

Aryan Age

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Eight killed in stampede at Sheetalashtami Temple in Nalanda district

Nalanda : At least eight women devotees were killed in a tragic stampede at a Sheetalashtami temple at Madhda village under the Deepnagar police station area in Nalanda district on Tuesday.

Confirming the incident, police said here that a large number of devotees had gathered to offer prayers on the occasion of Sheetalashtami.

The situation spiralled out of

control due to huge overcrowding, leading to panic among devotees and triggering a stampede. All eight victims were women. Authorities have identified five of them as Devanti Devi, Rekha Devi, Malo Devi, Chinta Devi and Kanti Devi, while efforts are underway to ascertain the identities of the remaining three.

Several injured persons were immediately rushed to nearby

healthcare centres, where they are undergoing treatment. The condition of some of the injured is stated to be serious.

Senior police and district administration officials reached the spot soon after the incident and were monitoring the rescue and relief operations. The area has been secured to prevent further mishaps.

Preliminary reports suggest that

lack of crowd control arrangements and sudden surge of devotees may have contributed to the tragedy. However, officials said a detailed inquiry will be conducted to determine the exact cause of the incident. The administration is also working to ensure proper identification of the victims and to provide assistance to the affected families.



PM Modi expresses condolences after tragic mishap in Bihar's Nalanda district

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep sorrow over a recent mishap in Nalanda district, Bihar, describing the incident as "deeply painful"

and extending his condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. Speaking on X, the Prime Minister also offered prayers for the speedy recovery of

those injured in the tragedy. Announcing financial assistance for the victims, PM Modi stated that an ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) would be provided to the next of kin of each deceased, while the injured would receive Rs. 50,000.



Nitish announces Rs 6 lakh ex gratia for Nalanda stampede victims

Expressing sorrow over the loss of lives in a stampede at the Sheetalashtami temple in Bihar's Nalanda district, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday announced an ex gratia of Rs 6 lakh for the families of the deceased. Calling the incident "deeply distressing," the Chief Minister said he was profoundly saddened by the tragedy and extended his condolences to the families of the victims. Announcing the relief, Kumar said the amount includes Rs 4 lakh from the Disaster Management Department and an additional Rs 2 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Kumar also directed senior officials to reach the site of the stampede to oversee relief and rescue operations. The Chief Minister instructed authorities to ensure proper medical treatment for those injured in the incident and wished them a speedy recovery. Officials said the state government is closely monitoring the situation and all necessary assistance is being extended to the affected families.



President Droupadi Murmu expresses grief

President Droupadi Murmu today expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives in a stampede at a temple in Nalanda district of Bihar. In her

condolence message, the President, who is in Nalanda on a day-long tour, said that the news of the death of several devotees in the incident was "extremely distressing."

She conveyed her heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for strength for them in this hour of grief. "I express my deep sympathies to all the bereaved families. I also pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," the President said.



UPCM Yogi expresses grief over Nalanda accident

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed deep sorrow over the stampede at the Shri Sheetalashtami Temple in Nalanda, Bihar.

He said the loss of lives in this incident was extremely sad and painful. In his condolence message, the Chief Minister expressed his condolences to the bereaved families. He prayed to Mother Shitala Devi for the peace of the departed souls, strength to the families to bear this loss, and a speedy recovery for the injured.



Delhi CM expresses grief over loss of lives in temple accident in Bihar

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday expressed grief over the death of several devotees in a stampede at the Sheetalashtami temple premises in Bihar's Nalanda. She expressed her deepest

condolences to the bereaved families and prayed that may God grant peace to the departed souls, and bestow strength upon their families to bear this boundless sorrow. Taking to social media platform X on Tuesday, Delhi CM said that the news was extremely heartbreaking. She also wished for a swift recovery of all those who were injured in the mishap.

Meanwhile, Bihar's Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary also expressed sorrow over the tragic incident, adding that the stampede which occurred at the Temple in Nalanda is extremely heart wrenching. According to the Deputy CM, the government is providing every possible assistance and relief to the affected families, adding that arrangements have been made for the proper treatment of the injured. According to reports, a sudden rush of devotees at a temple fair in Bihar's Nalanda turned into a tragic affair, claiming several lives in a stampede, and leaving several injured after the barricades reportedly collapsed.



PM Modi Launches ₹20,000-Cr Gujarat Projects and Targets Congress

Gandhinagar : Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched development projects worth over ₹20,000 crore in Gujarat on Tuesday, covering sectors like railways, solar energy, and water supply. A major highlight was the inauguration of the Kaynes Semicon Plant in Sanand, India's second semiconductor unit to start commercial production.

Modi also dedicated the Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway to the nation, calling it a catalyst for regional industrial growth. During his address in Vav-Tharad, the Prime Minister shifted to a sharp political tone, accusing the Congress party of acting like "vultures" by trying to exploit global energy crises for domestic gain. He asserted that while other nations hiked

fuel prices due to West Asia tensions, India protected its citizens by maintaining stable rates and ensuring uninterrupted supplies.

PM Inaugurates Samrat Samprati Museum in Gandhinagar

On the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Samrat Samprati Museum in

Gandhinagar. Named after the Mauryan ruler known for spreading Jain philosophy and non-violence, the museum serves as a cultural bridge between India's ancient heritage and its technological future. Modi emphasized that the institution is a "sacred center of knowledge" that harmonizes multiple belief systems, which is a unique trait of Indian civilization. He

highlighted the "Gyan Bharatam Mission," an initiative using modern technology to digitize and preserve ancient manuscripts that were scattered or destroyed over centuries. The Prime Minister noted that this balance of preserving roots while advancing in high-tech fields like semiconductors defines the path toward a developed India.



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Siddaramaiah sees strong support for Congress in Bagalkote bypoll

Bagalkote: Siddaramaiah on Tuesday expressed strong confidence in the Indian National Congress party's chances in the Bagalkote Assembly bypoll, stating that the party is witnessing "unexpectedly strong" public support across the constituency.

Campaigning in Bagalkote, the Chief Minister said the political atmosphere in the region appears favourable for the Congress. He highlighted that feedback from grassroots outreach programmes indicates growing enthusiasm among voters.

Addressing a public gathering at Mugulolli village, Siddaramaiah campaigned in support of Congress candidate Umesh Meti. He urged voters to back the candidate, citing the positive response the party has been receiving during its campaign.

During the event, the Chief Minister also released a booklet titled "Progress Perspective," which documents the developmental con-



tributions of late HY Meti. He said the publication serves as a reminder of the late leader's work for the people of the region.

Siddaramaiah noted that HY Meti had earned respect across communities for his inclusive ap-

proach to governance. He appealed to voters to ensure continuity of that legacy by supporting his son, Umesh Meti, in the bypoll.

The Chief Minister was joined by several senior leaders during the campaign, including Minister RB

Timmapur and former Legislative Council Chairman SR Patil, among others.

Responding to media queries, Siddaramaiah reiterated that the Congress is in a strong position in the by-election. He attributed this to the party's organisational strength and consistent engagement with voters at the grassroots level.

He emphasized that Congress workers have been actively reaching out to people, listening to their concerns, and presenting the party's vision for development in the constituency. Taking a swipe at the opposition, Siddaramaiah alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is making statements out of fear of defeat. According to him, such remarks reflect the party's anxiety over the shifting public mood. He further said that the Congress remains focused on its campaign and will not be distracted by political rhetoric or speculation from opponents.

UP IAS officer resigns, raising questions on the system

Lucknow: Rinku Singh Rahi, a 2022-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, resigned from his post on Tuesday, citing prolonged sidelining and lack of meaningful responsibilities. His decision has sparked a wider debate about the functioning of the administrative system and the treatment of officers perceived as upright and outspoken. In his resignation letter, Rahi stated that he had been attached to the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Council, but was not assigned any substantial work. He pointed out that while he continued to receive a salary, he had no opportunity to contribute to public service, which he described as deeply unsettling. Calling his resignation a "moral decision," Rahi said that remaining in a position without responsibilities was against his personal and professional ethics. He emphasized that public service

should be driven by accountability and purpose, not merely by holding a designation. Rahi further alleged the existence of a "parallel system" within the bureaucracy, where honest officers are often denied key roles. According to him, such a system discourages integrity and prevents committed individuals from functioning effectively within the administrative framework. He stated that despite his willingness to work with honesty and dedication, he was not given the platform to do so. This, he said, ultimately compelled him to step down from the prestigious civil service.

Rahi's journey to becoming an IAS officer has been marked by extraordinary resilience and courage. In 2009, he exposed a major corruption scam, an act that put his life at risk and changed the course of his career. Following the exposure,

he was brutally attacked and shot seven times. Despite sustaining severe injuries, Rahi survived the incident and continued his pursuit of justice and public service. Determined to overcome adversity, he later cleared the Union Public Service Commission examination under the disabled quota and joined the IAS in the 2022 batch, earning admiration for his perseverance. His first posting was as Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) in Powayan tehsil of Shahjahanpur. During his tenure, he took a strict stance on sanitation and administrative discipline. In one incident, he reportedly asked a clerk to perform sit-ups over poor sanitation conditions. When lawyers protested against his actions, Rahi publicly responded by doing sit-ups himself while holding his ears, signaling accountability and humility.

Green signal for procurement of pulses, oilseeds at MSP in UP: Farmers to receive increased support price

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government has prepared a comprehensive strategy for the procurement of Rabi season crops. State Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi stated that with the additional exemptions received from the central government, large-scale procurement of pulses and oilseeds, along with wheat, will now be ensured in the state.

In a press conference, the Minister said the Centre has approved the procurement of 6.77 lakh metric tonnes of lentils, 2.24 lakh metric tonnes of gram, and 5.30 lakh metric tonnes of mustard. This will provide farmers with the opportunity to sell their produce at the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The Agriculture Minister stated that the MSP has been increased this year, with the price of gram fixed at Rs 5875 per quintal, which is Rs 225 more than last year.

He said that the MSP for lentils has

been fixed at Rs 7,000 per quintal, an increase of Rs 300, while the MSP for mustard has been fixed at Rs 6,200 per quintal, an increase of Rs 250 from last year.

The Agriculture Minister stated that the Minimum Support Price acts as a safety net for farmers, and the government is committed to strengthening this system.

He stated that central agencies NAFED and NCCF will be involved in the procurement process, while four agencies, including the PCF and UPSS, will handle the state procurement. Payments to farmers will be made directly into their bank accounts.

Shahi stated that before 2017, the procurement of pulses and oilseeds was neglected in the state, but the current government has taken effective steps in this direction.

He stated that the Agriculture Department has spent 82.9 per cent of its budget. Out of a total budget of Rs

7,051 crore, Rs 5,788 crore has been spent, which is a remarkable achievement so far.

Mr. Shahi stated that to provide relief to farmers, seeds were provided to 11.25 lakh farmers at a 50 per cent subsidy this year, with ₹314.31 crore transferred directly to their accounts. Additionally, 54,847 quintals of seeds were distributed free of charge to 12.73 lakh farmers.

He stated that farmers are also receiving relief under the Crop Insurance Scheme. The Minister stated that compensation of Rs 532.17 crore has been transferred to the accounts of 5.39 lakh farmers so far this Kharif season. The process is ongoing, and an additional Rs 150-160 crore will soon be disbursed to approximately 1.5 lakh more farmers. He stated that since 2017, compensation of Rs 5660.33 crore has been disbursed to 67.52 lakh farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

Rupee fall hurting households, Centre must act: Karnataka DCM Shivakumar

Bengaluru: Rising volatility in global currency markets and the weakening of the rupee are increasingly impacting the common man across sectors, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Tuesday, while urging the Centre to take corrective measures.

Addressing media, Shivakumar made a series of points highlighting the economic implications of currency fluctuations. He said the dollar has been rising and the rupee has been falling, noting that such movements, even when described in simple terms, have a direct bearing on the economy.

Shivakumar stressed that currency instability affects both imports and exports, thereby influencing

the overall cost structure of goods and services in the country. He pointed out that essential and everyday items become more expensive due

to increased import costs, adding that the burden ultimately falls on ordinary citizens. Shivakumar observed that the impact is not limited to large industries but ex-

tends to households, where rising prices reduce purchasing power. He cited culturally significant purchases, including traditional items such as mangalsutra (tali), to illustrate how inflation linked to currency movements is affecting even routine and social expenditures. He said the situation re-



ffects a broader economic strain in which "everything is affected," reiterating that the common man is bearing the consequences of macro-economic shifts. He added that he is not fully aware of the specific Central government policies but emphasised that the issue requires attention and intervention at the national level.

Shivakumar demanded that the Central government take responsibility to stabilise the currency and restore normalcy in prices, stating that controlling volatility should be a priority.

He concluded that bringing the situation under control is necessary to prevent further hardship to the public and called it a clear expectation from the Centre.

Congress slams Centre for 'overburdening citizens' across multiple sectors

Bengaluru: The Congress on Tuesday accused the Centre of overburdening citizens through simultaneous price hikes across multiple sectors, alleging a widespread rise in costs of toll, medicines, fuel, construction materials and essential services.

Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, while addressing the media, claimed that toll collections from Karnataka have witnessed a steady increase over the years, citing figures rising from ₹1,866 crore in 2020-21 to ₹2,350 crore in 2021-22, ₹2,351 crore in 2022-23, ₹3,517 crore in 2023-24, ₹4,086 crore in 2024-25, and ₹4,320 crore in 2025-26, with estimated collections of around ₹4,600 crore in 2026-27 and projections of ₹5,000 crore by the end of that fiscal.

He alleged that a proposed 5% toll hike would

further increase revenue by ₹250-300 crore, adding to the burden on commuters. Referring to the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway, he claimed that toll collection began even before the project was fully completed, and stated that around ₹900 crore has already been collected from the 118-km stretch.

On healthcare, Surjewala alleged that prices of around 900 essential medicines are set to increase, including life-saving drugs and medicines used for treating diabetes, hypertension and infectious diseases. He cited antibiotics such as Meropenem in different dosages as part of the list of medicines seeing price revisions, and criticised repeated annual hikes in drug prices since 2022, including increases of 10.76% in 2022 and 12.12% in 2023.

He also raised concerns over taxation on essential

medicines, pointing out that GST continues to be levied on life-saving drugs, which he claimed adds to the financial burden on patients.

Expanding his criticism to industrial inputs, Surjewala said prices of petrochemical products such as polyethylene and polypropylene have increased significantly, impacting packaging, FMCG goods and household items.

He added that PVC prices have also risen, affecting construction, irrigation systems and agricultural infrastructure.

He further alleged that bitumen prices have increased by 30% to 50%, rising from about ₹45,000 per ton to ₹65,000 per ton, which would impact road and building construction activities. Cement prices, he said, are expected to rise by ₹50 to ₹100 per bag, while steel prices have also surged, with

hot rolled steel coils increasing from ₹43,717 per ton to ₹55,900 per ton and steel rebar from ₹47,615 per ton to ₹59,800 per ton.

Surjewala claimed that essential petrochemical derivatives used in detergents, dyes and pharmaceuticals have also seen price increases, and warned that consumer durables such as air conditioners, refrigerators and coolers may see price hikes of 5% to 15% in the coming months.

On fuel and transport, he said airfare has increased by 10% to 15% in March-April 2026, affecting travel for students and the general public. He also alleged that domestic LPG cylinder prices have risen from around ₹400 during the Congress regime to ₹913 currently, with two hikes in the past 30 days, while commercial LPG cylinders are priced at around ₹1,958 for a 19-kg cylinder,

with reported higher rates in some markets due to shortages.

He further cited a reported increase in petrol and diesel prices, stating that Nayara Energy raised petrol prices by ₹5.30 per litre and diesel by ₹3 per litre on March 26, 2026, and alleged that further hikes may follow after electoral phases.

Surjewala also pointed to a reported 34% increase in speed post charges, claiming that postal services have not been spared from rising costs.

He argued that the simultaneous increase in toll, healthcare, fuel, construction materials and essential goods is creating a compounded financial burden on households and small businesses, and urged the Centre to explain and address the widespread price rise affecting citizens across the country.

PM Modi laid foundation for powerful nation: J&K LG

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India stands resolute today.

"PM Modi has laid foundation for a powerful nation which is inspiring the world with its message that true peace is not weakness but unwavering courage and this is a time to build bridges, not battlefields," the Lieutenant Governor said in his address while attending the Mahavir Janna Kalyanak, a special event organized by S.S. Jain Sabha, to celebrate Mahavir Jayanti here.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations and best wishes to all on the auspicious occasion.

He spoke on Lord Mahavira's teachings of Ahimsa and Anekantavada, emphasizing right faith, knowledge, and conduct in today's

world, which urgently needs compassion, peace, and brotherhood.

The Lieutenant Governor said that amid global conflicts and strife, humanity must draw lessons from Lord Mahavira's teachings, which foster enduring peace and unbreakable brotherhood.

"True progress stems from responsibility and accountability for one's actions.

To envision a better future, we must bridge divides among people, fostering trust through understanding diverse cultures, ideas, and experiences," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Lord Mahavira focused on introspection, individual transformation, and his teachings of discipline, faith, and awareness can elevate society.

"By internalizing Ahim-

sa, restraint, austerity, Anekantavada, non-possession, and truth, we can contribute meaningfully to nation-building. Our impact depends on the character we cultivate," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the young generation to infuse non-violence into its mindset and reform attitudes toward nature, long exploited as mere utility.

"True Ahimsa transcends ethics, becoming the sharpest environmental strategy," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that Lord Mahavira's legacy is a refined guidebook for navigating complexity.

He affirmed truth's multifaceted nature; no single viewpoint captures it fully. Today, amid echo chambers, people mistake opinions for absolute truth, eroding balance, he added.

Telangana Minister Uttam seeks Centre's intervention over LPG shortage affecting auto-rickshaws

Hyderabad: Uttam Kumar Reddy, Telangana's Civil Supplies Minister, has written to Hardeep Singh Puri, urging immediate intervention to address the acute shortage of Auto LPG in the state, particularly in Hyderabad.

In his letter, Reddy highlighted that the shortage is severely impacting thousands of LPG-run auto-rickshaws, which form a crucial part of the city's public transport system. He stressed that the issue has become urgent as it directly affects daily commuters and the livelihoods of drivers.

The Minister pointed out that Telangana has been strictly complying with the Centre's directives amid the ongoing Middle East crisis. This includes ensuring uninterrupted supply of domestic LPG and regulating commercial LPG distribution.

However, he noted that while priority has been given

to household and commercial segments, the Auto LPG sector has been disproportionately affected. This has resulted in a significant supply-demand gap across the state.



According to Reddy, nearly one lakh auto-rickshaws in Telangana run on LPG, making the fuel essential for affordable urban transport.

The current disruption has therefore created widespread inconvenience.

He stated that the state is facing a daily shortfall of approximately 55 metric tonnes of Auto LPG. This deficit has led to dry-outs at a majority of private fuel outlets, leaving drivers struggling to find fuel.

The shortage has had a cascading impact on public transport services, with fewer auto-rickshaws operating on roads. This, in turn, has increased waiting times and travel difficulties for commuters.

Reddy also highlighted the structure of the Auto LPG distribution network in Telangana.

Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) such as Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) operate only 33 outlets, accounting for roughly 20 per cent of the market.

In contrast, private operators dominate the sector with over 110 outlets, contributing nearly 80 per cent of the supply network. Despite this, they remain heavily dependent on PSUs for LPG supplies.

Proposed Metrolite project limited to Jammu urban corridor between Bantalab to Bari Brahmana: J&K CM

Jammu: Omar Abdullah on Tuesday clarified that the proposed Metrolite project in Jammu will, for now, operate only between Bantalab and Bari Brahmana, covering a total of 22 stations. The announcement outlines the current scope of the urban transit plan aimed at improving mobility within the Jammu region.

Responding to a starred question raised by MLA Mohan Lal, the Chief Minister stated that the present proposal is limited to Jammu's urban corridors. He confirmed that Akhnoor town has not been included in the current Metrolite alignment.

The clarification comes amid growing demands for extending the proposed transit system to Akhnoor, a region witnessing rapid urbanisation and increased daily commuter traffic. However, the government has indicated that such expansion is not

part of the current plan.

Omar Abdullah noted that the corridor between Bantalab and Bari Brahmana has been prioritised due to its high traffic density and urban connectivity needs. The 22-station network is expected to serve key areas within Jammu city.

In response to another query, the Chief Minister confirmed that proposals for Metrolite or Light Metro projects in both Jammu and Srinagar have been submitted to the Government of India and are currently under consideration.

He added that the approval process is underway, and the final decision will depend on appraisal and clearance by the central authorities. These projects are seen as crucial for modernising urban transport infrastructure in the Union Territory.

Providing details on the



groundwork completed so far, Omar Abdullah said that in Jammu, comprehensive surveys and feasibility studies have already been conducted. These include traffic assessments, engineering analysis, and preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR). The DPR for Jammu has been prepared by RITES Ltd, a government-owned consultancy firm. The report includes alignment planning, ridership projections, cost estimates, and land requirements. According to the

DPR, the project is expected to handle approximately 2.84 lakh daily passengers by the year 2035. This projection highlights the anticipated demand for efficient public transport in the city. The plan also outlines land requirements of around 29.58 hectares permanently and an additional 1.50 hectares temporarily. Environmental considerations and seismic safety have also been incorporated into the design framework. The Economic Internal Rate of Re-

turn (EIRR) for the Jammu Metrolite project has been assessed at 18.92 percent, indicating strong economic viability and potential long-term benefits. For Srinagar, the Chief Minister said that similar preparatory work has been completed. This includes topographical surveys, traffic and ridership studies, and engineering feasibility assessments. The DPR for the Srinagar project has been prepared by NTES Ltd, covering alignment planning, financial structuring, and economic analysis. Both DPRs have been finalised and submitted for central appraisal. Addressing the possibility of extending the Metrolite network to Akhnoor, Omar Abdullah stated that no such proposal is currently under active consideration. He clarified that any future expansion would require a separate feasibility study.



OUR CITY

AAP's Kakkar targets BJP over drugs issue, alleges lapses in handling of seized narcotics

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its former ally Shiromani Akali Dal were responsible for the spread of drugs in Punjab, intensifying the ongoing political tussle over the issue.

Addressing a press conference, AAP national chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar responded to remarks made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding efforts to make Punjab drug-free.

Kakkar alleged that previous governments in the state had allowed drug trafficking networks to flourish, claiming that political inaction and alleged protection enabled the problem to grow over the years.

She asserted that since coming to power, the AAP government has intensified its crackdown on drug-related activities, focusing on dismantling trafficking networks and increasing enforcement efforts.

Highlighting the scale of the issue, Kakkar said drug abuse remains a serious concern not only in Punjab but across India. She also referenced how the issue has gained widespread public attention over the years, including through its portrayal in popular culture.

The AAP leader further alleged that during earlier regimes, certain drug traffickers enjoyed political patronage—an accusation.

That has frequently surfaced in political de-



bates but has been consistently denied by opposition parties.

Detailing the current government's actions, she claimed that thousands of arrests have been made in

connection with drug-related offences in Punjab. According to her, these measures have significantly disrupted the operations of trafficking networks.

However, independent

verification of the figures cited by Kakkar was not immediately available, leaving room for scrutiny and further confirmation.

Kakkar also turned her criticism toward BJP-ruled states, raising concerns over reported instances where seized narcotics allegedly went missing from police custody.

She cited examples from states such as Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra, where authorities in certain cases have reportedly cited reasons like damage or loss of contraband during court proceedings.

According to Kakkar, such lapses could weaken prosecution cases, as the integrity of evidence plays a crucial role in securing

convictions in drug-related offences.

She called for greater accountability and stricter protocols in the handling and preservation of seized narcotics, particularly in states governed by the BJP.

The AAP spokesperson also questioned the handling of major drug seizures, including a high-profile case at Mundra Port, raising concerns about delays in legal proceedings and follow-up action.

The allegations add to the ongoing political debate over drug control policies.

And enforcement across states, with parties continuing to trade charges over responsibility and effectiveness in tackling the issue.

More MCD & DANICS officers on DC & AC posts will increase accountability: Kapoor

New Delhi: Kapoor has asserted that appointing more officers from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service to key administrative positions such as Deputy Commissioners (DC) and Assistant Commissioners (AC) will significantly enhance accountability within the civic administration.

Speaking on the issue, Kapoor emphasised that officers drawn from MCD and DANICS possess ground-level administrative experience and a deeper understanding of local governance challenges. According to him, their familiarity with civic systems can lead to more efficient decision-making and better implementation of policies.

He pointed out that increasing the presence of such officers in leadership roles would ensure stronger monitoring of municipal functions, including sanitation, infrastructure maintenance, and public service delivery.

Kapoor also highlighted that these officers are directly connected to field operations, making them more responsive to citizens' concerns. Their appointment to DC and AC posts, he suggested, would bridge the gap between policy formulation and execution.

The move is expected to improve coordination across various municipal departments, reducing bureaucratic delays and enhancing overall governance efficiency.

He further noted that accountability mechanisms become stronger when officers with hands-on experience are placed in positions of authority, as they are better equipped to identify lapses and take corrective action.

Kapoor argued that empowering MCD and DANICS officers would also promote transparency in civic administration, as their performance can be more easily evaluated based on visible outcomes on the ground.

MCD Shahdara North Zone corruption scandal: CBI arrests two officials

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday arrested two officials of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi in connection with an alleged bribery case, marking a significant development in an ongoing anti-corruption probe.

The arrested officials have been identified as Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Mishra and Accounts Officer Divyanshu Gautam. Both are accused of involvement in a bribery demand linked to departmental operations.

According to CBI sources, Divyanshu Gautam had allegedly demanded a bribe of ₹4 lakh from a License Inspector. The demand reportedly prompted the complainant to approach the agency and file an official complaint.

Acting swiftly on the complaint, the CBI initiated a trap operation to verify the allegations and catch the accused in the act.

Such operations are commonly used in corruption cases to gather direct evidence.

During the operation, both officials were allegedly caught red-handed while accepting the bribe, providing crucial evidence for the case. The arrests were made immedi-

ately following the successful execution of the trap.

Officials indicated that the case may not be limited to a single instance of bribery. Preliminary findings suggest that further aspects of corruption could emerge as the investigation progresses.

The agency is expected to examine financial records, communication trails, and other evidence to determine whether there is a broader network or pattern of misconduct.

Sources also stated that additional individuals could come under scrutiny if links to the case are established during the course of the investigation.

The arrests highlight ongoing concerns regarding corruption within civic bodies and the need for stronger accountability mechanisms in public administration.

The CBI has said it will provide a detailed briefing on the case later in the day, which may shed more light on the scope of the investigation and the evidence gathered so far.

Further legal proceedings, including court appearances and potential custodial interrogation, are expected as the agency continues its probe into the matter.

Two arrested in Delhi following separate overnight police shootouts

New Delhi: Delhi Police arrested two men wanted in a fatal stabbing and a series of knife attacks in the Dabri area during separate late-night encounters, an officer said on Tuesday. According to the police, the matter began on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, when a man was found stabbed near Durga Mata Mandir in Madhu Vihar. "The victim, a 39-year-old man, Gominutes, which triggered panic in the vicinity. Police teams from Dabri station, along with forensic units, immediately took up the matter

vind Jha, was rushed to the hospital; however, he succumbed to the injuries sustained shortly after midnight," police said. Within minutes of the first attack, another stabbing was reported barely a few blocks away, leaving three more men, Honey, Anish, and Rohit, critically injured. A team rushed to the crime scene, where they found that the two incidents occurred within a span of just 15

for investigation and filed two FIRs, which were registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Kushal Pal Singh, Deputy

Commissioner of Police (Dwarka), said that multiple teams, along with the Special Staff and Anti-Auto Theft Squad (AATS), probed and tracked down the suspects involved in these cases. Acting on intel provided by the informers, the first breakthrough came on Monday when Special Staff officers tracked

down one accused, Rohit Kumar alias Noddy, near a sports complex in Dwarka Sector 17. Police said Rohit opened fire when asked to surrender, firing three rounds at the team. In retaliatory action, officers fired two rounds in self-defence, hitting him in the knee before overpowering and arresting him.

Delhi sees light rain under western disturbance, more showers likely

New Delhi: Delhi continued to reel under the impact of a Western Disturbance affecting north-west India, with scattered showers reported across parts of the city on Tuesday.

According to the India Meteorological Department, Safdarjung—the city's base weather station—recorded 2.1 mm of rainfall between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., which falls under the "light rainfall" category as per official classification.

Other monitoring stations, including Palam, Ridge, Lodhi Road, and Ayanagar, also received light showers during the day. Among them, Lodhi Road recorded the highest rainfall at 2.8 mm.

Meteorologists noted that southwesterly surface winds gained strength in the afternoon, reaching speeds of 20–25 kmph. Gusts are expected to intensify further, potentially touching 40 kmph during the evening and night hours. The prevailing weather conditions have been attributed to the ongoing western disturbance, a system known to bring unseasonal rain and cloud cover to northern parts of India. The IMD has forecast an overcast sky for Wednesday, indicating that cloudy conditions are likely to persist. Another western disturbance is also expected to

influence the region from April 2, which could bring additional changes in weather patterns.

Meanwhile, the city witnessed a slight dip in temperatures amid the cloud cover and rainfall. The maximum temperature settled at 33.7 degrees Celsius, which remains above normal for this time of the year.

The minimum temperature was recorded at 19.4 degrees Celsius, about one degree above the seasonal average, suggesting relatively warm nights despite the rain.

Weather experts say such intermittent showers can provide temporary relief from rising temperatures, although sustained cooling is unlikely unless more widespread rainfall occurs. The changing weather pattern has also led to fluctuations in humidity and wind conditions, contributing to a mixed experience of warmth and brief cooling spells. Residents have been advised to remain cautious of sudden gusty winds and light rain spells, particularly during evening hours when weather activity is expected to intensify. Overall, the influence of successive western disturbances is expected to keep Delhi's weather relatively dynamic over the coming days, with periodic cloud cover and light rainfall likely to continue.



Farming in the hands of brokers!

Agriculture—the very backbone of the Indian economy—finds itself in a grave crisis today. The farmer, who is the actual producer, possesses no authority to determine the price of his own produce; instead, middlemen have established an overwhelming dominance over the marketplace. As a result of this system, the 'Annadata' (the provider of food) is becoming increasingly economically vulnerable. The agricultural sector—widely regarded as the fundamental pillar of the Indian economy and the nation's true economic spine—is currently navigating through a crisis that is both extremely severe and deeply complex. Even though nearly 80 percent of the country's economy depends, directly or indirectly, on agriculture, the farmer—upon whose toil this entire nation stands—remains, to this day, a mere puppet in the hands of middlemen. It is the greatest irony of our democracy that, even 75 years after independence, the simple, natural principle of "he who owns the produce sets the price" has failed to take root in the agricultural sector. While the producer of virtually every other commodity in the world holds the right to determine its price, the rates for the produce of a farmer—who toils under the scorching sun, shedding blood and sweat day and night to cultivate crops—are instead dictated by middlemen and traders sitting comfortably in air-conditioned rooms. We take great pride in proclaiming India as an agrarian nation; yet, in reality, the economic lives of farmers and agricultural laborers remain trapped within a perpetual cycle of uncertainty. Due to a dearth of financial services in rural areas and the inability to meet urgent, unforeseen needs, the farmer has remained perpetually dependent on others. Whether it is a daughter's wedding or a sudden medical emergency, whenever a farmer faces an urgent need for funds, he finds himself compelled to knock on the doors of moneylenders or middlemen, rather than finding the doors of banks open to him. In such situations, the opposing party exploits the farmer's helplessness, compelling him to sell his produce at whatever meager price is offered. The extensive chain of intermediaries that has emerged within this agricultural market is so entrenched and organized that, despite decades of effort, breaking it remains an arduous task. The farmer possesses not even the faintest idea of the rate at which his produce ultimately reaches the end consumer, for he exercises absolutely no control over this entire trade chain. In the modern era, the growing intrusion of the corporate sector has rendered the challenges confronting agriculture even more acute. Farming—once reliant on the benevolence of nature—has now been pushed into a state of complete unprofitability by the relentless onslaught of climate change. The deteriorating ecological balance and the inherent unpredictability of natural cycles have become, for the farmer, akin to adding insult to injury. At times, unseasonal rains cause standing crops to rot right in the fields; at other times, prolonged dry spells cause the crops to wither away. This constitutes a double-edged predicament—a vicious cycle from which the farmer, no matter how desperately he attempts to extricate himself, finds himself ensnared ever more deeply. In contemporary times, the costs of agricultural inputs—ranging from seeds to fertilizers—have skyrocketed, resulting in a massive surge in production costs. Whether it is the recurring crisis regarding onions, the plummeting prices of leafy vegetables, or the distressing sight of heaps of tomatoes being discarded on the streets—these are scenes that leave us utterly numb. At the political level, issues concerning agriculture and farmers have invariably been politicized. The Congress government, which held power for a prolonged period, has frequently faced criticism for having abandoned farmers to their fate. When Sharad Pawar served as the country's Agriculture Minister, the hopes of farmers in Maharashtra were rekindled; however, even during his tenure, policy flaws prevented farmers from achieving the anticipated success, and the shadow of despair persisted. Following the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) ascent to power at the Centre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took concrete steps aimed at understanding the plight of farmers and providing them with direct assistance. Unfortunately, however, these efforts too fell victim to political animosity. Due to the belligerence of the opposition and a negative propaganda campaign driven by anti-Modi sentiments, obstacles were deliberately created in the implementation of numerous schemes designed for the welfare of farmers. Nevertheless, utilizing technological tools such as (DBT), the government has made a sincere effort to ensure that financial assistance reaches the farmers' bank accounts. In the specific context of Maharashtra, schemes such as the Central Government's 'PM Kisan Samman Nidhi' and the State Government's 'Namoo Shetkari Mahasamman Nidhi' have provided farmers with a measure of financial support. According to official statistics, the Central and State governments—working in tandem—have so far deposited a total of ₹54 lakh crore into the bank accounts of approximately 90 lakh farmers across Maharashtra. While this assistance is significant, it serves merely as a temporary stopgap measure. The fundamental issue remains this: until the farmer is liberated from the impenetrable nexus of trade intermediaries and middlemen, he cannot attain true economic freedom. Rather than merely distributing a largesse of subsidies, the government must prioritize ensuring a Guaranteed Minimum Price for agricultural produce while simultaneously focusing on how to enhance the farmer's direct participation within the market ecosystem. Unless this parallel system dominated by middlemen is dismantled, we cannot absolve ourselves of the sin of reducing the very providers of our food to the status of mere supplicants. In light of this grim reality, it has become imperative to view agriculture not merely as a way of life, but to approach it with a professional and commercial mindset. The government's responsibility must not remain confined merely to announcing schemes; rather, the need of the hour is to ensure that the benefits of these schemes reach the last farmer in the chain, while simultaneously eliminating the interference of middlemen. The true transformation of this agrarian nation's landscape will occur only when the farmer—who battles on two fronts: against the vagaries of nature and against a man-made economic chain—begins to emerge victorious. To live with dignity, the 'provider of food' requires not just a helping hand, but a transparent system that ensures a fair return for his arduous labor. The farmer is not merely a tool for garnering votes; he constitutes the very foundation of this nation's existence.

Therefore, it is essential for political parties—including the opposition—to set aside their petty self-interests and animosities, and to unite in the effort to make agriculture a profitable enterprise. If we fail to stand firmly by the farmers today, the looming crisis of future food security will assume a formidable and severe form. Curbing the organized exploitation perpetrated by middlemen and traders is not merely an administrative reform; it is, above all, a moral imperative. As long as the hands toiling in the fields do not receive a just return for their sweat and labor, any claims regarding the nation's progress will remain hollow and unsubstantiated. Consequently, it has now become imperative that 'Save the Farmer' transcends the status of a mere slogan and evolves into a full-fledged national movement. Rather than relying on temporary stop-gap measures to address farmers' issues, it is absolutely essential to establish a robust, long-term, and transparent systemic framework. At this critical juncture, saving the 'Annadata'—the provider of food—stands as the true guarantee for the nation's future.

Mission Vatsalya scheme

Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely 'Mission Vatsalya' in all States and Union Territories on predefined cost sharing basis between the Central and the State Governments to deliver various services for children in difficult circumstances including orphan children. The scheme provides institutional care and non-institutional care. Child Care Institutions (CCIs) established under the Mission Vatsalya scheme provide, inter-alia, age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, health care, counselling etc. Under Non-Institutional Care Service, support is provided through Sponsorship, Foster Care, Adoption and After Care.

During revision of centrally sponsored schemes in 15th Finance Commission, financial norms were appropriately increased to ensure basic needs, care, protection, development, treatment, rehabilitation and social re-integration of children living in Child Care Institutions.

The TrackChild Portal is implemented with support and involvement of various stakeholders namely Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Railways, State Governments/ UT Administrations, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, National Legal Services Authority, etc. Advisory boards have been issued to all States and UTs including Director General of Police of all States & UTs and other stakeholders regarding providing information of missing children on the TrackChild portal.

Under Mission Vatsalya, States and Union Territories are supported to conduct awareness and capacity-building programmes for strengthening child protection systems at the grassroots level. Further, the Ministry also organizes zonal conferences and sensitization/dissemination workshops under Mission Vatsalya Scheme to create awareness and strengthen implementation among stakeholders.

This Ministry has developed an integrated unified Mission Vatsalya Portal in consultation and coordination with States and UTs. The TrackChild portal for Missing/Found Children, and Khoya-Paya application for Missing/Sighted Children have been integrated with this unified Mission

Governments to appoint designated nodal officers for Missing children at State Level and District levels. The details of these nodal officers have been uploaded on Mission Vatsalya portal.

Under the JJ Act 2015 (Sections 27-30), the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) have been empow-

Further, Section 144 of BNS, 2023, deals with the exploitation of trafficked persons, including sexual exploitation. The section outlines different punishments for exploiting trafficked children and adults including women, with distinct terms of imprisonment and fines. Section 95 of BNS

provided financial assistance to all States and Union Territories, for upgrading/setting up Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) covering all Districts of the States and UTs. Currently, 827 AHTUs are functional including 807 in States and UTs, 15 in Border Security Forces (BSF) and 5 in Sa-

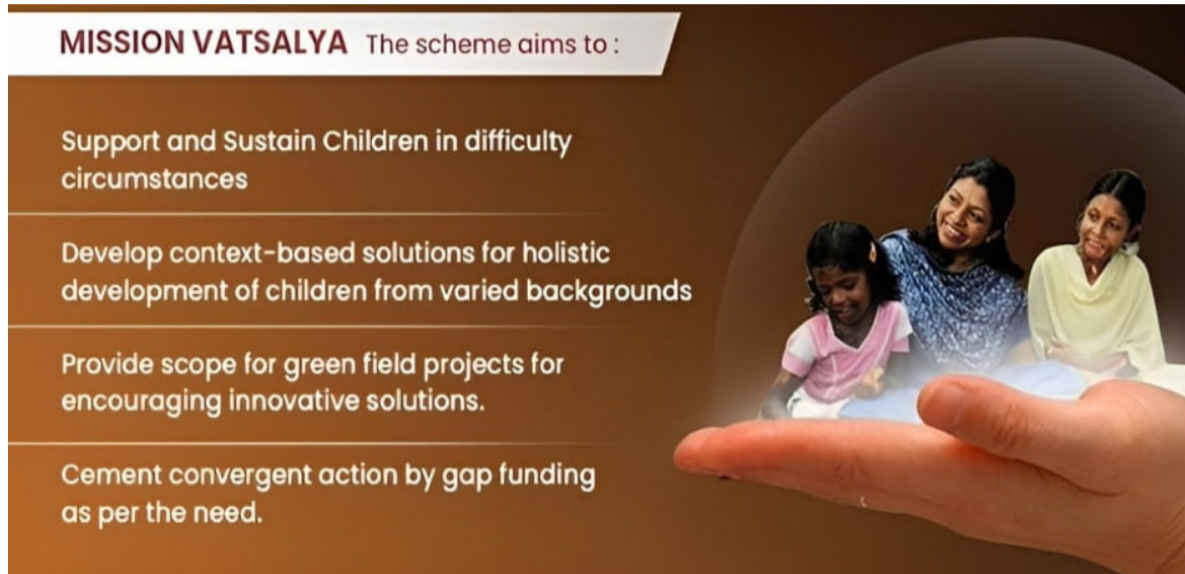
vestigation Agency (NIA) to investigate cases of human trafficking having interstate, national and international ramifications.

14,653 Women Help Desks (WHDs) have been established in Police Stations with financial assistance under Nirbhaya Fund focus on making the Police Stations more women friendly and approachable.

vi. Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO), an online analytical tool, has been launched to monitor and track police investigations in sexual offences as per Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2018 (now included in BNSS). It enables a regular review by the States and UTs concerned to monitor the progress of case investigation.

National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) is a database available exclusively to police. It was Launched on 20.09.2018 to facilitate investigation & tracking of sexual offenders, which allows Investigating Officers to track habitual sex offenders along with initiating preventive measures against sexual offences.

National Database of Human Trafficking Offenders (NDHTO), facilitates the LEAs to search the trafficker's portfolio which provides crime history, personal details, movement, court actions, appeals, visitors, etc. Trafficker's data search provides details for prevention/detection and investigation of such crimes. The Government of India is committed to enhancing inter-agency collaboration at the national and international levels and strengthening public awareness campaigns to prevent trafficking. The NIA, in conjunction with the new criminal laws and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA), coupled with the initiatives of the Ministry of Women and Child Development constitute a more robust framework for handling trafficking offences. This information was given by the Minister of State for Women and Child Development Smt. Savitri Thakur in Lok Sabha in reply to a question.



MISSION VATSALYA The scheme aims to :

Support and Sustain Children in difficulty circumstances

Develop context-based solutions for holistic development of children from varied backgrounds

Provide scope for green field projects for encouraging innovative solutions.

Cement convergent action by gap funding as per the need.

Vatsalya Portal. The TrackChild portal is implemented with support and involvement of various stakeholders namely Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Railways, State Governments and UT Administrations, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, National Legal Services Authority, etc. Standard operating procedure have been issued in this regard. Advisory boards have also been issued to all States and UTs including Director General of Police of all States & UTs and other stakeholders regarding implementation of TrackChild. It is also integrated with the Crime and Criminal Tracking & Network Systems (CCTNS) of the Ministry of Home Affairs which allows interoperability in terms of matching of F.I.Rs of missing children with data base of TrackChild to trace and match missing children by the State and UT police concerned. Further, through Khoya Paya module any citizen can report about any missing or sighted children.

Further, This Ministry has directed all State and UT

related to hiring, employing or engaging a child etc to commit an offence, Section 99 of BNS related to buying a child for the purposes of prostitution are also relevant in the context of human trafficking. Additionally, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 also recognizes trafficking as a cognizable and non-bailable offence. 'Police' and 'Public Order' are the "State" subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility for preventing and countering the crime of human trafficking, therefore, primarily vests with respective States and Union Territories, who are competent to deal with such offences under extant provisions of law.

However, the Government of India supplements the efforts of the States and Union Territories by providing their guidelines on preventing and countering the crime of human trafficking, in the form of various advisories issued from time to time. Some of the initiatives of the Central Government are as under:

The Government has

shastra Seema Bal (SSB). SSB has also established dedicated helpline number 1903. The Ministry of Home Affairs also provides financial assistance to the States and UTs in holding 'State level conferences' and 'Judicial Colloquiums', which are aimed at sensitizing the Police/ Law officers of the States and UTs about the latest initiatives/developments relevant in addressing the issue of human trafficking in a focused and efficient manner.iii. A national level communication platform-Crime Multi Agency Centre (CriMAC) was launched by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on March 12, 2020 for online sharing of information on crime & criminals on 24x7 basis among various Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and ensure seamless flow of information between them. It facilitates dissemination of information about significant crimes including human trafficking cases across the country on a real time basis and enables inter-State coordination.

The Government has

Nirbhaya Fund : Safety and security for women

The Ministry of Women and Child Development does not maintain centralized data on the number of women who have turned to prostitution and women beggars apprehended in the National Capital and other metropolitan cities.

'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution crime against women rests with the respective State Governments and UT Administrations; they are competent to deal with such offences under the extant provisions of laws.

The Government of India has enacted the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) to address trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and related offences. The Act defines prostitution in the context of commercial sexual exploitation and provides for penal action against those who facilitate, abet or profit from such exploitation. Implementation of the Act is primarily the responsibility of State Governments and UT Administrations.

tions.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) implements 'Mission Shakti', a scheme in mission mode which aims to strengthen interventions for women safety, security and empowerment across the country. Mission Shakti comprises of two verticals 'Sambal' for safety and security of women and 'Samarthya' for empowerment of women. Under 'Sambal', One Stop Centres (OSCs), provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence and those in distress, both in private and public spaces. It also provides an integrated range of services including medical aid, legal aid and advice, temporary shelter, police assistance, psycho-social counselling to needy women. Further, Women Helpline (WHL) under 'Sambal', aims to provide 24x7x365 emergency and non-emergency response through telephonic short-code 181 to women, both in public and private spaces by linking them with appropriate authorities such as Police, One Stop Centres, Hospitals, Legal Services Authorities etc. Additionally, it provides information about women welfare

schemes and programs. Women Helpline is operational in 35 States and Union Territories and also integrated with Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112). Under 'Samarthya', Shakti Sadan provides an Integrated Relief and Rehabilitation Home for women in distressful situations including trafficked women. It aims at creating a safe and enabling environment for the women in such difficult situations, to enable them to overcome the adverse circumstances. In order to strengthen transparency and accessibility in service delivery with respect to reliefs and rehabilitation to women in distress, MWCD launched Mission Shakti Dashboard, on 22.01.2025 (<https://missionshakti.wcd.gov.in/>). The dashboard hosts updated lists of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), Nodal Officers of various schemes including OSCs, WHL, Shakti Sadan etc. The portal also consolidates all major helplines for easy public access. The Mission Shakti Dashboard data is also accessible via the Mission Shakti Mobile Application. A woman in distress can now book an appointment with her nearest OSC through both the portal and

the mobile application.

The Government of India has set up a dedicated fund called the "Nirbhaya Fund" for implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security for women. All projects/ schemes under Nirbhaya Fund are demand driven. The fund provides financial assistance to Ministries, Departments, States and UTs for implementation of various projects such as ERSS-112, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC), Safe City Project in 8 major cities namely Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai, Women Help Desks (WHDs) in police stations, Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), Strengthening of DNA analysis, cyber forensic and related facilities in State Forensic Laboratories (SFLS), Setting up Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) including exclusive POCSO courts to dispose of cases pending trial under rape and POCSO Act, etc.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Women and Child Development Smt. Savitri Thakur in Lok Sabha in reply to a question.

NHAI Awards Contract for Construction of Flyovers and Underpasses at Jaipur Bypass Junction on NH-48

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has issued a Letter of Award (LoA) for a major infrastructure upgrade at the Jaipur Bypass Junction along the Delhi-Jaipur-Ajmer Expressway (NH-48) in Rajasthan. The project aims to address long-standing traffic congestion issues at one of the busiest intersections in the region.

The contract for the development has been awarded to M/s Maruti Infracreation Pvt. Ltd., with a total project cost of Rs. 130.65 crore. The work will be executed under the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) mode, ensuring a streamlined approach to design and implementation.

Jaipur Bypass Junction, often referred to as the 200 Feet Junction, plays a crucial role in con-

necting key routes between Delhi, Jaipur, and Ajmer. Due to its strategic importance, the junction witnesses a heavy influx of vehicles throughout the day.

The area surrounding the junction is densely populated, with major residential and commercial localities such as Mansarovar, Shyam Nagar, and Vaishali Nagar contributing to high local traffic volumes. This mix of highway and city traffic has resulted in frequent bottlenecks.

Currently, vehicles from multiple directions must pass through signal-controlled intersections, leading to long waiting times. This situation often results in traffic snarls, especially during peak hours, affecting daily commuters and long-distance travelers alike.

The proposed project seeks to resolve these challenges through

the construction of modern, grade-separated infrastructure. This includes the development of two underpasses and two flyovers designed to streamline traffic movement.

One of the underpasses will cater to vehicles traveling from Delhi towards Mansarovar, ensuring uninterrupted movement for this route. The second underpass will facilitate traffic moving from Mansarovar towards Delhi, reducing dependency on traffic signals.

In addition to the underpasses, two flyovers will be constructed to improve connectivity between Jaipur and Ajmer, as well as from Ajmer towards Delhi. These elevated structures will allow vehicles to bypass congested intersections entirely.

The segregation of local and through traffic is expected to sig-

nificantly ease congestion at the junction. By eliminating the need for vehicles to cross conflicting traffic streams, the project will enhance both efficiency and safety.

At present, frequent stoppages at traffic signals not only delay journeys but also contribute to higher fuel consumption. This leads to increased costs for commuters and adds to environmental pollution in the area.

With the implementation of this project, travel time is expected to reduce considerably. Smoother traffic flow will also minimize wear and tear on vehicles, offering long-term benefits to road users. Road safety is another critical aspect that the project aims to improve. By reducing congestion and eliminating risky crossing movements, the likelihood of accidents at the junction

will decrease.

The project also reflects a broader effort by NHAI to modernize key highway corridors across India. Enhancing infrastructure along NH-48 is particularly important due to its role as a major economic and transport lifeline.

Once completed, the upgraded junction will not only benefit local residents but also improve connectivity for interstate travelers. It will strengthen the overall efficiency of the Delhi-Jaipur-Ajmer corridor.

Overall, this development marks a significant step towards improving urban mobility in Jaipur. By addressing congestion at a critical junction, the project is set to deliver long-term gains in traffic management, safety, and commuter convenience.



Briefs :

Crackdown on LPG Black Marketing Intensifies

Hisar : Haryana authorities have intensified action against LPG black marketing amid panic buying, seizing over 1,100 cylinders and arresting multiple offenders.

The Food and Civil Supplies Department has conducted 464 raids across the state, leading to the seizure of 1,138 cylinders. While 17 people have been arrested in specific cases, FIRs have been registered against 79 individuals.

Jhajjar reported the highest recoveries with 155 cylinders seized, followed by Gurugram, Mahendragarh and Ambala. Officials said misuse of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes remains a key concern.

District authorities have assured that there is no shortage of LPG and are closely monitoring the situation to prevent inconvenience to consumers.

The intensified crackdown on LPG black marketing in Haryana represents a significant logistical and legal effort by the state to stabilize the essential energy supply chain. Following reports of panic buying and artificial shortages, the authorities in Hisar and across the state have shifted into a high-alert phase to protect consumers from exploitation. This surge in enforcement is not merely a response to isolated incidents but a systemic attempt to dismantle the networks that profit from the illegal diversion of subsidized domestic resources into the unregulated commercial market.

Mustard Procurement Hit by Glitches

Chandigarh : Mustard procurement in Haryana has begun on a shaky note as farmers face technical issues and poor arrangements at mandis, prompting many to sell their produce to private buyers.

Although the minimum support price is Rs 6,200 per quintal, farmers are opting for private traders offering Rs 5,300 to Rs 5,800 due to quicker payments. The state aims to procure 13 lakh tonnes this season through agencies like NAFED, NCCF, HAFED and the Haryana State Warehousing Corporation.

The introduction of geo-fencing and mandatory gate passes via the e-Kharid app has led to widespread technical glitches. Farmers reported frequent portal crashes and data mismatches, with many denied entry to mandis.

Opposition leaders have criticised the government for mismanagement, highlighting inadequate facilities such as shortage of labour, gunny bags and basic amenities. With wheat procurement set to begin soon, concerns are rising over the system's preparedness.

The commencement of the mustard procurement season in Haryana has been overshadowed by a series of systemic inefficiencies and technical bottlenecks that have left the farming community in a state of deep frustration.

While the government officially opened the doors to mandis across the state, the transition from harvest to sale has been anything but smooth, characterized by long queues and digital hurdles. For many farmers, what was supposed to be the culmination of months of hard labor has instead turned into an administrative nightmare, forcing them to navigate a bureaucratic maze just to

LPG Supply Stabilises After Panic Buying

Hisar : The supply of LPG cylinders in Hisar has returned to normal after a surge in panic buying driven by rumours of shortages.

Authorities reported that 4,592 cylinders were delivered in a day, while over 9,300 remain in stock. Demand had spiked sharply after March 12, with daily consumption crossing 9,000 cylinders on peak days. Data showed fluctuating demand patterns over several days, which put pressure on stock levels before stabilising. Officials attributed the sudden surge to rumours linked to global tensions.

District officials have assured residents that there is no actual shortage and that supply chains are functioning smoothly. Helplines and monitoring teams have been set up to address any concerns promptly.

The recent reports from Hisar regarding the stabilization of LPG supplies mark a significant turning point in a period defined by consumer anxiety and market volatility. After a week of intense pressure on local distribution networks, the flow of essential cooking gas has finally recalibrated to meet the actual needs of the population rather than the inflated demands of fear.

This shift indicates that the administrative measures taken to reassure the public and secure the supply chain have successfully dampened the "panic buying" phenomenon that threatened to disrupt the daily lives of thousands of households.



The crisis originally stemmed from a sharp surge in demand that began around March 12, as rumors of an impending shortage began to circulate through social media and local communities. These rumors, which officials have since traced to unfounded fears regarding global geopolitical tensions, created a self-fulfilling prophecy. As residents rushed to book extra cylinders to "stock up," the sudden surge in orders naturally put a temporary strain on local stocks, which in turn convinced more people that a genuine shortage was underway, leading to peak consumption days exceeding 9,000 cylinders.

To put this surge into perspective, the district authorities highlighted the fluctuating demand patterns that characterized the height of the panic. On the busiest days, the daily consumption nearly doubled the standard operational levels, forcing distributors to work around the clock to prevent the total depletion of local godowns. This rapid

drain on resources was a purely artificial crisis, as the physical supply of gas from the refineries remained constant, but the "last-mile" delivery system was simply not built to handle a month's worth of demand in just a few days. Current data provided by the district administration now shows a much more balanced picture, with a healthy recovery in stock levels. Officials reported that in a single recent day of operations, 4,592 cylinders were successfully delivered to households across Hisar, a figure that aligns more closely with the region's actual daily requirement.

Extortion Calls Trigger Panic Among Kiln Owners

Hisar : Brick kiln owners from Jind district approached Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and DGP Ajay Singhal after receiving repeated extortion calls allegedly from members of the Bishnoi gang.

The callers demanded large sums as protection money. One of the complainants, Anoop Kumar, said he received calls on March 24 demanding Rs 2 crore, followed by another call the same night through WhatsApp.

The caller identified himself as linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Authorities have assured strict action against the culprits and promised security for businessmen.

Police have registered a case, arrested two suspects and provided protection to the complainant. Further investigations are underway to trace other individuals involved.

The recent wave of extortion calls targeting brick kiln owners in Jind has sent a chill through the local business community, highlight-

ing the persistent threat posed by organized crime syndicates in the region. The situation reached a critical point when a delegation of concerned business owners, feeling increasingly vulnerable, took the extraordinary step of directly approaching Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Director General of Police (DGP) Ajay Singhal. Their plea was simple but urgent: they required immediate state intervention to protect their lives and livelihoods from anonymous callers claiming to represent the notorious Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

The specifics of the threats are chilling, involving demands for massive sums of "protection money" that would cripple any legitimate business. Anoop Kumar, one of the primary complainants in the case, detailed a terrifying series of events that began on March 24. According to his account, he was first contacted with a demand for a staggering ₹2 crore. The pressure did not end there; the perpetrators followed up with additional

calls the same night, utilizing the end-to-end encryption of WhatsApp to hide their digital footprint while reiterating their demands and issuing threats of violence if the money was not paid.

During these interactions, the callers were brazen in their identification, explicitly linking themselves to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang to maximize the fear factor. This gang has gained a fearsome reputation across North India for its involvement in high-profile extortions and violent crimes, making any claim of affiliation a matter of grave concern for local police. By invoking this name, the extortionists sought to bypass any hesitation the kiln owners might have, hoping that the sheer weight of the gang's reputation would compel them to comply quietly without involving the authorities.

However, the decision of the Jind kiln owners to stand together and report the matter has shifted the momentum back toward law enforcement.

₹1,293 Crore Realty Deal Boosts Gurugram Growth

Gurugram : Realty firm Signature Global has secured an investment of Rs 1,293 crore from RMZ Group, marking its expansion into the commercial real estate sector. The deal provides RMZ with a 50 per cent stake in Gurugram Commercial Limited. Following the agreement, both firms will jointly develop a major mixed-use project along the Southern Peripheral Road. The project will include office spaces, hotels and organised retail hubs. The investment has been executed through a Securities Subscription and Purchase Agreement involving Signature Global, GCL and RMZ's Millennia Realtors. The stake acquisition includes both share purchase and fresh investment. With a development potential of around 3.94 million square feet, the project is expected to strengthen Gurugram's commercial infrastructure. It also marks the company's first major venture into large-scale commercial development within its existing land



bank. The recent ₹1,293 crore investment deal between Signature Global and the RMZ Group marks a transformative moment for the Gurugram real estate market, signaling a robust shift toward large-scale

commercial expansion. This massive infusion of capital is not just a financial transaction but a strategic partnership that brings together Signature Global's extensive local land bank with RMZ's global expertise in high-end

commercial development. The deal effectively pivots Signature Global from its traditional stronghold in affordable and mid-segment housing toward the lucrative world of premium office and retail infrastructure.

Saini Orders Real-Time Medicine Monitoring

Chandigarh : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has directed all government hospitals to adopt a centralised real-time system to track medicine availability and curb external prescriptions.

Doctors have been instructed to prescribe medicines available within hospitals and clearly mention on OPD slips if any drug is unavailable. Chief Medical Officers will be held responsible for ensuring compliance.

During a review meeting, the Chief Minister stressed that patients should not face inconvenience due to shortages and called for continuous monitoring. He also ordered timely communication with suppliers and annual empanelment to avoid stock-outs.

Saini emphasised expanding diagnostic facilities like CT scans and MRIs across all districts, noting that such services are already operational in 10 districts, with the rest to be covered soon. He also called for improved staffing, transparent procurement, better sanitation and enhanced patient services.



In a decisive move to overhaul the state's public healthcare infrastructure, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has mandated the implementation of a sophisticated, centralized real-time monitoring system across all government hospitals. This directive is designed to eliminate the information gap regarding medicine stocks, ensuring that every health facility in the state can track its inventory with digital precision.

By adopting this technology, the government aims to create a transparent supply chain where shortages are identified and addressed before they impact patient care, moving away from the manual and often delayed reporting methods of the past.

A primary objective of this new system is to significantly curb the practice of "external prescriptions," where patients are forced to purchase medicines from private pharmacies because

government stocks are reportedly unavailable. The Chief Minister has issued clear instructions to medical professionals to prioritize the prescription of drugs already stocked within the hospital's internal pharmacy. This policy shift is intended to reduce the out-of-pocket expenditure for citizens, ensuring that the benefits of government-subsidized healthcare reach the intended recipients without unnecessary financial hurdles.

Protest Erupts Over Himachal Entry Tax Hike

Solan : Residents from Haryana staged a protest at the Barotiwala inter-state barrier against the sharp increase in entry tax imposed by the Himachal Pradesh government.

Demonstrators blocked vehicular movement for nearly an hour and raised slogans, calling the hike—from Rs 70 to Rs 170 on private vehicles—an unfair burden. Many commuters from Haryana and Punjab who travel daily to the Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh industrial belt for work expressed concern over the increased costs.

Members of the Doon Tempo Operators Union also protested, warning of stricter agitation if the decision is not reversed. They threatened to seal borders and even submit vehicle keys to the Chief Minister in Shimla as a mark of protest.

Transporters argued that the hike would severely impact small vehicle operators and disrupt livelihoods, especially those dependent on daily cross-border travel.

The Barotiwala inter-state barrier recently became the focal point of a heated standoff as residents from Haryana and local transport-

ers launched a coordinated protest against the Himachal Pradesh government's decision to hike entry taxes. The demonstration, which saw a significant turnout, led to a complete standstill of vehicular movement for nearly an hour as protesters occupied the road and raised slogans against the state administration. This flare-up highlights the growing friction between neighboring states over cross-border taxation, particularly in high-traffic industrial corridors where thousands of people cross state lines daily for their livelihoods. The primary catalyst for the anger is a sharp increase in the entry fee for private vehicles entering Himachal Pradesh, which has reportedly jumped from ₹70 to ₹170. Protesters have labeled this more than twofold increase as an "unfair burden" that disproportionately targets the middle class and daily wage earners. For commuters from Haryana and Punjab who work in the Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh (BBN) industrial belt—one of Asia's largest pharmaceutical and manufacturing hubs—this daily tax hike represents a significant monthly expense that eats

into their take-home pay.

The BBN industrial area relies heavily on a workforce that resides in neighboring Haryana towns like Panchkula and Kalka. For these employees, traveling to Himachal is not a choice but a professional necessity. Many demonstrators argued that the government failed to consider the "commuter economy" when drafting the new tax slabs, effectively penalizing the very people who contribute to the state's industrial productivity. The sentiment on the ground was one of deep frustration, with many questioning why a daily necessity like commuting is being taxed at such a high premium.

Joining the residents were members of the Doon Tempo Operators Union, who brought a more organized and professional dimension to the protest. These commercial operators, who manage the transport of goods and small-scale shuttle services across the border, are reeling from the cumulative impact of the hike. They argued that the increased costs make their operations unviable, especially for small vehicle owners who work on thin profit margins.



Cow Sanctuary to Tackle Stray Menace

Gurugram : The Haryana government is setting up a modern cow sanctuary at Hasanpur village in Nuh district to address the growing issue of stray cattle. Spread over 50 acres, the facility will feature an open-range environment with designated grazing areas, a veterinary hospital and advanced waste management systems.

The project has been designed to be environmentally and financially sustainable. Plans include generating CNG from cow dung through a waste-to-energy plant and producing organic fertilisers and Panchgavya products on a large scale.

The initiative is expected to generate employment for local youth in animal care and related activities. Experts believe the model could be replicated in other parts of the state.

With over 6,100 stray cattle in Gurugram, authorities have linked the problem to road accidents and traffic congestion. Under the "Mission Safe Gurugram" campaign, nearly 600 animals have already been relocated, and fines are being imposed on those abandoning cattle. The new sanctuary is expected



to house rescued animals and help make the city stray cattle-free by 2026 while improving public safety.

The Haryana government has initiated plans to establish a large-scale and modern cow sanctuary in Hasanpur village of Nuh district as part of efforts to address the rising problem of stray cattle in urban and semi-urban areas.

The proposed sanctuary will be developed over an expansive area of nearly 50

acres, making it one of the largest organised facilities for cattle management in the region. Officials have stated that the project is being designed with a long-term vision to provide a safe and structured environment for abandoned and stray cattle.

The sanctuary will feature an open-range system where animals can move freely instead of being confined to limited enclosures.

Dedicated grazing zones will be created within the

campus to ensure that cattle have access to adequate natural fodder.

Authorities are also planning to build a fully equipped veterinary hospital within the premises to provide timely medical care to the animals.

The healthcare facility will include treatment units, regular check-up arrangements and emergency care services for injured or sick cattle. In addition to animal welfare, the project has been

structured to incorporate modern waste management techniques.

A key highlight of the plan is the installation of a waste-to-energy plant that will convert cow dung into compressed natural gas (CNG).

This initiative is expected to contribute to clean energy production while also reducing environmental pollution.

Alongside CNG generation, the sanctuary will focus on producing organic fertilisers on a large scale using cattle waste.

Authorities are also exploring the production of Panchgavya-based products, which have growing demand in agriculture and traditional wellness sectors.

Officials believe that such integrated utilisation of resources will help make the project financially sustainable over time. The sanctuary is also expected to create new employment opportunities for local residents, especially youth.

Jobs related to animal care, maintenance, waste processing and product manufacturing are likely to be generated through the initiative.

DC Cracks Down on Mandi Readiness Ahead of Wheat Procurement

Yamunanagar : Deputy Commissioner Preeti conducted an unannounced inspection of grain markets in Pratap Nagar, Chhachhrauli, Saraswati Nagar and Radaur to review arrangements ahead of the wheat procurement season beginning April 1. She interacted with farmers and commission agents to understand their concerns and assured that no inconvenience would be allowed during procurement. She stated that wheat procurement in Haryana will commence with the Minimum Support Price fixed at Rs 2,585 per quintal for 2026. Officials were instructed to ensure that procured wheat is lifted from mandis within 24 hours to prevent delays and congestion.

Highlighting the importance of farmer welfare, she directed authorities to ensure proper coordination among procurement agencies, transporters and commission agents. Adequate labour and transport arrangements were also emphasised for smooth operations.

Farmers were advised to bring dry crops to mandis for hassle-free procurement. The DC also ordered the

Market Committee to ensure facilities like drinking water, sanitation, electricity, toilets and sufficient gunny bags. Entry and exit points for vehicles were checked to ensure smooth movement, with several senior officials present during the inspection.

Deputy Commissioner Preeti undertook a surprise visit to several grain markets across the district to assess preparedness ahead of the wheat procurement season set to begin on April 1.

The inspection covered key mandis located in Pratap Nagar, Chhachhrauli, Saraswati Nagar and Radaur, where arrangements are being finalised for the upcoming procurement drive.

During her visit, she closely reviewed the on-ground facilities and interacted with officials responsible for managing procurement operations. She also held discussions with farmers who had arrived at the mandis to gather first-hand feedback about their expectations and concerns.

Commission agents present at the sites were also consulted to understand logistical challenges and operational issues that may arise

during procurement.

The Deputy Commissioner assured all stakeholders that the administration is committed to ensuring a hassle-free experience for farmers during the procurement period.

She stated that the government has fixed the Minimum Support Price at Rs 2,585 per quintal for wheat for the 2026 season.

Officials were clearly instructed to ensure that the lifting of procured wheat is carried out within 24 hours of arrival at mandis.

This step, she emphasised, is essential to prevent overcrowding and ensure smooth functioning of procurement activities.

She highlighted that delays in lifting produce often lead to congestion, inconvenience to farmers and disruption in mandi operations.

Focusing on farmer welfare, she directed authorities to maintain seamless coordination among procurement agencies involved in the process.

Transporters were also asked to remain fully prepared to handle the movement of produce without delays.

Students Spread Message Against Drug Abuse

Kurukshetra : An anti-drug awareness programme was organised at Indira Gandhi National College in Ladwa to educate students about the harmful effects of substance abuse. Around 75 students participated in the event, which included a street play showcasing the dangers of addiction and its impact on physical, mental and social well-being. The presentation highlighted how substance abuse can derail lives and harm society. College principal Prof Kushal Pal urged students to stay away from drugs and contribute to building a healthier society. Faculty members also encouraged disciplined lifestyles and awareness about issues like HIV/AIDS and its prevention. The programme aimed to inspire youth to adopt positive habits and actively promote a drug-free environment. The

recent anti-drug awareness initiative at Indira Gandhi National College in Ladwa serves as a powerful reminder of the proactive role educational institutions are playing in the fight against substance abuse. By organising such a focused program, the college aimed to equip its students with the knowledge and moral resolve necessary to navigate a world where drug-related challenges are increasingly prevalent. The event was not merely a lecture but a call to action, emphasizing that the youth are the most effective ambassadors for social change within their peer groups and the broader community. A group of approximately 75 students took center stage during the event, demonstrating their commitment to the cause through creative and engaging performances. These students recognized that the

message of abstinence and health is often more impactful when delivered by peers rather than authority figures alone. Their participation highlighted a growing trend of "peer-to-peer" education, which focuses on breaking the stigma surrounding discussions of addiction and creating an environment where students feel empowered to support one another in making healthy life choices. The centerpiece of the awareness program was a moving street play, or Nukkad Natak, which was designed to illustrate the grim realities of drug addiction in a relatable and visceral way. This performance moved beyond the clinical definitions of substance abuse, instead focusing on the human element—showing how a single decision to experiment with drugs can spiral into a life-altering tragedy.

Chandigarh : The Haryana government has recommended a CBI investigation into a Rs 590 crore scam involving IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank, where government funds were allegedly siphoned off through fraudulent means. The case is currently being probed by the State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, which has so far arrested 15 individuals. Investigators found that funds from eight government departments were diverted through 12 bank accounts.

Out of these, ten accounts were held in IDFC First Bank and two in AU Small Finance Bank. The accused reportedly created fake companies to route the

CBI Likely to Probe ₹590 Crore Bank Scam



money illegally.

An FIR was registered on February 23 in Panchkula under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act

and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Investigators also discovered manipulation of banking records using forged debit memos to transfer

funds to accounts linked with the accused and their associates.

The Haryana government's recommendation for

a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the ₹590 crore bank scam marks a significant escalation in one of the state's most complex financial fraud cases. This decision reflects the massive scale of the embezzlement, which reportedly involves the siphoning of public funds from multiple government departments into private accounts. By handing the reins to a central agency, the state aims to uncover the full extent of the conspiracy, which appears to span across various banking institutions and administrative layers.

At the heart of the scandal are allegations that funds belonging to at least eight different government departments were systematically

PGIMS Opens on Holiday to Return Documents

Rohtak : Pandit BD Sharma PGIMS resolved a long-pending issue by opening its offices on a holiday to return academic documents to MBBS graduates of the 2020 batch. The move followed directions from the state government to release certificates retained under the bond policy. The directive, issued on March 27, brought relief to 595 graduates across government medical colleges. At PGIMS alone, 170 students received their documents in a single day. Officials confirmed that no pending applications remain, as staff worked beyond routine hours to ensure students received their certificates on time. These documents were es-



sentential for higher studies and competitive exams. Students expressed relief as the timely action enabled them to apply for the UPSC Combined Medical Services Examination before the deadline.

Many said delays could have cost them valuable opportunities and urged the government to clarify certain aspects of the bond policy. The administration at Pandit BD Sharma Post Graduate Insti-

tute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak took the unprecedented step of opening its administrative offices during a public holiday to address a critical document backlog. This administrative push was specifically designed to facilitate the return of original academic certificates to the MBBS graduates of the 2020 batch, who had been waiting for months to reclaim their credentials. By prioritizing student needs over the standard holiday schedule, the institute demonstrated a rare level of bureaucratic flexibility aimed at resolving a point of significant friction between the medical community and the state.

Teen's Death Raises Concern Over Academic Pressure

Gurugram : A 15-year-old Class 10 student allegedly died by suicide in a school staff quarter in Farukhnagar, with family members attributing the incident to study-related stress. The boy, Akash, lived with his parents on the school premises where his father worked as a watchman.

Police said the incident came to light when his mother returned home in the evening and found him hanging from a ceiling fan. No suicide note was recovered from the spot.

The body has been sent for postmortem, and an investigation has been initiated. Officials said preliminary findings indicate

suicide, though all angles are being examined.

The incident has once again brought attention to mental health challenges faced by students, especially due to academic pressure.

The tragic loss of a young life in Gurugram has sparked a serious conversation about the intense academic expectations placed on teenagers today.

Akash, a fifteen-year-old student preparing for his Class 10 examinations, was found dead in his home on the school grounds where his father served as a watchman.

The incident has left the local community in Farukhnagar in shock, as neighbors and school staff grapple with

the sudden loss of a student who was reportedly struggling with the weight of his studies.

The discovery was made by the boy's mother when she returned to their quarters in the evening. Finding her son in such a state has left the family devastated and seeking answers about the pressures he was facing. While the police did not find a suicide note at the scene, the family has been vocal about the stress Akash felt regarding his schoolwork and the upcoming board exams, which are often seen as a high-stakes milestone for students in India.

Local authorities have moved the body for a post-mortem examination to con-

firm the exact cause of death, while a formal investigation has been launched to look into all possible factors.

Although the preliminary findings point toward suicide, the police are conducting interviews with teachers, classmates, and family members to understand the boy's state of mind leading up to the tragedy. This investigation aims to determine if there were any specific incidents or external factors that contributed to his distress.

This event has reignited urgent discussions among educators and mental health professionals about the "pressure cooker" environment created by the current education system.

Ex-DGP's WhatsApp Hacked, Accused Held

Panchkula : Police have arrested a man from Bihar for hacking the WhatsApp account of former Haryana DGP Kanwar Nirmal Singh and using it to defraud his contacts. The accused, Rajesh Kumar from Nalanda district, allegedly gained access after tricking the former officer into dialing a code under the pretext of receiving a parcel. He then used the account to request money from contacts. One victim, a former gunman, transferred Rs 40,000 believing the request was genuine. Police tracked down the after a month-long investigation and recovered the amount. Officials have warned the public against sharing OTPs or responding to suspicious requests and advised verifying such messages before making payments. The arrest of a cyber-

criminal from Bihar marks a significant breakthrough in a high-profile case involving the digital impersonation of a former top-ranking police official in Haryana. The Panchkula police successfully apprehended the individual responsible for infiltrating the personal communication channels of former Director General of Police Kanwar Nirmal Singh. This incident has sent ripples through the administrative and security circles of the region, highlighting that even those with extensive backgrounds in law enforcement are not entirely immune to the sophisticated and manipulative tactics employed by modern digital fraudsters. The investigation began after a series of fraudulent activities were traced back to the former DGP's personal What-

sApp account, which had been compromised through a deceptive social engineering tactic. The accused has been identified as Rajesh Kumar, a resident of the Nalanda district in Bihar, a region that has unfortunately become increasingly associated with organized cybercrime syndicates. By gaining control over a high-profile account, the perpetrator was able to leverage the prestige and trust associated with the former officer's identity to target a wide network of professional and personal contacts. The methodology used to gain access to the account was as simple as it was effective, relying on a common but dangerous technique known as call forwarding fraud. The suspect allegedly contacted the former DGP under the guise of a delivery service em-

ployee, claiming that a parcel was waiting for him but required a specific verification process to be completed. During this interaction, the victim was tricked into dialing a specific code on his mobile device, which effectively redirected his incoming calls and SMS messages to a device controlled by the fraudster. Once the call forwarding was active, the perpetrator was able to bypass the standard security protocols of the messaging platform by intercepting the verification code required to register the account on a new device. With the account successfully hijacked, the former DGP was locked out of his own communication tool, while the criminal gained full access to his contact list and message history. This allowed the attacker to pose as the

respected former official, initiating conversations that appeared entirely legitimate to the unsuspecting recipients on the other end. The primary objective of this digital infiltration was immediate financial gain, which the suspect pursued by sending urgent pleas for money to various individuals in the contact list. Exploiting the high level of respect and authority commanded by a former Director General of Police, the fraudster crafted messages that suggested a temporary but pressing financial emergency. Because the requests came from a verified and familiar phone number, many of the recipients did not immediately suspect that they were being communicated with by an imposter rather than their former colleague or superior. One of the most notable

victims of this scheme was a man who had previously served as a gunman for the former DGP, illustrating the personal nature of the exploitation.

Believing that his former employer was in genuine need of assistance, the man did not hesitate to transfer a sum of forty thousand rupees to the bank account provided by the fraudster. This specific transaction became a focal point of the subsequent police investigation, providing a digital trail that eventually led the cybercell back to the source of the crime in Bihar.

The Panchkula police department took the matter extremely seriously, recognizing the implications of a former high-ranking official's identity being used for criminal purposes. A specialized

team was formed to track the digital footprint of the stolen funds and the technical origin of the account takeover. This month-long investigation required coordination across state lines, as the trail moved from the digital infrastructure of Haryana to the physical location of the suspect in the Nalanda district.

During the course of the operation, investigators utilized advanced forensic tools to monitor the movement of the defrauded money through various digital wallets and bank accounts. The complexity of these cases often stems from the speed at which stolen funds are moved or laundered, but the persistence of the Panchkula police allowed them to freeze the relevant accounts before the money could disappear entirely.

Revamped LSG gear up for IPL 2026 opener against Delhi Capitals

New Delhi : Lucknow Super Giants will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Delhi Capitals at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Wednesday (tomorrow), hoping for a stronger and more balanced season after a difficult previous year.

The franchise has focused on strengthening its squad, particularly the bowling unit, while also reshaping its batting order to provide more stability.

Last season proved challenging for Lucknow, with injuries to several key players, especially in the pace department, affecting the team's consistency. This time, however, the squad looks far more settled, with a number of players returning to full fitness and some experienced additions boosting the lineup.



know with a deeper and more varied pace attack than in previous seasons.

In the spin department, mystery spinner Digvesh Singh Rathi will be one to watch. After making a strong impression in his debut season last year, Rathi will look to build on that momentum and further establish himself as a key member of the bowling lineup.

Compared to the bowling unit, the batting order appears more settled. The opening combination of Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram gives Lucknow an explosive yet dependable start at the top. Both players bring international experience and the ability to accel-

erate the scoring during the powerplay.

Further down the order, the team has reshuffled roles to ensure better balance. Captain Rishabh Pant is expected to move up the order after struggling to make an impact at number four for much of last season before finishing with a century when promoted to number three. Nicholas Pooran is likely to follow in the middle order, providing firepower in the later stages of the innings. Lucknow will face a Delhi Capitals side that showed promise last year but fell short of a playoff berth. Delhi struggled with instability at the top of the order, trying as many as sev-

en opening combinations across the season. This year, they will hope for more clarity and consistency in their batting lineup.

KL Rahul is expected to open the innings, although his partner remains uncertain, with Prithvi Shaw, Abhishek Porel and Pathum Nissanka among the options. The addition of David Miller strengthens the middle order alongside fellow South African Tristan Stubbs, adding experience and power-hitting ability.

Delhi also boast a strong bowling attack, even though Mitchell Starc will miss the opening game due to injury. Captain Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav form a formid-

ble spin duo capable of turning games in the middle overs.

The pace department has been bolstered by the inclusion of Lungi Ngidi, who impressed with his variations and change of pace during the recent T20 World Cup. Left-arm seamer T Natarajan has also returned to full fitness after spending much of last season sidelined with injury, adding further depth to the Capitals' bowling lineup.

Squads:
Lucknow Super Kings: Rishabh Pant (C), Aiden Markram, Himmat Singh, Matthew Breetzke, Mukul Choudhary, Akshat Raghuvanshi, Josh Inglis, Mitchell Marsh, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahamad, Arshin Kulkarni, Wanindu Hasaranga, Ayush Badoni, Mohammad Shami, Avesh Khan, M. Siddharth, Digvesh Singh, Akash Singh, Prince Yadav, Arjun Tendulkar, Anrich Nortje, Naman Tiwari, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan
Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (C), K.L. Rahul, Karun Nair, David Miller, Pathum Nissanka, Sahil Parakh, Prithvi Shaw, Abhishek Porel, Tristan Stubbs, Sameer Rizvi, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Ajay Mandal, Tripurana Vijay, Madhav Tiwari, Auqib Dar, Nitish Rana, Mitchell Starc, T. Natarajan, Mukesh Kumar, Dushmantha Chameera, Lungisani Ngidi, Kyle Jamieson, Kuldeep Yadav

From doom-scrolling to decisive save: Suraj's turning point

Male (Maldives): Suraj Singh Aheibam's journey from social media addiction to match-winning hero stands as a powerful example of how discipline off the pitch can redefine success on it. The India U20 goalkeeper's transformation has not only reshaped his routine but also accelerated his rise in Indian football.



Once caught in the cycle of endless scrolling and late-night distractions, Suraj admitted that social media had begun to negatively impact his focus, recovery, and overall performance. What initially seemed like harmless browsing gradually evolved into a habit that disrupted his training rhythm and mental sharpness.

The turning point came on April 14, 2025, following Classic Football Academy's 0-3 defeat to Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the Reliance Foundation Development League final. The loss forced Suraj to reflect deeply on his preparation and lifestyle choices.

Confronting the reality that his off-field habits were affecting his on-field output, the young goalkeeper made a bold decision. That very night, he deleted his social media accounts, choosing discipline and focus over distraction. "I had become a social media addict, constantly watching reels, especially at night. It affected my sleep and focus during training," Suraj revealed, highlighting how the habit had taken a toll on his development. The results of his digital detox were almost immediate.

With the match locked at 1-1, he held his nerve in the penalty shootout, producing a crucial save against Bangladesh to secure the title for India. The moment marked a turning point in his young career. "It validated everything. Staying away from distractions helped me stay calm and focused in that moment," he said, reflecting on the impact of his lifestyle change. Although he eventually returned to social media, Suraj now approaches it with a completely different mindset. He maintains strict con-

control over his screen time, prioritising rest, match analysis, and recovery over mindless scrolling.

His transformation has coincided with rapid professional growth. The 18-year-old has since earned a contract with Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League, marking a significant milestone in his career.

In addition, he has taken on greater responsibility as captain of the India U20 side in the ongoing SAFF U20 Championship, embracing a leadership role at a young age. "I want to be a disciplinarian now. There is more responsibility as captain," Suraj said, underlining his commitment to leading by example both on and off the field. Inspired by Ederson's composure and distribution, Suraj continues to refine his goalkeeping skills. He also benefits from the mentorship of former India midfielder Renedy Singh, whose guidance has played a key role in his development.

Komalika Bari: Starting off with bamboo bows, to becoming a world champion recurve archer

Raipur: Starting archery with make shift bamboo bows, Jharkhand's Komalika Bari would never have thought that her marksmanship would one day make her a world champion.

Komalika's international accolades include world youth championships women's singles gold (Wroclaw, 2021), a gold medal at world cadet championships (Madrid, 2019) and Under 17 cadet world champion among others.

Hailing from a tribal family of modest means, her father is a Life insurance corporation (LIC) agent and her mother is a former Anganwadi worker. Speaking to UNI on the sidelines of the ongoing Khelo India Tribal Games being played in Chhattisgarh she recounted her struggle and credited the Tata Archery academy for transforming her fortunes.

"I started archery in

2012, I practiced with a bamboo bow, as we did not have the money to buy recurve. I planned to play nationals with a bamboo bow, and buy a recurve bow when I have the money. But thankfully I got selected in the Tata Archery academy in 2016, that was the turning point for me, at the academy, food, lodging, equipment, dress, travel allowance for attending tournaments all was taken care off by the academy. I have been able to make it this far because of them." Komalika, who is only the second Indian woman recurve archer to clinch the world cadet and world junior title praised the Khelo India tribal games, says "the facilities here are at par with national and international levels, KITG is giving a platform to athletes from remotest areas who are not privileged. Getting a chance to play a tournament of this quality will spur play-

ers to take up their respective disciplines with greater intensity and ambition."

The Khelo India Tribal Games are being held from March 25 to April 3, 2026, in Chhattisgarh and the 10-day national event features over 3,000 athletes competing in seven disciplines—archery, athletics, football, hockey, swimming, weightlifting, and wrestling—along with demonstration sports like Mallakhamb and Kabaddi.

Recounting the highest and lowest points of her career so far, she said "becoming a champion at the world cup (2021 in Guatemala City), hearing my National anthem in a foreign land, that also coincided with the independence day made it an even special moment. My lowest point was in 2023, I became overage growing out of the junior circuit and I did not find a place in the senior team."

Ultimate Table Tennis reaches India's heartland as UP Prometheans join line-up for Season 7

Mumbai: Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) is set to add a strong new Uttar Pradesh flavour to Season 7 with the inclusion of UP Prometheans, bringing the energy and sporting passion of India's heartland into the league's mix.

The upcoming season, scheduled to be played in July in Goa, marks another step in UTT's journey of building a dynamic and competitive league.

Owned by first-generation entrepreneur and BITS Pilani alumnus Mukesh Sharma, UP Prometheans reflects a clear and long-term vision to strengthen India's high-performance sporting ecosystem.

With the franchise coming into the lineup, UTT also sees a fresh regional presence added to its roster, as UP Prometheans step in place of Chennai as part of the league's evolving team composition.

The move strengthens

representation from the northern belt while adding a new competitive dynamic, with Season 7 also set to feature a revised format with an expanded group stage.

Commenting on the announcement, Ekansh Gupta, CEO, Ultimate Table Tennis, said: "We are pleased to see UTT's footprint extend into Uttar Pradesh with UP Prometheans coming on board.

As India's largest state, UP holds immense potential for sport, and this addition strengthens our ambition of building a league that truly represents the country. With growing interest from stakeholders who share our vision, UTT continues to evolve both on and off the table."

As Founder Chairperson of Prometheans School in Noida, Sharma has focused on reimagining education while also contributing to India's Olympic ambitions through sport. Through the



Prometheus Sports Academy, he has built Olympic-level infrastructure across disciplines, including table tennis, badminton, shooting, swimming, and golf, supporting the development of athletes such as Olympian Archana Kamath.

Sharma and the Prometheans' association with UTT aligns with the league's efforts to create structured pathways from grassroots to elite competition.

Extending this commitment to the next generation,

UP Prometheans will also compete in Dream UTT Juniors, a grassroots initiative by the Dream Sports Foundation in collaboration with UTT, aimed at nurturing young table tennis talent across the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Sharma said, "I'm excited to be part of Ultimate Table Tennis, which has already set a strong benchmark over the past seasons. With UP Prometheans, we look forward to raising the bar further and building a

team that reflects our commitment to excellence and high-performance sport. This is another step towards strengthening India's journey to the Olympic podium."

Season 7 will feature seven teams competing in a single round-robin format, where each team will face every other team once in the league phase. The total number of ties will increase to 24, up from 23 for the last two seasons. Over the years, UTT has continued to grow in scale and stature, bringing world-class table tennis to new regions while building a strong base of players, fans, and partners. With increasing interest from across the country and sustained investment at both grassroots and elite levels, the league remains a key driver in the growth of table tennis in India. UTT Season 7 will be streamed live on JioHotstar and broadcast on the Star Sports network.

India ready to face Bhutan in SAFF U20 C'ship semi-final

Male (Maldives): Defending champions India will look to rise to the occasion when they take on Bhutan in the semi-finals of the SAFF U20 Championship at the National Stadium here on Wednesday.



The India U20 men's team head into the semi-final after making full use of the three-day break following their group-stage matches.

The Blue Colts used the time to recover physically and reset mentally after their outings against Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The squad also enjoyed a day out at the beach, allowing the players to unwind and strengthen team bonding ahead of the decisive encounter. The positive atmosphere carried into training, where the players showed sharpness, enthusiasm and renewed focus as preparations intensified.

India progressed to the semi-finals as group toppers after composed performances against Pakistan (3-0) and Bangladesh (1-1) in Group B. The team showed resilience in key moments and handled pressure well, par-

ticularly in phases where the matches demanded patience and discipline.

India head coach Mahesh Gawali praised his players for their effort and mindset so far.

"The boys have been playing well as they handled pressure well. We didn't get time to prepare before the tournament, but the boys are giving their 100 per cent. I am really happy and proud of the way we have performed so far," said Gawali.

While the group-stage results were encouraging, the Indian camp is aware that the semi-final will require another step forward. The team created opportunities in both matches but will aim to be

more clinical in front of goal. Maintaining concentration during defensive phases will also be important in a knockout encounter.

"Nothing is easy. We created chances to score, and we need to convert more. We also need to be more focused when defending," Gawali added.

Bhutan enter the semi-final after showing determination in Group A. They began with a defeat against Nepal but recovered with a goalless draw against hosts Maldives. Their qualification was sealed in dramatic fashion when they scored in injury time to beat Sri Lanka 1-0. The late winner underlined Bhutan's persistence and ability to stay in the con-

test until the final whistle.

India will therefore approach the match with caution. Bhutan's disciplined performances and ability to capitalise on decisive moments make them a dangerous opponent. Staying focused for the full 90 minutes will be crucial for the Blue Colts. There will also be a key battle in front of goal. India's Vishal Yadav and Omang Dodum have each scored twice in the tournament and have led the attacking effort. Bhutan's Dhendup Gyeltshen has also netted two goals and will be a major threat. The performance of these forwards could influence the outcome of the match. With no extra time scheduled, the semi-final will go directly to penalties if the scores are level after regulation time. That adds further intensity to the encounter, where composure and decision-making will play a vital role. India will look to build on the positives from the group stage, remain disciplined and deliver a strong performance as they aim to secure a place in the SAFF U20 Championship final.

Barcelona move difficult to turn down: Cucurella

London: Marc Cucurella has admitted that it would be "hard to turn down" an offer to return to FC Barcelona, though he insists he remains fully focused on his current journey with Chelsea FC.

The 27-year-old defender, who has established himself as a regular left-back at Chelsea, opened up about his future while reflecting on his roots in Spanish football. His comments have sparked fresh speculation about a potential return to La Liga.

Cucurella's connection with Barcelona runs deep. After beginning his foot-

balling journey at RCD Espanyol's academy, he later joined Barcelona's famed youth setup, where he honed his skills.

Despite his development at the Catalan club, he made only one senior appearance for Barcelona in 2017. Seeking regular playing time, he moved on to build his career elsewhere in Spain.

He gained valuable experience in La Liga with spells at SD Eibar and Getafe CF, where his performances began attracting wider attention.

His breakthrough came after a move to Brighton & Hove Albion in

2021. Cucurella impressed in his debut Premier League season, showcasing his energy, defensive solidity, and attacking support.

That standout campaign earned him a high-profile £60 million transfer to Chelsea, where he has since cemented his place in the starting lineup and become an important part of the squad.

Speaking about the possibility of returning to Spain, Cucurella acknowledged the emotional pull of his homeland. "Spain is always Spain. It is where I grew up and you always think about going back," he said.

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Manika Batra battles past Lily Zhang to end group stage with win in ITTF World Cup 2026

Macao: Indian table tennis players Manika Batra and Sreeja Akula produced contrasting results on Day 2 of the ITTF World Cup 2026 here on Tuesday.

Manika Batra, 47th in the table tennis world rankings for women's singles, registered a 3-2 (11-7, 11-2, 14-16, 5-11, 11-6) win over world No. 42 Lily Zhang of the USA.

The 30-year-old Manika Batra appeared set to seal the contest in straight games, surging to a 5-2 lead in the third and earning two match points.

However, Lily Zhang,

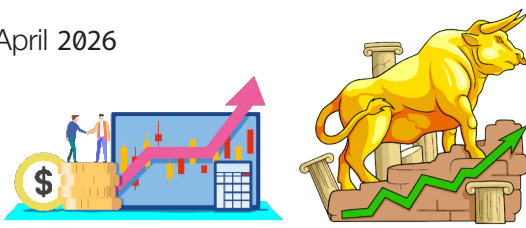
former Pan American singles champion, mounted a spirited comeback, forcing a tie-break before clinching the game. Riding that momentum, Zhang claimed the fourth to push the match to a decider, according to Olympics.com. The three-time Olympian Batra, though, regrouped under pressure to close out the contest and finish with a win in her final group match. All group stage table tennis matches at the ITTF World Cup follow a best-of-five games format before shifting to a best-of-seven for the knockout rounds.

Manika Batra had lost her first match of the tournament in Group 4 against world No. 5 Miwa Harimoto of Japan on the opening day of the ITTF World Cup.

Only the top 16 group toppers will qualify for the round of 16 stage. Miwa Harimoto and Lily Zhang will go head-to-head on Wednesday, following which the Group 4 winner will be decided. India's other entrant in the women's draw, Sreeja Akula, ranked 44th in the world, made a promising start by taking the first game against Olympian Fu Yu of Portugal in her tournament

opener in Group 2.

However, Sreeja Akula eventually went down 3-1 (8-11, 11-9, 15-13, 11-8) against world No. 48 Fu Yu. Sreeja Akula will face world No. 2 and Olympic gold medalist Wang Manyu of the People's Republic of China in her final group match on Wednesday. Manav Thakkar, who went down to the Republic of Korea's Park Gang-hyeon in his tournament opener in the men's draw, will also return to action on Wednesday. He will face Olympic silver medalist and world No. 2 Truls Mörégarð of Sweden.



Adani Green Energy brings solar, hybrid power projects online

Mumbai: Adani Green Energy (AGEL) informed the stock exchange in a regulatory filing on Monday that its step-down subsidiary companies have commercially operationalised an aggregate of 951 MW power projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

“Based on relevant clearances, it was decided at 9.58 pm on March 29, 2026, to commercially operationalise these plants and commence power generation from March 30, 2026,” the company stated in its regulatory filing.

According to the company statement, 251 MW has been operationalised at Baiya, Rajasthan, while 700 MW has been added at Khavda, Gujarat. This also includes 926 MW of solar projects and 25 MW of hybrid power projects.

Among solar power capacity, Adani Hybrid Energy Jaisalmer Five has added 50 MW, Adani Green Energy



Twenty Four has added 100 MW, Adani Green Energy Twenty Five C has operationalised 225 MW, and Adani Green Energy Twenty Six A has added 300 MW,

while Adani Solar Energy Barmer One has added 251 MW. Adani Solar Energy Jodhpur Six has operationalised a 25 MW hybrid capacity, according to the com-

pany statement.

With the commissioning of these plants, AGEL's total operational renewable generation capacity has increased to 18,933.3 MW.

Consumer durable retail chain Sathya Agencies to raise Rs.6,000 million from IPO

Chennai: Sathya Agencies Limited, a Tamil Nadu-based consumer durables retail chain, has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India to raise up to ₹6,000 million through an Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to ₹3,000 million, along with an offer for sale (OFS) of up to ₹3,000 million by promoter shareholders. The promoters participating in the OFS include Johnson Asaria, J John Sathya, and Charles Packiaraj.

According to the DRHP, the company plans to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue for multiple strategic purposes. A portion of ₹350 million will be allocated towards partial payment for the acquisition of its wholly owned subsidiary, Unilet Appliances Private Limited.

In addition, a significant share of ₹1,750 million will be used for repayment or prepayment, either fully or partially, of certain outstanding



borrowings. This move is expected to strengthen the company's balance sheet and reduce debt-related obligations.

The remaining funds from the fresh issue are earmarked for general corporate purposes, which may include expansion, operational improvements, and other business requirements.

Sathya Agencies Limited has built a strong presence in the consumer durables retail segment by offering a wide range of products across multiple categories. Its portfolio includes consumer electronics and home appliances catering to diverse customer segments and price points.

The company's product

lineup spans televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, kitchen appliances, and other electronic goods, positioning it as a comprehensive retail destination for household needs.

As of January 31, 2026, the company, along with its subsidiaries, operates an extensive retail network comprising 392 consumer electronics stores. This scale highlights its deep market penetration, particularly in southern India. In addition to its core electronics business, the company also runs 35 mobile retail stores focused on selling smartphones and related accessories, tapping into the rapidly growing mobile device market.

Air India inks codeshare agreement with Uzbekistan Airways

Chennai: Air India, now owned by the Tata Group, on Tuesday announced a new codeshare partnership with Uzbekistan Airways, marking a significant step in expanding connectivity between India and Central Asia.

Effective March 20, 2026, Air India has started placing its 'AI' designator code on Uzbekistan Airways-operated flights across key India-Uzbekistan routes. These include connections such as Delhi-Tashkent, Mumbai-Tashkent, and the seasonal Goa-Tashkent service.

The partnership is aimed at enhancing travel convenience for passengers by offering seamless connectivity between the two countries. With this arrangement, travellers can now book integrated itineraries under a single ticket.

One of the major benefits of the codeshare agreement is the ability for passengers to check their baggage through to their final destination. This reduces the need for repeated check-ins and simplifies the overall travel experience.

The agreement also strengthens access to Tashkent, which is increasingly emerging as a key hub for tourism, business, and cultural exchanges between India and Central Asia.

In addition to the codeshare, the two airlines already maintain an interline partnership. This further expands connectivity beyond Tashkent to several cities across Uzbekistan.

Through this arrangement, travellers can access destinations such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Fergana, Namanagan, Urgench, Termez, Nukus, and Qarshi, making travel across the region more accessible.

Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer of Air India, expressed optimism about the collaboration. He noted that the partnership aligns with the airline's broader strategy to expand its global footprint.

He highlighted that Tashkent is becoming an important destination for Indian travellers, whether for leisure, business, or cultural purposes. The new

arrangement, he said, would provide passengers with greater flexibility and convenience.

Aggarwal also emphasized that the partnership would strengthen India's aviation links with Central Asia, a region of growing strategic and economic importance.

On the other hand, Shukhrat Khudaykulov, Chairman of the Board of Uzbekistan Airways, described the agreement as a milestone in bilateral aviation cooperation.

He stated that the codeshare marks a new chapter in strengthening ties between the two countries while also expanding Uzbekistan Airways' international network. Khudaykulov added that the collaboration would open up new opportunities for passengers and serve as a foundation for deeper cooperation in the aviation sector.

He further expressed confidence that the agreement would lead to additional joint initiatives between the two airlines in the future.

Prologis commences 1.1 mn sqft Logistics Park in North Chennai

Chennai: Prologis today announced that it has commenced construction of Prologis Park Redhills CPRR, a Grade A industrial and logistics park with total development potential of 1.1 mn sqft in North Chennai.

The project is being developed on 51 acres acquired along the Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (CPRR) corridor.

Redhills marks Prologis' third location in Tamil Nadu, alongside projects in Hosur and Sriperumbudur.

Together, these developments represent a Rs 3,300 crore investment and span approximately 6.5 mn sqft across some of the state's key industrial and manufacturing corridors.

The first phase of Pro-

logis Park Redhills CPRR comprises two buildings totalling about 412,000 sqft. The construction is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2027.

“This construction start at Redhills speaks to the long-term opportunity we see in North Chennai as a logistics and industrial corridor,” Vineet Sekhsaria, Head of India, said.

“With the CPRR taking shape, this location will be increasingly important for regional distribution. Our site sits directly along the corridor, allowing us to support customers more efficiently while contributing to local jobs and economic growth in Tamil Nadu,” he said.

Located along the CPRR, the project sits on the 52-km northern section of the 133-km corridor connecting Chennai's key highways, ports, and industrial zones. Once completed, the CPRR is expected to strengthen connectivity to Ennore and Kattupalli ports and improve access to the Chennai-Kolkata highway.

At full build-out, Redhills will deliver approximately 1.1 mn sqft of modern Grade A warehousing and industrial space. Designed for large format logistics and manufacturing occupiers.

The facilities will incorporate 34-m wide truck courts, 12-m clear heights, and robust power infrastructure to support high-throughput operations. It is structured as a professionally managed, integrated

campus designed to accommodate both standardised warehouse space and build-to-suit facilities, giving occupiers flexibility in layout and scale.

“We are seeing growing interest from port-linked manufacturers and third party logistics operators that require larger facilities, stronger yard planning and resilient power infrastructure,” Sekhsaria said, adding, “With direct connectivity to the CPRR and access to Ennore.

And Kattupalli ports, Redhills is positioned to support customers' high-volume operations. Our focus is on delivering quality Grade A industrial infrastructure - defined by specification, layout, and execution, not simply by label.”

New Income Tax act roll out from Apr 1, focus on cleaner and simpler framework to comply with

New Delhi: India will roll out the Income-tax Act, 2025, from April 1, Wednesday, replacing the six-decade-old Income-tax Act, 1961, in a major reform aimed at simplifying the country's tax framework while retaining the existing tax structure.

The government has clarified that the new law does not introduce any new taxes or increase the tax burden, but focuses on making the system clearer, more transparent and easier to comply with.

The reform is being positioned as a complete structural simplification of the law. Over the years, the 1961 Act had become complex due to numerous amendments, provisos and explanations.

The new Act reduces this complexity by cutting down sections from over 800 to about 536, trimming rules and forms, removing redundant provisions and integrating explanations into the main text.

One of the most significant conceptual changes is the introduction of a single “Tax Year”, replacing the earlier dual concepts of “previous year” and “assessment year.”

The tax year will now align with the financial year, eliminating confusion caused by references to two different years.

The government has clarified that there will be no overlap or missing year during the transition.

Income earned up to March 31, 2026 will be governed by the old Act (Assessment Year 2026-27), while income earned from April 1, 2026 onwards will fall under

the new Act (Tax Year 2026-27).

Although the 1961 Act will be repealed from April 1, 2026, it will continue to apply to all earlier years.

Pending proceedings — including assessments, reassessments, appeals, penalties, and rectifications — will continue under the old law.

Rights and obligations such as refunds, tax demands, carry-forward of losses and MAT/AMT credits will remain valid and enforceable.

Even existing approvals, registrations, circulars and notifications will continue as long as they are not inconsistent with the new Act.

In practical terms, both the old and new laws will operate in parallel for a period. The income tax portal will support compliance under both frameworks simultaneously.

For instance, taxpayers will file returns for income earned in FY 2025-26 under the old Act in 2026, while at the same time paying advance tax for income earned from April 2026 under the new Act.

This dual compliance phase is aimed at ensuring a smooth and disruption-free transition.

The government has emphasised that core tax payment mechanisms remain unchanged. Systems such as Tax Deducted at Source (TDS), Tax Collected at Source (TCS), advance tax and self-assessment tax will continue in the same manner.

However, their presentation has been simplified. TDS provisions, for example, have been consolidated into fewer sections with tabular formats, though rates,

thresholds and timelines remain largely unchanged.

The applicability of the law during transition will depend on the timing of payment or credit — transactions will follow the old Act, while those after April 1, 2026 will be governed by the new Act.

Advance tax provisions also remain the same in substance, including instalment dates and the Rs 10,000 threshold.

The only change is the reference to “tax year” instead of “assessment year.” Similarly, interest rates for defaults, timelines for tax payments, and compliance procedures continue without policy changes.

Return filing rules under the new regime largely mirror the existing system.

Returns for FY 2025-26 will be filed under the old Act (AY 2026-27), even if filing occurs after April 2026. Returns for income earned in FY 2026-27 will be filed under the new Act in 2027.

Due dates remain unchanged, and taxpayers will not be required to file two returns at the same time. However, they must ensure the correct selection of the assessment year or tax year while filing or making payments.

The law also ensures continuity in specific areas such as carry-forward of losses and MAT/AMT credits, which will continue seamlessly under the new Act subject to existing conditions. Refund claims arising under the old Act will remain valid, and tax arrears will continue to be recoverable even after the new law comes into force.

Centre's fiscal deficit hits Rs 12.53 Lakh Cr till Feb: Finance Ministry

New Delhi: Government's fiscal deficit reached Rs 12.53 Lakh Crore till February, which was 80.4 per cent of the full year (Rs 15.58 Lakh Crore) target. As per the monthly review of accounts by the Finance Ministry released here on Monday, the government received Rs 27,91,943 Cr which was 82 per cent of the corresponding RE2025-26 of total receipts up to February.

This amount comprises Rs 21,45,223 Cr. of tax revenue, Rs 5,81,173 Cr. of non-tax revenue and Rs 65,547 Cr. non-debt capital receipts.

As per the release, Rs 12,66,369 Cr. has been transferred to State governments as devolution of share of taxes by Government of India during this period which was Rs 85,837 Cr. higher than the previous year.

Total expenditure in-



currred by the government stood at Rs 40,44,592 Cr.

which was 81.5 per cent of corresponding RE 2025-26.

From this amount, Rs 31,15,270 Cr. and Rs 9,29,322 Cr. have been revenue and capital account, respectively.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 10,65,305 Cr. was on account of interest payments and Rs 3,89,610 Cr. was on account of major subsidies, the monthly report stated.

Dell Technologies launches 'Tech ON Wheels' initiative in Mumbai

Mumbai: Dell Technologies has launched a novel initiative aimed at bringing its latest technology solutions directly to customers, enabling them to experience products firsthand and understand how they can drive business growth. The initiative, titled “Tech ON Wheels”, is a mobile experience centre designed to showcase Dell's diverse portfolio, including laptops, desktops, servers, and peripherals. By taking technology on the road, the company aims to bridge the gap between innovation and real-world business needs. The programme is currently being rolled out in Mumbai from March 30 to April 8, covering key IT and technology hubs across the city. The campaign kicked off at Boomerang, a prominent commercial complex in Chandivali. Through this initiative, businesses can directly interact with Dell's latest offerings in a hands-on environment. The mobile setup allows decision-makers to explore how various solutions can be integrated into their operations.

The concept behind Tech ON Wheels is to move beyond traditional product displays and instead provide immersive demonstrations. This approach helps customers better understand how technology can address specific challenges and improve efficiency. The mobile experience centre has been strategically designed to cater to organisations of different sizes, from startups to large enterprises. It aims to provide tailored insights based on unique business requirements. According to Manish Gupta, President and Managing Director of Dell Technologies India, the initiative is focused on direct engagement with customers across the country. “With Tech ON Wheels, we are going on the road to connect directly with businesses of all forms and sizes across 20 cities in India,” he said, highlighting the scale of the campaign. He further explained that the initiative is not just about showcasing products, but about helping businesses discover solutions that align with their operational goals and growth strategies.

New Era for Skill Development: FUEL's Debut on NSE Social Stock Exchange

Mumbai: In a historic milestone for social finance and vocational education, FUEL (Friends Union for Energising Lives) was on Monday listed on the social stock platform of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), marking a significant step in democratising access to impact-driven investments.

Announcing the development, Ashish Kumar Chauhan, Managing Director and CEO of NSE, said that FUEL has raised approximately ₹99 lakh through the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) platform. The listing represents a growing trend of integrating social initiatives with structured financial mechanisms. A notable highlight of the fundraising effort was the strong participation from retail donors, who contributed nearly 37 per cent of the total funds raised. This underscores increasing awareness and engagement among individuals in supporting social causes through formal investment channels. Chauhan also pointed out that the NSE platform now reaches 99.85

percent of India's PIN codes, enabling citizens across the country to participate in social impact initiatives alongside institutional investors.

The listing event also served as a platform for announcing new policy initiatives. Chandrakant Patil, Maharashtra's Minister for Higher and Technical Education, unveiled a transformative “Earn and Learn” scheme aimed at supporting girl students. Under this initiative, eligible students in Maharashtra will receive a monthly stipend of ₹2,000 starting from the upcoming academic year. The scheme is designed to encourage education while providing financial assistance. Speaking at the event, Patil emphasised that when students are given clear direction and support, they can develop the skills necessary to uplift themselves and contribute meaningfully to society. He further noted that the collaboration between the state government, NSE, and FUEL will create pathways for free education for underprivileged girls, ensuring im-

proved livelihood opportunities and long-term empowerment. Joining the event via video conferencing, Devendra Fadnavis highlighted the broader vision behind FUEL's initiatives. He revealed that the organisation is planning a ₹100 crore social issue to expand public participation in its mission. Fadnavis explained that the initiative would offer diverse investment categories, making it easier for both retail and institutional investors to contribute to social impact projects. This approach aims to further democratise participation in nation-building efforts. He also noted that FUEL's evolution into a Skill Tech University is being supported by a strong framework of transparency and collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Reflecting on the organisation's journey, Dr. Ketan Deshpande, Founder Chairman of FUEL, spoke about its growth over the past two decades and its expanding role in skill development and education.