



Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

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As the war winds down, Indian firms looking to buy Iran oil

New Delhi : In the dying moments of the Iran-US war, Indian refiners are believed to be looking at buying Iranian oil through a combination of rupee payments, partial deferred accounting and even barter which could later help rebuild Iran's civilian infrastructure now that the US administration has given a 30-day sanctions waiver for the purchase of Iranian oil already at sea.

Top sources in Indian refining firms said they were looking at "quick purchases" of Iranian crude, much of which is on the high seas in ships who are idling in the Indian Ocean.

"We have a long tradition since the 1990s of buying Iranian oil... its natural that we should be among the first to try and corner stores from there," said Sandeep Johri, a commodities trader.

At its peak, Iran supplied roughly 10 to 15 percent of India's crude. The appeal was not merely geopolitical or price-wise, it was geological. "Iranian crude grades suit Indian refineries," averred Johri.

According to estimates about 130-170 million barrels of Iranian crude are at sea, mostly in the Indian Ocean, but also in the Medi-



terranean and South China Sea.

The American waiver announced Friday applies to oil loaded on or before March 20, on ships, including sanctioned tankers. They must however be offloaded at the receiving port by April 19.

When Western sanctions against Teheran tightened between 2010 and 2012, targeting

Iran's financial arteries, the problem for India was not access to crude but the means to pay for it. "So we invented ways including Rupee purchases which were used by the Iranians to pay for rice, tea and other food stocks and machinery which they bought from us," said top commerce ministry officials.

At that time, India devised

a split-payment mechanism, Indian refiners deposited roughly 45 per cent of their dues in rupees into accounts held by Iranian banks within India, most notably through UCO Bank, state-run lender with minimal exposure to the American financial system and, therefore, less vulnerable to secondary sanctions. This was the money that was used for purchas-

es from India.

The remainder 55 per cent was deferred and held in escrow accounts. When geopolitics allowed it, this money was converted into hard currencies like dollars or Euros and taken by Iran, with the payments routed through third countries such as UAE or Turkey.

The two countries even formalized a new rupee-based payment framework in late 2018, once again relying on UCO Bank as the conduit.

"An expanded rupee-based system, perhaps broader in scope, tied to a wider basket of Indian exports will probably be the way forward for refineries like Reliance or Indian Oil if they go for such deals to look at," said Johri.

Officials hinted barter could also be considered in the longer run by paying for oil through Indian project spending in repairing oil and port infrastructure. "Civilian infrastructure which has been devastated in both Iran and Gulf countries will have to be rebuilt. We want to encourage Indian project exporters and engineering companies to be ready for work once peace returns," they said.

Trump again attacks NATO, calls them 'cowards', 'paper tiger' without US



New Delhi : Continuing his trade against NATO, US President Donald Trump called the military alliance 'cowards' and 'paper tiger' without the United States and warned that the US will 'remember.' 'NATO IS A PAPER TIGER! They didn't want to join the fight to stop a nuclear-powered Iran,' Trump said on his social media platform.

He said that now that the fight against Iran is militarily won, with very little danger for them (NATO), they complain about the high oil prices they are forced to pay, but don't want to help open the Strait of Hormuz.

Opening of the Strait of Hormuz is a simple military manoeuvre that is the single reason for the high oil prices, he added.

"So easy for them to do, with so little risk. COWARDS, and we will REMEMBER," he added.

The latest salvo against NATO comes three days after Trump called them 'absolute fools' for not helping him in opening the Strait of Hormuz. Trump trained his guns on NATO because the military alliance refused to meet his demand of sending warships to the area to free the strategic Strait from Iranian control.

Iran strikes Diego Garcia as conflict with US-Israel enters new phase

New Delhi/ Tehran : Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday warned that the ongoing US-Israel attacks on Iran could have far-reaching global consequences as Tehran expanded the theatre of conflict with ballistic missile strikes on a critical US-UK military base deep in the Indian Ocean.

The President cautioned that the conflict may "burn many other countries" if it continues unchecked.

In a post on X, Pezeshkian described Israel as "terrorist in nature" and said US actions against Iran, including the assassination of the Leader, had set a dangerous precedent in international disputes that could erode global norms.

"If the international community does not stand firmly against the aggression, the flame of this fire ignited by the US and Israel will burn many others," he said.

He accused the United States and Israel of launching an "unprovoked war of aggression" on Iran which he said resulted in the killing of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with senior military commanders and civilians.

Meanwhile, Iran fired two intermediate-range ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia, a strategic US-UK military base in the Indian Ocean.

The strike on the base, located about 4,000 km from Iran, demonstrates Tehran's long-range mis-

sile capability and its ability to target distant military installations.

The development comes after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer allowed the United States to use Diego Garcia and other UK bases for what were described as "defensive" operations against Iranian missile sites.

Diego Garcia serves as a critical hub for US long-range bombers and naval assets, and targeting it could disrupt key logistics and strike operations across Asia. The widening of the conflict into the Indian Ocean as the war entered its fourth week may force the United States to redeploy advanced missile defence systems to distant locations.

In an effort to calm

volatile global markets, Trump administration granted Iran a temporary licence to sell around 140 million barrels of crude oil, even as fighting intensified and spread across new regions.

The waiver, issued late Friday, allows Tehran to offload oil stored on tankers, equivalent to roughly a day and a half of global demand, according to the US Energy Information Administration, in a bid to ease supply concerns triggered by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

But Trump also hinted for a possible de-escalation, saying the United States was considering "winding down" military operations in the Middle East, though there has been no visible reduction in ac-

tivity on the ground.

Tensions remain high across the Gulf, where several countries have intercepted incoming missiles and drones in recent days.

The Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global oil shipments, remained to be a focal point of the crisis.

Iran has also issued fresh warnings to regional rivals, including the United Arab Emirates, while Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reported intercepting missile and drone attacks, highlighting the widening scope of the conflict.

The strike on Diego Garcia opened a new dimension to the war in the Indian Ocean, raising concerns that the conflict could broaden further even as diplomatic efforts struggle to contain it.

PM Modi, Iran President hold telephonic talks, stress regional stability and secure shipping lanes

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held a telephonic conversation with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, during which the two leaders exchanged greetings on the occasion of Eid and Nowruz and discussed key regional concerns, including security and stability in West Asia. In a post on X, Modi said he conveyed his greetings to President Pezeshkian and expressed hope that the festive season would usher in "peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia," a region that has been witnessing heightened tensions in recent months. The Prime Minister also voiced concern over recent attacks targeting critical infrastructure in the region, warning that such

incidents pose serious risks beyond immediate conflict zones. "Condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains," Modi said, underlining the broader economic and geopolitical implications of such disruptions. With global trade heavily reliant on maritime routes passing through West Asia, Modi reiterated the importance of maintaining secure and open sea lanes. "Reiterated the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure," he noted, reflecting India's strategic interest in uninterrupted maritime commerce. During the conversation, Modi also

acknowledged Iran's role in ensuring the well-being of Indian citizens residing there. "Appreciated Iran's continued support for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran," the Prime Minister said, highlighting ongoing cooperation between the two countries on consular and community matters. India and Iran share longstanding civilisational ties and have maintained engagement across sectors including trade, connectivity, and regional security. The latest exchange between the two leaders comes amid evolving geopolitical dynamics, with both sides underscoring the need for dialogue, stability, and the protection of vital global infrastructure.

Built in India, ready for the world: 'Taragiri' to guard Blue frontiers



New Delhi : In a significant boost to India's maritime capabilities, the Indian Navy is set to commission its latest stealth frigate Taragiri (F41) on April 3, marking a major milestone in the country's quest for self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

The commissioning ceremony, to be held in Visakhapatnam, will be presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and is expected to underscore India's growing naval capabilities and indigenous shipbuilding prowess. Positioned as a new vanguard of the seas, Taragiri is set to enhance the Navy's front-line combat strength while reinforcing the nation's maritime sovereignty.

In a statement issued here today, a Naval spokesperson stated that as the fourth potent platform of the Project 17A class, Taragiri is not merely a ship; it is a 6,670-tonne embodiment of the 'Make in India' spirit and the sophisticated engineering capabilities of our indigenous shipyards.

Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, this Frigate represents a generational leap over earlier designs, offering a sleeker form and a significantly reduced Radar Cross-Section that allows it to operate with lethal stealth. With indigenous content exceeding 75 percent, the ship highlights the maturity of a domestic industrial ecosystem that

now spans over 200 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Driven by a Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion plant, Taragiri is designed for 'High-Speed - High Endurance' versatility and multi-dimensional maritime operations. The ship's weapon suite is world-class, featuring supersonic Surface-to-Surface Missiles, Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles, and a specialised Anti-Submarine Warfare suite.

These systems are seamlessly integrated through a state-of-the-art Combat Management System, ensuring that the crew can respond to threats with split-second precision.

Beyond its role as a

premier hunter of the seas, Taragiri is built for the complexities of modern diplomacy and humanitarian crises. Its flexible mission profile makes it ideal for everything from high-intensity combat to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).

The Indian Navy continues to grow as a combat-ready, cohesive, credible, Aatmanirbhar force, safeguarding the seas for a Viksit, Samridha Bharat guarded by ships designed by Indians, built by Indians and operated by Indians. Taragiri stands ready for a promising future as a beacon of rising maritime power and an ironclad guardian of our blue frontiers, the spokesperson added.

First phase of EVM-VVPAT randomisation completed in key poll-bound states: ECI

New Delhi : The Election Commission of India has completed the first stage of randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units for the upcoming Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala and the union Territory of Puducherry, the poll panel said on Saturday.

The poll body had earlier, on March 15, announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, along with by-elections in six other states.

According to an ECI press statement, the allocation of EVMs follows a strict two-stage randomisation process aimed at ensuring transparency and fairness. "In the first stage, EVMs are randomly allocated from district-level warehouses to Assembly constituencies. In the second stage, they are further randomised from the constituency level to individual polling stations," the statement explained.

As per ECI guidelines, District Election Officers were required to complete the first round of randomisation only for machines that had successfully cleared the First Level Checking (FLC). This process has now been com-



pleted not only in the three poll-bound regions but also for by-elections scheduled in Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland and Tripura, all of which will go to polls on April 9.

Officials emphasised that the randomisation was carried out using the EVM Management System (EMS) in the presence of representatives from recognised national and state political parties. "The entire exercise was conducted transparently with participation from political party representatives to maintain confidence in the electoral process," the statement noted.

Following the completion of the first stage, constituency-wise lists of the randomised EVMs and VVPATs have been shared with party representatives at district headquarters. The machines will now be stored securely in designated strong rooms at the As-

"No Oil at Sea," Says Iran, Counters US Sanctions Move

New Delhi/Tehran : Iran's Oil Ministry said on Saturday that it has "no oil" on the international waters even as US eased sanctions temporarily allowing Tehran to sell crude "it has stored on water."

In a move to calm the volatile oil market, the Trump Administration gave Iran a temporary waiver to sell about 140 million barrels of crude oil. US Treasury Secretary Scott Besant said on Friday that Washington temporarily eased sanctions to allow Tehran to sell crude "it has stored on the water." However, the Iranian Petroleum Ministry said the country has "no crude oil" stored at sea and no excess volumes awaiting release into international markets.

Iran's MEHR News Agency (MNA) quoted Iranian Oil Ministry Spokesperson Saman Ghodousi as saying that currently Iran has no crude oil left on the water and no surplus intended for other international markets. He said the US secretary's remarks were aimed at influencing market sentiment. The US secretary had said the waiver would bring about 140m barrels of oil into global markets and help relieve pressure on energy supply. This is the second time the US has temporarily waived sanctions in about two weeks. It had previously eased sanctions on Russian oil.



Yogi calls for collective action on forest conservation amid climate crisis

Lucknow: Highlighting the growing global concerns over climate change and environmental degradation, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday stressed the need for collective responsibility in conserving forests, saying ecological balance is central to sustaining life and development.

Speaking at the inauguration of the National Forestry Dialogue on the occasion of the International Day of Forests, he said the increasing impact of global warming and environmental imbalance calls for urgent introspection and renewed commitment to protect nature.

He said that the consequences of climate change compels for an introspection as to where the efforts have fallen short.

Invoking India's Vedic traditions, the Chief Minister said nature has always been accorded the highest respect, quoting ancient texts to underline the importance of trees and forests in sustaining life. "Forests are the basis of life. If there are forests, there is water; if there is water, there is air; and if there is air, there is life," he said.

"Our sages, thousands of years ago, conveyed the message that the earth is our mother and we are her children - 'Mata Bhumi Putroaham Prithivyah'. This is our responsibility to protect our mother nature and follow the precautions to protect and preserve it," he said.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister released a coffee table book, honoured several individuals, and also visited the exhibition organized by the Forest Department.

Chief Minister said, "India's sage tradition has always stated, 'Dashakoopasama Vaapi, Dashavaapisamo Hradah. Dashahradasamah Putro, Dashaputrasamo Drumah'. Its meaning is: One stepwell is equal to ten wells, one pond is equal to ten stepwells, one son is equal to ten ponds, and one tree is equal to ten sons. The importance of trees in nature has been considered supreme. Forests are the basis of life and an important dimension of ecological balance. If there are forests, there is water; if there is water, there are forests; if there are forests, there is air; and if there is air, there is life. Life cannot be imagined without these." He further added, "Keeping the global perspective in mind, this year's theme has been set as 'Forest



and Economics", which reflects the need to maintain ecological balance while also creating plans for economic development through forests and human welfare".

He expressed satisfaction that under the guidance of Narendra Modi, the state has succeeded in increasing forest cover over the past 9 years. He emphasized that success came when it was turned into a people's movement. Whenever any campaign becomes a people's movement, success is achieved because then society leads it while the government and departments remain behind. When the government and departments are ahead and the public is behind, results do not come. The successes achieved over the past 9 years are based on this principle.

Chief Minister also said, during Van Mahotsav in earlier years, only 5.5 crore saplings could be planted, and even that required support from private nurseries. In contrast, last year, 37 crore saplings were planted across the state in a single day, with 50 crore saplings available. This year, a target of 35 crore has been set, which may increase to 40 to 45 crore.

He further informed, over the past few years, Uttar Pradesh has ensured capital expenditure of around ₹2 lakh crore on infrastructure. Despite this, the increase in forest cover is a matter of satisfaction. In the last 9 years, 242 crore saplings have been planted, and forest cover has increased to around 10 percent. The forest cover in the state should correspond to its share in the country's population, meaning efforts are needed to raise it to 16 to 17 percent.

He added, in 2017, there was

only one Ramsar site in the state, which has now increased to 11, and the effort is to take it to 100. Ramsar sites are important from the perspective of tourism, wildlife, and birds, and they also play a role in water conservation. Declaring Ramsar sites helps protect these areas from land encroachment and enables conservation programs to be implemented effectively.

"Initiatives such as Atal, Eklavya, Triveni, Oxy and Smriti Van are part of this effort. Large-scale plantation drives are being carried out along the Ganga, Yamuna and Sarayu rivers. Plantation programmes are also being undertaken along both sides of expressways and highways. Additionally, restoration work on one river in each district has been taken up," he said.

The Chief Minister said Uttar Pradesh is the first state in the country where funds have been distributed to farmers for carbon credits under a carbon finance project. Steps have also been taken to promote ecotourism in Dudhwa National Park, along with improved connectivity.

A total of 2,467 forest-based green economy model industries have been established in the state. "People visit national parks to see tigers, and their conservation is our responsibility. Uttar Pradesh is the first state to categorise human-wildlife conflict as a disaster," he said.

He added that a tiger does not attack suddenly. He shared that near his birthplace, the forest began just 50 meters away, and they used to see tigers but never disturbed them, and the tigers never harmed them or their livestock. However, if we interfere

with their safety, they will naturally become aggressive.

Chief Minister also informed, if there are forests, there are tigers; if there are tigers, there is biodiversity; if there is biodiversity, there is life; and if there is life, there is human civilization. Therefore, forest conservation is not only important for humans but for all living beings. As humans are considered the best creation of God, it is our moral responsibility to take ownership and work towards forest conservation at every level.

He stated that the forest department budget has been significantly increased this year. Certain sectors, such as security and forests, are never constrained by budget limitations. For social forestry, ₹800 crore has been allocated, ₹220 crore for gausala management, ₹10 crore for forest modernization, ₹50 crore corpus fund for Ranipur Tiger Reserve, ₹194 crore for clean air management, and ₹50 crore for a forestry university.

Before 2017, the Gangetic dolphin had almost disappeared. With the inspiration of the Prime Minister and after the Namami Gange project, the species has been revived. Earlier, the total number of dolphins was 23, which has now increased to 6,327, with 2,397 in Uttar Pradesh alone. A Jatayu Conservation Center has also been established in Gorakhpur.

Chief Minister said, "To achieve the carbon net zero target, the state has implemented an Electric Vehicle Policy and is among the leading states in this sector. An electric vehicle manufacturing unit has already been established in Lucknow. Metro services are operational in seven cities, and the country's first rapid rail is also running in the state. More than 700 electric buses are operational, and Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of e-rickshaws".

Ayodhya is being developed as a solar city, and work is underway to develop 17 other municipal corporations as solar cities. Under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, more than 4 lakh rooftop solar systems with a capacity of over 1,400 megawatts have been installed. Additionally, a target has been set to develop 22,000 megawatts of renewable energy in the next 5 years. Under the Uttar Pradesh Green Hydrogen Policy 2024, funds have been arranged for two centers of excellence.

Odisha logs 558 square km increase in forest covers in two years

Bhubaneswar: Odisha has recorded an increase of 558 square kilometres in forest and tree cover in the last two years emerging as a frontrunner in forest protection and green cover creation in India, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi claimed on Saturday.

The State's success in forest protection has been made possible due to improved forest management practices, large-scale plantation drives, and public awareness initiatives, Majhi said while addressing the state-level World Forest Day-2026 function here today. Currently, State's forest and tree cover constitute 37.63% of the state's total geographical area, covering 58,597 square kilometres.

Highlighting plantation efforts, he noted that under the Prime Minister's campaign 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam', Odisha planted 14.9 million saplings in a single day and over 80 million saplings within a year.

The Chief Minister



stressed the need to strike a balance between environmental conservation and industrial development, stating that with modern science and technology, sustainable industrialisation is achievable without harming the environment.

Referring to this year's theme, "Forests and Economy," he underlined that forests are not only vital for ecology but also play a crucial role in economic development. He reiterated the government's focus on transforming forests into a major source of livelihood while ensuring their protection.

Majhi also urged officials to intensify efforts to prevent forest fires and reduce human-wildlife conflict. He directed strict action against those responsible for man-made forest fires.

Forest, Environment and

Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia highlighted the importance of the day and reiterated the government's commitment to improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities, especially in tribal-dominated districts.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg outlined the state's long-term vision for 2036 and 2047, stating that Odisha aims for significant economic growth and employment generation.

She noted that the tourism sector alone has the potential to create 2.5 million jobs, with forests playing a key role. She stressed the need to view forests not only as ecological contributors but also as economic assets, promoting a "Green Economy" alongside the Blue Economy.

Among others, Principal Secretary of the department Bhaskar Jyoti Sharma, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force Dr. K. Murugesan also graced the occasion.

Man arrested in Thoothukudi girl student rape and murder case

Chennai : After nearly ten days of protest, Special teams probing the brutal rape and murder of a 17-year-old 12th Standard girl student at Vilathikulam in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, Special teams formed to nab the culprit, arrested a 38-year-old man on Friday.

Following the arrest, the family members and relatives, who were on protest ever since the girl's body was found in a scrub forest area on March 11 and refused to take possession of the, they called off their stir.

The girl went missing the previous evening when she visited the forest area to attend the nature's call and despite the parents approaching the police, cases were not registered initially.

They also finally accepted the body of the victim last evening from the Thoothukudi Government Medical College and Hospital, where it was kept after post mortem. During the agitation, they also demanded action against errant policemen for failing to register a case initially by accepting their complaint soon after the girl went missing.

The arrested M Dharma Muniswaram alias Maveeran, is a native of Sayalkudi in Ramanathapuram district. After preliminary interrogations, he was produced before a POCOS Court on Friday evening and remanded in judicial custody. On the same day after the girl did not return home, her parents visited the Kulathur police station around 9.30 p.m. to lodge a complaint. Since the girl was a minor, her parents were asked to lodge the complaint at the Vilathikulam All-Women Police Station.

During interrogation, Dharmamuniswaram admitted that on the day of the incident he was hiding in the forest area, lying in wait for women going to field work. According to the police, he said that when the girl walked past, he raped her, and when she began shouting, he panicked that someone might arrive. He then killed her by pressing his foot on her neck and garrotting her with a dupatta.

He further claimed he remained hidden in the forest

that night, and escaped the next morning on a motorcycle to Thoothukudi.

Earlier a local resident, Solaippan, had taken a photo of a motorcycle with a Ramnad-series number plate near the scene. Initially unaware of its importance, he later shared it with police who traced the number to Dharmamuniswaram's two-wheeler, and subsequent checks led to his arrest.

Thoothukudi District Superintendent of Police C. Madhan said evidence that led to Muneeswaran's arrest was gathered purely through scientific investigation. More than 450 individuals from the district were interrogated both directly and through digital methods. As the case is still under investigation, further details cannot be disclosed at this time, he said. Inspector-General of Police (IG) Vijayendra Bidari appreciated the meticulous investigation by the special teams in cracking a "blind" case. "In this case, there was no clue. No one had seen the accused either before or after the crime. He was a total stranger to the scene of the crime, which is an interior village," he said.

Mr. Bidari said the accused had been signing the register in the court as part of his bail conditions every day even after committing the crime. With no CCTV cameras available in the vicinity of the scene of crime, the police had gone through hours of video footage from those located in the surrounding areas, in far-off places, and on roads leading to the village. The IG said the police would take all efforts to expeditiously prosecute him in the current case.

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UP CM felicitates brave children

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday felicitated brave children on the occasion of the International Day of Forests.

Chief Minister encouraged the children who saved themselves and their families from leopard attacks and described them as an inspiration for society.

He also honoured employees of the forest department and social organizations for their outstanding work in the fields of forestry and wildlife.

Additionally, cheques were distributed to two beneficiary farmers under the Carbon Credit Project.

Chief Minister honoured 10-year-old Achehe Lal from Bahraich and Tanu Singh

(18) from Prayagraj.

On December 6, 2025, around 7 pm, Achehe Lal was returning home from the fields with his father on a bicycle when a leopard suddenly attacked from a sugarcane field. Displaying courage, he fought back and managed to save himself, forcing the leopard to retreat.

Similarly, Tanu Singh was honoured for her bravery. On January 8, 2026, a leopard entered a house in village Chhivaiya in the Jhansi area.

Present in the room, Tanu showed remarkable courage and presence of mind. She safely escorted two children out of the room and locked the leopard inside, enabling its safe rescue without any loss of life.

BRS to introduce Private Member bill in Assembly on Cong 'Six Guarantees'

Hyderabad: KT Rama Rao, Working President of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi, on Saturday announced that the party plans to introduce a Private Member Bill in the State Legislature to push for the implementation of the six guarantees promised by the Indian National Congress.

KTR stated that the move is aimed at holding the Congress government accountable for its pre-election commitments, which he claimed have not been fulfilled even after a considerable period in power.

Recalling the initial developments after the Congress assumed office, he said Chief Minister A Revanth

Reddy had signed the file related to the six guarantees soon after taking charge.

He further noted that these promises were formally highlighted when the Governor addressed the joint session of the Assembly shortly thereafter, reinforcing their importance in the government's agenda.

However, KTR alleged that despite these early assurances, there has been little to no tangible progress in implementing the guarantees on the ground.

"Even after 800 days, there has been no progress in implementing these guarantees," he said, expressing dissatisfaction with the pace

of execution.

According to him, the introduction of a Private Member Bill is a strategic step to bring the issue back into legislative focus and compel the government to respond.

KTR emphasized that the bill would serve as a tool to exert pressure on the ruling dispensation.

And ensure that the promises made to the people are not overlooked.

He added that the party would formally approach the Speaker of the Assembly as well as the Chairman of the Legislative Council to seek permission for introducing the Bill.

Mamata, Abhishek set for dual campaign blitz ahead of Bengal Polls

Kolkata: With barely a month left before voters head to the polls for the first phase of the West Bengal Assembly Election 2026 on April 23, the ruling All India Trinamool Congress has begun preparations for an aggressive and expansive statewide campaign.

The campaign will be spearheaded by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee along with the party's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, signalling a high-intensity political battle in the weeks leading up to polling. According to party sources, Mamata Banerjee is set to kick off her North Bengal campaign on March 24. Her itinerary includes rallies in key locations such as Matigara, Moynaguri, and Alipurduar.

A major highlight of her campaign launch will be a large public meeting at Alipurduar Parade Ground, which is expected to draw significant crowds and set the tone for the party's out-

reach in the region.

In addition to the main rally, two more public meetings are likely to be held on the same day, reflecting the party's intent to maximise



voter engagement right from the beginning of the campaign. Before heading to North Bengal, Mamata Banerjee is expected to begin her campaign from her home turf in Bhabanipur, where she will address a workers' meeting to energise party cadres.

North Bengal holds strategic importance in this elec-

tion, as all its constituencies will go to polls in the first phase on April 23. The region has traditionally been considered a stronghold of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Meanwhile, Abhishek Banerjee will simultaneously lead the campaign in South Bengal, ensuring that the party maintains a strong presence across both regions. He is scheduled to begin his campaign on March 24 with a public meeting in Patharpratima, marking the start of an intensive outreach programme.

His campaign trail will cover districts such as East and West Midnapore, with rallies planned in Daspur, Keshiary, and Narayangarh. Abhishek Banerjee is also expected to hold a workers' meeting in Nandigram, a constituency that remains politically sensitive and highly contested.

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Nandigram is set to witness a high-voltage contest, with Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari facing Trinamool candidate Pabitra Kar, who was once considered a close aide of Adhikari before switching sides.

Karnataka Minister Zameer threatens resignation, rocks Davanagere South bypoll

Bengaluru : The Indian National Congress in Karnataka is facing mounting internal pressure ahead of the Davanagere South assembly by-election, as senior leader and minister Zameer Ahmed Khan has reportedly threatened to resign if a Muslim candidate is not given the party ticket.

Zameer Ahmed Khan's stance has intensified the political atmosphere within the party, bringing community representation to the forefront of the candidate selection process. His reported ultimatum has added urgency to an already delicate decision.

The development has amplified demands from sections of the Muslim community in the constituency, underlining the growing electoral influence of the community in Davanagere South.

The by-election was necessitated following the demise of veteran leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa, making the seat both politically significant and emotionally sensitive for the party.

Muslim organisations, including the Anjuman-e-Islam Society, have urged the Congress leadership to ensure fair representation by fielding a candidate from the community.

date selection process more complex.

The leadership now finds itself balancing competing demands—community representation on one side and broader electoral calculations on the other.

In response to the growing pressure, Karnataka Congress in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala has stepped in to manage the situation and maintain party cohesion.

Surjewala has stressed that the party will not succumb to pressure from any one group and will instead select a candidate based on merit and winnability.

He also reiterated that all communities would be taken into consideration, and the final decision would reflect the party's larger interests in the constituency.

Adding another layer of complexity are internal dynamics within the party, particularly involving senior leader and minister SS Mallikarjun.

Mallikarjun has reportedly advocated for rewarding long-serving party workers, arguing that loyalty and grassroots work should be key factors in candidate selection.

At the same time, his son Samarth Shamanur, grandson of Shamanur Shivashankarappa, has already filed his nomination even before the official announcement of the party candidate.

This move has sparked criticism from sections of the Muslim leadership, who view it as undermining the demand for fair representation.

The premature nomination filing has also drawn concern from the party high command, prompting Surjewala to caution against such steps before an official decision is made.

With multiple stakeholders asserting their claims, the Congress faces a challenging task in finalising a candidate who can balance community expectations, internal party dynamics, and electoral viability.

As the by-election approaches, the situation in Davanagere South highlights the intricate interplay of identity, strategy, and leadership within the Congress, making it a closely watched political contest.

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Briefs :

Jama Masjid sees huge Eid rush; Security beefed up across areas in Delhi

New Delhi : A sea of worshippers was seen at the Jama Masjid on Saturday morning to offer special Eid-ul-Fitr prayers. The historic mosque and its vicinity saw large crowds in festive attire, as people greeted one another and celebrated the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Eid began with the sighting of the Shawwal crescent moon, bringing happiness and excitement to families across the city. In view of the large gatherings, Delhi Police ramped up security in and around the Jama Masjid and other crowded locations, deploying extra personnel to ensure public safety and ease of movement. Following court orders, security was beefed up near Uttam Nagar East Metro Station. Police along with other local authorities were asked to stay alert and maintain proper arrangements during the festive period. The Delhi High Court directed the police to ensure adequate security arrangements amid concerns about public safety. The court has asked for a response from the police and said that proper arrangements should continue until the Ram Navami festival, on March 26. The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for April 6.

Tight security in Uttam Nagar as Muslims offer Eid prayers in Delhi

New Delhi : Delhi's Uttam Nagar, where a localised clash claimed a man's life and sparked communal tensions, is observing Eid-ul-Fitr in a subdued manner under heavy security deployment on Saturday. An official said that Hastsal village and the surrounding areas have witnessed heavy deployment of Delhi Police and paramilitary forces, with entry and exit points barricaded and strict ID checks enforced. Access to specific areas is restricted to residents following verification, with outsiders not permitted. Authorities are also undertaking routine foot patrols and closely monitoring rooftops, narrow lanes, and sensitive locations through CCTV surveillance. "Security has been heightened to maintain peace during the festival, and we are closely monitoring all developments," a senior police officer said, adding that additional personnel are on standby. Locals have begun offering Id prayers, though celebrations remain largely subdued amid restrictions. On March 4, during Holi, a 26-year-old man was killed in a clash between two neighbouring families in JJ Colony, allegedly triggered by a water balloon thrown by a girl that accidentally struck a woman.

Chilly winds sweep Delhi, fog returns after coldest March day in 6 years; air cleanest in 5 months

New Delhi: Delhi woke up in a shroud of fog on Saturday with the minimum temperature dipping to 13 degrees Celsius, 3.5 degrees below the normal, as a chilly wind swept the city. Delhi had on Friday registered a minimum temperature of 16 degrees Celsius. On Saturday, the air quality index (AQI) stood at 94 (satisfactory) at 8 am. Owing to rain, air quality improved dramatically on Friday with an AQI of 93, marking the first 'satisfactory' air day in about five months in the national capital. The last time the city recorded the same air quality was on October 9, 2025, when the AQI stood at 99. The air quality is likely to be in the 'moderate' category from Saturday to March 23, according to the Air Quality Early Warning System.

AAP leader Bharadwaj alleges lapses in firefighting response

New Delhi : The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday launched a sharp attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party government over the Palam fire tragedy, alleging serious lapses in the firefighting response that led to the deaths of nine members of a family.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi AAP chief Saurabh Bharadwaj claimed that the fire brigade failed to act effectively at the scene and that crucial rescue opportunities were missed.

He further alleged that authorities not only mishandled the situation but also attempted to "cover up" the lapses to avoid accountability for the tragic outcome.

According to Bharadwaj, a key failure occurred when the hydraulic lift of a fire tender malfunctioned during rescue operations, severely limiting efforts to reach those trapped inside the building.

He claimed that local residents and shopkeepers had stepped forward with an alternative rescue idea, suggesting the use of mattresses placed on the ground to help victims jump to safety.

However, Bharadwaj alleged that officials did not allow the vehicle at the site to

be moved to facilitate this makeshift rescue arrangement, thereby preventing locals from intervening.

"The government feared that if locals managed to save the victims, its own failure

cushioning had been arranged.

Bharadwaj also questioned the operational readiness and consistency of firefighting equipment used at the site.

He raised doubts over technical explanations provided by authorities, asking how one fire tender could be rendered ineffective due to overhead wires while another reportedly functioned under similar conditions.

Referring to an earlier incident in Janakpuri, he alleged a recurring pattern of shifting blame onto victims rather than acknowledging systemic failures.

He cited the case of Kamal Dhyani to support his claim, accusing the adminis-

tration of attempting to deflect responsibility.

The AAP leader also alleged that BJP workers created disruptions during a condolence meeting attended by senior party leaders, including Arvind Kejriwal.

He claimed that these disruptions were aimed at preventing a meaningful discussion on the causes and handling of the fire tragedy.

Bharadwaj further criticised statements made by Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, particularly claims that inflammable materials stored at the site contributed to the blaze.

Rejecting this assertion, he stated that the shop primarily dealt in cosmetics and hosiery, which are commonly found in such establishments and do not necessarily indicate negligence.

The incident has since sparked a political confrontation, with the AAP demanding accountability and transparency, while the BJP has defended its position.

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Editorial

Unseasonal crisis and the threat of El Niño

The cycles of nature are now caught in a vortex of uncertainty in the face of changing climate. The predictable schedule of rainfall has collapsed, and unseasonal rains coupled with hailstorms have emerged as the new reality. Recent torrential downpours and hailstorms across various parts of the country have inflicted massive damage upon agriculture, dashing the hopes of farmers. As the influence of climate change and global factors—such as 'El Niño'—intensifies as the driving force behind this irregularity, signs indicate that the situation is likely to become even more critical in the near future. Over the past few years, the issue of nature's capriciousness and the changing climate has ceased to be merely a topic of discussion; it has now evolved into an existential crisis. The old adage, "The monsoon arrives invariably on schedule," has become obsolete; in its place, a terrifying new reality has emerged: "Unseasonal rain arrives invariably on schedule." The unseasonal rains and destructive hailstorms that have lashed various parts of Delhi, Haryana, and Maharashtra over the last five to six days stand as living proof of this disrupted natural cycle. Just as farmers are harvesting their *Rabi* crops and dreaming of a bountiful harvest, this very wrath of nature is snatching the food right out of their mouths. This year's hailstorms have literally battered 11 districts across Maharashtra—including Ahilyanagar, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Latur, Nanded, Dharashiv, Yavatmal, Solapur, Pune, Satara, and Kolhapur. Specifically, in the Ahilyanagar district, crops across 3,558 hectares have been damaged, while standing crops across approximately 6,913 hectares spread across 30 *talukas* (administrative blocks) throughout the state have been flattened. Occurring precisely when cash crops such as wheat and chickpeas were ready for harvest, this rainfall has proven to be a devastating blow that has broken the backs of the farmers. This untimely calamity has not only damaged grain crops but has also wreaked havoc upon fruit orchards. Crops such as onions, maize, and sorghum—along with fruits like mangoes, bananas, watermelons, muskmelons, sugarcane, papayas, grapes, pomegranates, lemons, sweet limes, and oranges—have borne the brunt of severe hailstorms. Vegetable crops, in particular, have been damaged to such an extent that they are now barely recognizable. While such climatic fluctuations are not entirely new to humanity, their increasing frequency and intensity are undoubtedly a cause for grave concern. In the past, hailstorms were a rare occurrence; consequently, a shower of hail was often viewed as a symbol of joy. Today, however, hailstorms have become synonymous with destruction. There are equally compelling scientific reasons underlying this climatic shift. An atmospheric trough formed over parts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and North India—coupled with a low-pressure area situated between Vidarbha, Marathwada, and North Karnataka—has cast the ominous shadow of untimely rainfall over a vast expanse of the country. Beyond Maharashtra, hailstorms have also unleashed devastation across the states of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Karnataka, thereby underscoring the national scope of this crisis. The current situation is truly paradoxical. On one hand, we are enduring the scorching heat of a harsh summer, with water scarcity assuming alarming proportions everywhere—from remote hamlets to urban residential complexes. While it is only natural for a shower of rain to feel like a welcome relief during such times, untimely rainfall ultimately brings far more long-term distress than fleeting comfort. When such disruptions occur within the natural ecosystem, their repercussions extend beyond agriculture alone, impacting the entire ecological balance of the environment. Last year, the country witnessed robust rainfall and an intense winter; however, the subsequent spate of unseasonal calamities serves as a testament to the capricious nature of the weather. Against this backdrop, the 'El Niño' forecast issued by the World Meteorological Organization appears all the more alarming. The influence of 'La Niña'—the cold ocean current in the Pacific—is now waning, and there is a projected 40 to 70 percent probability that El Niño will intensify after July. El Niño is a phenomenon that exerts an extremely adverse impact on the Indian monsoon. When the sea surface temperature of the Pacific Ocean rises, it draws moisture-laden winds toward itself, resulting in diminished rainfall across the Indian subcontinent. During the years 2023–2024, rainfall levels remained below average due to El Niño, and 2024 emerged as a year of record-breaking heat. Although La Niña initially brought bountiful rainfall in 2025, a neutral phase has been developing within the ocean since April. The months of August and September—marking the second phase of the monsoon—are considered absolutely critical for both agriculture and the provision of drinking water. Should El Niño intensify during this specific period, the nation could face the looming threat of drought or severe water scarcity. Given that the Indian economy remains heavily dependent on the monsoon, this potential crisis could disrupt the economic stability not merely of farmers, but of the entire nation. The common citizen is already reeling under the strain of global geopolitical conflicts, fuel and gas shortages, and skyrocketing inflation. Amidst this turmoil, there is a palpable fear that this adverse turn of nature could prove to be the proverbial "thirteenth month of misery during a drought." It must now be acknowledged that this climatic imbalance is not merely a natural occurrence, but rather a direct consequence of environmental degradation caused by human intervention. Nowadays, witnessing a hailstorm evokes not a sense of delight, but rather a deep sense of dread—for behind it lie the tears of farmers and a looming question mark over the nation's food security. With the natural seasonal cycle of the monsoon, winter, and summer having completely collapsed, every stage of the agricultural process—from sowing to harvesting—has been plunged into uncertainty. At such a juncture, merely providing temporary relief will not suffice; rather, there is an absolute necessity for long-term and scientifically grounded planning to effectively combat this crisis. Both the government and society must now brace themselves to adapt to the changing facets of nature. In accordance with meteorological forecasts, it has become imperative to alter agricultural schedules, increase the use of hail-protection nets, and adopt both traditional and modern methods of water conservation. Given the potential threats of water and fodder scarcity posed by the El Niño phenomenon, emphasis must be placed on stockpiling and strategic planning starting right now. When nature shifts its course, humanity must adjust its policies accordingly. In light of the climatic winds looming on the horizon, we must not fall short in any aspect of pre-crisis planning. Ultimately, true prudence lies not in battling against nature, but in recognizing its changing nature and taking measures to safeguard ourselves. To protect our agriculture and economy, we must construct a robust protective shield capable of withstanding this seasonal imbalance. The current crisis of unseasonal weather is not merely a temporary phenomenon; it serves as a harbinger of far greater climatic challenges to come. Therefore, simply announcing relief packages will not be enough; instead, science-based agriculture, water conservation, and climate-responsive policy reforms have become the need of the hour. One cannot rule out the possibility that this crisis, looming under the shadow of El Niño, may intensify further in the days ahead.

Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Shri J. P. Nadda addressed the convocation ceremony of Teerthanker Mahaveer University in Moradabad today. Congratulating the graduating students, Shri Nadda described the convocation as a defining milestone in the lives of students—one that reflects years of dedication, perseverance, discipline and academic commitment.

Addressing the gathering, the Union Health Minister noted that a convocation marks not only the completion of an academic journey but also the beginning of a new chapter of responsibility



ty and service. He encouraged the graduating students to move forward with strong values and a commitment to contribute meaningfully to the nation and society.

"You are privileged to be entering the professional world during the second phase of India's Amrit Kaal, as the country moves towards the vision of a developed India by 2047. This period presents both an opportunity and a responsibility simultaneously for young professionals to shape the future of the nation," Shri Nadda said. Commending the efforts of Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Union Health Minister Shri J. P. Nadda highlighted the institution's notable contribution to advancing education in the medical and allied health sectors. He observed that of the nearly 150 academic programmes offered by the university, close to 60 percent are dedicated to medical and allied health disciplines, reflecting the university's strong emphasis on building a competent and skilled healthcare workforce for the country.

Shri Nadda also acknowledged the university's commitment to ensuring

India's Amrit Kaal



wider access to education. He noted that the institution has extended scholarships

amounting to around ₹75 crore to support students from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to pursue higher education and achieve their academic goals. Such initiatives, he remarked, demonstrate the university's dedication to promoting inclusive education, academic excellence and the development of skilled professionals who can contribute meaningfully to India's growing healthcare sector.

Highlighting the transformative changes in India's healthcare sector over the past decade, Shri Nadda said that the Government has made sustained efforts to expand healthcare infrastructure, strengthen medical education and improve access to affordable and quality healthcare across the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"In the last eleven years, India has witnessed a significant expansion of premier medical institutions. The number of All India Institute of Medical Sciences has increased from 6 earlier to 23 today, strengthening tertiary healthcare services and creating new opportunities for high-quality medical educa-

tion and research across the country," he stated.

He noted that India has recorded substantial progress in improving maternal and child health outcomes. Citing global estimates, he stated that India's Maternal Mortality Ratio has declined by about 86 percent, compared to a global reduction of around 48 percent, reflecting the impact of sustained public health interventions.

Speaking about India's efforts to eliminate Tuberculosis, he highlighted that India has achieved a 21 percent decline in TB incidence, which is significantly higher than the global decline of 12 percent, as reported by the World Health Organization.

Shri Nadda further emphasised that the Government has been working consistently to reduce the financial burden of health-



making healthcare more affordable and accessible to the people.

Highlighting India's progress in strengthening access to timely treatment, Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda cited findings from The Lancet, noting that around 90 percent of cancer patients in India begin their treatment within 20 days, reflecting improvements in early diagnosis and treat-

ment pathways across the healthcare system. He also highlighted the transformative impact of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, describing it as the world's largest health

coverage scheme, which provides health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. Shri Nadda stated that the scheme has significantly expanded financial protection in healthcare and has benefited over 71 crore people, enabling millions of families to access quality treatment without financial hardship.

Addressing the graduat-



care on citizens. He noted that out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) on healthcare has significantly declined from 62.6 percent to 39.4 percent, reflecting the Government's commitment to

ing students, the Union Health Minister reminded them that their academic achievements are the result of the collective efforts of parents, teachers, mentors, university staff and institu-

ment pathways across the healthcare system. He also highlighted the transformative impact of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, describing it as the world's largest health

Chintan Shivir on strengthening India's Medical Devices export ecosystem

A Chintan Shivir on "Strengthening India's Medical Devices Export Ecosystem" was organized by the Department of Commerce in collaboration with the Department of Pharmaceuticals and the Export Promotion Council for Medical Devices (EPCMD) at Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi today. The event brought together policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, exporters and sector experts to deliberate on strategies for strengthening India's global competitiveness in the MedTech sector.

The discussions were held under the theme "Achieving 30@2030 – USD 30 Billion Market Size by 2030." The event witnessed participation of over 150 participants from government, industry, regulatory bodies and the broader medical devices ecosystem. The Chintan Shivir served as a platform for structured engagement between the Government and industry stakeholders to identify key policy priorities, address regulatory and infrastructure bottlenecks, and explore emerging opportunities for strengthening India's medical devices manufacturing ecosystem and export capabilities. India's medical devices sector has emerged as a critical component of the country's healthcare and manufacturing landscape. With growing global demand for affordable and high-quality medical technologies, India is increasingly positioning itself as a reliable manufacturing

and export hub.

In the inaugural session, Forum Coordinator, AiMed, Shri Rajiv Nath shared the industry perspective and emphasized the need for continued government-industry collaboration to address global regulatory challenges and scale domestic manufacturing.

Addressing the gathering, Joint Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Shri Aman Sharma highlighted the importance of focusing on the quality of medical devices manufacturing in the country and emphasized that both industry and regulators need to work together towards this objective.

Delivering the special address, Additional Secretary and Director General, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Shri Lav Aggarwal emphasized the need to grow faster by addressing structural issues. He highlighted the role of trade policy measures and export promotion initiatives in expanding India's presence in global medical devices markets. The Chintan Shivir was formally inaugurated by Secretary, Department of Commerce, Shri Rajesh Agarwal. In his inaugural address, he emphasized that India must move beyond its identity as the "Pharmacy of the World" to emerge as a global MedTech manufacturing hub. Noting that India's medical device exports have crossed USD 4 billion in FY25, Shri Agarwal highlighted the need to signifi-

cantly enhance India's global market share over the next decade with a strong focus on high-value manufacturing, research and development investments, incremental innovation and regulatory harmonization. He also emphasized the broader goal of achieving a USD 30 billion medical devices market by 2030 while leveraging India's significant domestic market for scaling.

The Chintan Shivir featured three thematic sessions focusing on key aspects of strengthening India's medical devices export ecosystem.

The first session, titled "Global Trade Deals and India's MedTech Exports: New Pathways Opened by Global FTAs," deliberated on opportunities emerging from India's expanding network of trade agreements and strategies for enhancing market access in global markets. The second session focused on "MedTech Export Infrastructure and Global Brand Building," highlighting the need to strengthen manufacturing clusters, expand testing infrastructure and build global brand recognition for Indian medical devices. The third session discussed "Evolving Regulatory Frameworks to Support Medical Device Exports," with emphasis on regulatory harmonization, streamlining approval processes and improving coordination between industry and regulators to facilitate exports.

MSME Ministry Completes 364 MSE-CDP Projects

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises continues to strengthen the backbone of India's economy through targeted schemes aimed at boosting productivity and competitiveness among Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). These initiatives focus on cluster-based development, digital transformation, and improved market access, ensuring holistic growth across sectors.

A key component of this effort is the Micro and Small Enterprises-Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP), which facilitates the establishment of Common Facility Centers (CFCs) or the creation or upgradation of Infrastructure Development (ID) projects. These interventions are designed to support enterprises within existing clusters by providing shared resources and modern infrastructure.

Since its inception, the MSE-CDP has approved a total of 606 projects. Out of these, 364 projects have already been completed, reflecting steady progress, while 242 projects are currently ongoing and expected to further enhance industrial capabilities across the country. The scheme plays a crucial role in addressing infrastructural gaps and improving the overall efficiency of MSE clusters. By enabling access to advanced tools, testing facilities, and production support, it significantly boosts the competitiveness of small-scale in-

dustries.

Parallel to this, the Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) has emerged as a major initiative for revitalizing traditional sectors. Launched to promote cluster-based development, SFURTI focuses on strengthening rural livelihoods and preserving India's rich artisanal heritage.

Since 2015-16, a total of 513 clusters have been approved under SFURTI, with a committed financial assistance of ₹1,332.95 crore from the Government of India. This reflects the government's strong commitment to supporting traditional industries and artisans.

These clusters are expected to benefit approximately 3.03 lakh artisans engaged in diverse sectors such as handicrafts, handloom, agro-processing, coir, and honey production. The initiative not only provides employment but also enhances skill development and income generation at the grassroots level.

Out of the total approved clusters, 378 are currently functional, contributing actively to local economies. Meanwhile, 135 clusters are under various stages of implementation, indicating ongoing expansion and future growth potential.

SFURTI clusters focus on improving infrastructure, enabling skill upgradation, fostering value addition, and strengthening market linkages. This integrated ap-

proach ensures that traditional industries remain competitive in a modern economic environment.

In recent years, India's industrial landscape has also witnessed a surge in digitalisation, significantly impacting MSME operations. Digital tools and technologies have enhanced efficiency, streamlined processes, and opened new avenues for value creation.

MSMEs are increasingly adopting digital payments, engaging in e-commerce transactions, and utilizing IoT-enabled production tools along with AI-based technologies. These advancements are helping enterprises improve productivity and remain competitive in both domestic and global markets.

To support this digital transformation, the government has introduced several initiatives through various ministries. Platforms such as DigiLocker and IndiaAI Datasets Platform are empowering MSMEs with access to digital resources and data-driven solutions.

Additionally, connectivity initiatives like BharatNet and PM-WANI are ensuring affordable internet access and last-mile connectivity, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

The Ministry is also promoting digital empowerment through Udyam registration, training programs in technology centres, and incubation support under the MSME Innovative Scheme.



Briefs :

Gas Cylinder Crackdown

Hisar : Authorities in Hisar and Hansi have seized 26 domestic LPG cylinders that were being illegally used for commercial purposes. Targeted raids by the Food and Civil Supplies Department discovered the misuse at various businesses, prompting immediate legal action. Officials explained that diverting domestic cylinders for commercial use disrupts the supply chain for households and creates a black market during the peak wedding season.

To address the high demand for events, gas agencies have been instructed to issue specific commercial quotas for weddings. Currently, consumers are facing wait times of several days for home deliveries due to these supply imbalances. The department has formed eight dedicated teams to monitor gas usage continuously and ensure that domestic fuel reaches families rather than being diverted to commercial kitchens.

Authorities in Hisar and Hansi have launched a strict crackdown on the illegal use of domestic LPG cylinders, seizing 26 cylinders that were being diverted for commercial purposes.

The was carried out by the Food and Civil Supplies Department through targeted raids across multiple establishments.

Officials reported that several businesses were found using subsidized domestic cylinders instead of legally mandated commercial gas connections.

Such misuse is considered a serious violation, as domestic LPG is meant exclusively for household consumption.

Authorities stated that this illegal diversion disrupts the supply chain and directly affects families who depend on timely gas deliveries.

The issue has become more pronounced during the ongoing wedding season, when demand for LPG rises significantly.

Murder Plot Unraveled

Fatehabad : Police have arrested a woman, Mamta, for the alleged murder of her husband, Jaiveer, whose body was discovered near an under-construction hospital earlier this month. The investigation, which began on March 11 after the victim was found with severe head injuries, initially led to the arrest of a man named Manoj Kumar. Technical evidence later pointed toward a conspiracy involving the deceased's wife. Authorities revealed during interrogation that Mamta and Manoj were in a secret relationship and planned the killing to remove Jaiveer from their lives. After committing the crime, they reportedly dumped the body by the roadside in Sector 11 to evade suspicion. Both suspects are now in custody and face charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita as the legal proceedings move to court.

In a shocking development, police in Fatehabad have unraveled an alleged murder conspiracy, arresting a woman identified as Mamta for the killing of her husband, Jaiveer. The case came to light on March 11 when Jaiveer's body was discovered near an under-construction hospital with severe head injuries. Initial investigations suggested a violent assault, prompting police to register a murder case and begin a detailed probe.

Dairy Excellence Celebrated

Karnal : The 22nd Convocation of the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) saw 253 students receive their degrees in the presence of top agricultural scientists. Chief Guest Dr. ML Jat highlighted the massive growth of the Indian dairy sector, noting that production has climbed to 247 million tonnes. He emphasized the government's increased budget for animal husbandry, which aims to modernize laboratories and recruit thousands of new veterinarians. The ceremony also honored distinguished veterans with honorary doctorates for their lifelong contributions to agricultural policy and finance. NDRI Director Dr. Dheer Singh praised the institute's 100% placement record and its success in commercializing new technologies. Gold medals were awarded to top achievers in dairy technology and engineering, marking the beginning of their professional journeys in India's rapidly evolving livestock economy.

The 22nd convocation ceremony of the National Dairy Research Institute turned into a grand celebration of academic success and agricultural progress as 253 students were formally awarded their degrees in the presence of eminent scientists and dignitaries from across the country.

The event drew attention



not only for the number of graduates but also for the strong message about India's expanding dairy industry, which has been witnessing steady and remarkable growth over the years. Chief Guest Dr. ML Jat addressed the gathering and underlined the rapid transformation in India's dairy landscape, emphasizing how it has become one of the largest contributors to the agricultural economy. He pointed out that India's milk production has surged to an impressive 247 million tonnes, reflecting the collective efforts of farmers, scientists, and policymakers in strengthening the sector.

Highlighting the role of government initiatives, Dr. Jat spoke about increased budget allocations for animal husbandry, which are expected to significantly boost infrastructure and innovation in the field.

He noted that these funds would be directed toward upgrading laboratories, enhancing research capabilities, and ensuring the recruitment of a large number of trained veterinarians across the country. The convocation also served as a platform to recognize outstanding contributions made by senior experts who have dedicated their lives to advancing agricultural policy and rural finance. Several distinguished veterans were conferred honorary doctorates as a mark of respect for their long-standing commitment to the development of India's farming and dairy sectors. Dr. Dheer Singh, Director of the institute, expressed pride in the institution's achievements and highlighted its consistent record of academic excellence and innovation.

He emphasized that the institute has maintained a 100 percent placement record, ensuring that its graduates find meaningful opportunities in both public and private sectors. According to Dr. Singh, the institute has played a key role in bridging the gap between research and industry by successfully commercializing several new technologies developed within its laboratories. He added that these innovations have not only improved productivity but also enhanced the overall efficiency of dairy farming practices across various regions. The ceremony witnessed an atmosphere of pride and celebration as students, faculty members, and families gathered to mark this important milestone in the graduates' academic journeys.

Youth Volunteers Trained as Disaster First Responders

Kurukshetra : A week-long training program under the 'Yuva Aapda Mitra' initiative has been launched to prepare 400 volunteers for disaster response. Deputy Commissioner Vishram Kumar Meena inaugurated the program, stressing the importance of immediate local assistance during emergencies. The training includes practical sessions on safety protocols, legal awareness, and rehabilitation measures. Conducted by the District Disaster Management Authority, the program is part of a nationwide effort to build community resilience and strengthen grassroots-level disaster preparedness.

The Deputy Commissioner of Kurukshetra, Vishram Kumar Meena, recently took a definitive step toward bolstering local safety by officially inaugurating a specialized week-long training intensive designed for the youth of the region. This initiative, operating under the title 'Yuva Aapda Mitra,' aims to transform 400 enthusiastic volunteers into a disciplined and capable force of disaster first responders, ensuring that the community is not left vulnerable during the critical initial moments of a crisis.

During the opening ceremony, Commissioner Meena delivered a compelling

address that centered on the indispensable role of immediate local assistance, noting that in many emergency scenarios, the first few minutes are the most vital for saving lives. He emphasized that while professional state and national relief forces are essential, their arrival can sometimes be delayed by geography or infrastructure damage, making the presence of trained neighborhood volunteers a literal lifeline for those in distress.

The 'Yuva Aapda Mitra' program is meticulously structured to provide a holistic education in emergency management, moving far beyond basic theory to ensure that every participant is battle-ready for real-world application. Over the course of the week, the 400 volunteers are being put through their paces in various practical sessions that simulate high-pressure environments, allowing them to practice safety protocols under the watchful eyes of experienced mentors and emergency professionals. A significant portion of the curriculum is dedicated to the technicalities of safety protocols, teaching the youth how to navigate unstable structures, provide basic life support, and manage crowd control during the chaos that often follows natural or man-made

disasters. By mastering these skills, the volunteers become force multipliers for the District Disaster Management Authority, providing extra sets of trained hands that can operate effectively without becoming casualties themselves.

In addition to physical rescue techniques, the training program places a unique emphasis on legal awareness, ensuring that these first responders understand the statutory frameworks and protections that govern disaster relief operations. This knowledge is crucial for volunteers, as it empowers them to act with confidence within the bounds of the law, protecting both the rights of the victims and the liability of the responders during complex recovery efforts.

The sessions also delve into the long-term aspects of crisis management, specifically focusing on rehabilitation measures and the psychological support required to help a community bounce back after a traumatic event. The volunteers are taught that disaster response does not end once the immediate danger has passed; rather, it continues through the process of rebuilding homes, restoring livelihoods, and providing emotional comfort to those who have lost everything.

Women Changemakers Honoured for Inspiring Work

Yamunanagar : A special ceremony titled Nari Gaurav Samman celebrated the achievements of over 25 women for their contributions to society. Held at Geeta Bhawan temple, the event recognized efforts in areas such as social service, skill training, and community welfare.

Among those honoured were Meenakshi Sharma, known for providing free meals to the needy for over a decade, and Rajni, who supports her family by driving an e-rickshaw.

Organizers highlighted that such recognition helps inspire others and strengthens the message of women's empowerment.

The city of Yamunanagar recently became the site of a profound celebration of female resilience and social contribution through a dedicated ceremony titled Nari Gaurav Samman. This event was meticulously designed to shine a spotlight on the often-unseen labor and transformative impact of women who have dedicated their lives to the betterment

of their communities. By gathering these leaders in a single forum, the organizers aimed to elevate the narrative of women's empowerment from abstract policy to tangible, lived reality, showcasing the diverse ways in which female changemakers are reshaping the social fabric of the region.

The venue for this prestigious gathering was the historic Geeta Bhawan temple, a location that lent a sense of solemnity and spiritual significance to the proceedings. The choice of such a respected community landmark underscored the deep cultural value placed on the contributions of these women, framing their work not just as professional achievements, but as a form of selfless service that aligns with the highest ideals of community welfare. The atmosphere within the hall was one of collective pride, as citizens and local leaders gathered to witness the formal recognition of over 25 women who have made significant strides in various humanitarian fields. The scope of the honors

was remarkably broad, reflecting a holistic understanding of what it means to be a "changemaker" in modern society. The Nari Gaurav Samman did not limit its recognition to any single sector; instead, it celebrated efforts in areas as diverse as grassroots social service, vocational skill training, and broader community welfare initiatives. This inclusive approach served to validate many different paths of service, from the woman providing educational opportunities to underprivileged children to the organizer coordinating large-scale health awareness drives in rural clusters.

One of the most touching highlights of the ceremony was the recognition of Meenakshi Sharma, a woman whose name has become synonymous with compassion in the Yamunanagar area. For over a decade, Sharma has operated a mission focused on providing free meals to those in desperate need, ensuring that the most vulnerable members of society do not go hungry.

Wisdom Meets Innovation

Mahendragarh : Central University of Haryana hosted a national conference focusing on combining ancient environmental wisdom with modern technology to combat climate change. The event brought together over 150 environmental nodal officers and researchers to discuss sustainable living models. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tankeshwar Kumar highlighted the university's own green initiatives, such as solar power, water recycling, and the use of electric vehicles on campus.

The sessions explored historical ecological movements like those led by Guru Jambheshwar, advocating for a return to traditional conservation ethics alongside scientific progress. Participants presented over 60 research papers on topics like waste-to-energy and environmental ethics. The conference served as a platform for creating practical frameworks that use local traditional knowledge to strengthen global climate resilience efforts. The Central University of Haryana, situated in the heart of Mahendragarh, recently became a focal point for national ecological discourse by hosting a significant conference dedicated to the intersection of ancestral environmental wisdom and cutting-edge modern technology. This gathering was not merely an academic exercise but a concerted effort to bridge the gap between historical conservation ethics and the urgent technological requirements



of the twenty-first century. By bringing together a diverse array of minds, the university aimed to create a holistic dialogue that addresses the multifaceted nature of the global climate crisis, emphasizing that the solutions for our future may very well lie in the forgotten practices of our past combined with the innovations of the present. The event saw an impressive turnout, drawing over

150 environmental nodal officers, seasoned researchers, and dedicated scholars from various parts of the country to engage in rigorous debate and collaborative planning. These participants represented a wide spectrum of expertise, ranging from hard sciences and engineering to philosophy and indigenous studies, all united by a common goal of developing sustainable living models.

International Conference to Spotlight Scientific Innovation

Kurukshetra : Kurukshetra University has announced an upcoming global conference on "Advancements in Computational and Applied Sciences," scheduled for late April. Vice-Chancellor Som Nath Sachdeva launched the event brochure, emphasizing the importance of such platforms in bridging research and real-world applications.

The conference will bring together experts from multiple scientific disciplines to explore innovative solutions to modern challenges.

Organizers believe the event will enhance academic collaboration and provide valuable exposure to students and researchers alike.

The Vice-Chancellor of Kurukshetra University, Professor Som Nath Sachdeva, has officially set the stage for a major academic milestone by announcing an upcoming global conference centered on the theme of "Advancements in Computational and Applied Sciences."

This high-profile event, which is meticulously scheduled to take place in late April, aims to position the university as a central hub for international scientific dialogue and a catalyst for



interdisciplinary innovation. The announcement has already generated significant buzz within the academic community, signaling a robust commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional research and embracing the complexities of the digital age. During the formal launch of the event brochure, Vice-Chancellor Sachdeva articulated a clear vision for the conference, emphasizing that such platforms are no longer just a luxury but a necessity in the modern educational landscape. He noted that the primary objective of this gathering is to bridge the often-widening gap between theoretical research conducted in laboratories and the practical, real-world ap-

plications that drive societal progress.

By focusing on the intersection of computational power and applied sciences, the university intends to showcase how abstract algorithms and data models can be translated into tangible solutions for industry, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. The conference is designed to be a melting pot of intellectual diversity, bringing together a vast array of experts from multiple scientific disciplines to explore innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century. Organizers have curated a program that transcends departmental silos, inviting physicists,

mathematicians, computer scientists, and engineers to share a singular stage. This multidisciplinary approach is rooted in the belief that the most groundbreaking discoveries often occur at the fringes where different fields of study overlap, fostering an environment where a breakthrough in one area can spark a revolution in another.

One of the core ambitions of the event is to enhance academic collaboration on a global scale, creating a network of scholars who can work together long after the conference has concluded. By inviting international keynote speakers and delegates, Kurukshetra University is facilitating a cross-pollination of ideas that is essential for staying competitive in the global research arena. This focus on networking is intended to lead to joint research ventures, faculty exchange programs, and a more integrated approach to solving problems that do not respect national or disciplinary borders.

For the students and young researchers at Kurukshetra University, this conference represents an unparalleled opportunity for professional exposure and personal growth.

Folk Art Extravaganza

Sonepat : The Lok Kala Utsav at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya concluded with a vibrant display of India's diverse cultural heritage. The three-day festival featured traditional performances from multiple states, including Punjab's Luddi, Assam's Bardo Shikla, and Maharashtra's Lavani. Guest speakers emphasized that these folk arts are not just entertainment but the bedrock of national identity and social unity. The event, supported by the Union Ministry of Culture, aimed to reconnect the younger generation with their ancestral roots. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sudesh presided over the closing ceremony, which saw massive participation from students and cultural enthusiasts. The festival provided a platform for regional artists to showcase their talents, ensuring that traditional songs and dances continue to thrive in the modern era. The vibrant Lok Kala Utsav hosted at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya concluded on a colorful and energetic note after three days of immersive cultural celebrations that brought together the richness and diversity of India's traditional heritage under one roof. The festival transformed the campus into a lively hub of artistic expression, where audiences witnessed an extraordinary blend of music,

dance, and storytelling that reflected the deep-rooted traditions of different regions, creating an atmosphere filled with enthusiasm, pride, and cultural appreciation among students, artists, and visitors alike. Throughout the festival, a wide array of traditional performances captivated the audience, showcasing the unique cultural identities of various regions through their distinctive art forms, vibrant costumes, rhythmic music, and expressive dance movements. Performances such as Luddi, Bardo Shikla, and Lavani stood out for their authenticity and energy, drawing loud applause from spectators who were mesmerized by the skill and passion displayed by the artists, while also gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural narratives embedded within these folk traditions that have been preserved and passed down through generations. Speakers and cultural experts present at the event emphasized that folk arts are far more than just a source of entertainment, highlighting their role as a vital foundation of national identity, collective memory, and social cohesion that binds communities together across linguistic and regional boundaries. They stressed that preserving and promoting these traditional art forms is essential in maintaining cultural continuity, especially in

an era where rapid modernization and globalization often overshadow indigenous practices and local expressions of creativity.

The festival, organized with the support of the Union Ministry of Culture, was designed with the broader objective of reconnecting younger generations with their ancestral roots by offering them direct exposure to the richness of traditional art forms in an engaging and interactive manner. By bringing students face-to-face with live performances and cultural narratives, the event encouraged a renewed sense of curiosity, respect, and responsibility toward preserving the country's artistic heritage for future generations.

The closing ceremony was presided over by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sudesh, who commended the efforts of the organizers, performers, and participants in making the festival a grand success and highlighted the importance of such initiatives in educational institutions. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and cultural enthusiasts, many of whom actively engaged with the performances and expressed admiration for the diversity and depth of India's folk traditions, turning the festival into not just a celebration but also a meaningful cultural exchange.

Digital Shield Against Rising Cyber Threats

Chandigarh : In a major step toward strengthening online safety, Haryana Director General of Police Ajay Singhal unveiled the 'Abhedya' mobile application on Saturday, marking a first-of-its-kind initiative in India.

The app has been designed to proactively block extortion attempts, stalking incidents, and harmful digital communication before they can affect users.

The move comes in response to a growing number of cybercrime cases in the state, with 178 extortion complaints recorded in 2024 and 107 more in the following year. The application functions by monitoring incoming WhatsApp calls and messages from unknown numbers, particularly those originating from international or virtual Indian sources.

When suspicious activity is detected, the system instantly disconnects the call and deletes related notifications or voice notes. This preventive mechanism is intended to reduce the psychological pressure and fear that cybercriminals often exploit to manipulate victims. The Haryana Police have taken a pioneering leap in the realm of digital security with the launch of a so-



phisticated technological barrier designed to protect citizens from the escalating waves of online exploitation. On a landmark Saturday in Chandigarh, Director General of Police Ajay Singhal officially unveiled the 'Abhedya' mobile application, a tool that represents a paradigm shift from traditional reactive policing to a proactive, tech-driven

defense strategy.

This initiative is the first of its kind in India, signaling Haryana's intent to lead the nation in the fight against the sophisticated methods employed by modern cybercriminals who operate across international borders.

The necessity for such a robust digital shield is underscored by a

sobering trend in criminal data, which reflects a sharp rise in the frequency and audacity of cyber-enabled crimes within the state. Statistical records from the Haryana Police reveal a troubling trajectory: in 2024, the state documented 178 formal complaints related specifically to digital extortion, a figure that was followed by another 107

cases in the subsequent year. These numbers likely represent only the tip of the iceberg, as many victims of digital stalking and harassment often suffer in silence due to the intense social stigma and psychological fear intentionally cultivated by their tormentors.

At its core, the 'Abhedya' application is engineered to function as an automated sentry, standing guard over the user's most private digital gateways, specifically their messaging and calling platforms. The application focuses its primary defensive efforts on monitoring incoming WhatsApp communications, which has recently emerged as the preferred medium for scammers and extortionists due to its end-to-end encryption and global reach.

By targeting this specific vector, the Haryana Police are addressing the primary channel through which most modern digital threats are delivered to unsuspecting mobile phone users. The sophisticated algorithms integrated into the 'Abhedya' app are specifically tuned to identify and flag high-risk communication patterns that deviate from standard personal or professional interactions.

Midnight Operation Cracks High-Profile Kidnap Gang

Sonepat : A dramatic late-night encounter near the Yamuna river led to the arrest of five members of a criminal gang by the Special Task Force, while two suspects sustained gunshot injuries. The crackdown was linked to the shocking Holi-day abduction of an eight-year-old boy, grandson of a well-known college owner in Jhajjar, who was released only after a ransom of ₹5 crore was allegedly paid.

The operation unfolded near Mehandipur village, where the accused reportedly opened fire on the STF team, prompting retaliatory action. Police managed to capture all five suspects, identifying the injured individuals as residents of Rohtak.

Authorities also seized a vehicle and several weapons from the site, and efforts are ongoing to dismantle the wider network associated with the gang. In a high-

stakes midnight operation that mirrored a cinematic thriller, the Special Task Force (STF) of the Haryana Police successfully intercepted and apprehended five members of a notorious criminal syndicate near the banks of the Yamuna River. This confrontation was the culmination of an intensive investigation into a brazen abduction that had sent shockwaves through the region's elite circles.

The crackdown, occurring under the veil of darkness near Sonepat, marks a significant victory for law enforcement in their ongoing battle against organized crime and high-profile extortion rings that target prominent families. The origins of this intense police action trace back to a harrowing incident on the day of the Holi festival, a time usually reserved for celebration and communal joy.

Top Cop Reveals Personal Brush With Cyber Fraudsters

Chandigarh : Exposing the boldness of cybercriminals, Haryana DGP Ajay Singhal disclosed that he and his family were personally targeted by "digital arrest" scammers. Speaking during the launch of a security app, he described receiving a call from a Pakistani number where the caller impersonated a police officer and falsely claimed an arrest warrant had been issued against him. When confronted, the fraudster reportedly resorted to abusive language.

A similar attempt was made on his wife's phone under the guise of an official police matter. These incidents played a crucial role in inspiring the development of the 'Abhedya' app, which is

specifically built to block such deceptive international and masked calls, preventing these psychological tactics from reaching potential victims.

In a move that stunned the audience at a recent high-level security summit in Chandigarh, Haryana's Director General of Police, Ajay Singhal, shared a deeply personal account of how even the highest levels of law enforcement are not immune to the audacity of modern cybercriminals. By revealing that he and his family were direct targets of a sophisticated "digital arrest" scam, the DGP humanized the struggle against online fraud, transforming a technical policy discussion into a

narrative of personal resilience. This disclosure served as a powerful reminder that in the borderless world of the internet, a badge offers no physical shield against the psychological warfare waged by anonymous predators operating from thousands of miles away.

The specific incident described by the DGP involved a classic "digital arrest" tactic, a method that has become increasingly prevalent across India.

Singhal recounted receiving a call from a number with a Pakistani country code, where the individual on the other end of the line possessed the boldness to impersonate a high-ranking police officer. The fraudster

attempted to instill immediate panic by falsely claiming that a formal arrest warrant had been issued against the DGP, a move designed to bypass logical reasoning through the sudden onset of fear and authority-based pressure.

The encounter took an even more dramatic turn when the DGP, well-versed in the protocols of his own profession, began to confront the caller and challenge the legitimacy of the claims. Realizing that their psychological trap had failed to ensnare its target, the fraudster reportedly dropped the professional facade and resorted to a barrage of abusive language. This shift from calculated manipulation to raw

hostility is a common trait among cyber-extortionists when they encounter resistance, reflecting the desperate and volatile nature of these criminal enterprises when their scripts go off-track.

The reach of these scammers extended beyond the DGP himself, as a similar attempt was made on his wife's mobile phone shortly thereafter. In this instance, the criminals again utilized the guise of an official police matter to gain entry into her private digital space. By targeting the spouse of a high-ranking official, the scammers demonstrated a level of research and persistence that highlights the evolving "spear-phishing" nature of

these crimes, where specific family units are identified and hounded through multiple channels to maximize the chances of a successful extortion.

According to DGP Singhal, these personal brushes with digital predators were not just frustrating anecdotes but served as the primary catalyst for a major policy shift within the state's cyber-defense strategy. The realization that scammers were bold enough to target the head of the police force underscored a terrifying reality: if the DGP could be reached and harassed in his own home, the average citizen stood little chance against such relentless psychological tactics. This per-

sonal motivation became the driving force behind the rapid conceptualization and development of the 'Abhedya' mobile application.

The 'Abhedya' app was specifically engineered to act as a digital gatekeeper, addressing the very vulnerabilities that the DGP and his wife experienced. Its core architecture is built to identify and block deceptive international calls and masked virtual numbers before they can even register a ring on the user's device. By cutting off the communication at the source, the app effectively removes the "human element" that scammers rely on, ensuring that the psychological pressure of a fake arrest warrant or an abusive tirade

never reaches the potential victim's ears.

During the app's launch, the DGP emphasized that the "digital arrest" phenomenon relies entirely on the initial window of communication to create a sense of urgency. Scammers often use professional-looking profile pictures, fake official documents, and a stern, commanding tone to make their victims believe they are in genuine legal peril. By revealing his own story, Singhal highlighted that the best way to defeat these tactics is to prevent the contact from happening in the first place, rather than expecting individuals to remain calm under extreme, manufactured stress.

Dense Fog Triggers Massive 15-Vehicle Highway Crash

Panipat : A major road accident involving 15 vehicles caused chaos on the NH-44 flyover on Saturday morning, leaving at least 10 people injured. The mishap was triggered by thick fog and a stationary truck that had broken down near Sewah village bus stand, drastically reducing visibility for approaching vehicles.

As a result, multiple cars and trucks collided in a chain reaction, creating a pile-up that brought traffic to a complete halt.

Among the injured were women and three children, all of whom were taken to a nearby hospital. The accident caused severe congestion on the Delhi-Panipat route for over two hours until emergency teams cleared the wreckage and restored traffic flow.

The early hours of Saturday morning on the National Highway-44 (NH-44) flyover near Panipat were marked by a scene of utter devastation as a massive 15-vehicle pile-up paralyzed one of the country's busiest transit corridors.



The accident, which occurred near the Sewah village bus stand, transformed a routine commute into a chaotic survival situation within a matter of seconds.

As the sun struggled to pierce through a heavy atmospheric shroud, the sounds of screeching tires and twisting metal echoed across the elevated roadway, signaling a chain reaction that would eventually involve a diverse mix of private cars, commercial trucks, and transport

travelers.

The primary catalyst for this multi-vehicle disaster was a lethal combination of natural elements and mechanical failure. A thick, impenetrable blanket of fog had descended upon the Panipat region, reducing visibility to near-zero levels and leaving drivers with almost no reaction time.

Compounding this environmental hazard was a stationary truck that had broken down in a vulnerable posi-

tion on the flyover.

Because the stalled vehicle was obscured by the dense white mist, approaching drivers were unable to see the obstacle until they were mere meters away, making a high-speed collision almost inevitable despite desperate attempts to brake.

As the first few vehicles struck the stationary truck, a terrifying chain reaction began to unfold across the asphalt.

High Court Reinstates Officer, Redefines Moral Turpitude

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled that a criminal conviction does not automatically amount to moral turpitude, leading to the reinstatement of a dismissed bank officer. The individual, a former branch manager, had been removed from service after being convicted under Section 498-A of the IPC in a matrimonial dispute.

Justice Sandeep Moudgil observed that the bank had failed to conduct a proper departmental inquiry before terminating the employee. The court noted that the conviction stemmed from a domestic conflict and did not necessarily indicate immoral character. It ordered the bank to restore the officer's position along with back wages and 6 percent interest, highlighting the nuanced interpretation of moral turpitude in legal contexts. The Punjab and Haryana High Court recently delivered a landmark judgment that significantly clarifies the intersection of personal criminal convictions and professional em-



ployment status. In a move that challenges long-standing administrative assumptions, the court ruled that a criminal conviction does not serve as an automatic grounds for dismissal under the umbrella of "moral turpitude." This decision led to the formal reinstatement of a former bank branch manager, whose career had been abruptly terminated following a legal battle stemming from a private matrimonial dispute. The ruling emphasizes that the nature of an offense must be meticulously analyzed before it is used to justify the stripping of an individual's livelihood and

professional standing.

The case centered on an officer who had served as a branch manager before being embroiled in a domestic legal conflict under Section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code, which pertains to cruelty by a husband or his relatives toward a woman. Following his conviction in this matrimonial matter, the bank moved to dismiss him from service, operating under the internal regulation that any criminal conviction reflects a fundamental flaw in "moral turpitude" that is incompatible with the trust required for a banking role. However, the officer challenged this dis-

missal, arguing that a domestic dispute, however unfortunate, should not be equated with professional dishonesty or an inherent lack of moral character.

Justice Sandeep Moudgil, presiding over the case, offered a detailed and nuanced observation regarding the bank's handling of the termination process. He pointed out a critical procedural lapse, noting that the bank had failed to conduct a proper and independent departmental inquiry before taking the extreme step of terminating the employee. The court underscored that a conviction in a court of law does not absolve an employer from its duty to follow due process, which includes assessing how the specific nature of the crime actually impacts the employee's fitness to perform their professional duties within the specific context of their workplace.

A central pillar of the High Court's reasoning was the redefinition of "moral turpitude" in a modern legal context.

Police Bust Large-Scale Liquor Smuggling Network

Ambala : Authorities intercepted a major illegal liquor consignment, seizing 1,149 boxes during a late-night operation near Khudda Khurd village. Acting on intelligence inputs, police stopped a truck heading toward Yamunanagar and discovered the contraband hidden beneath animal fodder.

The driver, a resident of Rajasthan, was arrested on the spot. Preliminary findings indicate the shipment originated in Punjab and was bound for Odisha. Officials have confiscated the vehicle and initiated further investigations to identify the larger

smuggling network.

In a significant blow to inter-state bootlegging operations, the Ambala police successfully intercepted a massive illegal liquor consignment during a high-stakes midnight operation near Khudda Khurd village. This crackdown marks one of the largest seizures in the region recently, highlighting the persistent challenge of organized smuggling networks that utilize Haryana's transit corridors to move contraband across the country. The precision of the raid suggests a high level of coordination and intelligence

gathering by local law enforcement, who managed to disrupt the shipment before it could disappear into the secondary road networks leading toward Yamunanagar.

The operation was initiated following specific and actionable intelligence inputs received by the Ambala district police regarding the movement of a suspicious heavy-duty vehicle. Acting swiftly on this information, tactical teams set up a strategic checkpoint near the village outskirts, waiting for a truck that matched the description provided by infor-

mants. The tension of the late-night vigil culminated when the targeted vehicle was spotted and flagged down, leading to a thorough inspection that would soon reveal the true nature of its cargo, hidden behind a carefully constructed facade of legitimacy.

Upon initial inspection, the truck appeared to be transporting a standard load of animal fodder, a common sight on the rural roads of Haryana. However, the officers on the scene, suspicious of the driver's demeanor and the specific routing of the vehicle, decided to dig deeper

into the layers of the cargo. As they cleared away the top levels of dry fodder, they uncovered a massive cache of 1,149 boxes of country-made and branded liquor. This sophisticated concealment method was clearly designed to evade routine manual checks and bypass the technological scanners used at major state border crossings.

The scale of the seizure is particularly notable, with the 1,149 boxes representing a significant black-market value and a substantial loss for the illegal syndicate involved.

Court Seeks Reply on Witness Protection Withdrawal

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has sought clarification from the state government regarding the withdrawal of protection for a key witness in cases involving Asaram Bapu and Narayan Sai. The petitioner has challenged the decision to discontinue financial aid and security coverage.

The witness, who survived a shooting in 2015 and suffers from permanent disability, argued that the threats against him persist. Despite this, his request for continued protection was rejected by district authorities. The court has scheduled the next hearing for August 13 and directed the state to respond.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has formally in-

tervened in a matter concerning the safety of a high-stakes witness, issuing a notice to the state government to explain the recent withdrawal of his security and financial assistance. This legal challenge centers on a key individual involved in the high-profile criminal cases against Asaram Bapu and Narayan Sai, whose testimony is considered pivotal to the ongoing judicial proceedings. The petitioner, a victim of a near-fatal attack over a decade ago, argues that the state's decision to strip away his protection is not only a breach of administrative duty but a direct threat to his life and the integrity of the witness protection framework.

The core of the petitioner's grievance lies in the persistent and grave nature of the threats he faces as a result of his cooperation with law enforcement.

Having survived a brutal shooting incident in 2015, the witness continues to live with the physical and psychological scars of that encounter, including a permanent disability sustained during the assassination attempt. He contends that the criminal elements associated with the cases he testified in remain active and capable of carrying out further violence, making the sudden cessation of security coverage a move that leaves him entirely vulnerable to retaliation.



Kohli sets the tone as RCB prepare for IPL title defence

Bengaluru: Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) have begun preparations for the new season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) as the defending champions returned to the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium with renewed focus ahead of the 2026 campaign. Addressing the squad during the first training session, star batter Virat Kohli stressed the importance of maintaining the standards that helped the franchise secure last year's title.

"We worked really hard over the last two to three seasons to achieve what we did last year, and it's only going to get tougher because other teams are going to come hard at us."

Emphasising the need to make the most of the preparation period, Kohli added, "We don't waste these days. We stay ahead. So switch on now. Let's not waste even a minute of any session that we are a part of. We must give our 120 per cent for these two and a half months."

The opening session also saw the integration of several new members into the squad. Head coach Andy Flower welcomed the latest additions,



including Venkatesh Iyer, Mangesh Yadav, Jordan Cox, Vicky Ostwal and Satvik Deswal. He also made special mention of Under-19 World Cup winners Kanishk Chou-

han and Vihaan Malhotra.

"We had an interesting auction and I think we've improved our squad, to be quite frank. We've brought in some great new additions.

Integrating them into the RCB way alongside established players led by Virat and Rajat is an exciting part of building this team," Flower said.

"There is one difference this year, we've got a star on our shirt. That's a very proud feeling for all RCB fans. But that season is gone. Now we have a new challenge ahead, and it's an exciting one. We're here to win this year's IPL," he continued.

New recruit and wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma also expressed his enthusiasm about joining the set-up. "Everyone was very excited to meet each other. I was excited to get more batting time. I got a chance to meet all the coaches and train again."

Flower also highlighted the advantage of beginning the campaign at home. "Our first game is here at Chinnaswamy, which is a fantastic opportunity for us to build momentum early and be welcomed by our home fans. The outfield is looking superb, lush, green and beautiful."

RCB will begin their title defence against Sunrisers Hyderabad on March 28 at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Jay Shah had no role in my IPL commentary exit: Laxman Sivaramakrishnan

New Delhi: Former Indian cricketer Laxman Sivaramakrishnan has clarified that neither the Board of Control for Cricket in India nor current International Cricket Council chairman Jay Shah had any role in his decision to step away from commentary duties ahead of the Indian Premier League 2026.

Addressing the speculation, Sivaramakrishnan emphasized that his concerns were limited to an issue with a specific individual within the system rather than the governing body itself. He made it clear that the matter was personal and should not be linked to the larger administration. "Don't bring the BCCI Administration into the picture. It's a one-on-one with an employee of the BCCI. Jay Shah and Co. have nothing to do with this issue. I am taking control of my life, and I think I am entitled to do it," he stated, underlining his stance. The former leg-spinner had recently announced his decision to

quit his long-standing role as a commentator associated with the BCCI. His exit comes after more than two decades of involvement with the commentary panel.

In a series of social media posts, Sivaramakrishnan alleged that he faced discrimination and did not receive adequate opportunities despite his long tenure. His remarks sparked widespread discussion among cricket fans. He specifically pointed out that he was often overlooked for prominent on-air responsibilities such as toss presentations and post-match segments, which are considered key visibility roles for commentators.

"I am retiring from commentary for BCCI. If I have not been used for tosses and presentations for 23 years, and newcomers are given those roles, what do you think could be the reason?" he wrote, expressing his frustration. Sivaramakrishnan also hinted at deeper issues within broadcast production, suggesting that his

experience reflects a broader pattern. He indicated that more details could emerge in the future.

Adding to the controversy, when a social media user suggested that his skin colour might have played a role, Sivaramakrishnan responded by agreeing with the observation, stating, "You are right. Colour discrimination."

Following these comments, several fans directed criticism toward the BCCI and its administration. However, Sivaramakrishnan later clarified that his intention was not to implicate the board as a whole.

He reiterated that his decision was a personal one, driven by his desire to regain control over his professional life and step away from an environment he found unsatisfactory. By distancing the issue from the BCCI and its leadership, Sivaramakrishnan sought to prevent unnecessary controversy and maintain clarity around his stance.

Another setback for KKR: Akash Deep ruled out of IPL 2026

Kolkata: Merely a week ahead of the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, three-time title-holders Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) suffered another major setback to their pace attack with India fast bowler Akash Deep ruled out of the tournament.

According to sources within the KKR set-up, the 29-year-old Bengal pacer will miss the entire season. Akash, who was bought by the franchise at his base price of Rs 1 crore during last year's mini-auction in Abu Dhabi, has not joined the team's training camp here, which began on March 18.

It is understood that the pacer has been undergoing rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, although the exact nature of his injury has not been disclosed. Reports suggest that the Centre's medical staff have been in communication with the franchise regarding the player's status.

Akash has struggled with injuries throughout his career, which has often limited his availability for both India and his IPL teams. Since making his IPL debut in 2022, he has played only 14 matches across four seasons, taking 10 wickets.

Last season, he was part of Lucknow Super Giants, who had signed him for Rs 8 crore at the 2025 auction before



releasing him after just one season.

With Akash now unavailable, KKR may be forced to look for a replacement. The franchise had earlier been undecided about signing a substitute for Harshit Rana, who was ruled out before the start of the camp after undergoing knee surgery. KKR head coach Abhishek Nayyar had on Friday hinted at the possibility of a replacement signing earlier, likely aware of the uncertainty around Akash's availability.

"Hopefully soon, in a couple of days I think. Obviously Harshit is with the BCCI at the CoE. Once we get an update the medical team will communicate to us. We'll try to evaluate what we are picking before we make the announcement. (We) will take us a few more days, most probably before we leave for

Mumbai," Nayyar said.

Akash Deep's absence has only further compounded KKR's bowling concerns. The franchise had made a significant investment in Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana, signing him for Rs 18 crore, but he is still awaiting a No Objection Certificate from Sri Lanka Cricket. At present, the franchise's Indian pace options include Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik and Kartik Tyagi. The team management could also rely on Australian all-rounder Cameron Green for a few overs if required.

However, KKR team mentor Dwayne Bravo insisted that it has enough depth to cope with the setbacks. "In any tournament with any team, once you lose some of the key bowling options, these are not things you plan for, but these are things you have to accept," Bravo said on Friday. "The good thing about Indian cricket, especially at the moment, there's a lot of depth. There're the likes of Umran Malik, Kartik Tyagi, Vaibhav Arora... they are young, exciting talents. We lost some key players, but I feel comfortable to know that we have what it takes to replace those guys. From a bowling point of view, I think we will be fine," he said. KKR will begin their IPL 2026 campaign with an away match against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium on March 29.

Iyer, Arshdeep confident as Punjab Kings begin IPL countdown

New Delhi: With the Indian Premier League (IPL) season fast approaching, Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer and fast bowler Arshdeep Singh expressed confidence and excitement about the campaign ahead during the franchise's new jersey unveiling event in Mohali on Friday.

Speaking on the team's preparations during the event, which was also attended by Punjab Kings CEO Satish Menon, Chief Commercial Officer Saurabh Arora, among others, Iyer highlighted the importance of building strong relationships within the squad before the start of the tournament, noting that bonding off the field plays a key role in on-field success.

"This is the period where we live as a family for two months. The more time we spend together, the more we get to know each other. Now is the time to build that camaraderie. We spend most of our time in the game room, playing FIFA and other

games. The planning and plotting for matches usually happens a day or two before the game, but building this bond off the field helps us get better results eventually,"



Shreyas said.

Iyer also reflected on his return to competitive cricket after recovering from an injury that kept him out for a period. "It is always challenging to come back after an injury. I had lost around seven kilos and it took a lot of effort to gain that weight back. But I love challenges. I am glad I overcame that part of my life, and I am back here proudly representing the

team."

Acknowledging the support he has received from Punjab fans, who have affectionately nicknamed him 'Sarpanch Sahab', the cap-

tain said his focus remains firmly on winning the title. "Expectations are high, which is fun. I love the challenge. But the important thing is that whenever we step in, we have to win. My eye is on the trophy," he added.

Arshdeep, one of the franchise's key bowlers and a local favourite, also spoke about the excitement of playing in front of the home

crowd at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur.

"When you feel the pressure, it is a privilege," Arshdeep smiled. "It is a lot of fun when you get so much support from the crowd. When people cheer for you, you feel that 30,000 people are running in with you at that time. We will try our best to win all our home matches this year."

The left-arm quick also looked back at his journey with the franchise and credited the team management for believing in him early in his career. "The journey has been amazing," Arshdeep said.

"When I came here for the first time, they gave me full support and showed me my potential. They trusted me a lot when no other team did. I really appreciate that, and I want to stay here for a long time. I am looking forward to winning a lot of trophies for the team," he added.

5 players from top 100 to feature, record prize purse of US\$ 2.55 million at stake

Gurugram: Five players from the World's Top-100 and another eight who are ranked between 101 and 150 are set to participate at Hero Indian Open (HIO) 2026, which will be held March 26-29, 2026 at DLF Golf and Country Club in Gurugram.

A total of 13 players in the world's 150 makes the 2026 edition of HIO an extremely strong event on the DP World Tour calendar. Co-sanctioned by the Indian Golf Union, the event carries a record prize purse of US\$ 2.55 million this year.

The world-class field will be led by Akshay Bhatia, winner of a Signature event on the PGA Tour, and Francesco Molinari, a Major winner, along with top Indian golfers.

The five players in the Top-100 are Bhatia (22), Casey Jarvis (69), a two-time winner on DPWT in 2026, Elvis Smylie (74), David Puig (85) and Thriston Lawrence (89).

Three-time winner on the PGA Tour, Bhatia is a Hero MotoCorp Brand Ambassador and recently won the star-studded Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill against the likes of World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler and World No. 2 Rory McIlroy. Ryder Cup star Molinari of Italy is the 2018 winner of the Open and has been a part of the winning European Ryder Cup team three times.

The eight players between 101 and 150 includes the defending champion Eugenio Chacarra, who is currently ranked 143rd. The others are Angel Ayora, Andy

Sullivan, Nacho Elvira, Dan Bradbury, Calum Hill, Martin Couvra and Julien Guerrier.

The international star cast will face tough competition from the home challenge which will be led by Shubhankar Sharma, a two-time DP World Tour winner, Yuvraj Sandhu, winner of the 2025 PGTI Order of Merit, previous PGTI OOM winners, Manu Gandas, Om Prakash Chouhan and Veer Ahlawat, who in 2024 finished runner-up at the Hero Indian Open and Rayhan Thomas.

The local contingent will also include multiple winners on the PGTI like Shaurya Bhattacharya, Sri Lankan N Thangaraja, Honey Baisoya, Khalin Joshi and Saptak Talwar, among others. The field will also see two rising stars of Indian golf - 16-year old Kartik Singh and 21-year old Shubham Jaglan, who have been given sponsor invitations for the tournament.

Rankings apart, the excellent current form of some of the players can also be seen by their recent successes. There are as many six players - Jarvis, Bradbury, Freddy Schott, Elvira and Puig, who have won in the current 2026 season. Jarvis won the Investec South African Open and the Magical Kenya Open in successive weeks.

Another seven players won in 2025 and as many as a dozen players were successful in 2024, making the current gathering as one of the most decorated fields.

Chennaiyin FC eye back-to-back wins against FC Goa

Chennai : Chennaiyin FC will aim to carry forward their winning momentum when they host FC Goa in their first home game of the Indian Super League 2026 on Sunday at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

The Marina Machans secured their first victory of the campaign with a 1-0 win over Kerala, thanks to summer signing Imran Khan's debut goal.

Head coach Clifford Rayes Miranda, speaking on Saturday, emphasized the importance of building on that result against a fourth-

placed FC Goa side that remains unbeaten so far.

Miranda outlined his approach to containing the visitors' attacking threats: "I won't give away the plan, but we try to stop the opponent as a team and as a group. We don't usually go for man-marking. We work collectively and look to nullify the opposition together, rather than focusing on individuals, unless it's a set-piece situation."

He also reflected on the team's offensive development, noting the need for better composure and finishing

in the final third. "We have been creating good moments and generating chances, but we need to be more dominant, especially in the final third. We also need to be a bit calmer on the ball," Miranda said.

Sunday's match will mark Chennaiyin's first home appearance this season after four away games, yielding a win and a draw. "It is so important. We have four games of a five-match home run left, and we need to make the best use of them. We need our fans to be there to support us," the head coach added.

ISL: Punjab FC face winless Kerala Blasters in Kochi

Kochi: Punjab FC will hope to maintain their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League 2025-26 season as they face winless Kerala Blasters FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Kochi on Saturday. The match is scheduled to kick-off at 19:30 IST.

Punjab FC have bounced back from their first-round loss against Jamshedpur FC by being unbeaten in their last three fixtures which included a win against Bengaluru FC and two draws against NorthEast United FC and FC Goa. On the other hand, Kerala Blasters have had a terrible start to the season, losing their first four matches, including three at home.

In the last round, Blasters secured their first point of the season after a 1-1 draw against East Bengal courtesy of a stoppage time equaliser

by Muhammad Ajsal. The Shers also drew their previous match 1-1 against FC Goa, with goalscorer Nsungusi Effiong receiving a red card at the start of the second half. The side from Mohali will be missing the services of their top scorer for the next three matches.

Speaking ahead of the match, Kerala Blasters Head Coach David Catala said, "We performed better than in other games in the last match. We showed character and competed, especially in the first half against them. I'm satisfied with the point, but I'm not really satisfied with the situation overall. But this is a way to start, a way to believe. Maybe we expected not to have problems in that situation, but we have to believe in the way we performed the other day and continue believing that the situation is going to get bet-

ter."

The Shers are currently eighth in the table with five points from four matches while Blasters are languishing at 13th place in the table with just one point from five



matches.

Speaking about their recent performances, Punjab FC Head Coach Panagiotis Dilmeris said, "During all our games this season, not only the one's we tied, we were better than the oppo-

nents. We did not let them come inside our box and we are creating plenty of chances on the other end. I think for us the most important thing is quicker decision-making and quicker finish-

ing, and of course scoring goals."

Both teams have faced each other four times in the ISL with both teams winning two matches each, which came away from home for both teams. In the last meet-

ing between the teams, Blasters edged Punjab FC 1-0 with Noah Sadaoui scoring the winner in New Delhi. In Kochi, they beat the home side 2-1 which was also Dilmeris's first match in charge of the side.

Both Head Coaches had mutual respect for each other before the crucial fixture. "They are a very difficult team to play against. They are compact in defence and know exactly what they have to do.

When they score, it's very difficult to come back against them," said Kerala Blasters Head Coach David Catala.

Speaking about the opposition, Dilmeris said, "The last two games of Kerala against Chennaiyin and East Bengal showed that Kerala's players have good potential and they deserve better results. I think it's very

crucial for us to deal with the excitement that they might have at the beginning of the game."

Speaking about playing in his home state, Punjab FC defender Muhammad Uvais said, "I'm happy to play in my hometown. And I'm looking forward to playing a good match here. In the camp, we are taking every match one by one. Every match is like a final because it is a short season. We will do our maximum and play well to get the best result."

"We have a clear plan from the coach, and he has explained how we should approach the game. Punjab is strong in attack and good in transitions.

We need to stay focused, give our 100 pc, and try to get the three points", said Kerala Blasters defender Aiban Dohling about the approach for tomorrow's match.



Dr Reddy's launches generic diabetic injection semaglutide

Chennai: Pharmaceutical major Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd on Saturday announced the launch of its injectable semaglutide under the brand name Obeda, a type 1 diabetes drug in India.

Dr. Reddy's has been the first Indian company to receive Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) approval for generic semaglutide. This launch underscores the company's Day-1 entry into the segment upon patent expiry, demonstrating its readiness to serve unmet patient needs in India, the company said.

In a head-to-head Phase III clinical study enrolling 312 participants, Dr. Reddy's Obeda established non-inferior efficacy and a safety profile comparable to the innovator drug. It showed similar glycaemic reduction, Dr. Reddy's said.

Additionally, comparable results were observed for fasting glucose control,



post-prandial glucose control, and therapeutic glycaemic response (achieving HbA1c <7.0%) at the end of the study.

No anti-drug antibodies were detected, and the immunogenicity profile was similar to that of the innovator drug.

With both API develop-

ment and manufacturing, as well as formulation development conducted entirely in-house, Obeda reflects Dr. Reddy's strength in complex product development and peptide science.

As part of its future plans for GLP-1 therapies, the company will be looking at a fully integrated API and

formulation approach, encompassing both development and manufacturing in-house.

Erez Israeli, Chief Executive Officer of Dr. Reddy's, said: "Our foray into GLP-1 therapies reflects our capabilities in complex product development and peptide science. It reinforces

our vision to be a trusted partner in healthcare by combining innovation with access, ensuring advanced diabetes treatments are not only available but affordable. As part of phase-1 launch, we aim to introduce generic semaglutide in several countries and, through our 'One Product, One Quality' approach, we are committed to ensure the same high-quality product across all markets."

Dr. Reddy's Obeda injection is available in 2 mg and 4 mg strengths and comes in a pre-filled, disposable pen designed for subcutaneous, once-a-week administration, with robust cold-chain integrity maintained throughout distribution. The company said, each pen of both strengths will deliver a minimum of 4 weekly doses.

The cost to the patient will be Rs. 4,200 per month for both the strengths.

Govt says India has achieved power milestone; sets stage for future energy growth

New Delhi: Marking a significant achievement in its energy journey, India has successfully ensured universal access to electricity across the country, a milestone that now forms the foundation for an ambitious transformation of the power sector, an official statement said on Saturday.

Building on this achievement, the government has outlined a forward-looking roadmap to strengthen the electricity ecosystem, focusing on sustainability, reliability and rising demand.

The initiative, led by the Ministry of Power, aims to align the sector with the broader vision of a developed India by 2047. With electricity now reaching virtually every household, the focus is shifting from access to quality, affordability and uninterrupted supply.

The government is targeting a sharp rise in per capita electricity consumption, projecting it to reach around 2,000 kWh by 2030 and over 4,000 kWh by 2047, driven by industrial



growth, urbanisation and increasing electrification. India's power sector has also witnessed a strong push towards clean energy, with non-fossil fuel sources accounting for a growing share of installed capacity.

The next phase will see accelerated expansion of renewable energy, supported by battery storage and pumped storage solutions to ensure grid stability.

At the same time, efforts are underway to address structural challenges, particularly in the distribution segment. Reforms aimed at improving the financial health

of utilities, rationalising tariffs and reducing losses are expected to play a crucial role in sustaining growth.

The government is also emphasising modernisation of transmission and distribution infrastructure, adoption of advanced technologies and strengthening of cybersecurity to build a resilient and future-ready power system.

Having achieved near-universal electrification, India is now preparing for the next leap—ensuring not just access, but reliable, affordable and clean power for its rapidly growing economy.

Govt launches Rs 20,000 cr credit guarantee scheme to boost microfinance sector

New Delhi: In a significant push toward strengthening financial inclusion, the Government of India has introduced a revamped credit guarantee framework aimed at boosting the microfinance sector. The initiative is designed to improve access to credit for underserved and low-income segments, which often struggle to secure formal financing.

The scheme, titled Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions (CGSMFI-2.0), has been launched by the Ministry of Finance as part of a broader effort to revitalise lending in the microfinance space.

Under this new framework, the government aims to facilitate loans worth up to ₹20,000 crore. This is expected to benefit nearly 36 lakh borrowers across the country, particularly those in rural and semi-urban regions who rely heavily on microfinance institutions for credit.

The primary objective of the scheme is to encourage banks and financial institutions to increase lending to microfinance institutions (MFIs). By providing a safety net, the government seeks to reduce the perceived risks associated with lending to this segment.

A key feature of CGSMFI-2.0 is the provision of a substantial guarantee cover on loans extended

to MFIs. This backing significantly lowers the risk exposure for lenders, making them more willing to extend credit.

The scheme is particularly beneficial for smaller and mid-sized microfinance institutions, which often face challenges in accessing adequate funding due to limited creditworthiness or higher perceived risk.

By improving access to institutional funding, these MFIs will be better positioned to extend loans to their end borrowers, thereby strengthening the entire microfinance value chain.

Another important aspect of the scheme is its focus on affordability. The framework includes provisions to cap interest rates, ensuring that loans remain accessible and do not become a financial burden for low-income households.

This move is expected to directly benefit small entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, and women borrowers, who form a significant portion of the microfinance customer base.

The guarantee support under the scheme will be managed by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited, which plays a crucial role in enhancing lender confidence and ensuring smooth implementation.

The involvement of this

institution will also help improve liquidity in the sector, enabling faster and more efficient credit disbursement to MFIs.

The launch of CGSMFI-2.0 comes at a critical time when the microfinance industry has been grappling with funding challenges. Limited access to capital had led to a slowdown in lending activities in recent years.

By addressing these issues, the government aims to revive credit flow in the sector and support income-generating activities at the grassroots level.

The scheme is expected to have a strong impact in rural and semi-urban areas, where access to formal banking services is still limited and microfinance plays a vital role in sustaining livelihoods.

CGSMFI-2.0 will remain operational until June 30, 2026, or until the targeted guarantee amount is fully utilised, whichever occurs earlier.

Overall, the initiative represents a strategic step toward stabilising the microfinance ecosystem while ensuring that affordable credit reaches millions. By doing so, the government aims to promote inclusive economic growth and empower small borrowers across the country.

NTPC Limited eyes global expansion, holds energy talks with Tajikistan

New Delhi: India's largest power utility, NTPC Limited, is looking to expand its global footprint by strengthening its engagement with Central Asian nations, particularly Tajikistan. The development comes as part of India's broader strategy to enhance international cooperation in the energy sector.

In this direction, NTPC's Chairman and Managing Director held high-level discussions with Juma Daler Shafiq, Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan. The meeting also included senior official Luk-

mon Bobokalonzoda, reflecting the importance both sides are placing on the partnership.

The discussions focused on exploring opportunities for collaboration in power generation and infrastructure development, signalling a mutual interest in long-term cooperation.

Key areas identified for potential joint development include coal-based power, gas-fired energy projects, and floating solar initiatives. These segments are seen as critical to diversifying energy sources and improving

sustainability. The talks underline a growing intent to deepen India-Tajikistan ties in the energy domain, while also enabling NTPC to tap into emerging opportunities in the Central Asian region.

For NTPC, such collaborations are part of its strategy to evolve from a domestic power giant into a global energy player with a diversified portfolio. During the meeting, the Tajik minister appreciated NTPC's efforts in capacity building and skill development. He specifically acknowledged the com-

pany's initiative to host professionals from Tajikistan.

Earlier this year, NTPC hosted 32 professionals from Tajikistan under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, aimed at enhancing technical knowledge and expertise.

This initiative is part of India's broader diplomatic and developmental outreach, focusing on knowledge sharing and strengthening partnerships with friendly nations. The interaction between NTPC and Tajikistan officials took place on the sidelines of the Bharat

Electricity Summit 2026.

The summit is being held at Yashobhoomi from March 19 to 22 under the patronage of the Ministry of Power, bringing together key stakeholders from the energy sector.

The platform provided an opportunity for global and domestic players to engage in discussions on energy transition, infrastructure, and sustainability.

For Tajikistan, collaboration with NTPC offers access to technical expertise and experience in large-scale power generation projects.

Mahagenco Showcases Vision 2035 at Bharat Electricity Summit

New Delhi: The Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Ltd. (Mahagenco) pavilion at the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, held at Yashobhoomi in New Delhi, is drawing an enthusiastic response from industry stakeholders and visitors. On March 20, the Honorable Minister of State for Energy, Smt. Meghana Deepak Sakore Bordikar, visited the pavilion to closely review the company's showcased initiatives. During her visit, she received a comprehensive briefing on Mahagenco's Vision 2035, a strategic roadmap that is specifically aligned with the national Viksit Bharat @2047 goals. This vision outlines the company's commitment to a sustainable energy



transition while effectively meeting the state's rising power demands through innovative and environmentally friendly projects.

The presentation to the Minister highlighted several forward-looking programs designed to reduce the company's carbon footprint. These

initiatives include large-scale solar installations, green hydrogen development, and pumped storage hydroelectric projects.

Furthermore, Mahagenco is implementing advanced infrastructure solutions such as coal pipe conveyor systems and sewage treatment plants (STP). These environmentally conscious projects reflect the company's broader strategy to integrate sustainable practices into its core power generation operations. Minister Bordikar's review of the roadmap underscores the importance of Mahagenco's role in achieving long-term energy security through a diverse portfolio of green energy and innovative engineering solutions.

Gujarat approves deal with Tata Power to restart Mundra Plant

Mumbai: Tata Power has officially announced that the Government of Gujarat has approved a power supply agreement (PPA) to restart its 4-gigawatt Mundra plant. The plant is operated by its subsidiary Coastal Gujarat Power and is a key asset in the company's generation portfolio.

According to the company's statement, the Gujarat cabinet has cleared the supplementary PPA, and a formal government order has already been issued. The agreement will be signed between Tata Power and Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited after obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals.

With this development, Tata Power is set to resume long-term power supply to Gujarat from the Mundra plant. The move is expected to restore a stable supply arrangement that had been disrupted in recent years.

The company has indicated that the Mundra plant will soon operate at full capacity. This restart is also expected to help Tata Power recover losses estimated at around ₹1,000 crore incurred during the shutdown period.



In addition to Gujarat, Tata Power plans to sign similar PPAs with other procuring states, including Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana. These agreements are likely to be finalised in the coming weeks.

Earlier, in February, the company had confirmed that discussions with the Gujarat government had reached a conclusion.

CEO and Managing Director Praveer Sinha had indicated during a post-earnings call that operations could resume soon after agreements were in place.

A key feature of the updated PPA is the provision for cost pass-through related to coal. This has been a critical issue for Tata Power, especially after changes in government policy impacted compensation mechanisms.

This disagreement led to prolonged negotiations between Tata Power and the concerned states. The discussions with the Gujarat government alone spanned nearly four years before reaching a resolution.

The latest agreement is expected to resolve these long-standing issues and pave the way for the resumption of operations at the Mundra plant after a shutdown of around eight months.

The Mundra facility holds strategic importance for Tata Power, as it contributes nearly one-fourth of the company's total electricity generation capacity of 16 gigawatts.

Power generated at the plant is supplied to multiple states, including Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Punjab, making it a critical component of regional power distribution.

With the revival of the Mundra plant, Tata Power is not only aiming to stabilise its operations but also strengthen its position in the power sector by ensuring consistent supply and improved financial performance.

Glenmark launches 'GLIPIQ' (Semaglutide) in India, targets affordable GLP-1 Therapy

Hyderabad: Glenmark Pharmaceuticals has announced the launch of GLIPIQ, a semaglutide-based therapy, in India for the management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. The move is aimed at improving affordability and expanding access to advanced GLP-1 therapies for patients across the country.

GLIPIQ introduces a new pricing benchmark in the Indian market, with weekly treatment starting at ₹325. This is expected to address one of the biggest barriers to adoption of injectable diabetes therapies—high cost.

The company highlighted that affordability has long been a challenge for patients requiring advanced treatment options. By lowering the cost significantly, GLIPIQ aims to make effective diabetes management more accessible to a wider population.

The drug has received approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization following a multicentre, randomised Phase III clinical study conducted in India. The study demonstrated favourable efficacy and safety outcomes.

GLIPIQ is available in both vial and pre-filled pen formats, giving patients and physicians flexibility in choosing the most suitable method of administration.

The vial-based formulation, supported by dose-specific syringes, is designed to allow flexible, physician-guided dosing. It also offers a more cost-effective option, particularly for patients in the early stages of therapy. The weekly treatment cost using the

vial format ranges between ₹325 and ₹440, making it one of the more affordable GLP-1 therapy options available in India.

In addition to improving affordability, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals has introduced a pre-filled pen format for GLIPIQ to enhance convenience for patients. This format is particularly suited for long-term self-administration, making it easier for individuals to follow their treatment regimen consistently. The availability of a user-friendly pen device is expected to significantly improve patient compliance, especially for those who may find traditional injection methods challenging or intimidating.

Both the vial and pre-filled pen formats of GLIPIQ are available in multiple strengths, including 2 mg/1.5 mL, 4 mg/3 mL, and 8 mg/3 mL. These options allow doctors to tailor treatment plans according to individual patient needs.

The flexibility in dosage ensures that therapy can be adjusted over time, depending on how patients respond to the medication and their overall health condition. To further strengthen patient support, Glenmark has launched 'Sankalp', a dedicated programme aimed at helping individuals initiate and continue their treatment journey with confidence. The 'Sankalp' initiative focuses on addressing common concerns associated with injectable therapies, including fear of needles and lack of familiarity with the administration process.

It also aims to improve long-term adherence by providing guidance, edu-

cation, and ongoing support to patients undergoing treatment.

Speaking about the launch, Alok Malik, President and Business Head (India Formulations) at Glenmark, highlighted that affordability remains one of the biggest barriers to starting advanced diabetes therapies in India.

He noted that many patients delay or avoid effective treatment due to high costs, which can lead to complications and worsening health outcomes over time.

According to Malik, GLIPIQ has been developed with the intention of bridging this gap by making modern therapies more accessible to a larger population.

He emphasised that the company's goal is not only to provide an effective drug but also to ensure that patients can sustain their treatment over the long term. The active ingredient in GLIPIQ, Semaglutide, belongs to a class of drugs known as GLP-1 receptor agonists, which are widely used in managing Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. These medications work by improving blood sugar control through mechanisms such as enhancing insulin secretion and reducing appetite.

Beyond glycaemic control, semaglutide offers additional health benefits, making it a valuable option for patients with multiple health concerns. It is particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with conditions like obesity, cardiovascular disease, and chronic kidney disease, which often coexist with diabetes.