



Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

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PG 02 Those seeking Nobel Prize for Pakistan are unfortunate: Farooq Abdullah

PG 03 De-silting accelerates at 77 I&FC drains as Delhi gears up for Monsoon



PG 06 Haryana Government transfers 4 IAS, 13 HCS officers

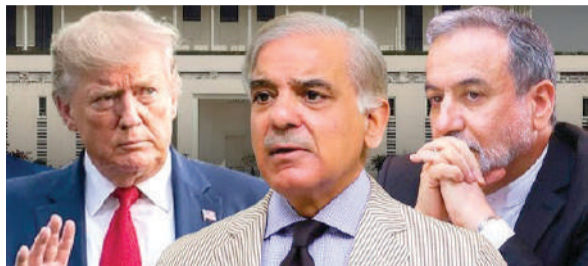


PG 07 Confident Punjab Kings take on unsettled Sunrisers in weekend's first double-header



PG 08 Stock market gains over 1pc, investors get richer by Rs 6 lakh cr

High Stakes in Islamabad US-Iran talks amid war fallout and global oil fears



Islamabad : Pakistan's capital is on high alert as it prepares to host critical talks between the United States and Iran, the first since a six-week war across the West Asia killed thousands and disrupted global oil markets. Security has been tightened across Islamabad, with roads leading to the Red Zone home to key government buildings. Authorities have imposed a two-day public holiday while heavy military deployments and checkpoints have been put in place and the Serena Hotel, adjacent to the Foreign Ministry, has been sealed off as the venue for the negotiations.

The US delegation, led by Vice President JD Vance alongside special envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, is expected in Islamabad later today. Tehran has not officially confirmed its team, though reports indicate Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will lead the Iranian side.

The talks aim to solidify a fragile ceasefire, address disagreements over Lebanon's inclusion, and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint for global oil

Delhi Police busts major ISI-linked spy network, 11 arrested



New Delhi: In a major breakthrough, Delhi Police Special Cell has exposed a large espionage network allegedly operated by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, and arrested 11 individuals connected to the module. The sources told UNI that the accused were installing CCTV cameras across multiple locations to monitor sensitive areas, including Army-linked establishments, from Kathua to other parts of North India. "11 individuals have been arrested, with cameras found installed at 9 locations nationwide. Notably, a similar network was busted earlier in Ghaziabad," said the source. The source said that the module was operating in a pattern similar to a terror network, raising serious security concerns.

Vance offers "open hand" as Iran proposes transit fees for Hormuz ahead of high stakes talks

Washington: As a fragile two-week ceasefire holds in West Asia, US Vice President JD Vance departed for Islamabad to hold critical talks with Iranian officials.

The discussions, which are scheduled for Saturday, come amid Iran's bold move to impose new conditions on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, including transit fees payable in the Iranian rial, a move signaling Tehran's intent to assert control over one of the world's most strategic maritime chokepoints.

The head of Iran's Parliament National Security Commission indicated that, under a parliamentary proposal, all transit fees through the Strait would be settled in Iran's national currency, according to a post from Iran's Consulate General in Mumbai on X.

"In the Strategic Action Plan for Security and Sustainable Development of

New Delhi : The mountains of Ladakh, which once echoed with his courage, fell silent on Friday as Colonel Sonam Wangchuk (Retd.), the legendary 'Lion of Ladakh', passed away following a heart attack, in Leh.

A warrior whose bravery shaped the early victories of the Kargil War, he leaves behind a void as deep as the valleys he so fiercely defended.

Col. Wangchuk, a Maha Vir Chakra awardee and one of the most celebrated heroes of the 1999 Kargil War, was 61. A son of the mountains and a warrior forged in the harshest terrains, he embodied a rare blend of fearlessness and quiet dignity, qualities that earned him a legendary stature both within and outside the armed forces.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed grief at the passing of Maha Vir Chakra awardee. In a post on X, Singh paid glowing tribute to Colonel Wangchuk describing him as a highly decorated officer of the Indian Army, renowned for his gallantry,

resolute leadership and unwavering commitment to duty.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Colonel Sonam Wangchuk. He was a highly decorated officer of the Indian Army, renowned for his gallantry, resolute leadership and unwavering commitment to duty," he said.

The defence minister called Colonel Wangchuk a "proud son of Ladakh" and said, "He exemplified the spirit of the region- resilient, steadfast and deeply rooted in service to the Nation, while standing as a symbol of India's unity in diversity."

"His courageous actions of leading by personal example during Operation Vijay inspired his men under the most demanding conditions in high-altitude. His life remains a testament to courage, sacrifice and national integration and his legacy will continue to inspire coming generations," the defence minister said.

In its post on X, ADGPI wrote, "General Upendra Dwivedi, COAS and All Ranks of the Indian Army

pay heartfelt homage to Colonel Sonam Wangchuk, MVC - a brave soldier, a committed leader and a son of Ladakh whose life embodied



courage, service and unity. His legacy will continue to inspire generations. Indian Army offers deepest condolences and stands in solidarity with the bereaved family in this hour of grief."

Born on May 11, 1964, in Sankar village of Leh district, Wangchuk joined the Indian Army in 1987, serving first with the 4 Assam Regiment before moving to The Ladakh Scouts, the famed

'Snow Warriors' of the Himalayas. Over a military career spanning more than three decades, he emerged as one of the most formidable high-altitude commanders produced by India.

It was during the Kargil conflict that Col. Sonam Wangchuk's name became etched into India's military history. Then a Major with the Indus Wing of the Ladakh Scouts, he led one of the earliest and most decisive operations of Operation Vijay in the Batalik sector on 30 May 1999.

Operating at nearly 18,000 feet (over 5,500 metres) in a brutally glaciated zone, he and his column came under sudden enemy ambush while moving to occupy a ridge along the Line of Control, resulting in the loss of one NCO.

Displaying exceptional leadership, Major Wangchuk held his men together and launched a daring counter-ambush, attacking the enemy from the flank. In the close-quarter battle that followed, he personally led the raid, killing two enemy soldiers and recovering

a Heavy Machine Gun, a Universal Machine Gun, ammunition and other stores.

Over the next three days, commanding a team of just 40 soldiers, he spearheaded the eviction of 136 Pakistani intruders from the strategic Chorbat La sector, braving deep snow, thin air and relentless enemy fire.

Executed with precision, audacity and unparalleled endurance, the operation became one of the defining early successes of the Kargil War and cemented Major Wangchuk's legacy as one of India's finest high-altitude commanders.

His gallantry not only earned him the nation's second-highest wartime honour, the Maha Vir Chakra, but also set a benchmark for battlefield leadership.

Col. Wangchuk retired from service in 2018 after more than 30 years in uniform, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape high-altitude warfare doctrines. Col. Wangchuk is survived by his wife, Padma Angmo.

Talks on with over 20 countries to open market access, trade opportunities: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, announced on Friday that India is in talks with 20 additional countries to open market access and broaden trade opportunities.

He said these negotiations are aimed to build on nine Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed over the past three-and-a-half years.

These FTAs provided preferential access to 38 developed nations. Piyush Goyal's remarks came while

addressing the business leaders in Coimbatore. "We are in discussions with, apart from these 38 countries, at least 20 more countries to open market access in all of them. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Eurasian region, and Israel as participants in these ongoing trade talks," he said. Highlighting the business opportunities in Coimbatore, he said the city is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. He described Coimbatore as the power

centre of South India's entrepreneurial strength and credited the region's MSMEs for providing essential policy guidance to the Centre.

"Industry leaders come and complain to me that we are getting zero-duty imports from countries where we don't get access for our goods, but they are dumping goods in our country at zero-duty. But we have not done a single FTA with any of our competitors. All our FTAs are with developed countries where per capita income is



high, where they are not competing with us in our industries, and where we can get market access to expand our businesses."

"Today two-third of global trade is open for all of you to get preferential market access to expand your businesses," Goyal said.

The minister also highlighted the integration of the national power grid as a foundational achievement for industrial growth.

Shah vows crackdown on 'misrule' in Bengal, promises UCC and anti-infiltration drive

Kolkata: Releasing the BJP's election manifesto 'Sankalpa Patra' on Thursday, Home Minister Amit Shah promised decisive action against "15 years of corruption, lawlessness and political violence" in West Bengal. Shah said a BJP government would prioritise restoring the rule of law, ensuring security and dismantling entrenched networks of corruption.

"The party after coming to power will release a white paper on alleged corruption and administrative failures under the current government. The paper will expose irregularities and hold those responsible accountable through legal action," Shah said. "We will bring all culprits behind corruption to justice," he said, accusing the ruling Trinamool Congress of running a "mafia raj" linked to coal, cattle and other sectors. The BJP has also promised to curb the so-called "cut money" culture and end syndicate operations that it alleges have become entrenched in the state's governance system. A major focus of the party's enforcement agenda is infiltration and border security. Shah announced a "zero tolerance" policy, stating that illegal infiltrators would be identified, detained and deported in a systematic manner. He warned that continued infiltration could pose a serious threat to the state's demographic and security balance.

The party also pledged to strengthen border surveillance using modern technology and seal routes used for cattle smuggling. "Illegal encroachments on government land is a key concern and we promise to remove all such



encroachments within two months of forming the government," the Home Minister said. He alleged that the current administration was unwilling to cooperate on issues related to land for border infrastructure, saying a BJP government would resolve such matters within 45 days. On political violence, Shah announced that a commission headed by a retired Supreme Court judge would be set up to investigate incidents across the state. The BJP has also promised sweeping legal and administrative reforms, including the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) within six months of coming to power. Shah said this would ensure equal rights and a uniform legal framework for all citizens. Law and order reforms are expected to be backed by a detailed two-part strategy, which will first document the alleged deterioration under the current regime and then outline measures to restore stability and public confidence. Shah said restoring fear-free governance would be a top priority, with emphasis on strengthening policing and administrative accountability. The manifesto also links governance reforms with broader institutional restructuring. Shah said within 100 days of assuming office, the BJP would introduce a comprehensive roadmap to revive the state's financial condition, alongside ensuring full implementation of Central schemes that he alleged have been stalled.

Exit in silence, storm unabated: Justice Yashwant Varma steps down as Impeachment heat peaks

New Delhi: In a resignation as terse as it is telling, Justice Yashwant Varma has walked away from the Allahabad High Court, drawing the curtain on a turbulent tenure even as the machinery of impeachment and inquiry continued to gather pace around him.

His departure—communicated in a restrained letter to Droupadi Murmu—reads like a quiet retreat in the face of an escalating storm, marked by what he described as "profound anguish" and an unmistakable refusal to engage with the allegations that have dogged him for over a year.

The April 9 letter, effective immediately, offers no defense, no justification—only distance.

"I do not propose to burden your august office with the reasons which have constrained me," Justice Varma wrote, choosing omission over explanation. Yet, even in exit, he struck a note of institutional reverence, calling his time on the bench "a privilege and an honour," as though seeking to separate the office from the controversy that has engulfed it.

That controversy, however, has been anything but contained. It erupted dramatically in March last year with the alleged recovery of partially burnt cash from an outhouse at his official residence during his stint at the Delhi High Court—an episode that quickly spiralled into a rare convergence of judicial scrutiny

and parliamentary action.

What began as a murky incident soon evolved into a full-blown institutional test, probing how far India's systems can go in holding members of the higher judiciary accountable. Transferred to the Allahabad High Court in April 2025, Justice Varma's repositioning did little to defuse the crisis.

Within months, impeachment notices—backed by a formidable number of MPs across party lines—were moved in both Houses of Parliament, triggering the formal process under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. A three-member panel was set up by the Lok Sabha Speaker, tasked with investigating whether the allegations rose to

the level warranting removal—one of the gravest constitutional actions available.



Justice Varma fought back, but the legal ground beneath him steadily narrowed. His challenge in the Supreme Court—questioning the procedural validity of the inquiry—was turned away by a bench comprising Justices Dipankar

Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma, which ruled he was not entitled to relief. His objections to the judiciary's own in-house probe met a similar fate, with the apex court backing the internal findings that pointed to his "secret or active control" over the allegedly recovered cash, affirming that due process had been followed.

Before the parliamentary panel, Justice Varma held his line. In written submissions, he flatly denied any connection to the cash, insisting he was not present when a fire incident reportedly brought it to light. He went further, disputing the very claim that any money had been recovered from his residence—an assertion that cuts to the heart

of the case against him.

Even as these competing narratives played out, the inquiry itself remained unfinished. The panel continues to sift through records, testimonies and rebuttals, its eventual findings poised to have shaped the course of an impeachment motion that had already gathered unusual political traction.

His resignation now interrupts that arc. It closes one chapter but leaves the larger story unresolved—raising as many questions as it answers. While his exit ends his judicial role, it does not dissolve the findings already recorded, nor does it settle the institutional dilemmas exposed by the case.

For the judiciary, the episode is a stark reminder that independence cannot exist in isolation from accountability. For Parliament, it underscores both the gravity and the difficulty of invoking impeachment against a sitting judge. And for Justice Varma, the departure is less an ending than an ellipsis—an exit defined by what remains unsaid.

In the final analysis, his letter lingers not for its words but for its silences. By stepping aside without explanation, Justice Varma has ceded the narrative to the very processes he contested—leaving institutions, rather than the individual, to deliver the last word on a controversy that is far from over.



Those seeking Nobel Prize for Pakistan are unfortunate: Farooq Abdullah

Srinagar : Veteran politician and National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Friday expressed hope that the recent ceasefire in the Middle East would lead to lasting peace, while also taking a swipe at calls to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Pakistan's leadership.

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Abdullah welcomed the halt in hostilities and said it was a positive development for global stability. He emphasised that peace must not only be achieved but also sustained over time.

"Thank God the war has stopped. I hope it remains stopped in the future as well, peace prevails in the world, and we all benefit from it," Abdullah said, reflecting a sense of cautious optimism over the situation.

The remarks come in the backdrop of heightened tensions in the Middle East, where recent diplomatic efforts have led to a temporary ceasefire. Abdullah underlined the importance of ensuring that such pauses in conflict translate into long-term peace initiatives.

When asked about demands from certain sections in Pakistan to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his alleged mediatory role between



Tehran and Washington, Abdullah dismissed such calls as inappropriate.

He termed the demands "unfortunate," asserting that humanitarian efforts should not be driven by aspirations for global recognition or awards. According to him, true leadership lies in working selflessly for peace rather than seeking accolades.

"One does not work for the No-

bel Prize, one works for humanity. Those who demand a Nobel Prize—it is unfortunate. There is a better prize, which is the cause of humanity," Abdullah remarked firmly.

The former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir stressed that the focus should remain on alleviating human suffering caused by conflicts rather than engaging in symbolic debates over awards.

He highlighted that wars and conflicts disproportionately impact civilians, leading to loss of life, displacement, and long-term instability in affected regions.

Abdullah reiterated that global leaders must prioritise humanitarian concerns and work collectively to prevent further escalation of violence. He called for sustained diplomatic engagement to ensure peace efforts are not derailed.

He also pointed out that peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, stability, and cooperation among nations.

The NC leader's comments reflect a broader sentiment that global recognition should follow genuine efforts toward peace rather than precede them.

He urged the international community to focus on building trust and fostering dialogue among conflicting parties to create durable solutions. Abdullah concluded by stressing that humanity must remain at the centre of all diplomatic and political efforts, especially during times of global conflict. "It is humanity that is suffering, and it is humanity that must be saved," he said, reinforcing his call for compassion and collective responsibility in addressing global crises.

Three killed in Shivamogga soil collapse, CM expresses grief

Bengaluru: In a tragic incident, three workers lost their lives after a sudden soil collapse during road barrier construction at Hulikal Ghat in Hosanagara taluk of Shivamogga district on Friday. The mishap has once again highlighted the dangers associated with construction work in

fragile hilly terrains. According to initial reports, the accident occurred while workers were engaged in excavation work at a curve along the ghat section. A portion of loose soil unexpectedly gave way, burying the workers under heavy debris. The collapse happened without warning, leaving little time for the workers to react or escape. The suddenness of the incident contributed to the severity of the tragedy. Local labourers and emergency response teams rushed to the site immediately after the incident. Rescue operations were carried out on a war footing in an attempt to save those trapped. Despite swift efforts, all three workers

were declared dead on the spot. The incident has left the local community in shock and mourning. Hulikal Ghat, located in Hosanagara taluk, is known for its steep terrain and landslide-prone conditions. Construction activities in such areas often carry significant risks, particularly

during excavation and earth-cutting work. The tragedy has raised serious concerns about the implementation of safety protocols at construction sites in vulnerable regions. Experts have often stressed the need for strict monitoring and preventive measures in such zones.

UP govt's 'Yaksh App' giving edge to smart policing

Lucknow: The Yaksh App of Uttar Pradesh Police is playing a crucial role in putting criminals behind bars. Within just 90 days, the Yaksh App has helped solve more than a dozen criminal incidents, giving a new dimension to smart policing and strengthening crime control.

Through this app, serious crimes such as kidnapping, murder, robbery and theft have been solved. With the help of the Yaksh App, police are not only reaching suspects quickly but have also significantly reduced the time taken to crack cases.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the Yaksh App during the "Police Manthan" programme to give a new direction to smart policing in Uttar Pradesh.

UP DGP Rajeev Krishna said here on Friday that, "The Yaksh App was launched under the concept of smart policing in line with the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath." The Yaksh App provides features such as a digital database of criminals in the state, location-based mapping of CCTV cameras,

and analytical tools.

Earlier, investigators had to rely on traditional registers like the "Village Crime Notebook," but now the entire criminal history can be accessed within minutes. DGP Rajeev Krishna further said, "In a kidnapping case registered in Hardoi, the Yaksh App revealed a shocking truth during the investigation. It was found that the person who was allegedly kidnapped had actually been in jail for the past two and a half years. Similarly, the robbery of a public service center operator in Jaunpur on March 11, 2026, was solved within hours. Police analyzed footage from 42-43 CCTV cameras through the Yaksh App, which helped identify suspects and track their location. Following this, three accused were arrested in an encounter, and about Rs 1.30 lakh in cash was recovered."

In addition, two robbery incidents that occurred within an hour in the Kakori area of Lucknow were solved within 48 hours. By analyzing the suspects' identities, mobile locations, and activities through the Yaksh App, police arrested both criminals. Furthermore, in

Raebareilly, the app helped expose an eight-member interstate vehicle theft gang. Through the app's database and geo-tagging, police obtained the criminal history of the accused and arrested them through a planned operation. The Yaksh App also played a key role in arresting an accused involved in the murder of his mother-in-law and brother-in-law in Bareilly. As soon as the suspect's photo and record were obtained from the app, the police arrested him. In Agra, the app helped save an elderly man from false molestation allegations. Through CCTV footage and facial recognition, the real accused were identified and arrested. In districts such as Meerut, Hathras, Farrukhabad, Kanpur and Gonda, several theft and pickpocketing gangs have been exposed with the help of the Yaksh App. In Meerut, four members of a pickpocket gang were arrested; in Hathras, a jewelry theft accused was traced; in Kanpur, a gang involved in stealing from a jewelry shop was busted; and in Gonda, thefts taking place in schools were uncovered through the app.

Karnataka HC warns ED of ₹1 lakh cost over Winzo founder bail appeal

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Friday cautioned the (ED) that it may impose costs of ₹1 lakh if it finds the agency's appeal against the bail granted to Winzo co-founder Paavan Nanda to be frivolous or unnecessary. Justice S. Rachaiah, hearing the matter, observed that the ED must demonstrate either violation of bail conditions or evidence that the accused was attempting to suppress facts. "Without these two, if I find this is an unnecessary challenge I will impose ₹1 lakh cost," the judge warned.

The court was hearing the ED's challenge to the bail granted by a Bengaluru sessions court in February this year in a money-laundering case linked to allegations against Nanda. The ED has alleged that Winzo's gaming platform involved algorithmic manipulation and use

of bots, resulting in wrongful gains of about ₹177 crore. It has also claimed that funds were diverted to overseas entities and laundered through cloud infrastructure hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS), with suspected illegal transactions of around USD 55 million.

SIR process completed in Uttar Pradesh, over 20 million names removed

Lucknow: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2026 process has been successfully completed in Uttar Pradesh. During this extensive exercise, the names of over 20.5 million voters in the state have been deleted from the list. Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that the Election Commission released the final list of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Uttar Pradesh on Friday. The number of voters in Uttar Pradesh has decreased by 13 per cent to 133.9 million as 20.5 million names have been deleted from the final list. However, 8.4 million new names have been added during the process. Before the SIR, in October 2025, there were a total of 154.4 million voters in Uttar Pradesh. After the first draft list was released, this figure dropped to 125.5 million. While 28.9 million people were removed from the list, 8.4 million names have been added to the list, including those removed from the first draft list. Addressing a press conference here, CEO Rinwa said, "The final list can be viewed at voters.eci.gov.in and ceouttarpradesh.nic.in. If your name is not on the list, you can register by filling out Form 6. Online applications can be made at https://voters.eci.gov.in using your mobile number. The application form can also be downloaded." He said that the enumeration phase in the state ran from November 4, 2025, to December 26, 2025,

while the time for claims and objections was given from January 6, 2026, to March 6, 2026. Subsequently, all claims and objections were resolved by March 27. Rinwa informed that this campaign received widespread support from representatives of all political parties, booth-level agents and the general public. He informed that District Election Officers of all 75 districts of the state, 403 Electoral Registration Officers, 12,758 Assistant Officers, 18,026 BLO Supervisors, and 1,77,516 BLOs played an active role in making this 166-day campaign a success. Apart from this, 5,82,877 booth-level agents of different political parties also contributed. Rinwa informed that as per the final voter list, the total number of voters is 13,39,84,792, of which 7,30,71,061 are male voters.

CPI slams NDA ovt govt over worsening law & order in Bihar

Patna: Launching a sharp political attack on the ruling dispensation, the Communist Party of India (CPI) on Friday alleged that the law and order situation in Bihar has "completely collapsed," holding the NDA government responsible for the rise in crime. CPI state secretary Ram Naresh Pandey said that increasing incidents of murder and crime have created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity across the state. He alleged that criminals are operating with impunity, with cases of daylight killings becoming frequent.

lawyers, teachers and common citizens falling victim to criminal activities. Re-

Citing a recent incident in Forbesganj, Pandey said the murder of a truck driver in broad daylight, followed by mob violence against the accused, reflects a serious breakdown of law enforcement. Such incidents show that public confidence in the legal system is eroding, he said. Targeting the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the CPI leader alleged that the government has failed to control the deteriorating situation. He claimed that Bihar is witnessing a steady rise in crime, with people from all sections, businessmen, politicians,

referring to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Pandey

claimed that Bihar ranks among the top five states in terms of murder and overall crime and stands second in crime rate nationally. He also alleged a significant increase in crime cases over the past decade. According to figures he cited from the State Crime Records Bureau, over 1,300 murder cases were reported in the state by mid-2025, indicating a high monthly average. He further claimed that cases of crimes against women, including rape, have also seen a substantial rise over the years.

Briefs :

Woman's body found in bed box in outer Delhi; three arrested

New Delhi : A 35-year-old woman with strangulation marks was found stuffed inside a double-bed storage box at a paying guest (PG) accommodation in outer Delhi's Mangolpuri area, police said on Wednesday, adding three persons have been arrested in connection with the case. The police said the accused have been identified as Deepak (22) and his two associates, Surendra and Joginder, all residents of Mangolpuri. According to police, a PCR call was received at the Mangolpuri police station on April 7 regarding a woman found lying under suspicious circumstances inside a room in a building located in Patthar Market. On receiving the information, a police team rushed to the spot and found the body, bearing strangulation marks and a forehead injury, stuffed inside a bed storage compartment in the room, an official said. The crime scene was inspected by the Crime Team and the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team and exhibits were collected. A case was registered under Sections 103(1) (murder), 238(A) (causing disappearance of evidence or giving false information) and 3(5) (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) at Mangolpuri police station, the officer added. According to investigators, the deceased woman, a married resident of the same locality, was allegedly in a relationship with the accused Deepak, who is also married. On Tuesday at around 4.30 pm, she reportedly came to the PG to meet him and they stayed there for about an hour, the officer said.

Delhi spy busts ISI-linked spy-terror network, 11 arrested; Arms supply plot foiled

New Delhi: In a major breakthrough, the Special Cell of Delhi Police has busted a sprawling espionage and terror network allegedly linked to Pakistan's intelligence agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the banned Khalistani outfit Babbar Khalsa International. Eleven persons have been arrested in connection with the case. According to sources, the accused were part of a well-organized module operating across Delhi and other parts of North India. They had installed CCTV cameras at multiple sensitive locations, including areas linked to Army establishments, to monitor strategic movements. Investigations revealed that live feeds from these cameras were being transmitted to handlers in Pakistan through SIM-based systems.

Auto driver arrested after pregnant Delhi Police constable injured in accident

New Delhi: An autorickshaw driver has been arrested after a pregnant Delhi Police constable sustained serious injuries in a road accident near Motilal Nehru College in South Campus, an official said on Wednesday. According to police, a PCR call regarding the accident was received at the South Campus police station on April 2. An investigating officer reached the spot and found a damaged autorickshaw, with a loading tempo stationed ahead on the roadside. "Both drivers - Vijender Singh, a resident of Jaitpur, and Aditya Kumar, a resident of Chhawla - were present at the scene, but no complainant was found," the officer said. Police later received information about a medico-legal case (MLC) related to the incident from the AIIMS Trauma Centre.

De-silting accelerates at 77 I&FC drains as Delhi gears up for Monsoon

New Delhi: In an effective push for monsoon preparedness, national capital's Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Parvesh Verma on Friday conducted an extensive on-site inspection of the ongoing de-silting operations at two critical drains, including near the Delhi Gate and the Barapulla drain. Notably, the Delhi Gate drain, covered with slabs for nearly 40 years, is now being fully opened for thorough cleaning.

The long-covered structure had previously hampered proper de-silting, causing repeated waterlogging in surrounding areas.

The Minister informed that over 70% of de-silting at the Delhi Gate drain is complete, with more than 21,000 metric tonnes of silt removed so far. At the Barapulla drain, another key channel under the Irrigation & Flood Control Department (I&FC), work is nearing 78% completion, with over 31,000 metric tonnes of silt cleared.

The scale of operations reflects a focused and time-bound approach to ensure that major drains are fully functional before the mon-



soon, he said.

Verma noted that the scale of these operations reflects a "focused and time-bound approach" to ensure major drains are fully functional before the monsoon.

Reviewing the overall progress, the Minister stated that nearly half of the 77 identified I&FC drains have been de-silted, with over 14 lakh metric tonnes of silt removed.

The department aims to clear 28 lakh metric tonnes this year, with continuous work underway to meet the target.

"This is not just about cleaning drains, it is about correcting decades of neglect and ensuring Delhi is ready before the rains arrive," Verma said. "The Delhi Gate drain, covered for nearly 40 years, is finally being opened and cleaned properly."

He expressed confidence that the work being done will soon show results on ground.

Highlighting the impact of the work, Verma added: "Our focus is clear, start early, work with urgency, and

complete de-silting on time. Progress at Barapulla and Delhi Gate shows that work is happening seriously, not just on paper. Once strengthened, these drains will provide significant relief from waterlogging in areas such as Daryaganj, Jama Masjid, Feroz Shah Road, ITO, South Extension, and Okhla." He emphasized that de-silting operations across all I&FC drains are being closely monitored, with accountability at every level, to prevent delays and ensure high-quality execution.

Kejriwal can't seek judge's recusal for attending 'legal seminar' by Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad: CBI to HC

New Delhi: Former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and other discharged accused in the liquor policy case cannot seek the recusal of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma merely because she attended a "legal seminar" by the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad as it does not demonstrate any ideological association, the CBI has told the Delhi High Court.

In a reply filed to applications by the AAP leader and others seeking the judge's recusal from hearing the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) challenge to the trial court's discharge order, the agency highlighted that several sitting Supreme Court judges, including Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, and high court judges, have attended functions by the RSS-affiliated confederation of lawyers, and if their plea is accepted, all of them would have to recuse from hearing any case involving politically exposed persons as accused.

The CBI asserted that making "unscrupulous" and "sweeping" allegations of bias over attending legal seminars, which had no political topic, was an attempt to scandalise and lower the court's authority and interfere with the administration of justice, which amounted to contempt of court. Kejriwal has filed the application for recusal of Justice Sharma, claiming there was a grave, bona fide, and reasonable apprehension that the hearing in the matter before her would not be impartial and neutral.

His plea stated that Justice Sharma has decided multiple cases arising from the CBI FIR, including Kejriwal's petition against his arrest, and never given relief to any of the accused. Besides Kejriwal, the applications for recusal of the judge have also been filed by AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak. Other respondents, including Vijay Nair and Arun Ramchandra Pillai, have also filed similar applications seeking recusal.

On April 6, Justice Sharma had granted time to CBI to respond to the recusal application and listed the case for hearing on April 13.

The CBI said in its response that the prayer for recusal was based on frivolous and baseless averments, which were wholly vexatious, and should be dismissed with "heavy cost".

"It is submitted that attending a legal seminar can never be a ground for recusal when the topic of the seminar was not a political one therefore it does not demonstrate any ideological association, hence the said averment is also otherwise untenable. If attending a function of Akhil

Bhartiya Adhivakta Parishad shows ideological bias of any judge then large number of sitting high court and Supreme Court judges would have to recuse from hearing any case where politically exposed persons are accused," the reply stated.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has opposed the plea seeking recusal of a judge in the liquor policy case, asserting that a judicial decision cannot be used as a ground to allege bias and terming the request by Arvind Kejriwal and others as an attempt at "forum shopping."

In its response, the agency emphasised that merely because a party is dissatisfied with a judicial view does not justify questioning the impartiality of the judge hearing the matter.

The CBI strongly argued that Justice Justice Sharma should not recuse herself from the case, as she has been duly assigned to hear matters related to MPs and MLAs by the Chief Justice of the High Court.

It noted that such roster allocations are an administrative function of the Chief Justice and cannot be altered based on the preference or request of any litigant.

The agency further pointed out that multiple judges of the High Court as well as the Supreme Court of India have previously made adverse observations in connection with the liquor policy case.

According to the CBI, accepting Kejriwal's argument would set a problematic precedent where any adverse remark could lead to demands for recusal by all judges involved in a matter.

The agency maintained that apprehensions about not receiving a fair hearing cannot be based on "conjectures and surmises," stressing that such claims must be supported by substantial and credible grounds.

It also underlined that recusal is not a decision to be taken lightly or at the "drop of a hat," but must be exercised with caution and only in exceptional circumstances.

The CBI warned that allowing frequent or unjustified recusal requests could undermine the integrity of the judicial system and encourage litigants to engage in "bench hunting."

Highlighting the importance of judicial independence, the agency stated that courts must remain insulated from external pressures and attempts to influence proceedings. It further argued that judges are duty-bound to hear cases assigned to them and should not be compelled to step aside due to unsubstantiated allegations.

Construction of three roads proposed to ease traffic in South Delhi

New Delhi, Apr 10 (UNI) A proposal to construct three new roads in South Delhi was discussed during a meeting at the Delhi Secretariat, with PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh and South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri in attendance, along with local representatives and officials. According to the information, the proposed projects aim to address persistent traffic congestion in areas such as Deoli, Sangam Vihar, Chhatarpur and Tughlakabad. The plan includes construction of a master plan road connecting IGNOU to the Tughlakabad Shooting Range via Neb Sarai, Sainik Farms and Deoli Bandh Road. An elevated road has also been proposed along the 100-foot road in Chhatarpur, while another stretch is planned beneath the Metro corridor between Harkesh Nagar and Maa Anandmayee Park for about one kilometre. Officials present at the meeting discussed timelines and feasibility, and directions were issued to expedite groundwork and planning processes. Local representatives, including MLA Kartar Singh, municipal councillor Anita Singhal, and members of resident welfare associations, also participated in the discussion.

By using unlawful

Cyber fraud syndicate operating with 'SIM box' device busted in Delhi; 2 arrested

New Delhi: Delhi Police dismantled a major international cyber fraud racket involving illegal 'SIM box' technology, arresting two individuals accused of duping victims through fake digital arrest threats and bogus investment schemes, an officer said today.

As per the police statement, the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit of Delhi Police uncovered a highly organised network with connections to handlers operating out of Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries.

GSM gateways, the syndicate redirected international calls, enabling foreign fraudsters to pose as local callers and evade scrutiny.

"The arrested individuals have been identified as Vaibhav Raj, 29, and Anil Kumar, 28, who were apprehended from Mayur Vihar in east Delhi," a senior police officer said.

Police said the breakthrough came after suspicious telecom activity was flagged on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Further scrutiny led the investigators to a rented flat in GD Colony, where an active SIM box setup was be-

ing run.

While conducting the raid, the officer confiscated a 32-slot SIM box, more than 350 SIM cards, mobile phones, a laptop, and networking equipment, pointing to large-scale illegal call routing.

The accused allegedly acted as facilitators for overseas handlers by maintaining infrastructure, procuring SIM cards, and managing mule bank accounts to launder criminal proceeds.

Their modus operandi involved impersonating officials from agencies such as the police, CBI, and Cus-

oms, falsely informing victims that cases had been registered against them, and threatening them with arrest.

Victims were then coerced into transferring money into so-called "verification accounts" under the pretext of an ongoing investigation, police said.

The accused allegedly used remote access applications to enable foreign operators to take control of systems and commit fraud in real time, police said, adding that a broader transnational network has been uncovered and investigations are ongoing.

Congress slams MCD's contractual hiring move for sanitation workers, alleges anti-Dalit bias

New Delhi: Delhi Congress strongly opposed the proposed contractual recruitment of sanitation workers in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), accusing the BJP-led administration of pursuing policies that are "anti-Dalit and anti-poor". Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president Devender Yadav alleged that the BJP's "triple-engine government" had gone back on its earlier promise of direct recruitment and was instead moving towards hiring contractual workers across MCD zones.

According to Yadav, the BJP had assured the appointment of over 16,000 temporary sanitation workers ahead of the 2022 civic polls, but had failed to recruit any in the past year after coming to power. He claimed that the new plan to appoint around 50 contractual workers in each of the 12 MCD zones reflected a shift away from permanent employment.

"The BJP has exposed its anti-Dalit and anti-poor face by pushing for contractual recruitment instead of ensuring secure, permanent jobs," Yadav said,

adding that the Congress would oppose the move and join hands with Safai Karamchari associations to launch protests.

He further alleged that contractual hiring deprived workers, many of whom belong to Dalit communities, of essential benefits such as fair wages, pensions, and medical facilities. Yadav also raised concerns about the continued risks faced by sanitation workers, including hazardous working conditions despite legal prohibitions on manual scavenging and sewer cleaning.

Nari Shakti Vandan Act to mark new chapter in political representation: Delhi CM

New Delhi: In support of the Nari Shakti Vandan Act, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday visited the Arts Faculty at Delhi University, where she took part in a signature campaign, and also interacted with students and teachers.

Addressing the gathering, she underlined the urgent need to increase women's participation in governance and policy-making.

Gupta said that a meaningful change can only take place when women occupy decision-making positions, enabling them to address issues that directly affect society, families and their own lives.

She pointed to Delhi government initiatives such as 'Lakshmi Bithiya' and 'Anmol', describing them as outcomes of a sensitive and inclusive approach aimed at strengthening women's empowerment and social security.

The event also highlighted the importance of women's leadership and equal representation through messages like 'It's time for women to lead' and 'Empowered women, prosperous nation'. CM Gupta described



the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Act' as a historic step for women empowerment, while she also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for its passage.

She said the legislation carries forward the journey from 'Beti Bachao' to 'Beti Padhao,' and urged young people to actively support the initiative, extending their help for turning it into a mass movement, giving the message that true democratic strength lies in equal participation in decision-making.

Expressing confidence in the law's impact, Gupta said it would redefine political representation in the country and help build a stronger, more balanced and progressive democra-

cy. Meanwhile, a large number of students, teachers and citizens came forward, attended the event and extended their support to the campaign.

Following the campaign, the CM interacted informally with students and women faculty members at a tea stall on campus.

While sipping tea, CM listened closely to students' views, experiences and suggestions. According to CM, the interaction reflected the importance of open and direct communication between public representatives and citizens, noting that the simpler and more accessible this dialogue is, the more effective and people-centric policymaking becomes.

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has arrested a 38-year-old woman identified as the alleged kingpin of a deception-based cheating racket that targeted women outside hospitals and temples across the national capital, officials said on Friday.

According to police, the accused, Paro (38), had been on the run since 2023 and was declared a proclaimed offender in two separate cases. Her arrest marks a significant breakthrough in cracking down on organised cheating networks operating in vulnerable public spaces.

Investigators revealed that the gang followed a carefully planned modus operandi, preying on women who appeared alone or distressed in crowded yet sensitive locations such as hospital premises and temple complexes.

One such case was reported at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, where a victim was allegedly manipulated into handing over her gold ornaments under false pretences.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Sanjeev Yadav said the accused and her associates

would initiate seemingly harmless conversations to gain the victims' trust.

"They would offer help or share fabricated personal stories before gradually manipulating victims psychologically," the officer explained, outlining the gang's deceptive tactics.

In several instances, the accused reportedly instilled fear in victims by warning them of impending misfortune or danger, effectively lowering their guard and making them more susceptible to manipulation.

"Once disoriented, victims were tricked into removing their valuables, after which the accused would flee the spot," the DCP added.

The arrest followed a month-long intensive operation carried out by the Crime Branch, involving both technical surveillance and ground-level intelligence gathering.

Police teams scanned CCTV footage from nearly 50 locations across the city to trace the accused's movements and identify patterns linked to the crimes.

By combining digital tracking with local intelli-

gence inputs, investigators were able to narrow down her whereabouts and track her movements.

Paro was eventually apprehended from Bawana on Thursday, bringing an end to her prolonged evasion from law enforcement.

Police said the accused, a resident of a jhuggi cluster, was allegedly driven to crime due to financial distress and challenging personal circumstances.

Married in 2012 and a mother of three, she is believed to have gradually risen to become the mastermind of the organised gang.

Officials also noted that her husband's alleged alcohol dependency further worsened the family's financial condition, contributing to her involvement in criminal activities.

Paro is currently wanted in at least three cheating cases registered under relevant sections at I.P. Estate and Mandir Marg police stations.

Authorities are continuing their investigation to identify and apprehend other members of the gang and to determine the full extent of the accused's involvement in similar cases across the city.

Editorial

The Mask of the Superpower Slips Away

Following the United States' direct intervention in the Iran-Israel conflict, the landscape of global politics has undergone a complete transformation. The diplomatic maneuvers initiated under the pretext of halting the war have, ironically, served to expose the limitations of the superpower. Despite possessing immense military might, the U.S. has failed to achieve its desired objectives and now appears to have shifted into a defensive posture; this conflict has, in turn, brought a new set of power dynamics to the world's attention.

On the global geopolitical map, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Iran—which has been simmering for several months—has now reached an extremely sensitive and complex juncture. It was the collective hope of the entire world that this war—waged against Iran by a united front comprising Israel and the United States—would come to an end. The stakes involved are not limited merely to the loss of human life or property damage; rather, this conflict has placed the invaluable reserves of crude oil and natural gas in the Gulf region at grave risk. Crude oil is not merely a source of revenue for the Gulf nations; it serves as the very fuel that powers the global economy. As long as this conflict remained confined to Israel and its immediate neighbors, its intensity was restricted to a specific geographical zone. However, the moment the United States directly plunged into the fray, the very nature of the war shifted, and issues concerning global security were thrust to the forefront of the international agenda. As soon as Israel began receiving direct military support from the United States, it proceeded to target Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with key figures within his cabinet and the nation's top military strategists. While this strike undoubtedly shook Iran, the nation—rather than capitulating—responded by mounting a full-scale resistance with every ounce of its strength. Indeed, Israel has been locked in a perpetual conflict with the Gulf nations ever since its very inception. By supplying weaponry to the Hamas organization in the Gaza Strip and to the Houthis rebels, Iran has woven a web of 'proxy warfare' against Israel. This scenario mirrors precisely the manner in which Pakistan wages a proxy war against India through the medium of terrorist organizations. Iran seeks not merely to oppose Israel, but to establish its dominance as the 'Big Brother' across the entire Gulf region. Driven by this very ambition, it is also pursuing efforts to develop nuclear weapons—a pursuit that has emerged as a major headache for the United States. Following the horrific attack launched by Hamas against Israel, the armed offensive subsequently initiated by Israel within the Gaza Strip resulted in a blatant disregard for human rights. This conflict claimed the lives of innocent women and children, triggering a global wave of outrage. The United States' policy is unequivocal: under no circumstances will it permit Iran to become a nuclear-armed state. Much like Iraq—which defied U.S. authority during the era of Saddam Hussein—Iran today has adopted a somewhat similar stance. The United States appears intent on replicating in Iran the same strategy it employed against Iraq—namely, orchestrating its destruction and sending its leader, Saddam Hussein, to the gallows. However, in the case of Iran, the sympathies of numerous nations across the globe appear to be tilted in its favor. The manner in which the United States intervened in the affairs of Venezuela has not sat well with many sovereign nations. Many countries now harbor a deep-seated fear: that while it is Iran facing this predicament today, tomorrow it could very well be their turn. Undoubtedly, the United States serves as the economic engine of the world. The headquarters of major multinational corporations with a global footprint are situated within the United States. Furthermore, the United States enjoys an international reputation as a nation that offers opportunities to people from every corner of the globe. That is precisely why people attempt to gain entry there—whether through legal channels or via illicit routes such as the 'Donkey Route.' However, this allure surrounding America does not stem from the capricious conduct of its President. In particular, Donald Trump's propensity to meddle in every affair is proving detrimental to global peace. Driven by the fear that Russia or China might usurp its position, many decisions taken by Trump have turned out to be self-defeating. While Trump did indeed plunge into this conflict with the aim of subduing Iran, the resistance Iran has mounted over the past 40 days came as an unexpected shock to the United States. It is evident that Russia and China have been providing behind-the-scenes support to fuel this resistance. The United States had anticipated that Iran would capitulate within two or three days; instead, it is America itself that has become ensnared in this conflict.

When a situation arose where halting the war would have amounted to a loss of face for a superpower, the United States put Pakistan forward to salvage its reputation. Pakistan acts as a puppet on a string for the U.S., surviving solely on its financial aid. The United States has historically supplied Pakistan with logistical support to wage war against India. To repay this debt of gratitude, Pakistan assumed the role of a mediator between Iran and the U.S. Leveraging their shared Islamic faith, Pakistan engaged in dialogue with Iran and ultimately brokered a fifteen-day ceasefire. Under the pretext of this ceasefire, the United States has, for the time being, extricated itself from this conflict. The American public, as well as allies like France, are now voicing their opposition to these belligerent U.S. policies. Consequently, an ironic situation has emerged—aptly captured by the adage, "When in a bind, Trump grasps at Pakistan's feet." Amidst all these developments, India's stance has remained remarkably restrained and strategic. Although Prime Minister Narendra Modi has maintained silence on this issue, there is a solid rationale behind it. India requires the cooperation of both Iran and the United States. History cannot be forgotten; when India executed 'Operation Sindoor', all Muslim nations stood firmly behind Pakistan, whereas at that critical juncture, only Israel extended unwavering support to India. Therefore, taking a stance against an old ally—namely Israel—is not something that would sit well with Modi. Today, Donald Trump is holding peace talks in the very nation—Pakistan—that the United States once labeled a "hub of terrorism." The question of how the fruits of peace can possibly grow in the very soil from which terrorism is sown casts a significant shadow of doubt upon the efficacy of Trump's diplomacy. The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from this conflict is that no nation can be permanently subdued through military might alone. Iran has projected an image suggesting that the United States' authority as a superpower is now waning. This conflict has once again divided the world into two distinct poles. Although this ceasefire has temporarily silenced the guns, it will take a considerable amount of time to extinguish the raging wildfire of mistrust among the Gulf nations. Only time will tell whether this peace initiative proves to be merely a temporary compromise or a permanent resolution.

For the moment, however, the superpower's facade has crumbled, and new equations are taking shape in the realm of international politics. This conflict has made one thing abundantly clear: global dominance cannot be achieved solely through the exercise of brute force. As the image of the United States falters, Iran has, through its resistance, signaled the emergence of a new power. It is certain that, in the times to come, global politics will become increasingly multipolar.

Road safety awareness is a national movement

Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Corporate Affairs Shri Harsh Malhotra emphasized that road safety awareness initiatives are not merely isolated events but integral components of a larger national movement aimed at fostering a culture of responsible road usage across the country. The Minister reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to strengthening road safety and promoting responsible driving behaviour as he flagged off the 3rd Edition of the Uttarakhand Adventure Ride organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

Shri Malhotra noted that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the guidance of Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari, India has made remarkable strides in expanding and modernizing its road infrastructure. However, he stated that ensuring safety ultimately rests on the collective responsibility and conduct of citizens.

Highlighting the significance of the initiative, the Minister commended PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) for successfully organizing the Uttarakhand Adventure Ride and bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders. He observed that the initiative effectively blends adventure tourism with public awareness, thereby amplifying the critical message of road safety among varied sections of society.

Underscoring the scale of the challenge, Shri Malhotra pointed



out that road accidents continue to pose a major public safety concern in India, with nearly 1.8 lakh fatalities reported annually. He further highlighted that approximately 45% of these fatalities involve two-wheelers, underlining the urgent need for riders to adopt safe and responsible practices. He urged citizens, particularly the youth, to act as ambassadors of road safety and lead by example.

Reiterating the Government's proactive and comprehensive approach, Shri Harsh Malhotra elaborated on the Ministry's 4E Strategy—Engineering, Enforcement,

Education, and Emergency Care—which serves as the cornerstone of India's road safety framework. He highlighted significant progress in improving road engineering, rectifying accident-prone black spots, strengthening enforcement through legislative measures such as the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, and enhancing emergency response mechanisms nationwide.

The Minister further stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, several citizen-centric initiatives—such as the PM RAHAT Scheme and the Rah-Veer Scheme—have been in-

troduced to encourage timely assistance to accident victims. He emphasized that building a responsive and compassionate society is essential to reducing fatalities and strengthening post-accident care systems. Applauding the strong emphasis on youth engagement, Shri Malhotra stated that youth are being sensitized through interactive sessions and awareness programmes. He stressed that inculcating responsible driving habits at an early stage is critical for nurturing a long-term culture of road discipline in the country.

He urged all road users to strict-

ly adhere to traffic rules and refrain from risky behaviours such as riding without helmets, speeding, using mobile phones while driving, and underage driving.

Reinforcing the importance of safety, Shri Malhotra remarked: "Helmet is not a choice, it is protection." "Speed is not power, it is risk." "Life is important—no call is more urgent than safety."

Highlighting the growing role of technology, Shri Malhotra referred to the use of AI-based traffic monitoring systems, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), automated enforcement mechanisms, and FASTag-enabled seamless mobility in improving road safety outcomes. However, he emphasized that technological advancements must be complemented by responsible human behaviour to achieve meaningful and lasting results.

The event witnessed the participation of 40 riders representing the Armed Forces, government ministries, corporates, and the motorcycling community. Shri Malhotra lauded their dedication and noted that such multi-stakeholder engagement reflects a unified national effort towards achieving safer roads.

Concluding his address, the Minister called upon all citizens to take a collective pledge to follow traffic rules, practice responsible driving, and actively spread awareness within their communities. He reiterated that road safety is a shared responsibility, requiring sustained and collaborative efforts from the government, institutions, and citizens alike.

India's innovation ecosystem

Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr Jitendra Singh today called upon the private sector to accelerate its participation in Research & Development (R&D) activities, emphasising that industry engagement is essential to strengthening India's innovation ecosystem.

The Minister said the government has taken a series of enabling steps - including opening up sectors such as space and nuclear energy to private players and creating dedicated mechanisms like the RDI fund—and stressed that industry must now respond by investing more actively in R&D and partnering in the country's scientific and technological advancement.

Speaking at the release of two NITI Aayog reports on easing research and development processes, Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasised that the focus must shift from how systems are designed to how they are actually experienced by researchers on the ground. He said evidence-based documentation of these lived challenges strengthens the case for reform and helps

carry concerns beyond the scientific community to policymakers.

"There is no denying that research can flourish only when there are no impediments, no slowdowns and no avoidable interruptions," Dr. Jitendra Singh said, adding that even when external disruptions are unavoidable, "the ponderables must be addressed" to prevent compounding delays.

The Minister pointed to a growing mismatch between India's expanding scientific capabilities and the systems that support them, noting that while the country has "no dearth of human resources" and its scientific talent is increasingly recognised globally, institutional and procedural frictions continue to constrain outcomes.

Highlighting the changing nature of research, Dr. Jitendra Singh said scientific work is now deeply interconnected with industry, finance and global collaboration, making it essential for systems to facilitate interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral engagement. He noted that the government has taken steps to open sectors such

as space and nuclear energy to private participation, signalling a broader shift in the research and innovation landscape.

At the same time, he flagged the limited participation of private industry in research funding and execution, arguing that government support alone cannot sustain long-term innovation. Referring to the recently introduced Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) funding approach, Dr. Jitendra Singh described it as an unusual intervention aimed at incentivising private sector engagement, even as he acknowledged that industry readiness remains uneven.

He also drew attention to gaps in corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending for research, noting that even existing allocations are not being fully utilised for R&D purposes, and called for a stronger culture of philanthropy and institutional support for scientific work.

The Minister cited initiatives such as "One Nation, One Subscription" for research journals as examples of enabling measures that improve access to

knowledge, while stressing that incremental improvements in routine processes—such as approvals, funding flows and administrative clearances—can collectively have a significant impact on research productivity.

Suman Bery, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, said the initiative on easing R&D processes is rooted in longstanding calls from the scientific community to reduce administrative burdens and improve system efficiency. He emphasised that as India's research ecosystem expands, the focus must shift towards ensuring coherence across the entire research lifecycle—from approvals and funding to execution and application—so that avoidable delays do not distort outcomes. Highlighting findings from extensive consultations, Bery noted that inefficiencies often arise at the intersections of systems rather than within individual processes, calling for a more coordinated, system-wide approach to reform. He added that clearer processes, institutional support for collaboration, and alignment with global practices would

be key to enabling research continuity and translating knowledge into real-world applications.

V. K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, said India's research ecosystem is at a "point of transition", with systemic inefficiencies such as funding delays and administrative bottlenecks continuing to affect both the pace and quality of research. He called for greater institutional autonomy, reduced compliance burden on researchers, and stronger linkages between research, innovation and industry, alongside coordinated, top-down reforms in funding and policy frameworks.

The Principal Scientific Adviser Prof. A.K. Sood said improving ease of doing R&D must remain a continuous effort, noting that despite recent progress, key gaps persist. He flagged low funding success rates, unresolved issues such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) framework, and constraints in hiring and infrastructure, urging stronger coordination and follow-through to translate recommendations into action.

The reports released by

NITI Aayog draw on consultations with researchers across institutions and highlight the need for greater flexibility, transparency and predictability in research systems. They emphasise that efficiency is not only about reducing timelines but also about providing clarity, enabling scientists to plan work with continuity and confidence.

Dr. Jitendra Singh concluded that strengthening India's research ecosystem requires sustained, system-wide engagement beyond government, involving institutions, industry and society at large. "Science today is too serious a subject to be left to scientists alone," he said, calling for broader stakeholder participation to ensure that research translates into scalable technologies, products and solutions.

The focus on easing research processes comes as India seeks to expand its innovation capacity and align its scientific ecosystem with broader economic and strategic goals, including increased global collaboration and the transition from research outputs to real-world applications.

Government Approves ₹132.51 Crore for Critical Port Connectivity Project at Kandla

In a significant boost to India's port-led infrastructure development, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has approved the construction of a Road Over Bridge (ROB) at LC-235 at Deendayal Port Authority. The project, estimated at ₹132.51 crore, is expected to play a crucial role in easing transportation challenges and enhancing logistics efficiency at one of the country's key ports.

The proposed ROB project is a part of the Government of India's ambitious Sagarmala Programme, which focuses on modernising ports and improving connectivity to drive economic growth. The initiative seeks to integrate ports with industrial clusters, thereby boosting trade and reducing logistics costs.

Additionally, the project aligns with the objectives of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing multi-modal connectivity across the country. The master plan is designed to bring together various ministries and infrastructure projects under a unified digital platform for better coordination.

The construction work for the ROB is being carried out by Western Railway on a deposit basis. This collaboration highlights the integrated approach being adopted by different government agencies to streamline infra-



structure development.

Speaking about the project, Sarbananda Sonowal emphasized that the initiative reflects the government's commitment to modern and efficient infrastructure development. He noted that the project is being implement-

ed under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sonowal further stated that the ROB will help eliminate critical bottlenecks that currently hamper cargo movement at the port. By ensuring seamless connectivity, the project is

expected to significantly improve operational efficiency and reduce delays.

He highlighted that the project would not only enhance cargo handling capacity but also strengthen India's logistics ecosystem. Improved connectivity will lead to faster movement of goods, benefiting both exporters and importers.

The Union Minister also underlined that the initiative is part of a broader effort to develop world-class port infrastructure in India. Such projects are crucial for positioning the country as a global maritime hub.

The proposal for the ROB was recently reviewed by the Delegated Investment Board (DIB), which operates under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary of the ministry and involved a detailed evaluation of the project. During the appraisal, the revised project cost was carefully examined to ensure compliance with modern safety standards and technical specifications. This step underscores the government's focus on safety and quality in infrastructure projects. The ROB is expected to address longstanding logistical challenges at the Deendayal Port. Currently, rail crossings often create delays and congestion, affecting the smooth movement of cargo.



Briefs :

Ancient Buddhist Sites in Haryana Face Danger of Disappearing

Yamunanagar : Experts are worried that several ancient Buddhist sites in Haryana are being ruined because they are not properly protected. In areas like Adi Badri and nearby villages, researchers have found old structures and bricks that date back 2,000 years to the Kushan period. However, activities like sand mining and farming are slowly destroying these historical treasures.

Sidhartha Gauri from The Maitreya Trust has asked the government to step in and save these sites, including an ancient mound in Kurukshetra that was described by famous travelers hundreds of years ago. Scientists are using special ground-radar tools to find buried buildings without digging. They believe that if these sites are protected, they could reveal many secrets about India's ancient past.

The historical landscape of Haryana is currently witnessing a silent crisis as its ancient Buddhist heritage faces an existential threat due to prolonged neglect and the absence of robust preservation frameworks. For decades, the region has served as a silent witness to the ebb and flow of ancient civilizations, yet the physical markers of this rich history are rapidly deteriorating under the pressures of modern expansion and industrial activity. Experts in archaeology and South Asian history have expressed deep-seated concerns that without immediate intervention, these irreplaceable links to the past will vanish entirely, leaving a permanent void in our understanding of the early development of Buddhist thought.

162-Year-Old Church in Sirsa Stands as a Sign of Unity

Sirsa : The St Methodist Church, built by the British in 1864, remains a beautiful and important part of Sirsa's history. The city is famous for people of all religions living together in peace, and this church is a big part of that heritage. Even before the church was built, a Christian graveyard was started in the area back in 1805.

Today, the church is a busy place where people gather for prayers, weddings, and a big fair during Christmas. Pastor Kamal Paul says the church and the old graveyard together help keep the history of the local Christian community alive. It is a symbol of how different cultures and faiths have thrived together in the city for over a century and a half. The St. Methodist Church in Sirsa stands as a remarkable testament to the enduring nature of history and the power of communal harmony in a modernizing world. Established by the British in 1864, this architectural marvel has weathered over 162 years of change, yet it remains as steadfast and beautiful as the day its foundations were first laid. For the residents of Sirsa, the church is not merely a place of worship but a living landmark that mirrors the city's long-standing reputation for being a melting pot of diverse cultures and faiths living in perpetual peace. The historical depth of the site actually extends much further back than the construction of the church building itself, reaching into the very early nineteenth century.

Two Senior Officers Suspended Over Huge Bank Scams

Chandigarh : The Haryana Government has suspended two high-ranking IAS officers, Pardeep Kumar and Ram Kumar Singh, because of their alleged connection to multi-crore bank frauds. These scams involved over 740 crore rupees being illegally moved from government accounts into private ones at three different banks.

The CBI is now investigating how this money was stolen through fake signatures and shell companies. While the government has managed to get most of the money back from the banks, these officers were suspended because they were in charge of the departments when the money disappeared. Other officers have also been moved to different roles as the investigation continues.

The administration in Haryana has been rocked by a major administrative crackdown as the state government took the decisive step of suspending two senior IAS officers, Pardeep Kumar and Ram Kumar Singh. This move comes in the wake of revelations surrounding a series of massive financial irregularities that have sent shockwaves through the corridors of power in Chandigarh. The



suspension of such high-ranking officials underscores the gravity of the allegations, which point to a sophisticated network of fraud that bypassed standard governmental checks and balances to siphon off public funds on an unprecedented scale.

At the heart of this controversy is a staggering sum of over 740 crore rupees, which was reportedly moved illegally from official government accounts into various private entities. These transactions were not isolated incidents but were spread across three different banking institutions, suggesting a widespread and systemic failure in oversight. The sheer volume of the capital

involved has made this one of the most significant financial scandals in the state's recent history, prompting a swift and severe response from the highest levels of the provincial leadership to maintain public trust.

The methodology behind these alleged scams appears to be both traditional and technologically savvy, involving the use of forged signatures and the creation of shell companies. By mimicking legitimate administrative processes, the perpetrators were able to divert massive amounts of taxpayers' money into accounts that had no actual business relationship with the state. These shell companies acted as

digital ghosts, existing only on paper to receive and then redistribute the stolen funds, making it incredibly difficult for internal auditors to track the movement of money in real-time.

Recognizing the complexity and the inter-state implications of such a large-scale fraud, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been called in to lead the probe.

The federal agency is currently meticulously tracing the paper trail left by the illegal transfers to identify every individual who may have played a role in the conspiracy. Their investigation is focusing on how the security protocols of the banks

were breached and whether there was active collusion between government staffers, bank employees, and the private individuals who operated the fraudulent accounts.

While the suspension of Pardeep Kumar and Ram Kumar Singh is a high-profile development, the government has clarified that these actions were taken because the officers were the administrative heads of the departments during the period the money vanished. In the world of high-level governance, the principle of command responsibility dictates that those at the top must be held accountable for the integrity of their departments. Their suspension ensures that they cannot influence the ongoing investigation or access sensitive documents that might be crucial to the CBI's forensic audit.

In a rare bit of positive news amidst the scandal, the Haryana Government has managed to recover the vast majority of the missing 740 crore rupees from the involved banks.

This recovery was made possible because the state was able to prove that the transfers were unauthorized and based on fraudulent documentation.

Protesters and Police Clash in Manesar Industrial Hub

Manesar : The industrial area of Manesar became a site of chaos on Thursday as thousands of workers clashed with the police. Over 7,000 people gathered to demand better pay and working conditions. Even though the government had banned large groups from meeting, the workers still came together, causing a major standoff.

The situation turned violent when the police tried to move the crowd. Protesters allegedly attacked officers and set a police motorcycle on fire. The police used "mild force," including a lathicharge, to control the situation. More than 20 workers were injured, and one had to be taken to the hospital with a serious head injury. While the government recently raised minimum wages by 35%, workers claim many companies are not paying the new rates. The industrial landscape of Manesar was gripped by intense volatility this past Thursday as a long-simmering dispute over labor rights boiled over into a full-scale confrontation between thousands of factory workers and law enforcement.

The Manesar industrial hub, typically a center of manufacturing and economic output, was transformed into a site of civil unrest as

the air filled with the sounds of slogans and the tension of an impending standoff. What began as an organized assembly for better treatment quickly spiraled into a chaotic scene that disrupted the entire region, highlighting the deepening rift between the industrial workforce and the authorities tasked with maintaining order.

An estimated 7,000 workers gathered to voice their collective frustration over stagnant pay scales and deteriorating working conditions, marking one of the largest labor demonstrations the area has seen in recent years. This massive assembly took place despite the fact that the government had proactively issued a ban on large gatherings, citing concerns over public safety and potential disruption to industrial operations. The decision of the workers to defy these legal restrictions set the stage for an immediate and high-stakes conflict, as thousands of individuals stood their ground in a direct challenge to the state's administrative orders.

The atmosphere turned notably hostile when the police attempted to intervene and disperse the crowd, leading to a breakdown in communication and a surge in physical aggression.

Karnal MLA Meets Chief Minister to Discuss City Improvements

Chandigarh : Jagmohan Anand, the MLA for Karnal, met Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday to talk about making Karnal a better city. They focused on fixing roads, improving water supply, and upgrading schools and hospitals. Anand wants to turn Karnal into a "model" area with better jobs and modern facilities.

The Chief Minister promised that the work in Karnal would be done quickly. They also talked about continuing the projects started by the former Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar. Anand is hopeful that with the government's support, Karnal will soon become one of the most advanced and well-organized cities in Haryana. The recent meeting

between Jagmohan Anand, the MLA for Karnal, and Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini marks a pivotal moment in the state's urban development strategy. Held in Chandigarh this past Thursday, the high-level discussion was not merely a routine political briefing but a comprehensive strategy session aimed at reimagining the future of Karnal. As the administrative heart of the district, Karnal is being positioned for a significant transformation that seeks to address long-standing infrastructural gaps while setting a new benchmark for urban living in Haryana.

Central to the dialogue was the critical need for a complete overhaul of the city's road network, which serves as the lifeline for local



commerce and daily commuting. Both leaders ac-

knowledged that as the city grows, the existing infra-

structure must be widened, repaired, and modernized to

handle increasing traffic loads and improve connectivity to the surrounding rural belts. The proposed road projects are expected to prioritize not just durability but also safety and efficiency, ensuring that Karnal remains an accessible hub for both residents and transit travelers. Beyond the visible pavement, the meeting delved into the essential but often hidden systems of urban life, specifically the city's water supply and sanitation frameworks. Anand emphasized that a "model city" cannot exist without reliable access to clean water and a sewage system capable of supporting a growing population. The discussions pointed toward integrating modern water management technologies that minimize waste

and ensure that every household in the Karnal constituency receives consistent, high-quality utility services regardless of their location.

The transformation of Karnal is also being envisioned as a human-centric endeavor, with a heavy focus on upgrading the quality of local schools and educational institutions. The MLA highlighted that the future of the city lies in its youth, who require modern facilities and a conducive learning environment to compete in a globalized economy. By investing in school infrastructure, the government aims to bridge the gap between public and private education, ensuring that the next generation of Karnal's citizens is well-equipped with the skills needed for the modern work-

Multilevel Parking in Gurugram Stays Locked Three Months After Opening

Gurugram : A new parking building at Sohna Chowk, which cost over 55 crore rupees, is still not being used even though it was inaugurated three months ago. The six-storey building was supposed to solve traffic problems in the busy Sadar Bazar area, but it remains locked while cars continue to jam the streets outside.

The problem is that the city government (MCG) cannot find a company to run the parking lot. They have tried four times to find a contractor, but the rules were so strict that no one qualified. Now, the city plans to make the rules easier so they can finally find someone to manage it and open the gates to the public next month. The administrative deadlock surrounding the newly constructed multilevel parking facility at Sohna Chowk has become a focal point of frustration for residents and commuters in Gurugram. Despite a massive investment exceeding 55 crore rupees, the six-storey structure remains a silent monument to bureaucratic inefficiency rather than the solution it was promised to be. This project was envisioned as a critical intervention to decongest the perennially choked arteries of the Sadar Bazar area, yet three months after its official inauguration, its gates remain firmly padlocked.

The primary objective of this ambitious architectural undertaking was to provide a dedicated space for hundreds of vehicles that currently have no choice but to occupy the limited road space in one of the city's busiest commercial hubs. By moving stationary vehicles off the



streets and into a vertical storage system, urban planners hoped to restore the flow of traffic and improve the experience for shoppers and local business owners alike. However, the reality on the ground remains unchanged, as the streets outside the facility continue to be plagued by the very gridlock the building was designed to eliminate.

The root cause of this operational paralysis lies in the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's (MCG) inability to secure a private partner to manage the day-to-day functions of the site. A parking facility of this magnitude requires a professional contractor to handle security, fee collection, and technical maintenance, yet the search for such an entity has hit a significant wall. This mismatch between the city's infrastructure ambitions and its administrative execution has left a multi-million rupee asset sitting idle while the public bears the cost of continued urban chaos.

To date, the MCG has launched four separate tendering processes in an attempt to find a qualified operator, all of which have

ended in failure. Each attempt to attract a contractor was met with a lack of successful bidders, largely because the criteria set by the city government were deemed excessively rigid or financially unviable by potential industry partners. This cycle of failed auctions highlights a significant gap in market research, suggesting that the initial terms of the contract did not align with the practical realities of running a large-scale parking operation in a high-traffic zone.

The strictness of these initial rules was likely intended to ensure a high standard of service and financial transparency, but they inadvertently acted as a barrier to entry for many local firms. Requirements regarding prior experience, high security deposits, and specific revenue-sharing models were so stringent that even established companies found it difficult to qualify. Consequently, the city found itself in a paradoxical situation where it possessed a world-class facility but no one legally authorized to turn on the lights and collect the first parking ticket.

Private Hospitals in Haryana Threaten to Stop Ayushman Services

Karnal : The Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Haryana has warned that private hospitals might stop treating patients under the Ayushman Bharat scheme after April 20. The hospitals are upset because the government owes them a lot of money.

They say that even though they should be paid within 15 days, some bills from last year are still not cleared. Dr. Sunila Soni, the head of IMA Haryana, said the delay is putting a huge financial strain on hospitals. They are also unhappy because the government has not included doctors in the

committees that make important decisions about the scheme. If this isn't fixed soon, thousands of people who rely on free healthcare might find it hard to get treatment. The healthcare sector in Haryana is currently facing a significant crisis as the Indian Medical Association (IMA) has issued a formal warning regarding the potential suspension of services under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

This federal insurance program, designed to provide free medical treatment to the underprivileged, relies heavily on the participation of private medical institu-

tions. However, the IMA Haryana chapter has stated that if the government does not address their grievances by April 20, private hospitals across the state will have no choice but to stop accepting patients under the scheme, a move that could jeopardize the health of thousands of citizens.

The primary point of contention lies in the massive backlog of unpaid dues that the government owes to these private healthcare providers. According to the operational guidelines of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, hospitals are supposed to be

reimbursed for their services within a strict 15-day window after a claim is submitted. In reality, representatives from the IMA claim that the system has slowed to a crawl, with numerous bills from the previous year still pending settlement. This delay has created a severe liquidity crunch for many smaller and medium-sized hospitals that depend on these reimbursements to maintain their operations. Dr. Sunila Soni, the president of IMA Haryana, has been vocal about the extreme financial pressure this delay is placing on the medical community.

Young Man Stabbed to Death in Faridabad Over a Love Affair

Faridabad : A 25-year-old man named Sachin Mehra was killed on Thursday night near the Badarpur border. Police believe he was attacked because of a love affair. Sachin, who worked at a hospital, had gone to a hotel to meet a friend when three men followed him outside and stabbed him several times.

Sachin's family is very angry, claiming that two police officers were nearby when the attack happened but did not do anything to stop it. The police have arrested one man named Sunny and are looking for two others who ran away. A young woman who was at the scene is also being ques-

tioned to find out exactly what happened. The community near the Badarpur border in Faridabad is reeling from a violent incident that claimed the life of a young man on Thursday night. Sachin Mehra, a 25-year-old dedicated healthcare worker employed at a local hospital, was brutally attacked and killed in what authorities are describing as a targeted assault. The tragedy has not only left a family in mourning but has also raised serious questions regarding public safety and the responsiveness of law enforcement in the area during critical moments of crisis. According to preliminary reports, the events leading up

to the murder began when Sachin went to a local hotel to meet with an acquaintance. Little did he know that his movements were being monitored by a group of individuals who were allegedly motivated by personal grievances. As Sachin exited the premises, he was intercepted by three men who had been lying in wait. The encounter quickly turned physical, escalating into a lethal assault that left the young man with multiple stab wounds in the middle of a public thoroughfare. The motive behind this heinous crime is currently being traced to a complicated love affair that had reportedly created friction between Sachin and the suspects. In-

vestigators believe that personal animosity regarding a romantic relationship was the primary catalyst for the violence, suggesting that the attack was premeditated rather than a random act of street crime. Such incidents highlight the tragic consequences of interpersonal conflicts that spiral out of control in the absence of mediation or timely intervention.

As the news of Sachin's death spread, his family and local residents gathered to express their profound grief and anger. The emotional weight of the loss was compounded by a shocking allegation from the victim's relatives.

Haryana Government transfers 4 IAS, 13 HCS officers Second time in three days

CM Saini Explains Why Officers Were Suspended After Bank Fraud

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini spoke about the recent suspension of two IAS officers following large bank scams. He mentioned that his government follows the example of PM Narendra Modi and will not tolerate any dishonesty. The scams involved a total of over 740 crore rupees across three different banks. Saini said the government is responsible for protecting the people's hard-earned money. While some money has been returned by the banks, a special team is still investigating how these mistakes happened. So far, 21 people have been arrested by the state police, and the CBI is now looking into the biggest part of the fraud. The recent announcement by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini regarding the suspension of two senior IAS officers has sent a powerful message through the administrative corridors of Haryana. By addressing the massive bank fraud that has come to light, the Chief Minister emphasized that his government is committed

to maintaining the highest standards of integrity in public service. The decision to suspend high-ranking officials like Pardeep Kumar and Ram Kumar Singh was not taken lightly, but it was deemed a necessary step to ensure a transparent and unbiased investigation into the multi-crore financial irregularities that have surfaced recently. Chief Minister Saini explicitly linked the state's current anti-corruption stance to the broader national vision established by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He noted that the Haryana government is operating under a policy of zero tolerance toward any form of dishonesty or financial mismanagement. This alignment with the Prime Minister's example serves as a moral and political anchor for the state's actions, suggesting that no individual, regardless of their rank or seniority in the bureaucracy, is above the law when it comes to the protection of public funds and the sanctity of the treasury.

Chandigarh : The Haryana Government has moved four IAS and 13 HCS officers to new positions. This is the second time in three days that top officials have been shifted. Vijay Kumar Siddappa Bhavikatti is now the Secretary to the Governor and the Labour Commissioner. Anish Yadav will take on the role of Managing Director for HAFED and a major horticulture project in Ganaur.

Vikram has been given several big roles, including Managing Director of the electricity boards for both North and South Haryana. Sachin Gupta will now look after urban development in Rohtak. Among the HCS officers, Amit Kumar is the new SDM for Punahan, while others like Manish Kumar Lohan and Bhupendra Singh have also received new assignments in departments like Mines and Public Relations.

The Haryana Government has recently implemented a significant administrative overhaul, ordering the transfer and posting of four IAS



and 13 HCS officers across various departments. This move marks the second major reshuffling of the state's bureaucracy in just a three-day window, reflecting a rapid strategic realignment of senior person-

nel. Such frequent shifts at the top levels of the administration often signal a push for accelerated governance or a response to shifting departmental priorities as the state navigates its current development

agenda. Among the high-ranking Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers affected by this directive, Vijay Kumar Siddappa Bhavikatti has been assigned a dual-responsi-

bility role of considerable importance.

He will now serve as the Secretary to the Governor of Haryana, a position that acts as a vital bridge between the constitutional head and the state executive. Additionally, he has taken over as the Labour Commissioner, a role that places him at the center of the state's industrial relations and the enforcement of worker welfare policies.

Anish Yadav, another prominent IAS officer, has been entrusted with the leadership of major economic and agricultural initiatives. He is the new Managing Director of the Haryana State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Limited (HAFED), which plays a crucial role in the procurement and distribution of agricultural products. Furthermore, he will oversee the development of the International Terminal Market, a major horticulture project located in Ganaur, which is designed to modernize the state's supply chain for fruits and vegetables.

Architects Caught Approving Unfinished Buildings in Gurugram

Gurugram : A major scam has been discovered where architects gave safety certificates to buildings that were not even finished. During a surprise check in Sector 70A, officials found that 14 out of 22 inspected buildings were still under construction. Some were just brick walls without floors, kitchens, or bathrooms, yet they had papers saying they were ready to live in.

This problem was found because of a rule that lets architects certify buildings themselves to save time. However, many used this to break the law. Now, over 1,500 certificates are being checked. The government says the architects involved will lose their licenses and be banned from working.

A significant architectural scandal has surfaced in Gurugram, revealing a systematic breach of trust within the city's real estate and construction oversight sector. Authorities have uncovered a widespread practice where licensed architects were found to be issuing Occupation Certificates (OCs) for residential and commercial buildings that were far from completion. This discovery has sent shockwaves through the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP), as it suggests that the very professionals tasked with ensuring structural safety and legal compliance have instead been facilitating a massive bypass of urban regulations. The controversy reached a boiling point following a series

of surprise inspections conducted in Sector 70A, an area seeing rapid residential development. Out of twenty-two buildings randomly selected for physical verification, a staggering fourteen were found to be in a state of active construction. This high failure rate indicated that the issuance of safety and completion papers had become a clerical formality rather than a reflection of reality, prompting an immediate and wider investigation into the integrity of the city's building certification process. In several instances, the physical state of the buildings stood in absurd contrast to the legal documents filed with the government. Inspectors discovered structures that were little more than skeletal brick shells,



lacking essential amenities such as finished flooring, functional kitchens, or even basic plumbing for bathrooms. Despite these glaring deficiencies, these properties possessed official certificates signed and stamped by architects, falsely asserting that the buildings were "ready for move-in" and

fully compliant with all local safety bylaws.

The root of this systemic failure can be traced back to a self-certification policy introduced by the government, which was originally intended to reduce bureaucratic red tape. This rule allowed empanelled architects to certify building

completions themselves, bypassing the need for a lengthy government inspection for every single structure. The goal was to speed up the delivery of homes to buyers and streamline the administrative process, but it appears that the lack of oversight turned this convenience into a loophole for widespread illegality. By self-certifying unfinished buildings, these architects enabled developers to claim they had met project deadlines, often allowing them to avoid penalties from the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) or to collect final payments from unsuspecting homebuyers. This practice not only misleads the public but also creates immense safety risks, as buildings are legally occu-

ped before their structural integrity, electrical wiring, and fire safety systems have been fully vetted and finished to the required standards. The scale of the deception has forced the Haryana government to launch a massive audit, with over 1,500 previously issued certificates now slated for a thorough manual review. Officials suspect that the fraud extends well beyond Sector 70A and could involve hundreds of properties across various sectors of the city. This retrospective check is designed to identify exactly how many "ghost" completions have been recorded in the city's official books over the last few years. The repercussions for the professionals involved in this scam are expected to

be severe and career-ending. The government has made it clear that any architect found guilty of misusing the self-certification rule will face the immediate revocation of their license. Furthermore, the administration plans to blacklist these individuals, effectively banning them from practicing their profession or representing any further construction projects within the state of Haryana. Legal experts suggest that beyond administrative penalties, the architects and the developers they assisted could face criminal charges for forgery and cheating. Filing a false certificate with a government department is a serious offense that undermines the entire urban planning framework.

New Parking Rules for Cheap Housing Projects in Haryana

Chandigarh : The Haryana government has changed its housing policy to make sure every apartment has a parking spot. For new affordable housing, the builder must provide one car space for every flat. The cost of this parking will be 10 percent of the price of the flat.

For buildings that are already being made without parking, the builder must get permission from most of the people living there before adding parking spots. However, this new rule will not apply to buildings that are already finished and where people have already moved in.

The Haryana government's recent amendment to its affordable housing policy marks a significant shift in urban planning, addressing one of the most persistent grievances of modern apartment living. For years, "affordable" often meant compromising on essential infrastructure, specifically vehicle storage, leaving residents to navigate a chaotic maze of street-side parking. By mandating that every new apartment must come

with a dedicated parking spot, the state is finally acknowledging that a personal vehicle is no longer a luxury but a necessity for the middle-class families these projects are designed to serve.

This policy change introduces a standardized "one flat, one parking" rule that aims to bring order to future housing societies. Under the previous guidelines, parking was often treated as an afterthought or a premium add-on that many buyers couldn't access. Now, the government has integrated this into the core requirements for project approval. This ensures that the dense clusters of affordable housing appearing across hubs like Gurugram, Faridabad, and Panchkula do not become future traffic bottlenecks or flashpoints for neighborhood disputes over public road space.

A critical aspect of this new rule is the transparent pricing structure, which is designed to prevent builders from using parking as a tool for price gouging. The government has capped the cost of these mandatory parking

spots at exactly 10 percent of the total price of the flat. This formula provides clarity to prospective buyers, allowing them to calculate their total investment upfront without worrying about hidden "amenity" charges that have historically inflated the cost of low-budget housing in the final stages of a sale.

The policy also addresses the "grey area" of projects that are currently under construction but were originally planned without sufficient parking facilities.

For these ongoing developments, the government has provided a pathway to add parking, but with a democratic safeguard. Builders are now required to obtain formal consent from at least two-thirds of the existing allottees before they can alter the project layout to include parking. This prevents developers from arbitrarily eating into planned green spaces or community areas without the residents' permission.

By requiring a majority consensus for under-construction projects, the state is empowering homeowners to

decide the balance between open space and vehicle utility. Many residents in these projects have already made financial plans based on specific layouts; therefore, the mandate ensures that the builder cannot unilaterally change the promise of the original brochure. This clause acts as a check against builders who might try to exploit the new parking rule solely as an additional revenue stream at the expense of communal living standards.

However, the government has drawn a firm line when it comes to existing, completed projects where people have already taken possession of their homes. The new parking rules will not apply to buildings that are already finished and occupied. This is a pragmatic decision intended to avoid legal and structural nightmares. Retrofitting parking into a fully settled society would involve major construction, potential demolition of existing amenities, and endless litigation over property rights, which would cause more harm than good for current residents.

Former CM Hooda Criticizes New Fingerprint Rules for Farmers

Karnal : Bhupinder Singh Hooda, the leader of the opposition, has asked the government to stop using biometric systems for buying wheat from farmers. He said that instead of helping, the new system is making it very hard for farmers to sell their crops at the markets. Hooda visited the Karnal market and said farmers are being burdened with too many rules like online registration and gate passes. He also mentioned that recent rain has damaged many crops and the government should pay farmers for their losses immediately. He claimed the current government is failing to manage the markets properly. The recent visit of Bhupinder Singh Hooda to the Karnal grain market has highlighted a growing friction between the state's political opposition and the current administration's push for digital integration in the agricultural sector. As the Leader of the Opposition and a former Chief Minister, Hooda has positioned himself as a vocal critic of the newly implemented biometric system, which requires



farmers to provide fingerprints to authorize the sale of their wheat. He argues that while technology is often introduced under the guise of transparency, in this specific context, it is acting as a significant bottleneck that frustrates farmers who are already under immense pressure during the peak harvest season. The core of Hooda's criticism lies in the practical difficulties that many

elderly farmers and manual laborers face when interacting with biometric scanners. Years of hard physical labor in the fields often result in worn-down fingerprints, which the sensitive digital sensors frequently fail to recognize. This technical mismatch leads to long delays at the procurement centers, as farmers are forced to attempt the verification process multiple times or wait for manual

overrides. For a community that operates on a tight seasonal schedule, these minutes and hours lost to "system errors" translate into significant logistical and financial stress.

Beyond the biometric issue, Hooda has expressed deep concern over the increasing complexity of the entire procurement process, which now involves multiple layers of digital red tape.

Women's Commission Asks for Action Against Violent Songs

Chandigarh : Renu Bhatia, the head of the Haryana Women Commission, has written to the Chief Minister asking for a ban on songs that show guns and violence. She is worried that these songs use bad language and show women in a disrespectful way, which is a bad influence on school children.

She specifically mentioned a song by the singer Badshah, saying it hurt the image of young girls. Bhatia said that while the country is trying to empower women with programs like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," these songs are doing the opposite. She

wants strict rules to stop such content from being released.

Renu Bhatia, the Chairperson of the Haryana State Commission for Women, has officially signaled a stern crackdown on the growing trend of provocative and aggressive music within the state's cultural landscape. In a formal communication directed to the Chief Minister, she has advocated for a comprehensive ban on songs that glamorize gun culture, promote physical violence, and utilize derogatory language. Bhatia's initiative stems from a deep-seated concern that the unchecked proliferation of such me-

dia is eroding the social fabric of Haryana, particularly among the youth who are most susceptible to the influence of their musical idols.

The Commission has highlighted that a significant portion of contemporary popular music frequently depicts women in a disrespectful and objectified manner, which Bhatia argues is a direct threat to the safety and dignity of women in society. She pointed out that when lyrics and music videos normalize the mistreatment of women or portray them as mere ornaments to a lifestyle of crime and luxury, it cre-

ates a hostile environment that validates harassment. For the Commission, this is not merely an issue of artistic expression but a pressing public health and safety concern that requires immediate legislative intervention. Specific attention was drawn to the impact of this content on school-going children, who are increasingly mimicking the aggressive posturing and foul language found in these viral tracks. Bhatia noted that the impressionable minds of students are being conditioned to believe that violence and the possession of firearms are markers of "coolness" or success. This cul-

tural shift is viewed as a major setback for educators and parents who are trying to instill values of empathy, discipline, and respect in the next generation of Haryana's citizens. In her letter, Bhatia specifically identified a song by the popular rapper Badshah as a prime example of content that tarnishes the image and self-esteem of young girls. She argued that the lyrics in such high-profile releases are particularly damaging because of the artist's massive reach and influence. By calling out specific creators, the Women's Commission is making it clear that even the most famous figures in

the entertainment industry will be held accountable if their work is deemed to be socially irresponsible or harmful to the gender-sensitization efforts of the state. The Chairperson poignantly contrasted the themes of these violent songs with the government's flagship initiatives, such as "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter). She emphasized the inherent contradiction in a society that spends millions of rupees on women's empowerment programs while simultaneously allowing a music industry to thrive on content that belittles and endangers those very

same women. To Bhatia, these songs act as a counter-force that undoes the progress made by state-led social reforms, creating a "two steps forward, one step back" scenario for gender equality. To rectify this, the Commission is pushing for the establishment of strict regulatory frameworks or a state-level censorship board specifically for independent music releases and social media content. Currently, while films undergo rigorous certification, many songs are released directly onto digital platforms without any oversight regarding their social impact.



Confident Punjab Kings take on unsettled Sunrisers in weekend's first double-header

Chandigarh: Punjab Kings will head into their upcoming Indian Premier League 2026 clash with quiet confidence, backing their collective strength against a star-studded but inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad side at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh PCA Stadium in Mullanpur on Saturday, in the first match of the day's double-header.

Despite a strong start to the season, PBKS were left slightly frustrated after their previous match against Kolkata Knight Riders was washed out due to rain, forcing them to share points when they appeared well on course for another win. Even so, the overall mood in the camp remains positive, with the team showing signs of a well-rounded and cohesive unit.

Under Shreyas Iyer, Punjab have built a reputation for adaptability and resilience. Whether it was chasing down a daunting 200-plus total against Chennai Super Kings in their own backyard or overcoming Gujarat Titans on a challenging Mullanpur pitch, PBKS have demonstrated the ability to handle varied match situations with composure.

Their clash against KKR



at Eden Gardens also showed promise, with Australian pacer Xavier Bartlett making early inroads before the weather intervened. The performance further underlined the team's growing confidence across departments. A key aspect of Punjab's campaign has been their team-first approach. As opener-keeper Prabhshimran Singh, who is coming off a breakthrough 500-plus run season, pointed out, the focus remains on collective success rather than individual milestones like the Orange or Purple Cap. That philosophy has already reflected in performances, with Cooper Connolly play-

ing a crucial unbeaten 72 against Gujarat Titans and Vijaykumar Vyshak steadily making an impact with the ball. In contrast, Sunrisers Hyderabad are still searching for consistency. Despite possessing a formidable batting line-up capable of posting big totals, their campaign has been hampered by repeated top-order collapses. Matches against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants highlighted these concerns, with the otherwise dangerous opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma failing to provide solid starts. SRH have also struggled to find consistent con-

tributions from their bowling unit. Experienced names like Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat are yet to make a significant impact, leaving the team searching for answers in key moments.

There have, however, been a few positives. Nitish Kumar Reddy and Heinrich Klaasen have shown intent with the bat, while young spinner Harsh Dubey has impressed with his control during the powerplay overs.

Unadkat, in particular, will be keen to bounce back after a tough outing in the previous match, where he conceded 50 runs in just 23 balls. Tasked with defending nine runs in the final over

against LSG

, the left-arm pacer was unable to hold his nerve, something he will look to correct in the upcoming fixture.

Teams (from):

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c), Arshdeep Singh, Priyansh Arya, Pyla Avinash, Azmatullah Omarzai, Xavier Bartlett, Yuzvendra Chahal, Cooper Connolly, Praveen Dubey, Ben Dwarshuis, Lockie Ferguson, Harnoor Singh, Harpreet Brar, Marco Jansen, Musheer Khan, Vishal Nishad, Mitchell Owen, Prabhshimran Singh (wk), Shahank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Suryansh Shedge, Vishnu Vinod, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Nehal Wadhwa, Yash Thakur.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Ishan Kishan (c & wk), Abhishek Sharma, Amit Kumar, Salil Arora, Brydon Carse, Pat Cummins, Harsh Dubey, Krains Fuletra, Travis Head, Praful Hinge, Heinrich Klaasen, Liam Livingstone, Eshan Malinga, Kamindu Mendis, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshal Patel, David Payne, Sakib Husain, Shivam Mavi, Shivang Kumar, Ravichandran Sran, Onkar Tarmale, Jaydev Unadkat, Aniket Verma, Zeeshan Ansari.

India Caps campaign with 5 Golds as Vishvanath scripts pinnacle finish

Ulaanbaatar: India capped off a memorable campaign at the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 with Vishvanath Suresh clinching gold in the men's 50 kg category, defeating Japan's Daichi Iwai by a dominant 5:0 margin in the final.

The victory marked a defining moment for Vishvanath Suresh, who delivered a composed and commanding performance to secure the top podium finish. His tactical superiority and sharp execution ensured a clean sweep on the judges' scorecards.

India's medal tally received another boost as Sachin bagged a hard-fought silver in the 60 kg category. His performance added valuable points to India's overall standings, highlighting the strength of the men's contingent. Overall, India finished second in the medal standings, just one gold short of Kazakhstan. However, the Indian team emerged as the most consistent side, claiming the highest total medal count of 16 across categories.

A major highlight of the campaign was the historic performance by the Indian women's team, which topped the medal charts with an impressive haul of 10 medals. This included four gold, two silver, and four bronze medals, making it



one of their finest outings at the continental level.

Among the standout performers, Minakshi, Preeti, Priya, and Arundhati clinched gold medals in their respective categories, showcasing India's dominance across weight divisions.

The women's team also saw strong contributions from Jaismine and Alfiyan Pathan, who secured silver medals and played a crucial role in boosting the overall tally.

Vishvanath Suresh's gold is particularly significant given his rapid rise in international boxing. Having consistently impressed on the national circuit, he has quickly established himself as a formidable presence on the global stage.

His campaign in Ulaanbaatar stood out for its quality and resilience. Notably, he defeated a world number one opponent en route to the fi-

nal, demonstrating both skill and composure under pressure.

The performance reflects not only individual brilliance but also the growing depth of Indian boxing talent. Young athletes stepping up and delivering on big stages indicate a strong pipeline for the future.

Speaking on the team's success, Ajay Singh praised the collective effort and highlighted the emergence of new talent across categories. He described the campaign as remarkable, particularly applauding the women's team for topping the medal charts and underlining the promise shown by young boxers like Vishvanath. Singh noted that despite changes from the previous world championships, the team displayed tremendous character and adaptability against some of Asia's toughest competitors.

Estevao could be Brazil's World Cup's surprise: Davide Ancelotti

Brazil: Brazil assistant coach Davide Ancelotti has tipped Chelsea's teenage sensation Estevao Willian to emerge as a surprise package at this summer's FIFA World Cup. Ancelotti, who will be part of the Brazil coaching setup alongside his father Carlo Ancelotti, expressed strong confidence in the 18-year-old winger's potential to shine on the global stage.

The upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 is set to take place across the United States, Canada, and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, bringing together the world's top footballing nations.

Speaking to BBC Radio 5 Live's Euro Leagues podcast, Davide Ancelotti hinted that a relatively lesser-known player could make a big impact for Brazil during the tournament.

"The guy that will surprise you is someone that is not so well known," he said, pointing to the depth of attacking talent available in the

Brazilian squad.

Among those talents, he singled out Estevao Willian as one of the most exciting prospects. "If I have to give you a name, Estevao is one of the rising talents of Brazil," he added.

The young winger, who joined Chelsea from Palmeiras last summer, has already begun to make his mark in European football.

Since his move, Estevao has scored eight goals and provided four assists in 34 appearances, underlining his attacking prowess and adaptability at a young age.

However, his progress faced a brief setback due to a hamstring injury, which ruled him out of Brazil's recent friendlies against France national football team and Croatia national football team.

He returned to action just before the international break in March, featuring for Chelsea against Everton and gradually regaining match fitness.

The teenager quickly made an impact upon his return, finding the net in Chelsea's emphatic 7-0 victory over Port Vale in the FA Cup quarter-final.

Ancelotti praised Estevao's natural ability, particularly highlighting his finishing skills and composure in front of goal.

"He is a really big talent," Ancelotti said, adding that the youngster has all the attributes required to succeed at the highest level of European football.

Estevao made his debut for the Brazil national football team at just 17 years of age in September 2024, and has already scored five goals in 11 international appearances. His rapid rise through the ranks has positioned him as one of Brazil's brightest young prospects heading into the World Cup. With Brazil boasting a wealth of attacking options, Estevao's emergence adds another dynamic dimension to the squad.

I feel complete backing from owners and fans : Liverpool head coach Slot

London: Liverpool head coach Arne Slot insists he feels "complete support" from the club's hierarchy and fans despite a run of poor on-field performances and growing discontent about his Anfield future.

Slot, who replaced Jurgen Klopp when becoming head coach in June 2024, won the Premier League in his first season on Merseyside but now finds himself fighting to secure European football with just seven points separating Liverpool, in fifth, from 13th-placed Bournemouth.

His side have only picked up one point from their past three league matches, most recently losing to Brighton 2-1. Liverpool were also eliminated from the FA Cup with a 4-0 quarter-final mauling at the hands of Manchester City on Saturday before being handed a 1-6 defeat of the season in their Champions League

quarter-final first-leg against Paris St-Germain.

Following the 2-0 defeat in Paris, during which Liverpool had just 26 per cent possession and registered only three shots compared to PSG's 18, former defender Stephen Warnock told BBC Sport it "feels like confidence is at an all-time low" while French football journalist Julien

Laurens is "struggling" to see Slot continuing as Liverpool boss next season.

However, Slot, who is under contract until the end of the 2026-27 campaign, has no immediate concerns about his future and praised the fans for continuing to cheer for his side even in defeat.

"I'm repeating myself a lot, but I feel a lot of support. Not only from the owners but from Richard Hughes and Michael Edwards. A lot of support from them but as weird as it might sound, I

also feel the support from the fans," said Slot.

"In Paris when the players went out for the warm-up and after the 4-0 loss against Manchester City the fans immediately started singing 'we love Liverpool'."

"I think it's fair to say we were outplayed for 90 minutes and they were still singing and clapping for us."

"I've said it many times, the club knows the period of time we're in and in the meantime,

I feel complete support."

He added that Wednesday's defeat to PSG would serve as motivation during this "defining" period of the season, which starts with Fulham's visit to Anfield on Saturday.

"We faced the champions of Europe and we experienced that we were not on the level we should have been."

"The good thing is we have four or five days to

show we can be much more competitive. It also tells us we want to keep improving and playing at that level next season."

"I think if you experience that two days ago, you want to be involved next season to show we can do even better. Therefore, we have to perform in the league as well."

Slot paid tribute to departing defender Andy Robertson, who announced on Thursday he will leave the club when his contract expires at the end of the season.

He hailed the Scot's "intensity" and long service to the club while acknowledging the 32-year-old's lack of game time was a contributing factor in his departure.

Robertson has made 373 appearances for Liverpool and won a total of nine trophies while playing at Anfield, including two Premier League titles and the Champions League.

However, he has been restricted to just 19 league appearances this season, including six starts, after falling behind Milos Kerkez in the pecking order.

"He's had many great seasons here not only as a player but as a great person as well. Every team-mate of his will tell you how funny he is, how great he is," Slot said.

"What I remember most about him is the intensity he plays with. I can remember Robbo making a press from the left-back position to the right wing a few years ago and I showed it to my players I was working with back then."

"He's won everything at this club, served his club and really loves this club. It's been a great nine years for him. This season, he didn't play as much as he was used to and as a result of that, he's leaving."

Match officials appointed for FIFA World Cup 2026

Zurich (Switzerland): Following a meticulous and comprehensive selection process spanning over three years, FIFA has released the list of match officials who will oversee games at the FIFA World Cup 2026. The FIFA Team One cohort includes 52 referees, 88 assistant referees and 30 video match officials, who hail from all six confederations and 50 Member Associations, in what is the most comprehensive line-up of match officials in FIFA World Cup history. The appointments were made on the basis of FIFA's longstanding "quality first" principle, while consideration was given to the consistency of the performances delivered by candidates at FIFA tournaments, as well as in international and domestic competitions in recent years. Pierluigi Collina, FIFA's Chief Refereeing Officer and chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, said, "The selected match officials are the very best in the world. They were part of a wider pool of officials that was identified and monitored over the past three years. They have attended seminars and officiated at FIFA tournaments." In addition, their performances in domestic and international

matches were regularly assessed. The selected officials have received, and will continue to receive, comprehensive support from our fitness coaches and medical staff, including physiotherapists and a mental specialist. Our goal is to ensure that they're

fact that six women match officials have been selected continues a trend that was started four years ago in Qatar as we aim to further develop women's refereeing. "During the tournament, the match officials will train on a daily basis,

their decision-making. Goal-line technology, an advanced version of semi-automated offside technology and connected ball technology will be used, while for the first time in World Cup history, fans will be able to see things from the referee's on-field perspective thanks to the use of new technologies," Collina concluded. FIFA Director of Refereeing Massimo Busacca said, "The road to the FIFA World Cup 2026

began immediately after the conclusion of Qatar 2022, with a structured programme involving seminars, workshops and continuous monitoring. "Throughout this period, all candidates were closely evaluated by FIFA instructors, fitness coaches, doctors and physiotherapists, receiving comprehensive support to ensure that they achieve the highest possible standards at the tournament," Busacca said. Team One will be based in Miami, where the selected match officials will meet for a ten-day preparation seminar starting on May 31. Following this event, the video match officials will relocate to Dallas, which will be home to the International Broadcast Centre, while the referees, assistant referees and support staff will remain in Miami.



in optimal physical and mental condition when they arrive in Miami on May 31," Collina said. "This year's FIFA World Cup will be the biggest in history, with a 48-team line-up and 104 matches to be contested across the most extensive geographical footprint in the tournament's history."

Collina continued, "It'll be the largest FIFA Team One ever, with 41 more match officials than at Qatar 2022. Each of them must be ready to be appointed for a match and to contribute actively to ensuring that the refereeing at the World Cup is a success. The

with the sessions to feature the participation of local players. Collina commented: "As has been the case at FIFA tournaments in the past, our match analysts will provide the match officials with all the information they need to prepare properly for their games. We'll leave no stone unturned in ensuring that our match officials are fully prepared, and we're confident that FIFA Team One will meet the challenges that lie ahead at this groundbreaking competition." As at previous World Cups, technology will play an important role in supporting match officials in

Ayush Shetty stuns Jonatan Christie to storm into semi-finals of Badminton Asia Championships

Ningbo: India's Ayush Shetty stormed into the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia Championships 2026 after pulling off an upset against world No. 4 Jonatan Christie here on Friday.

With a place in the last four, Ayush became the first Indian men's singles badminton player since HS Prannoy in 2018 to secure a medal at the continental meet. It will also be India's first medal at the Badminton Asia Championships since Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy's men's doubles gold in

2023.

Ayush, 25th in the men's singles badminton rankings, registered a 23-21, 21-17 win over Olympian and third seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia in the quarter-finals.

The opener was fiercely contested with neither player able to break clear as Jonatan Christie, a former Asian champion, edged into the mid-game interval with a narrow 11-10 lead.

Jonatan Christie appeared poised to take control after stretching his advan-

tage to 18-15 and even earned a game point before Ayush produced a fight-back and forced the contest into a tie-break en route to clinching the opener, according to Olympics.com

The second game was equally hard-fought with Ayush carrying a slender 11-9 advantage into the interval before tightening his grip on the contest and closing it out to book his place in the semi-finals. This was the first win for Ayush against Jonatan Christie in the maiden encounter between the two.

Alcaraz battles past Etcheverry to reach Monte-Carlo Masters quarter-finals

Monaco: Carlos Alcaraz had to battle his way through three sets to advance to the quarter-finals at the 2026 Monte-Carlo Masters.

The defending ATP Masters 1000 champion defeated Argentina's Tomás Martín Etcheverry in the round of 16 on Thursday (9 April), booking his spot in the next round with a 6-1, 4-6, 6-3 result.

What started as plain sailing for the Spanish tennis star ended up in a two-hour, 24-minute battle against the world No. 30.

Alcaraz can breathe a sigh of relief as he booked his place in the last eight and keeps his chances of remaining as world No. 1 intact. Just as Jannik Sinner had done in his round of 16 tie earlier on Thursday, Alcaraz seized the



opening set in just 26 minutes, with a 93 per cent serve percentage that proved insurmountable for Etcheverry, according to Olympics.com. Whether it was complacency from the Spaniard or a resurgence from his Argentinian opponent, Etcheverry

broke down Alcaraz for a crucial break at 2-1 in the second set. With four attempts at

a double break, the unseeded player succeeded and took control of affairs against the shell-shocked defending champion.

A returned break from the top seed was not enough to quell the resurgent Etcheverry, who took the second set by serving to love in defiant fashion. Needing to regain the momentum, Alcaraz broke in a 13-point game at the first time of asking in the final set.

The world No. 1 was still being pushed to the limits with a healthy score margin, even though his service was not as precise as usual as the match unfolded. With 43 winners to 44 unforced errors, the 22-year-old held out to keep his title defence alive.

Next up is a first round-level showdown between Alcaraz and Alexander Bublik, the world No. 11 who debuted in the ATP top 10 at the start of the season.



MARKET

BSE Sensex			Nifty 50			Nifty 500			Nifty Next 50			Nifty 100			Nifty Bank			Nifty Midcap 100		
Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change	
77,550.25	1.20%		24,050.60	1.16%		22,346.75	1.40%		67,641.25	2.07%		24,809.80	1.32%		55,912.75	1.99%		57,843.95	1.52%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
76,631.65	77,121.01		23,775.10	23,880.55		22,037.50	22,151.05		66,268.65	66,677.25		24,486.50	24,602.60		54,821.70	55,182.25		56,978.75	57,315.60	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
77,622.50	76,851.16		24,074.05	23,856.35		22,364.30	22,133.15		67,708.95	66,623.65		24,831.30	24,579.30		55,978.50	55,145.25		57,885.75	57,168.20	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Asian Paints	2,360.70	4.01
Eicher Motors	7,424.00	3.87
ICICI Bank	1,321.90	3.17
Shriram Finance	1,027.55	3.14
Bajaj Auto	9,813.50	3.12

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Coal India	434.10	-4.40
Sun Pharma	1,654.90	-3.62
Infosys	1,292.50	-2.94
TCS	2,524.30	-2.50
Tech Mahindra	1,440.20	-1.46

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	152,803.00	-631.00 -0.41
Silver May 05	243,436.00	-332.00 -0.14
Crudeoil Apr 20	9,160.00	227.00 2.54
Naturalgas Apr 27	250.40	-0.20 -0.08

Pantherun, Phoenix ink distribution pact to expand in Israel

Bengaluru: Pantherun Technologies on Friday announced that it has signed a distribution agreement with Phoenix Technologies to expand its presence in the Israeli market.

Under the agreement, Phoenix Technologies will represent and sell Pantherun's product portfolio in Israel, enabling wider access to its advanced technology solutions among local customers and partners.

The partnership is aimed at strengthening Pantherun's foothold in Israel, a market known for its strong innovation ecosystem and demand for cutting-edge technologies. The company said the collaboration with an experienced distributor is expected to accelerate the adoption of its solutions across key industries.

"We are extremely pleased to establish this partnership with Phoenix Technologies. Israel is a highly innovative market with strong demand for advanced technology solutions. Finding a distributor with the market penetration, experience, and technical expertise of Phoenix gives us great

confidence that Pantherun's products will reach the right customers and applications," said Srinivas Shekar, CEO of Pantherun Technologies.

Abraham Gelber, CEO of Phoenix Technologies, said the collaboration would create strong synergies. "We believe that the combination of Pantherun's product line and Phoenix's capabilities and expertise will enable us to provide attractive solutions to the Israeli high-tech industry," he said.

The agreement marks a key step in Pantherun's international expansion strategy and underscores its focus on building regional partnerships to support customers globally.

Pantherun Technologies develops advanced solutions for high-performance electronic systems and next-generation applications across industries, while Phoenix Technologies is a leading franchised distributor in Israel, specialising in electronic components, modules, and IP cores for sectors including AI, communication, defence, aerospace, medical, and security.

Stock market gains over 1pc, investors get richer by Rs 6 lakh cr

Mumbai: The Indian stock market on Friday rebounded strongly supported by positive global cues.

At close, the Sensex was up 918.60 points or 1.20pc at 77,550.25, and the Nifty was up 275.50 points or 1.16pc at 24,050.60.

Among the sectors, Auto, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables, Realty, Power, FMCG, PSU Bank, Metal, PSU Bank, Private Bank added 1-2pc. On the other hand, IT index shed 1.7pc.

In the IT stocks, Wipro shares rose 1pc, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) declined 2.5pc. Bank shares rebounded from the previous session's losses, rising up to 3pc.

ICICI Bank emerged as the top gainer rising 3.3pc. Federal Bank and Axis Bank gained 2.38pc and 2.34pc, respectively.

State Bank of India,



HDFC Bank, Punjab National Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were trading higher by 1-2pc.

On Nifty, the key gainers were Asian Paints, Eicher Motors, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Auto, Shriram Finance. The losers included Coal India, Sun Pharma, In-

fosys, TCS, Tech Mahindra. Nifty Midcap and Smallcap indices rose 1.5 percent each.

Investors earned about Rs 6 lakh crore as the overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose to Rs 451 lakh crore from nearly Rs 445 lakh crore in the pre-

vious session.

On BSE, over 100 stocks touched their 52-week high. These included Adani Energy, Ather Energy, ABB India, Hitachi Energy, Cummins India, Titan Company, MCX India, Anand Rathi, Natco Pharma, among others.

Defence-related shares rallied up to 16pc. Bharat Forge and Dynamic Technologies advanced 3.43pc and 2.9pc while Hindustan Aeronautics, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders and Paras Defence and Space Technologies were trading higher by 1-2pc.

SpiceJet shares hit the upper circuit for the third consecutive session locked in the 5 percent upper circuit at Rs 12.27. In a week, Sensex and Nifty gained nearly 6 percent each, marking their best weekly performance snapping a six-week losing streak.

Talks on with over 20 countries to open market access, trade opportunities: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, announced on Friday that India is in talks with 20 additional countries to open market access and broaden trade opportunities.

He said these negotiations are aimed to build on nine Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed over the past three-and-a-half years.

These FTAs provided preferential access to 38 developed nations.

Piyush Goyal's remarks came while addressing the business leaders in Coimbatore.

"We are in discussions with, apart from these 38 countries, at least 20 more countries to open market access in all of them. The

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Eurasian region, and Israel as participants in these ongoing trade talks," he said.

Highlighting the business opportunities in Coimbatore, he said the city is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. He described Coimbatore as the power centre of South India's entrepreneurial strength and credited the region's MSMEs for providing essential policy guidance to the Centre.

"Industry leaders come and complain to me that we are getting zero-duty imports from countries where we don't get access for our goods, but they are dumping goods in our country at zero-duty. But we have not done a single FTA with any



of our competitors. All our FTAs are with developed countries where per capita income is high, where they are not competing with us in our industries, and where we can get market access to expand our businesses."

"Today two-third of

global trade is open for all of you to get preferential market access to expand your businesses," Goyal said. The minister also highlighted the integration of the national power grid as a foundational achievement for industrial growth.

"The national grid gives reliability and resilience that the data centre really requires," he said.

Amid the ongoing crisis in West Asia, Piyush Goyal recently held a virtual interaction with the Minister of Foreign Trade of United Arab Emirates Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi to explore strengthening India-UAE trade ties. "We discussed opportunities to further strengthen India-UAE trade ties and expand avenues for deeper bilateral cooperation. I look forward to advancing our strategic partnership to new heights," Goyal posted on 'X'.

Crisil upgrades Sammaan Capital to AA (positive) rating with stable outlook

New Delhi: Credit rating agency CRISIL has upgraded the long-term debt programme rating of Sammaan Capital Limited to CRISIL AA (positive)/Stable, marking a significant milestone for the Delhi-based non-banking financial company.

The upgraded rating reflects a high degree of safety with regard to timely servicing of financial obligations and indicates very low credit risk, reinforcing investor confidence in the company's financial stability.

According to an official statement released by Sammaan Capital, the upgrade comes after key structural and ownership changes that have strengthened the company's overall financial profile.

A major development

behind this improvement is the entry of International Holding Company (IHC), which has become the promoter of the company through its owned and controlled entity Avenir Investment RSC Ltd.

This transition followed the completion of a preferential issue and acquisition of a controlling stake, marking a strategic shift in the company's ownership and direction. In October last year, the IHC Group acquired a 41.2-41.5 percent controlling stake in Sammaan Capital—formerly known as Indiabulls Housing Finance—for approximately ₹8,850 crore (around USD 1 billion). This investment has played a crucial role in enhancing the company's capital base and strengthening its balance sheet, paving the

way for improved creditworthiness.

CRISIL highlighted several key factors behind the rating upgrade, including strong strategic importance and support arising from the company's linkage with the IHC Group.

The agency also pointed to sustained strong capitalisation, which provides the company with the ability to absorb potential financial shocks and maintain stability. Another contributing factor was the presence of robust financial buffers, which enhance the company's resilience in a dynamic economic environment. Additionally, CRISIL noted the company's strategic pivot towards growth, indicating a renewed focus on expanding its operations and improving performance metrics.

IT giant TCS reports strong deal wins, AI revenue growth in FY26

New Delhi: Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Thursday reported steady sequential growth and strong deal wins for FY26, even as overall annual revenue saw a marginal decline amid global macroeconomic headwinds, a TCS statement said here.

The company posted FY26 revenue of USD 30.02 billion, down 0.5 per cent year-on-year (-2.4 per cent in constant currency).

However, quarterly performance remained resilient, with Q4FY26 revenue at USD 7.62 billion, up 1.5 per cent sequentially.

A key highlight for the year was the

sharp rise in AI-led business. TCS said its annualised AI revenue crossed USD 2.3 billion in Q4FY26, reflecting accelerating enterprise adoption of artificial intelligence solutions. The growth was driven by increased deployment across enterprise transformation, digital engineering, and cloud modernisation services.

Executive Director and COO Aarthi Subramanian said FY26 marked a pivotal year for enterprise AI adoption, with strong momentum in AI-driven deals and platforms.

The company also strengthened its AI ecosystem through partnerships with

global players such as OpenAI, AMD and ABB, alongside investments in its HyperVault infrastructure to build next-generation AI capabilities.

TCS also launched AI-focused platforms and collaborations, including its Rapid Outcome AI solution built on NVIDIA technologies, aimed at helping enterprises scale AI adoption and achieve real-world business outcomes.

Despite increased investments in AI and growth initiatives, the company delivered strong profitability. Operating margin rose to 25 per cent for FY26, up 70 basis points year-on-year—the highest in four years—while net margin im-

proved to 19.8 per cent, up 80 basis points.

The company reported robust deal momentum, with total contract value (TCV) reaching USD 40.7 billion for FY26 and USD 12 billion in Q4 alone. It secured five mega deals during the year, including three in the final quarter, highlighting sustained client demand.

CEO and Managing Director K. Krithivasan said TCS has now delivered three consecutive quarters of sequential growth, supported by strong deal wins and broad-based performance across key markets.

"We are pleased to report the third

consecutive quarter of sequential growth, supported by three mega deals and a USD 12 billion TCV. While macro headwinds persist, customer conviction in technology investments remains strong," he said.

On the operational front, TCS expanded its client base, with the number of USD 100 million-plus clients rising to 66 and USD 1 million-plus clients increasing to 1,397. The company's workforce stood at 584,519 employees.

Chief Financial Officer Samir Sekaria said the company continued to invest in growth through a Build-Partner-Acquire strategy, including

acquisitions and AI-focused initiatives, while maintaining strong financial discipline and cash flows. The company proposed a final dividend of Rs 31 per share, taking total shareholder payout for FY26 to Rs 39,571 crore. TCS also continued to invest heavily in talent development, recording 69 million learning hours during the year, with over 270,000 employees gaining higher proficiency in AI and machine learning skills. Regionally, growth in Q4 was led by the UK and North America, while sectorally, energy, resources and utilities recorded the strongest sequential growth.

Olectra Unveils New Brand Identity, Adopts Tagline 'Transforming Everyday'

Hyderabad: Olectra Greentech Limited (part of the MEIL Group), India's leading electric bus manufacturer, on Friday unveiled its new brand identity as part of its strategic evolution into an innovation-driven company focused on integrated mobility and energy solutions.

The Hyderabad-based company also introduced a new tagline, "Transforming Everyday," reflecting its vision to lead the global transition towards sustainable and value-driven mobility.

Announcing the re-branding, the company said the refreshed identity signifies Olectra's transformation from a pioneering electric bus maker into a future-ready organisation committed to delivering responsible mobility and energy solutions.

The new brand positioning features a modern visual language, sharper narrative

and a unified voice aligned with its long-term strategic goals.

As part of its renewed vision, Olectra said it aims to become a trusted partner in mobility and energy solutions through accessible innovation, operational excellence and enhanced customer experience, creating long-term value for stakeholders.

The rebranding exercise is built around three key pillars - pragmatic Futurism, Accessible Innovation and Trusted Guide, which the company said will shape its approach to product development and market engagement going forward.

The company has also reinterpreted its visual identity, redesigning its central triangle into the "Olectra Prism" to symbolise structural integrity and direction, while the surrounding circle, termed the "Olectra Universe," represents the wider

ecosystem of stakeholders, cities and infrastructure it serves.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director Mahesh Babu said the new identity reflects the company's ambition and future direction.

"Olectra's new brand identity is not just a visual change it represents our ambition, mindset and the direction we are heading.

As we transform into a future-ready, innovation-led organisation delivering integrated mobility and energy solutions, this new identity reflects our core values and our commitment to transforming everyday across the mobility and energy ecosystem," he said. Backed by strong manufacturing capabilities and a growing order pipeline in the government sector, Olectra said it is entering the next phase of growth from a position of operational strength.

'Adani Group will carry forward JAL legacy,' says founder Jaiprakash Gaur

Mumbai: Founder of the Jaypee Group, Jaiprakash Gaur, on Friday expressed confidence that the legacy of Jaiprakash Associates Limited (JAL) will continue to thrive under the leadership of the Adani Group, following its selection as the successful resolution applicant.

In an official statement, Gaur said he firmly believes that under the leadership of Gautam Adani, the company will move forward with renewed energy, responsibility, and purpose while safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders.

"I have full confidence that under the leadership of Gautam Adani, the legacy of Jaiprakash Associates will be carried forward... ensuring that aspirations of all stakeholders are fulfilled," Gaur stated.

He also conveyed his respect for the decision taken by the Committee of Creditors (CoC), which selected the Adani Group as the successful bidder in the corporate insolvency resolution process.

"The Committee of Creditors has selected the Adani Group as the successful resolution applicant, and we fully respect this decision," he added.

Gaur took the opportunity to thank the Vedanta Group for its participation and interest in the bidding process, acknowledging the competitive nature of the resolution exercise. He further described the insolvency resolution process as "fair and transparent," appreciating the role played by the CoC and the resolution professionals in conducting the proceedings. JAL had en-



tered insolvency proceedings after facing significant financial stress, with the process aimed at restructuring its debt and ensuring continuity of operations under new ownership. The bid by the Adani Group to acquire JAL received approval from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on March 17, 2026, marking a major

step in resolving the company's long-standing financial challenges. However, the development was challenged by Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta, which moved the Supreme Court of India seeking a stay on the ₹14,535-crore takeover. Vedanta argued that it had earlier been declared the highest bidder and alleged that the decision was

reversed in favour of the Adani Group despite its higher offer. Agarwal claimed that Vedanta had submitted a bid of approximately ₹16,726 crore, higher than Adani's offer, and had even received prior written confirmation regarding its winning status. Despite these claims, the Supreme Court declined to stay the NCLT's decision and allowed the acquisition process to proceed. The apex court instead directed Vedanta to approach the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) for further relief and urged the tribunal to hear the matter on a priority basis. Founded in 1979, Jaiprakash Associates Limited has played a significant role in India's infrastructure and real estate sectors, developing landmark assets such as the Budd International Circuit.