delhi: Assurance Intl Limited on Monday announced the relaunch of the 'ACDelco' brand in the Indian market, marking a significant development in the country's automotive aftermarket segment. The announcement was made through an official statement issued by the company, which outlined plans to reintroduce a range of automotive products under the globally recognised brand. ACDelco is a well-known automotive aftermarket brand owned by General Motors

and has built a strong reputation worldwide for manufacturing high-quality automotive components and replacement parts. The brand has historically been associated with reliability and performance across various vehicle categories. With the relaunch, Assurance Intl aims to strengthen the presence of ACDelco products in India by leveraging its domestic manufacturing capabilities and extensive distribution network. The move is expected to bring globally trusted automotive

solutions closer to Indian consumers and service providers. Speaking at the launch event, Rakesh Sharma, Managing Director of Assurance Intl Limited, emphasised the strategic importance of the collaboration. He noted that the partnership represents a strong alignment between ACDelco's global expertise and Assurance Intl's established capabilities in the Indian automotive sector. "This partnership is a natural synergy between ACDelco's global legacy in automotive aftermarket solu-

tions and Assurance Intl's manufacturing expertise, quality experience, and distribution capabilities in the Indian automotive sector," Sharma said while addressing industry stakeholders. Under the agreement, Assurance Intl Limited will act as the official licensee for the ACDelco brand in India. The company will be responsible for managing several key functions, including manufacturing, marketing, and nationwide distribution of selected automotive aftermarket products.

