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The Age of Truth

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PG 02
Gruha Lakshmi has become election Lakshmi scheme: Vijayendra

PG 03
Delhi to ink MoU for AI- driven air monitoring to manage pollution



PG 06
Rahul Gandhi to join Brijendra Singh's 'Sadbhav Yatra' in Gurugram on tomorrow



PG 07
Just stuck to the process: Samson after match-winning knock against DC



PG 08
Stock market ends on strong note amid buying across sectors

Pakistan link suspected in Punjab IED blasts near security installations

Chandigarh : Security agencies in Punjab have launched a massive investigation following twin explosions near high-security installations in Jalandhar and Amritsar. On Tuesday night, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was detonated outside the Border Security Force (BSF) Frontier Headquarters in Jalandhar. While no injuries were reported, the blast was captured on video. Simultaneously, a grenade attack was attempted at an Army camp in Amritsar, though the explosive struck a

perimeter wall and failed to breach the facility. Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav, who visited the sites to assess the situation, confirmed that initial findings point toward the involvement of Pakistani intelligence agencies. The DGP stated that the Jalandhar blast was likely triggered via a timer or remote control, possibly timed to coincide with the anniversary of "Operation Sindoor". He emphasized that Punjab has long been a target of proxy warfare and noted that several specialized teams are



now working to uncover every aspect of the conspiracy. Addressing a press conference in Amritsar, DGP Yadav dismissed claims made by the Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA) regarding alleged fatalities as completely false and an attempt to mislead the public. He revealed that the KLA and similar elements often operate under the direction of the ISI to destabilize the region. Investigators are currently utilizing human and technical intelligence, including the analysis of active mobile numbers in the vicinity during the incidents, to trace the perpetrators. The DGP assured that while security forces are on high alert due to constant inputs, they remain committed to thwarting any attempts to disturb the peace in Punjab. The incidents have prompted a significant security upgrade at the Punjab Police Headquarters in Chandigarh, where the main gate has been reinforced with bulletproof shielding. Additional personnel have been deployed to monitor all movement in the sensitive zone, which also houses the Governor's office and the Chandigarh Police Headquarters.

KLA issues death threats to DIG Sandeep Goyal and four Punjab Police Officers; vows to 'turn everything red'



Chandigarh: The Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA) has issued direct death threats against five senior Punjab Police officers, including Amritsar Border Range DIG Sandeep Goyal, in the aftermath of a late-night IED blast near the BSF Frontier Headquarters in Jalandhar. In a chilling social media post, the group marked photographs of the officers with red "X" symbols, identifying them as primary targets in a campaign it has labeled "Operation Nawa Savair". The extremist group explicitly warned DIG Sandeep Goyal that he, his family, and his close relatives are on their hit list. The message stated that the "blood of martyr Ranjit Singh" would be avenged by shedding the blood of the officer's "near and dear ones," adding the ominous claim that they would "shed so much blood that everything will look red". This vendetta is reportedly linked to a March 2026 encounter led by DIG Goyal, which resulted in the death of Ranjit Singh, an accused in the killing of two police personnel at a Gurdaspur check-post.

The threat follows the May 5 IED attack in Jalandhar, for which the KLA has claimed responsibility, alleging that two BSF soldiers were killed and three others injured. While police investigations initially suggested a vehicle fire, the subsequent KLA manifesto has forced security agencies to treat the incident as a major terror conspiracy. Intelligence agencies believe these threats are a deliberate attempt to demoralize the police force, specifically targeting officers who have been instrumental in anti-terror and anti-drug operations in the border regions. Security has been significantly beefed up for the identified officers and their families as Punjab remains on high alert. The KLA has also threatened to release an "exclusive video" of the Jalandhar blast, further heightening tensions across the state. Authorities are currently investigating the authenticity of the "Operation Nawa Savair" campaign and tracking the digital footprints of the sleeper cells suspected of distributing the viral hit list.

Congress signals openness to back Vijay's TVK in Tamil Nadu



New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday indicated that it is considering extending support to actor-turned-politician Vijay and his party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), to form a government in Tamil Nadu, with the final decision to be taken by the party state unit. In a post on X, Congress general secretary KC Venugopal said Vijay had formally approached the party seeking its backing to form the government. "TVK President Thiru Vijay has requested the Indian National Congress for support to form a Government in Tamil Nadu. He has spoken about drawing inspiration from Perumthalaivar K. Kamaraj as well, in his political mission," Venugopal said. He added that the Congress views the electoral verdict in Tamil Nadu as a mandate for a secular government committed to upholding constitutional values. "The INC is clear that the mandate in Tamil Nadu is for a secular government that is committed to protecting the Constitution in letter and spirit. The INC is determined not to have the BJP and its proxies run the Government of Tamil Nadu in any manner," he said. Venugopal said the party leadership has asked

the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) to take a final decision on the request after assessing the ground situation. "Accordingly, the Congress leadership has directed the TNCC to take a final decision on Thiru Vijay's request, keeping in view the sentiments of the state reflected in the electoral verdict," he added. The development comes amid a fluid political situation in Tamil Nadu following the Assembly election results, with parties exploring alliances to secure a majority and form the next government. According to the Election Commission of India, TVK's tally of seats stands at 108, in the 234-seat TN assembly. The Congress has got five seats. To form government, a party or alliance will need 118 seats. The Congress has traditionally been a key player in alliance politics in the state, often aligning with regional parties to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party's influence. Vijay's political outreach and his invocation of Kamaraj, a revered Congress leader and former Chief Minister, is seen as an attempt to position his party within a broader secular and regional political framework as negotiations intensify over government formation in the state.

CM Mann alleges BJP 'conspiracy' behind Jalandhar, Amritsar blasts; BJP Leaders Counter-Attack

Chandigarh: An intense political row has erupted between Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) following the IED explosions near the BSF and Army installations in Jalandhar and Amritsar. Chief Minister Mann, speaking during a 'Shukrana Yatra' at Sri Anandpur Sahib, alleged that these blasts are part of the BJP's election strategy to garner votes by creating fear among the public. He claimed that orchestrating small-scale blasts and riots in poll-bound states is a hallmark of the BJP's political style. In light of the security situation, the Chief Minister has also postponed his scheduled visit to Jalandhar. The BJP has hit back sharply at these allegations, with union Minister of State

Ravneet Singh Bittu describing the Chief Minister's statement as "absurd" and "disgraceful". Bittu pointed out that



while the Director General of Police (DGP) is citing the involvement of Pakistan's ISI, the Chief Minister is instead attempting to incite internal political friction. He challenged Mann

to file a formal case against BJP leaders if he had any evidence, rather than demoralizing security forces with such claims. BJP National Secretary Tarun Chugh also condemned the remarks, calling them a cheap political tactic. Amidst this political squabble, security has been significantly tightened across the state. The main gate of the Punjab Police Headquarters in Chandigarh has been reinforced with bulletproof shielding, and additional personnel have been deployed to monitor all movement. While the political blame game continues, the DGP confirmed that special teams are investigating the Pakistani connection and the claims made by the Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA) regarding the IED detonations.

China warns Japan over missile use, flags 'remilitarisation' concerns

Beijing: China on Wednesday sharply criticised Japan's for firing Type 88 missiles during a joint maritime exercise, warning that Tokyo's actions signal a dangerous shift away from its post-war security posture. At a regular press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian called Japan, "the aggressor" and said it "failed to deeply reflect on its historical crimes, it has even sent military forces overseas and fired offensive missiles under the pretext of security cooperation." Lin said this move by Japan reflects the Japanese right-wing forces' push for accelerated "remilitarization" of Japan. Japan's firing of offensive missiles during joint drills marked a breach of its "exclusively defence-oriented policy" and raised serious concerns about growing militarisation. He linked the move to what he described as the resurgence of "neo-militarism,"

cautioning that such developments could undermine regional peace and stability. He further urged the Japanese side to "deeply reflect on its history of militarist aggression, and honor its commitments and stay prudent in military and security areas." Lin also invoked historical context, stating that Japan has yet to fully reckon with its past aggression in Asia. He urged Tokyo to reflect on its history, adhere to its commitments, and exercise restraint in military and security matters. Japan's Self-Defense Forces fired a Type 88 anti-ship missile during a joint maritime exercise with US, Australian, and

Philippine forces on Wednesday, hitting a decommissioned Philippine Navy ship in waters facing the South China Sea. The drill took place as Manila and Tokyo began talks on a potential defence equipment transfer, made possible by Japan's decision to scrap restrictions on military exports. Separately, China criticised the United Kingdom's latest sanctions targeting entities accused of supplying drone components to Russia, including two based in China. Lin said Beijing opposes unilateral sanctions lacking UN Security Council authorisation and has lodged formal protests with London. He reiterated that China has maintained strict controls over dual-use exports and that normal economic cooperation between China and Russia should not be disrupted. Beijing, he added, would take necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of its companies.

Iran has no unlimited pain threshold, diplomatic window narrowing: Rubio

Washington: Alongside his remarks on the Strait of Hormuz crisis, Secretary of State Marco Rubio used press briefing to lay out the US position on Iran's nuclear programme, the War Powers Act, and the ongoing diplomatic push for a negotiated resolution, warning Tehran that the window for a deal is "narrowing fast." Speaking at a Washington press briefing, Rubio dismissed Iran's repeated claims of peaceful nuclear intent as "not credible" and outlined a clear choice for the regime to pursue reconstruction, stability, and prosperity through serious negotiations, or risk growing isolation, economic collapse, and eventual defeat. Rubio was blunt on Iran's repeated claims of having no interest in nuclear weapons are simply not credible. "They have always said that; they just don't mean it," he said. He pointed to Iran's

development of long-range delivery missiles capable of reaching much of Europe, large underground centrifuges built inside mountains and caves, and its stockpile of highly enriched uranium at 60 percent, to make at the front end in order to make those talks worthwhile," he said. He acknowledged the difficulty of dealing with a fractured Iranian leadership. Talks have been slowed because "an offer will be made, and then it takes five or six days to get a response; you have to get it through their whole system, and they have to find the supreme leader wherever he hides." He also noted a visible divide within the regime between pragmatic elected officials and hardline clerics and IRGC figures who, he said, "could care less" about the suffering of ordinary Iranians. Rubio offered Iran a clear choice is to opt for a diplomatic path leading to "reconstruction, prosperity, and stability," or "growing isolation, economic collapse, and ultimately total defeat." He added that Iran does have a high pain threshold, "but they don't have an unlimited pain threshold. Nobody does."



White House believes it's moving closer to initial agreement with Iran, opening door to nuclear talks in short MOU

Washington: The White House believes it is moving closer to an initial agreement with Iran on a short, one-page MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) aimed at ending the war and opening the door toward wider nuclear negotiations, according to multiple US officials and sources familiar with the discussions, reports Axios. As per officials, the next 48 hours will be critical, with Washington waiting for Iranian response on several unresolved points. Though nothing has been finalised yet, sources have called the current talks as the closest thing to an agreement between the two sides ever since the conflict began.

Under the draft framework, Iran would agree to pause uranium enrichment for a lengthy period, while the US would begin easing sanctions and release billions of dollars in frozen Iranian funds. Both sides would also start lifting restrictions linked to the Strait of Hormuz, where shipping has been severely disrupted for weeks. Many of the terms laid out in the memo would be contingent on a final agreement being reached, leaving the possibility of renewed war or an extended limbo in which the hot war has stopped but nothing is truly resolved. Inside the White House, officials have maintained

that divisions within Iran's leadership remain a major obstacle towards reaching any long-term agreement. Some in Washington are still doubtful that Tehran's various political and military factions can unite behind even a temporary deal, though there is nonetheless optimism in Washington about a deal at several points during previous rounds of negotiations and during the current war, but have yet to reach one. The proposed one-page, 14-point memorandum is being negotiated by Trump envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, alongside Iranian officials, both directly and through mediators.

In its current form, the document would formally end active fighting and launch a 30-day negotiating window focused on reopening the Strait, placing limits on Iran's nuclear programme and unwinding parts of the US sanctions regime, with discussions set to possibly take place in

either Islamabad or Geneva. During that period, Iranian shipping restrictions and the US naval blockade would be eased step by step. A US official said Washington would still reserve the right to restore the blockade or resume military action if negotiations failed. One of the biggest

sticking points remains the length of the proposed enrichment freeze. Sources say the US is pushing for a moratorium lasting up to 20 years, while Iran proposed five. Current discussions are centred somewhere between 12 and 15 years. The US also wants automatic penalties if Iran violates the arrangement, extending the moratorium, with Iran agreeing only to enrich its uranium supply for solely civilian purposes up to a limit of 3.67 per cent. Iran would also commit in the MOU to never seek a nuclear weapon or conduct weaponization-related activities. According to a US official, the parties are discussing a clause whereby

Iran would commit not to operate underground nuclear facilities, and further would commit to an enhanced inspections regime, including snap inspections by UN inspectors, according to the US official. In exchange, the US would gradually lift sanctions and release frozen Iranian assets held abroad. Two sources also claimed Iran may now be willing to remove its stockpile of highly enriched uranium from the country — something Tehran had repeatedly rejected earlier since the war started. One option reportedly under discussion would involve transferring the material to Washington, though it seems

unlikely. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that "we don't have to have the actual agreement written in one day", calling the negotiations "highly complex and technical." "But we have to have a diplomatic solution that is very clear on the topics they are willing to negotiate on and the extent of the concessions they are willing to make at the front end in order to make it worthwhile," he added. But Rubio also warned that uncertainty remained over whether Iran's leadership was prepared to follow through on a deal, calling some senior figures in Tehran "insane in the brain".



Gruha Lakshmi has become election Lakshmi scheme: Vijayendra

Bengaluru: Karnataka BJP president Vijayendra Yedyurappa on Wednesday mounted an aggressive political offensive against the Congress government's flagship guarantee schemes, alleging that the Siddaramaiah administration had converted the state's ambitious Gruha Lakshmi programme into an "Election Lakshmi scheme" designed to influence voters ahead of crucial local body polls.

The sharp attack signals the BJP's attempt to reframe the Congress government's welfare narrative from "social guarantee" to "electoral strategy," setting the stage for a major political confrontation in Karnataka ahead of the Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat elections.

Addressing reporters in Chitradurga, Vijayendra accused the Congress government of deliberately timing the release of Gruha Lakshmi instalments to coincide with elections. "Gruha Lakshmi has now become Election Lakshmi. Payments were withheld for months and suddenly released during the by-election period.

The next instalment may again come only when local body elections arrive," he alleged.

The BJP leader claimed the Congress government was weaponising welfare schemes for political gains rather than implementing them as a sustained social security initiative.



According to him, the ruling party was using guarantees as an "electoral inducement mechanism" to consolidate its voter base.

In a direct challenge to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Vijayendra questioned the Congress government's confidence in its own guarantee model.

"If the guarantees are truly successful and people are satisfied, why did the Chief Minister have to camp in Bagalkot for nearly 15 days during the by-election campaign?" he asked.

The remark is politically significant because the Congress has consistently projected its five guarantees as the backbone of its governance model and the primary reason behind its sweeping 2023 Assembly election victory. By branding Gruha Lakshmi as

"Election Lakshmi," the BJP is attempting to turn the Congress party's biggest political asset into a liability.

Vijayendra also sought to draw a contrast between Congress guarantees and welfare programmes introduced during former Chief Minister BS Yedyurappa's tenure. He said schemes such as Bhagyalakshmi, Sandhya Suraksha and bicycle distribution programmes were implemented with a "long-term developmental vision" rather than electoral calculations.

Despite recent setbacks in by-elections, Vijayendra asserted that the BJP remained politically confident and organisationally strong.

"There is no question of BJP workers becoming demoralised. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, and with Amit Shah and

national president Nitin Nabin guiding the party, we will strengthen the organisation further and return to power in Karnataka," he said.

The BJP leader also intensified the party's attack on the Congress over the Sringeri election controversy. Referring to the Karnataka High Court ordered recount in which BJP candidate Jeevaraj was declared elected, Vijayendra demanded apologies from Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar over earlier allegations of vote theft.

"Rahul Gandhi travelled across the country speaking about vote theft. After the re-count, Congress leaders should apologise to the people," he said.

He further accused the ruling party of undermining democratic institutions and urged the Speaker of the Karnataka Assembly to immediately administer oath to Jeevaraj.

"If there is respect for democracy and constitutional values, the Speaker can administer the oath immediately. The Speaker should rise above politics and not function under political pressure," Vijayendra said.

With the Congress defending its guarantees as a welfare revolution and the BJP increasingly portraying them as politically timed cash transfers, Karnataka's welfare politics is rapidly emerging as the central battlefield ahead of the next round of elections in the State.

Oath ceremony for new Bengal CM on May 9 at Brigade; BJP holds key talks with chief secretary

Kolkata: BJP state president Samik Bhattacharya said that the oath-taking ceremony of the new chief minister will take place on May 9 at Brigade Parade Ground, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and union Home Minister Amit Shah will be present.

"The oath-taking ceremony will take place at Brigade Parade Ground on May 9. Preparations are underway for a smooth and dignified swearing-in ceremony, and we are coordinating closely with the administration to ensure everything is in place," Bhattacharya said.

Bhattacharya, along with BJP's central observer for the state Sunil Bansal, Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato, and Soumitra Khan, met Chief Secretary Dushyant Nariwala on Tuesday evening to discuss arrangements for the event.

A meeting of BJP MLAs has been scheduled for May 8, where the leadership is expected to finalise key decisions ahead of the swearing-in.

Though there have been growing speculations over the BJP's first chief ministerial face in the state, the state BJP president refused to make any comment on it.

However, before entering the state secretariat at Nabanna, the BJP state presi-



dent asserted that post-poll violence would not be tolerated and reiterated the party's firm stance against what he termed the "Trinamoolisation" of the BJP.

Addressing the media, Bhattacharya said, "This is largely a fight between Trinamool and Trinamool. Some people are carrying the BJP's flag and doing all these things. This will not be tolerated. switching sides from the Trinamool Congress to the BJP in the wake of the election results would not be accommodated in the party."

"We will not allow opportunistic entrants to dilute the ideology and legacy of the BJP. The party has been built through decades of hard work and sacrifice," he said.

"If any BJP worker or a leader is found resorting to violence, he will be thrown out of the party. I, being the

BJP rigged the polls in West Bengal: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow: Announcing his party's decision of snapping ties with poll strategy firm I-PAC, Samajwadi Party President and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday leveled serious allegations against the BJP and claimed that the saffron party had rigged the polls in West Bengal.

He said that the India alliance stood firm until the last moment and won the Lok Sabha elections, but even after forming a minority government, opposition parties were cheated. SP President Akhilesh Yadav said that the BJP committed vote robbery in West Bengal. He added that the BJP did not hesitate to use the police administration illegally. "The BJP has nothing to counter the PDA in Uttar Pradesh. The PDA has the largest vote share and that is why the BJP is perplexed" said Akhilesh. Akhilesh Yadav referred to the BJP's "10 Number Model" regarding alleged irregularities in various places, including Chandigarh and Kundarki. Akhilesh Yadav launched his sharpest attack on the Kundarki and Rampur by-elections, saying that there was massive rigging in

these elections. He called it a "multi-layer election mafia" and alleged that votes were robbed.

Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party has terminated its On the termination of SP's



agreement with election strategy firm I-PAC. Akhilesh said "Yes, we had a relationship with them. They worked with us for a few months. But now we are unable to work together because we are short on funds; we cannot provide that much." He further said, "Some people have told us about a company that can help us to win elections. They've advised us to conduct surveys through C-Voters. There's an AVM company, so keep them on board. If you want to run negative propaganda against some-

one on social media, connect with a 360-degree company. Fund them". But we have now decided not to engage anyone, he clearly stated.

Akhilesh Yadav entrusted the I-PAC with his 2027

election strategy in Uttar Pradesh. In 2021, the I-PAC helped the DMK win in Tamil Nadu and the TMC in West Bengal. Reports say that outgoing Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had advised Akhilesh Yadav to hire IPAC. Akhilesh Yadav held his first meeting with the company's officials in Delhi in December 2025. They met again in January of this year when he visited West Bengal. Following this, the Samajwadi Party hired

IPAC. The Samajwadi Party had assigned the data analysis and strategy to a Mumbai-based company, Show Time Consulting, while a Karnataka-based company is handling the survey work.

According to sources, I-PAC has been tasked with campaigning as well as training booth-level workers, using app-based tools to increase voter turnout and highlighting the weaknesses of opposition parties.

However, while addressing the party workers at the state party office, Akhilesh Yadav said that the 2027 assembly elections will be a big fight to save both democracy and the Constitution.

He added that the SP is determined to give representation to half the population.

"Women's reservation should be party-based. First, there should be a caste census, then the reservation system should be implemented in proportion to the population" he said. During the PC, the SP president honored Satyam Yadav and Ishaan Shukla, the top students of Pratappur's high school and intermediate examinations, by giving them laptops.

BJP MLA BP Harish faces arrest in 2023 caste abuse case

Bengaluru: Karnataka BJP MLA BP Harish is starting at possible arrest after a special court for elected representatives in Bengaluru issued a warrant against him in connection with a 2023 caste abuse case, citing his failure to appear despite repeated summons.

Special Judge Santosh Gajanan Bhat directed the police to secure the presence of the senior BJP leader and produce him before the court on May 7, escalating the legal heat on the legislator.

The case pertains to alleged derogatory remarks made by Harish against members of the Dalit community during an interaction with civic workers after the 2023 Karnataka Assembly election results. According to the complaint filed by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader D Hanumanthappa at the Harihar Town Police Station, Harish allegedly told civic workers that despite receiving internal reservation benefits, they had failed to support his party and were

"ungrateful".

The remarks triggered outrage among sections of the community and led to the registration of an FIR under provisions dealing with caste-based insults and atrocities. Although Harish reportedly apologised during a reconciliation meeting with community leaders later the same day, the complainant alleged that the BJP MLA subsequently defended and justified his controversial remarks, prompting further legal action.

With the MLA repeatedly skipping court appearances, the special court finally issued an arrest warrant, marking a significant escalation in the politically sensitive case involving a sitting BJP legislator.

The development comes at a time when the BJP has been aggressively targeting the Congress government in Karnataka over governance and law-and-order issues, even as one of its own legislators faces mounting legal trouble.

Governor confers unit citations on Security Forces in Manipur

Imphal: Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday presided over the Investiture Ceremony for the Governor's Unit Citation 2026 at the Manipur State Film Development Society in Imphal, recognising outstanding contributions of security forces operating in the state.

The ceremony brought together representatives from the Army, paramilitary forces, and state police, marking a significant occasion to honour their exemplary service, dedication, and commitment to maintaining peace and stability in Manipur.

During the event, the Governor conferred citations upon select units drawn from multiple forces, acknowledging their professionalism and resilience while operating in challenging and often volatile conditions.

The honoured units included formations from the Army, Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, and the Border Roads Organisation, along with district police units from across Manipur. Among the recipients of the Governor's Unit Citation

2026 were the 19 Garhwal Rifles, 2 Mahar Regiment, 25 Border Roads Task Force, and multiple battalions of the Assam Rifles, including the 17, 38, and 40 units.

Additionally, district police units from Kakching, Senapati, and Churachandpur were recognised for their consistent efforts in maintaining law and order at the grassroots level amid complex local challenges.

Other awardees included the 10 Battalion of the BSF and the 143 Battalion of the CRPF, both of which have played key roles in supporting peacekeeping and security operations in the region.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Bhalla described the ceremony as more than a formal event, calling it a moment to reflect on the sacrifices and dedication of the forces working tirelessly for the people of Manipur.

He praised the courage, discipline, and unwavering commitment of the personnel, highlighting their role as pillars of strength in ensuring stability during difficult times faced by the state in recent years. The Governor emphasised that the citation sym-

bolises collective excellence rather than individual achievement, underlining the importance of teamwork, coordination, and shared responsibility in successful security operations.

He further noted that the restrained and judicious use of force by security personnel has significantly contributed to building public trust and facilitating the gradual restoration of normalcy across affected areas.

Stressing the need for continued collaboration, he called for stronger coordination between security forces and the civil administration to sustain peace and foster long-term development in the state.

Also present at the ceremony was Chief Minister Yumnam Khechhand Singh, who commended both central and state forces for their humanitarian approach and their efforts in protecting lives across diverse communities. Deputy Chief Minister Losli Dikho, along with other ministers, legislators, a Member of Parliament, and senior civil, military, and police officials, attended the event, reflecting broad institutional support for the security forces.

BJP win in West Bengal result of decades of struggle by party workers: JPS Rathore

Lucknow: While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured victories in three of the five state assembly elections, it was the triumph in West Bengal that captured national attention. For BJP leaders, this win represents a landmark achievement.

In an exclusive interview with UNI, Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister JPS Rathore, who spent several months in West Bengal during the campaign, described the win as a historic breakthrough after decades of persistent effort, the BJP had succeeded in breaking this stronghold, making the achievement truly special for the party.

In the coming days, the BJP intends to work with honesty and diligence to bring about change, rather than pursuing a spirit of revenge.

JPS Rathore discussed the Bengal elections in detail. He said that Mamata Banerjee failed to recognize the undercurrent of public sentiment. The electorate was so eager for change that they were determined to achieve it at any cost. The non-Muslim

community in Bengal voted for the BJP in a united manner, resulting in a landslide victory.

Rathore said that Mamata Banerjee failed to recognize the undercurrent of public sentiment in the Bengal elections. The public was so angry that they wanted change at all costs. The non-Muslim community in Bengal voted for the BJP in a completely integrated manner, resulting in such a landslide victory.

Indeed, Rathore, considered an expert in micro-management, swayed the electoral mathematics in the BJP's favor in several key assembly constituencies. The BJP had fielded four ministers and one former minister from Uttar Pradesh in West Bengal for the elections beginning in October.

For electoral purposes, West Bengal was divided into five regions, with three regions assigned to state Cooperation Minister JPS Rathore, former Cabinet Minister Suresh Rana, and Uttarakhand Education Minister Dhan Singh Rawat. Cooperation Minister JPS Rathore, who had

previously headed the election war room in Uttar Pradesh, was responsible for 35 assembly constituencies. The BJP won 33 of these 35

constituencies. Responding to a question about the BJP's strategy in Bengal, Rathore said, "The party had previously been

perceived as an urban-centric force. However, in Bengal, the opposite was true: the BJP performed stronger in rural areas than in urban centers."

Rainfall brings sharp drop in daytime temperatures across Uttar Pradesh

Lucknow: A significant change in weather patterns was observed in Uttar Pradesh following the rains on Tuesday, with a notable drop recorded in daytime temperatures.

According to the Meteorological Department, maximum temperatures across most parts of the state remained considerably below normal levels.

In the state capital, Lucknow, the maximum temperature was recorded at 28.0 degrees Celsius—11.4 degrees below normal—while the minimum temperature stood at 20.2 degrees Celsius, which is 3.4 degrees below normal.

The impact of this drop in temperature was clearly evident in several cities. In Kanpur, the maximum temperature was 29.4 degrees Celsius (11.1 degrees below normal), while in Barabanki and Basti, temperatures were recorded at more than 10 degrees below normal levels.

In Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the maximum temperature was approximately 32 degrees Celsius in Varanasi (8 degrees below normal) and 33.6 degrees Celsius in Prayagraj (about 7 degrees below normal). In Jhansi, located in the Bundelkhand region, a temperature of 35.0 degrees Celsius was re-

corded—6.9 degrees below normal.

According to the Meteorological Department, there remains a possibility of rain accompanied by thunder and lightning in various parts of the state over the next 24 hours.

In Lucknow and its surrounding areas, partly cloudy skies and conditions conducive to thunderstorms are expected. The maximum and minimum temperatures here are forecast to hover around 31 and 20 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Meteorological Department has also issued a warning regarding storms and lightning strikes.

With the MLA repeatedly skipping court appearances, the special court finally issued an arrest warrant, marking a significant escalation in the politically sensitive case involving a sitting BJP legislator. The development comes at a time when the BJP has been aggressively targeting the Congress government in Karnataka over governance and law-and-order issues, even as one of its own legislators faces mounting legal trouble.

Briefs :

Counterfeit branded garments racket busted at Vasant Kunj Hotel; one arrested

New Delhi: The Crime Branch of Delhi Police has busted an organised racket involved in selling counterfeit branded garments and accessories from a luxury hotel exhibition in Vasant Kunj. The operation led to the seizure of a massive quantity of fake products, including apparel, footwear, watches, and accessories of several high-end brands, along with cash, digital payment devices, and other incriminating materials. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Pankaj Kumar said that the accused, Iqbal (51), a resident of Nuh, Haryana, was apprehended from the spot where he was actively managing the exhibition. He added that the accused was knowingly selling counterfeit products under the guise of a "discount sale," misleading customers into believing they were purchasing genuine branded goods at reduced prices. According to police, the racket operated by setting up temporary exhibitions in prominent hotels and convention centres, offering heavy discounts to attract buyers. Fake products were presented as original items, with proper-looking bills and modern payment methods such as swipe machines and UPI QR codes used to create an appearance of authenticity. The investigation revealed that the accused was working under the direction of another accused, identified as the mastermind behind organising such exhibitions and supplying counterfeit goods across multiple cities. Large-scale recoveries during the raid indicate a well-structured network dealing in bulk counterfeit merchandise. Further investigation into the matter is ongoing.

After poll wins, BJP leaders pray at Delhi's Kali Bari temple, thank voters

New Delhi: BJP National President Nitin Nabin, along with the party's Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva and CM Rekha Gupta, on Tuesday offered prayers at the revered Maa Kali Bari Temple located in C.R. Park, expressing gratitude for the party's poll win in Bengal, Assam, and Puducherry. After offering prayers, Nabin and all the party leaders congratulated the people of all five states that went to elections and expressed special gratitude to the people of Bengal, Assam, and Puducherry. He said that the victory achieved on the sacred land of Maa Kali and Maa Kamakhya is a blessing, and that the party leaders had come to bow their heads before the revered Goddess. In his prayers offered to Goddess Maa Kali, Maa Kamakhya, and Maa Durga, Nabin sought blessings for everyone, seeking that under the leadership of the national leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, work can be done for the development of West Bengal, Assam.

Boy 'strangled' to death in Delhi; 2 minors questioned

New Delhi: A 13-year-old boy was allegedly strangled to death in south Delhi's Bhati Mines area, police on Wednesday. The victim, a class 9 student, had gone out to play with friends on Tuesday evening but did not return home, following which his family filed a complaint, they said. "During the search operation, a team recovered the boy's body from a nearby forest area," a police officer said. Preliminary investigation suggested that the boy was strangled to death, he said, adding that efforts are under way to ascertain the exact sequence of events.

Delhi to ink MoU for AI-driven air monitoring to manage pollution

New Delhi: Taking a stride towards pollution mitigation, Delhi government's Department of Environment will be exploring use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technology for monitoring the air quality, a senior minister said on Wednesday.

For this, the Delhi government led by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is all set to ink a Memorandum of Understanding with the AIRAWAT Research Foundation, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi Minister Manjinder Sirsa said.

The proposed MoU also aims to build a cleaner, greener and a more scientifically managed national capital and create a collaborative framework between the state's Environment Department and AIRAWAT for designing, developing and operationalising AI-driven, sensor-enabled and analytics-based systems to monitor, manage and reduce air pollution in the national capital. The partnership will support areas like hyper-local air



quality monitoring, predictive forecasting, source attribution, decision-support systems, policy support and capacity building.

According to the minister, the proposed collaboration is expected to support the government in generating sharper insights into pollution patterns, identifying localised pollution sources and enabling timely interventions.

Sirsa said the city needs technology-backed, trans-

parent and actionable solutions to deal with the long-standing challenge of air pollution.

"This MoU with AIRAWAT Research Foundation reflects our resolve to build a smarter, more responsive environmental governance system," Sirsa added. He informed that the collaboration is designed to unlock research-led possibilities without placing any immediate financial burden on the government.

Sirsa underlined that the partnership is not limited to technology deployment alone, but also aims to strengthen institutional capacity within the government system.

The aim is to have Delhi's pollution response that is driven by data, guided by science and supported by robust institutional coordination, he said, adding that such partnerships are crucial for creating long-term, scalable solutions.

Congress criticises MCD sealing notices, alleges threat to livelihoods in residential areas

New Delhi: The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee has criticised the Municipal Corporation of Delhi over recent notices issued regarding commercial activities in residential areas, warning that the move could trigger large-scale sealing actions impacting small traders.

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav said that shopkeepers and small business operators across residential localities are being served notices as part of a survey exercise linked to a directive of the Supreme Court of India.

He alleged that instead of offering clarity or reassurance, the ongoing process has created anxiety among traders who fear possible enforcement measures.

According to Yadav, the Supreme Court's order is meant for identification and reporting of commercial activities operating in residential zones. However, he claimed that the manner in which the MCD is conducting the exercise suggests preparations for stricter action, including sealing of es-

tablishments.

This, he said, has led to widespread concern among thousands of small business owners who rely on such spaces for their livelihood.

Yadav further stated that initial reports of sealing activity have already emerged from certain areas, including Uttam Nagar. He cautioned that if the issue is not handled carefully, it could result in significant disruption to livelihoods, particularly for those operating small-scale businesses.

The Congress leader also pointed to what he described as inconsistencies in government policy.

He noted that while efforts are being made to regularise unauthorised colonies,



notices are simultaneously being issued to commercial establishments in similar areas.

This, he argued, has created confusion among both residents and traders regarding the government's approach.

Yadav emphasised that traders operating in unauthorised, regularised, and even approved colonies are particularly vulnerable.

Many of them, he said, depend on residential neighbourhoods to run their businesses due to limited availability of designated commercial spaces. He also recalled previous sealing drives in Delhi, stating that such actions had earlier affected thousands of families and small enterprises.

Negligence allegations over open drain death in Mukundpur, AAP targets MCD & BJP

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged administrative negligence by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) following the death of a two-year-old girl who fell into an open drain in Mukundpur Part-2.

AAP MLA Sanjeev Jha, who visited the bereaved family, said the incident occurred due to an uncovered drain that had been transferred to MCD from the Flood and Irrigation Department last year.

He alleged that despite the handover, the drain was not properly secured, leading to the fatal accident.

Jha questioned the responsibility of civic agencies, claiming that while action was being taken against an engineer of the Flood and Irrigation Department, officials of the MCD were being shielded.

He demanded accountability from the civic body and compensation for the victim's family.

He further stated that



residents in the area had earlier raised concerns about the uncovered drain and warned authorities about the risk, but no preventive action was taken.

According to him, under existing arrangements, maintenance responsibility of such drains lies with the municipal body after transfer, and any remaining uncovered portions should have been addressed before or after handover.

Jha also referred to administrative correspondence between departments in July 2025, claiming that the drain had been formally trans-

ferred after cleaning, making it the responsibility of the corporation thereafter.

He alleged that the incident reflects broader issues of sanitation and drainage maintenance in several parts of the city, particularly in areas represented by the ruling party in the civic body.

The MLA also said that communication has been sent to concerned departments seeking that the remaining portion of the drain be covered within a few days, though he added that such measures cannot compensate for the loss suffered by the family.

Delhi Govt announces pay-hike for vocational & Samagra Shiksha teachers

New Delhi: The Delhi Government has approved a significant salary hike for vocational teachers and educators working under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced following a Cabinet meeting held on Tuesday.

The decision is aimed at improving financial security and morale among teachers who play a crucial role in delivering skill-based and inclusive education across the capital.

The revised pay structure will benefit around 1,131 vocational teachers engaged in providing practical training across various disciplines in Delhi schools.

Their monthly salaries have been increased to ₹38,100, a substantial rise from the earlier range of ₹20,000 to ₹23,000.

In addition, teachers working at 784 centres under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan will now receive ₹35,420 per month, up from their pre-

vious salary of ₹21,000.

The hike also extends to educators at Special Training Centres, which focus on bringing out-of-school chil-

dren back into the formal education system.

According to the Chief Minister, the revised salaries bring Samagra Shiksha teachers on par with primary and upper primary teachers in Delhi. Gupta described the move as more than just a financial measure, calling it a

recognition of the dedication and hard work of teachers who operate in challenging environments.

She emphasised that



these educators often work at the grassroots level to ensure that children who have dropped out or never attended school are given a second chance at education.

The Chief Minister noted that improved financial stability is expected to boost teacher motivation and enhance the overall quality of

education delivery. She highlighted that motivated and satisfied teachers are essential for building a strong and effective education system.

Reaffirming her government's commitment, Gupta said the broader goal is to ensure that no child in Delhi is left behind in accessing education.

She underlined the importance of Special Training Centres, describing them as a lifeline for children who are outside the formal schooling system. These centres play a vital role in mainstreaming such children and preparing them for integration into regular schools. Gupta stressed that teachers are at the heart of this effort, as they guide, support, and inspire children to continue their education journey. She added that the government's vision goes beyond enrolment, focusing on encouraging students to learn meaningfully and build a secure future.

AAP questions Delhi Government's response to Vivek Vihar fire, alleges delay and victim-blaming

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday criticised the Delhi Government over the recent Vivek Vihar fire tragedy, alleging serious lapses in emergency response and accusing authorities of shifting responsibility onto the victims.

Delhi unit chief Saubh Bharadwaj questioned official claims that a single staircase in the building hampered escape efforts, stating that the circumstances surrounding the incident require deeper scrutiny. He pointed out that nine people, including a young child, lost their lives in the blaze, raising concerns about the effectiveness and timeliness of res-

cue operations.

Bharadwaj alleged that fire services took nearly 50 minutes to initiate effective firefighting measures after receiving the alert.

He also raised doubts over reports suggesting inadequate water pressure in fire brigade equipment, calling for clarity on the issue.

The AAP leader urged Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and minister Ashish Sood to provide a detailed explanation of the city's emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.

According to him, attributing the tragedy solely to structural issues such as a single staircase or installed window grills does not fully

account for the scale of the casualties.

He argued that a faster and more coordinated response could potentially have reduced the number of casualties.

The AAP reiterated its demand for a thorough and transparent investigation into the Vivek Vihar fire incident. The party also called for systemic improvements in fire safety infrastructure and emergency response systems to prevent such tragedies in the future.

The incident has intensified the political debate in Delhi, with opposition parties demanding accountability while raising broader concerns about urban safety and disaster preparedness.

Citing accounts from local residents, he claimed that fire brigade vehicles reached the spot after a delay and took additional time

to begin operations.

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Delhi Police bust fake currency scam, two arrested for duping youth with toy notes

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has busted a fake currency scam in the Outer North district, where two accused allegedly duped a 21-year-old youth of ₹1 lakh by handing over bundles of toy notes labelled "Children Bank."

The victim, a tour and travel operator from Burari, was reportedly lured through Instagram with promises of illegal currency exchange and unusually high returns.

According to police officials, the fraudsters used social media to target young individuals, presenting the scheme as a quick-profit opportunity involving so-called "rejected bank notes."

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North)

Hareshwar Swami said the accused have been identified as Jitender from Rajasthan and Sandeep from Haryana.

He stated that the duo trapped the victim by offering counterfeit or "rejected" currency at discounted rates, gradually convincing him to part with his money.

The victim initially paid ₹50,000 and was later persuaded to hand over another ₹50,000 after the accused fabricated an emotional excuse to gain his trust. Police said the final exchange took place near Singhu Border, where the accused delivered a sealed packet purportedly containing genuine currency. Upon opening the packet, the victim discovered around 600 fake notes bearing labels

such as "Bharatiya Manoranjan Bank" and "Children Bank of India 500 Full of Fun."

Realising he had been cheated, the victim attempted to confront the accused, leading to a brief chase in the area. Police teams intervened promptly, leading to the arrest of both accused individuals. During the operation, officers recovered ₹50,000 in cash along with fake currency notes and a bag containing over ₹1.32 lakh. A car allegedly used in executing the crime was also seized as part of the investigation. Officials said the accused exploited online platforms to identify and target unsuspecting victims with fraudulent schemes.

Delhi Govt orders removal of JE over minor girl's death in open drain

New Delhi : The Delhi Government on Tuesday said it has dismissed a contractual Junior Engineer (JE) from service and ordered a safety audit after a two-year-old girl died after falling into an open drain near her home in the Mukundpur Part-II area of outer Delhi. Reacting to the incident, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta expressed deep sorrow, calling it "extremely distressing and alarming," and asserted that such negligence was not acceptable under any circumstances.

Acting on her directives, the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) Department has dismissed a contractual JE from service with immediate effect. "Accountability will be fixed and

culprits will not be spared," said CM Rekha.

The Chief Minister stressed that ensuring the safety of citizens, especially children, is the government's top priority. She directed all departments concerned to immediately identify open drains and other hazardous locations within their jurisdictions and take urgent corrective measures.

The police said on May 3, they received information at the Bhalswa Dairy police station that a toddler fell into a drain. After getting information, the police launched an intensive search operation. During the operation, the toddler was found inside a drain located about 15 metres away from her residence. She was rushed to BJRM

Hospital where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

According to the police, family members suspect no foul play. Prima facie, the incident appears to be accidental fall and drowning. The girl was playing outside when she accidentally fell into the open drain. She could not come out of it due to its depth, an official said. The police said an appropriate action would be taken after an enquiry, including the post-mortem report, or in case any complaint is received from the family members. The police said on May 3, they received information at the Bhalswa Dairy police station that a toddler fell into a drain. After getting information, the police launched an intensive search operation.

Heatwave advisory issued by residents' welfare body

New Delhi : Amid intensifying heatwave conditions in the Capital, the Urban Residents' Joint Action (URJA) on Tuesday issued a comprehensive advisory to Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), calling for immediate preparedness and coordinated community action to safeguard public health.

A copy of the advisory has also been sent to the Chief Secretary and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Commissioner, seeking institutional support for the RWA-led initiatives during the peak summer period. With temperatures con-

tinuing to soar and forecasts indicating prolonged heat stress, URJA underlined the crucial role the RWAs play in mobilising residents, particularly in dense urban neighbourhoods, to adopt preventive and responsive measures.

The advisory emphasised the need for awareness and timely communication, urging RWAs to disseminate heat safety guidelines through notice boards, social media groups and community meetings. Residents have been encouraged to stay updated on heat alerts and advisories issued by the authorities. Highlighting the importance of hydration,

URJA asked RWAs to ensure the availability of clean drinking water in common areas and promote shaded or cooled spaces, especially for frontline workers such as security guards, sanitation staff and daily wage earners who are more exposed to extreme temperatures.

Special attention has been sought for vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children and those with pre-existing health conditions.

The RWAs have been advised to create community support systems and conduct regular check-ins to prevent heat-related illnesses. The advisory also rec-

ommends limiting outdoor activities during peak hours between 12 noon and 4 pm, and adjusting work schedules for maintenance staff wherever feasible.

On emergency preparedness, the RWAs have been asked to keep first-aid kits ready and spread awareness about symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, while maintaining updated contact details of nearby healthcare facilities.

In the long term, URJA has called for sustainable interventions such as tree plantation drives, terrace gardening and water conservation measures to help mitigate the urban heat island effect.

Editorial

The Vise of a Twisted Mentality

The escalating series of inhumane incidents from Nasrapur and Chakan in Pune to various corners of the country has laid bare the terrifying reality lurking within the very fabric of our society. These occurrences are not merely criminal acts; they are gaping wounds reflecting the failure of our collective sensitivity, our moral values, and our systemic institutions. The relentless succession of atrocities surfacing every few hours serves as stark proof that, beneath the veneer of civilization, a deeply disturbed, twisted, and insecure society is taking shape. The issue at hand is not solely about the perpetrators; it concerns the twisted mindset that breeds such acts, and the systemic framework that repeatedly fails to prevent them.

The brutal atrocity in Nasrapur, Pune; the barbaric assault on a young child in Chakan; and the life-threatening knife attack carried out in broad daylight fueled by unrequited love have sent shockwaves not only through Pune but across the entire state of Maharashtra and the nation. However, to harbor the illusion that such incidents occur exclusively in Pune and that all is well elsewhere would be nothing short of self-deception. From the disturbing case in Badlapur to instances of harassment in the narrowest of lanes, the relentless cycle of violence against women and children shows no signs of abating. These inhumane incidents, surfacing at intervals of just a few hours, have once again exposed the hideous face lurking behind society's so-called 'civilized' mask. Fundamentally, we become aware of these incidents only because they make it onto police records; however, due to social fear and the stigma attached to such matters, countless atrocities never even reach the doorstep of a police station. Consequently, the reality is far more terrifying and widespread than the picture currently visible to us.

When such incidents come to light, it is only natural for public opinion to be outraged. Through candlelight marches, road blockades, strikes, and protests, ordinary citizens express their indignation. However, concurrently, a perverse trend has been gaining ground on social media—one that seeks to inject politics, caste, and religion even into such sensitive issues. Instead of acknowledging the gravity of the crime, these attempts to exploit the situation for political gain cast serious doubts upon the very essence of humanity. While the demand for the death penalty for such monsters is entirely justified, this issue cannot be resolved through mere slogans alone. Loopholes in law enforcement and the inordinate delays in the delivery of justice have emerged as the greatest enablers for criminals. There was much discussion regarding stringent laws—such as the 'Shakti' Act—aimed at ensuring women's safety; yet, in reality, how many criminals have actually been executed within the stipulated 30 days? If laws remain confined merely to paper, it is inevitable that the public will lose faith in the system; this erosion of trust, in turn, fuels demands for mob justice or 'street justice.'

Today, we are left wondering: why has human behavior become so unhinged? Has an insatiable sexual appetite transformed human beings into 'zombies'? When confronted with workplace exploitation, domestic abuse, broad-daylight murders, and acts of desecration driven by superstition, we are compelled to ask ourselves: are we truly living in a healthy society? Approximately 13 years ago, the United Nations issued a global call to action against violence against women, declaring "Enough is Enough"; yet, to this day, the situation remains unchanged. According to the 2022 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 51 complaints of atrocities against women are registered in India every hour. With 450,000 crimes recorded annually, this figure marks a 12 percent increase compared to the previous year. This grim trajectory—beginning with female feticide—culminates in the trafficking of children for prostitution and brutal murders.

Whether it is the auctioning of young girls in a pilgrimage site like Varanasi, or the administration of hormonal injections to induce premature puberty in girls, these stories cast a dark stain upon the very fabric of humanity. The reality exposed through short films like 'Gudiya' is not a work of fiction; rather, it serves as a stark indicator of our decaying social order. In a society where a ten-year-old girl can be abducted her spirit and body utterly destroyed with what moral authority can we possibly chant slogans like 'Beti Bachao' (Save the Daughter)? In the name of empowerment, we have merely engaged in hollow rhetoric and symbolic gestures, yet we have utterly failed to provide women with a safe and secure environment. While the 'Vishakha Guidelines' were introduced to curb sexual harassment in the workplace, the historical precedent—specifically the manner in which the victim in the 'Vishakha' case herself faced neglect and indifference—demonstrates that securing justice remains, to this day, a monumental and arduous task.

The time for mere rhetoric or for preaching the virtues of government schemes has long since passed. If the birth of a girl child has ceased to be a joyous occasion becoming instead a perceived "liability" then this constitutes our greatest collective failure as a society. Whether one considers the case of "child mothers" in Solapur or the atrocities committed in Amravati, the evidence clearly suggests that, under the guise of ensuring safety, we are inadvertently perpetuating and even nurturing regressive social evils such as child marriage. Fast-track courts alone are insufficient to instill the necessary fear of the law; what is truly required is a proactive mechanism capable of ensuring that a perpetrator faces the ultimate penalty even the death sentence within a mere thirty days. Until such swift and decisive justice becomes an integral part of our system, the voices of victims will continue to be stifled.

The maxim that "justice delayed is justice denied" is a principle that the system must now embrace with the utmost seriousness. Furthermore, as a society, we must liberate ourselves from the prejudice that acts of atrocity are perpetrated solely by individuals belonging to specific castes or religious communities. A beast belongs to no religion; it is simply predatory. Therefore, to eradicate this perversion, we are in dire need of collective introspection and a restructuring of the system.

We cannot simply absolve ourselves of responsibility by shifting the burden solely onto the police and the judiciary. It is our moral duty to instill human values—ranging from the upbringing within our homes to our conduct in public spaces. Until the principle of equality that a woman is not helpless, nor is a man inherently an oppressor takes deep root in the public consciousness, nothing of substance will be achieved beyond mere slogans.

The day a girl can walk fearlessly down any street at midnight that is the day we can truly claim to have attained freedom. Until then, every act of atrocity remains a stain upon the humanity of us all. This is no longer the time merely for discussion, but for ensuring that these monsters do not slip through the clutches of the law, and for restoring the lost faith in our system. To escape this terrifying reality, neither laws nor slogans alone will suffice; rather, change must be brought about at every stratum of society. Instilling the confidence that criminals will face swift punishment is the need of the hour. Now is the opportune moment to take firm steps to save our humanity.

A New Era of Online Gaming Governance



The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026 will come into force on 1 May 2026. This marks a decisive step in shaping India's digital gaming landscape. The Rules establish a structured system to govern online games. The focus is on user safety and industry growth. Their commencement signals a shift from broad policy intent to enforceable regulation.

The Rules flow from the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (PROG) Act, 2025, enacted by Parliament in August 2025. The Act addresses the rising harm of online money gaming. It also enables growth of e-sports and online social games. It reflects the Government's vision to make India a global gaming hub. The aim is to foster innovation and creativity while protecting users from financial and social risks.

The online gaming sector has expanded rapidly and now forms a significant part of India's digital economy. The Indian market generated INR 232 billion in 2024. 77 per cent of this revenue came from transaction-based games. The sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of 11 per cent, reaching INR 316 billion by 2027. Recognising this scale, the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026 introduce a clear framework. It distinguishes between safe and harmful forms of online gaming. In this regard, determination and classification is central to effective regulation and enforcement. The sector can be broadly divided into three distinct segments with varying implications for users and society.

Esports: This refers to competitive digital sports, which are part of multi-sports events and where teams or individuals participate in organised tournaments. Success in esports requires strategy, coordina-

tion, and advanced decision-making skills.

Online Social Games: These are casual games that form part of everyday recreation. They are primarily skill-based and designed for entertainment, learning, or social interaction. Such games are generally considered safe.

Online Money Games: This segment includes games involving financial stakes. These may be based on chance, skill, or both. These platforms have raised serious concerns due to reports of addiction, financial losses, money laundering and even suicides.

The rapid growth of the online gaming sector highlights both its economic potential and the need for safeguards. E-sports and online social games support innovation and recreation. Online money games, however, raise serious financial and social concerns. It is estimated that around 45 crore people have been affected by such platforms, with losses exceeding Rs. 20,000 crores. This magnitude of impact highlights the urgency of clear classification and effective regulation. In response, the Government has acted to protect citizens while promoting safe and responsible gaming.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 was enacted to bring clarity and balance to India's online gaming ecosystem. It seeks to promote innovation in e-sports and online social games while firmly prohibiting online money games. The law sets out a clear distinction between permissible and prohibited activities in the sector.

The Act imposes a complete ban on all forms of online money games. This applies to games of chance, games of skill, and any mix of the two. It also prohibits their advertising, promotion and facili-

ties. Banks and payment systems are barred from processing trans-

actions linked to such games. Un-

lawful platforms may be blocked in accordance with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Strict deterrent penalties have been prescribed to ensure compliance. Offering or facilitating online money games may attract imprisonment of up to three years or a fine up to one crore rupees or both. Repeat offences carry a minimum of three years imprisonment, extend-

able to five. Fines range between one crore and two crore rupees. Advertising such games may invite up to two years imprisonment. Alternatively, a fine of up to fifty lakh rupees may apply, or both. Repeat violations attract higher penalties. Cyber cell officers at State and UT levels are empowered to investigate offences. This includes officers at police station, district, and Commissionerate levels.

Alongside prohibition, the Act promotes a safe and structured gaming environment. It provides recognition to e-sports and online social games. It establishes the Online Gaming Authority of India. It also introduces a transparent determination and registration system. Additionally, it provides a grievance redressal mechanism and safeguards to protect users from harm.

The Rules are built around six key pillars. Together, they create a structured system for online gaming regulation in India. The framework is clear and comprehensive. It rests on core governance princi-

ple. Together, they create a balanced framework that promotes growth while safeguarding users.

Boost to the Creative Economy: The Act supports India's emergence as a hub for digital creativity and innovation. By encouraging e-sports and safe online games, it expands opportunities for exports and investment. It also creates new jobs across design, technology and content creation. This strengthens India's position in the global digital economy.

Empowering Youth: Young people gain access to safe and constructive digital spaces. E-sports and skill-based games help build confidence, discipline and teamwork. These platforms also open up new career pathways for talented players. Over time, this can nurture a new generation of professionals in the gaming sector.

A Safer Digital Environment: Families are protected from predatory online money gaming platforms. Such platforms often rely on misleading claims of easy financial gains and can lead to user safety concerns including psychological risks like addiction and distress. The Act prohibits these practices, while the Rules ensure effective enforcement. This creates a healthier and more secure digital ecosystem.

Strengthening Global Leadership: India is positioned as a leader in responsible gaming and digital regulation. The framework shows how innovation can be balanced with strong social safeguards. It offers a model for other countries dealing with similar challenges. This enhances India's credibility in global digital governance.

In combination, the Act and the Rules balance innovation with strong safeguards, ensuring sustainable growth of the sector.

The coming into force of the Rules on 1 May 2026 marks a new phase in the governance of online gaming in India. It brings clarity to a sector that has grown rapidly but lacked a unified framework. By aligning legal provisions with clear procedures, the framework ensures that regulation is both effective and predictable.

The Act and Rules strike a careful balance between innovation and protection. They enable growth of e-sports and online social games. They also firmly address risks posed by online money gaming. This strengthens user trust and provides certainty to industry stakeholders. Over time, this framework is expected to support responsible expansion of the gaming ecosystem. It also reinforces India's position as a credible voice in global digital policy. Strong safeguards and clear rules are now in place. The sector is better equipped to grow in a safe and sustainable manner.



Source: Ministry of Electronics & IT

Swachhata Pakhwada-2026 with Active Participation and Tangible Outcomes



The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs successfully observed Swachhata Pakhwada-2026 from 16 to 30 April, 2026, with active participation from all Sections/Cells of the Ministry. The fortnight-long initiative focused on cleanliness, sanitation, record management, and workplace improvement in line with the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

The Pakhwada commenced on 16 April, 2026, with the administration of the Swachhata Pledge to all officers and officials by the Secretary, Ministry of Par-

liamentary Affairs. Swachhata messages were prominently displayed on the Ministry's website, and awareness was further amplified through social media platforms.

A dedicated Record Management and Digitization Drive was undertaken on 17 April, 2026, during which 92 files were digitized, 60 files were reviewed, 40 physical files were weeded out in accordance with the Record Re-

vision Schedule, and 38 e-files were closed.

Comprehensive cleanliness and maintenance activities were carried out



throughout the Pakhwada. These included cleaning of electrical fixtures and replacement of fused bulbs/tube lights in all rooms by CPWD, as well as a special cleanliness drive covering offices, corridors, and common areas. Whitewashing of rooms was undertaken wherever required.

As part of the Green Office Initiative, indoor plants were installed by the CPWD Horticulture Division to enhance the workplace environment.

On 29 April, 2026, inspections were conducted by senior officers under the leadership of the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs to assess

sanitation and cleanliness standards across Sections/parameters.



Offices of the Ministry.

The inspection also formed the basis for ranking

The Pakhwada concluded on 30 April, 2026, with a ceremony wherein the Secretary, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs distributed mementos to the top three performing Sections.

The Additional Secretary was also present on the occasion. During the ceremony, the Secretary encouraged other Sections to emulate the best-performing Sections and to strive for further improvement by enhancing cleanliness standards and the overall ambience of their workspaces.



Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Appeals for "Clean Sweep" in Ambala Civic Polls

Ambala : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on a visit to Ambala intensified campaigning for the upcoming local body elections, urging voters to support all candidates from his party to ensure uninterrupted development in the city. Addressing public gatherings and party workers, Saini appealed for a "clean sweep," calling on citizens to elect the entire panel of 21 candidates, including the Mayor, to maintain continuity in governance and accelerate ongoing projects.

During his address, the Chief Minister emphasised that a unified mandate would help avoid administrative hurdles and ensure faster execution of civic works such as infrastructure upgrades, sanitation improvements, and urban development initiatives. He said that coordinated leadership at the municipal level is crucial for effective policy implementation and timely delivery of public services.

Highlighting future de-



velopment plans, Saini announced that the state government is committed to setting up two new industrial townships in Ambala. He noted that these projects are expected to boost local economic activity, attract investment, and generate significant employment opportunities for the youth. The proposed industrial

hubs, he said, would strengthen Ambala's position as an important economic centre in the region.

The Chief Minister also spoke about the growing role of women in politics and governance. He criticised opposition parties for allegedly failing to support legislative measures aimed at increasing women's representation and participation in decision-making bodies. Saini reiterated his government's commitment to empowering women and ensuring greater inclusivity in political processes.

Concluding his visit, the Chief Minister offered prayers at a local temple, seeking blessings for the welfare and prosperity of the people of Ambala. His visit is seen as part of a broader campaign strategy to consolidate support ahead of the municipal elections.

He expressed confidence that the people of Ambala would support his vision for faster growth and stable governance in the upcoming elections.

Two Arrested for Running Online Scam from Jungle Hideout in Nuh

Kaithal : In a striking operation against cyber-crime, police arrested two accused who were allegedly operating an online fraud racket from a remote hideout in the forests of Nuh. The action followed a complaint filed by a woman from Kaithal, who reported being duped of more than ₹1 lakh through a digital payment scam.

According to police, the victim was contacted by a person posing as a friend of her father. Gaining her trust, the accused allegedly sent deceptive messages and QR codes, convincing her to transfer money via Google Pay. Believing the request to be genuine, she completed multiple transactions before realising she had been cheated.

Following the complaint, a dedicated cyber-crime team launched a technical investigation. Using digital tracking tools and transaction trails, officials traced the suspects' location to a secluded area deep inside the Nuh forest, where they had set up a temporary base to avoid detection.

Police conducted a raid

in the area and apprehended the two accused, identified as Mohammad Maqsood and Nasim. Authorities said the suspects were using mobile phones, fake identities, and digital payment platforms to target unsuspecting victims across different regions.

One of the accused has been remanded to judicial custody, while the other is currently being interrogated to uncover further details about the operation. Investigators are probing whether the duo is linked to a larger organised cyber fraud network that may be active in other parts of the country.

Officials have urged the public to remain cautious while dealing with unknown callers or messages requesting money transfers, especially those involving QR codes or urgent financial requests. The police also reiterated the importance of verifying identities before making any digital transactions, as cybercriminals continue to adopt new methods to exploit victims.

Police officials also revealed that several mobile phones, SIM cards, and digi-

tal transaction records were seized during the operation. These devices are now being examined to trace additional victims and identify possible accomplices who may have assisted the accused in carrying out similar frauds. Investigators suspect that the gang may have targeted multiple individuals using the same modus operandi.

Authorities further stated that efforts are underway to map the financial trail and recover the defrauded amount. Cybercrime experts are assisting in analysing the data to determine whether the operation is linked to a wider inter-state network. Police have assured that strict action will be taken against all those involved and have reiterated their commitment to cracking down on such tech-driven crimes.

Police have urged citizens to report any suspicious calls or messages immediately to the cybercrime helpline.

They also advised people to avoid scanning unknown QR codes or sharing financial details with strangers.

Twelve Booked in Major 'Ghost Rice' Procurement Scam in Karnal

Karnal : In a major crackdown on corruption in the food procurement system, police in Karnal have filed charges against 12 individuals, including government officials and rice mill operators, for their alleged involvement in a large-scale "ghost" rice scam. The fraud revolves around fake procurement entries, where rice purchases were shown on official records without any actual stock being procured, leading to significant financial losses to the government.

According to investigators, the accused manipulated procurement records

by creating fictitious transactions and inflating figures to siphon off funds meant for genuine farmers. The scam not only undermined the integrity of the procurement system but also deprived eligible farmers of their rightful payments.

The case came to light after special investigation teams launched a detailed probe, scrutinising procurement data, financial records, and bank transactions over several months. During the investigation, officials uncovered a well-organised nexus between certain government employees and private mill

owners, who allegedly collaborated to falsify documentation and divert funds.

Police sources revealed that around 40 individuals have either been arrested or questioned in connection with the case so far. Authorities believe the scam could be larger in scale, and further arrests are likely as the investigation progresses.

Officials have stated that strict legal action will be taken against all those found guilty, and efforts are underway to recover the misappropriated funds. The case has raised serious concerns about loopholes in the

procurement system and highlighted the need for stronger monitoring mechanisms to prevent such frauds in the future.

Authorities are also considering the introduction of stricter digital tracking systems and real-time audits in the procurement process to prevent similar irregularities. Senior officials indicated that reforms aimed at increasing transparency and accountability will be implemented soon to safeguard government funds and ensure that benefits reach genuine farmers without interference.

Two RTA Officials Caught Accepting ₹1 Lakh in Vigilance Trap

Rohtak : In a significant anti-corruption operation, the State Vigilance Bureau arrested two officials from the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) for allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹1 lakh. The accused include a Traffic Sub-Inspector and an Assistant Secretary, who were caught red-handed during a planned trap action following a complaint by a transporter.

According to officials, the transporter approached the vigilance authorities after being repeatedly pressured by the accused to pay money in exchange for al-

lowing his fleet of vehicles to operate without routine checks or penalties. Acting on the complaint, the bureau laid a trap and apprehended both officials while they were accepting part of the bribe amount.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the accused had initially demanded an exorbitant sum of ₹10.5 lakh per month to allow around 150 trucks to pass without inspection. After negotiations, the demand was allegedly reduced to ₹8 lakh per month, and a substantial portion of the money had already been paid before the vigilance

team intervened.

Officials stated that the accused were part of a larger network exploiting transporters by misusing their authority to extort money. The practice not only caused financial losses to vehicle operators but also raised serious concerns about road safety and regulatory enforcement.

A case has been registered under relevant provisions of anti-corruption laws, and further investigations are underway to identify any additional officials or intermediaries involved in the racket. Authorities are also examining financial

records and past transactions to determine the full extent of the illegal operation.

The arrests come amid a broader crackdown by the state government on corrupt practices within public departments. Vigilance officials have reiterated their commitment to strict action against corrupt officials and have encouraged citizens to report such incidents to ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

Officials have also assured that strict departmental action will be initiated against the accused in addition to legal proceedings.

Politician Pradeep Soni Arrested After Firing Incident Leaves Several Injured

Hisar : Tension gripped parts of Hisar after a local political figure, Pradeep Soni, was arrested for allegedly opening fire during a late-night altercation in Uklana, leaving one person seriously injured and five others hurt.

According to police sources, the incident occurred around midnight

when Soni, who had reportedly joined a political party just two days earlier, was out engaging with supporters as part of his campaign activities. During this time, a dispute broke out between him and a group of individuals, which quickly escalated into a violent confrontation.

Eyewitness accounts

suggest that the argument turned physical, with claims that Soni was initially attacked with sticks by members of the opposing group. In response, he allegedly used a firearm, resulting in multiple people sustaining injuries. The sudden outbreak of violence caused panic in the area, prompting locals to

alert authorities.

Police teams rushed to the spot, brought the situation under control, and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital for treatment. One of the victims is said to be in serious condition, while others suffered varying degrees of injuries.

Officials have confirmed that Soni has been

taken into custody and a case has been registered. However, investigators are still working to determine the exact sequence of events and the root cause of the clash. Authorities are also examining whether the firing was an act of self-defence or a disproportionate use of force.

The incident has

sparked concern among residents, especially given its timing during an active political campaign. Police have assured that a thorough investigation is underway, including questioning witnesses and reviewing evidence, to ensure accountability and prevent further escalation of tensions in the region.

Police officials said that forensic teams have been deployed to examine the crime scene, collect ballistic evidence, and verify the weapon used in the firing. CCTV footage from nearby areas is also being reviewed to reconstruct the sequence of events and establish the roles of all individuals involved in the clash.

Meanwhile, security has been tightened in and around Uklana to prevent any further unrest. Senior police officers have appealed to residents to maintain peace and cooperate with the investigation, assuring that strict action will be taken against anyone found guilty, regardless of their political affiliation.

Man Dies in Rapid Fire at Gurugram Slum

Gurugram : A 40-year-old man named Robin Das was killed late Tuesday night when a fire broke out in a slum area in Sector 53. Investigators believe the fire was caused by a short circuit in the electrical wiring. Witnesses said the flames spread so fast that Robin, who was a laborer from West Bengal, didn't have any time to run away. Firefighters arrived quickly and were able to stop the fire from burning down the entire neighborhood. By the time they put out the flames, Robin had already passed away inside the debris. His children, who live in a nearby area, were informed of the tragedy.

Officials said a detailed investigation has been launched to confirm the exact cause of the fire, with electrical wiring and safety conditions in the area coming under scrutiny. Authorities are also assessing whether proper fire safety measures were in place in the slum, as such densely populated areas are often highly vulnerable to rapid fire outbreaks.

Meanwhile, local residents have expressed concern over frequent fire incidents and have urged the administration to improve infrastructure, ensure safer electrical connections, and conduct regular safety checks.

Karnal Swimming Pool Remains Shut Amid Summer Heat, Young Swimmers Left Disheartened

Karnal : As temperatures continue to rise, the main swimming facility at Karnal Stadium in Karnal remains closed, causing disappointment among children, athletes, and residents who rely on it during the peak summer months. The prolonged shutdown of the pool has left aspiring swimmers without access to proper training and recreational space at a crucial time of the year.

According to local sources, the pool has been non-functional for several months due to structural and technical issues. Al-

though authorities had initiated repair work earlier, the effort proved incomplete as key components such as the filtration and water circulation systems were not adequately addressed. As a result, the facility could not be made operational despite initial attempts at restoration.

Officials have now indicated that a revised proposal is being prepared to cover the remaining work, which will require fresh approvals and additional funding. This process is expected to delay reopening further, raising concerns among the



local community.

Parents of young swimmers and sports coaches have expressed frustration

over the situation, stating that the delay is affecting the training schedules of children who are preparing

for competitions. Many fear that the lack of regular practice could impact the performance and confidence of budding athletes.

Coaches have also pointed out that the summer season is the most important period for swimming practice, and losing this time could set back skill development significantly. Some families are being forced to look for private alternatives, which are often expensive and not accessible to all.

Residents have urged the authorities to expedite the repair work and ensure

that such lapses do not occur in future projects. They have also called for better planning and supervision so that essential public sports facilities remain functional when they are needed the most.

The continued closure of the city's primary swimming pool has not only disrupted sports activities but also deprived many children of a much-needed way to beat the intense summer heat. Locals have demanded a clear timeline from authorities for reopening the facility to avoid further inconvenience.

Woman Dies After Falling from Fourth Floor of Residential Society

Faridabad : A tragic incident was reported from Faridabad, where a 40-year-old woman, Richa Taneja Goyal, lost her life after falling from the fourth floor of a residential building in Sector 88. The incident occurred late in the day and immediately created panic among residents of the society. People rushed out of their homes after hearing a loud noise and gathered at the spot. The sudden nature of the incident has left the entire premises in shock and disbelief. According to initial information, Richa lived with her husband, who is employed with a major gas company, and their 12-year-old twin sons. She had report-

edly left her private-sector job a few years ago due to health-related issues and had been staying at home since then. Neighbours described her as a quiet person who mostly kept to herself. Her family is said to be deeply affected by the incident and is cooperating with the authorities. At the time of the incident, her husband was out of town for work-related commitments. A security guard on duty noticed her entering the elevator and heading to the upper floors, but nothing appeared suspicious at that moment. It was only after she fell that residents realised something was wrong and alerted building authorities. Emergency ser-

vices were called, and she was rushed to a nearby hospital where doctors declared her dead.

Police have registered a case and started a detailed investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident. Officers are currently questioning family members, neighbours, and society staff to piece together what led to the tragedy. Preliminary findings indicate that a possible family dispute could be one of the reasons, though officials have not confirmed anything yet. Authorities have stated that all angles are being thoroughly examined before arriving at a final conclusion.

Suspected Shooter Arrested After Gunfight with Yamunanagar Police

Yamunanagar : In a major breakthrough, police in Yamunanagar arrested a suspected shooter following a brief gunfight near Kulpur village. The accused, identified as Aman, is believed to be associated with a known local gang and was reportedly involved in a firing incident at the residence of a former village leader last month. The arrest has brought relief to residents who were concerned about rising criminal activity in the area. Police officials said the operation was carried out based on specific intelligence inputs.

According to authorities, the district police had intensified patrolling

and set up checkpoints after receiving information about the presence of an armed criminal planning another attack. During one such naka checking, Aman was spotted and signalled to stop by the police team. Instead of complying, he allegedly attempted to flee, which led to a confrontation. The situation quickly escalated into a gunfight between the suspect and the police.

During the exchange of fire, Aman sustained a bullet injury in his leg, after which he was overpowered and taken into custody. Police immediately shifted him to a nearby hospital for treatment under security cover. Officials

confirmed that his condition is stable and he will be formally interrogated once he is fit. A weapon was also recovered from his possession at the time of arrest.

Investigators are now probing his links to other criminal cases in the region, including the earlier shooting incident. Police believe he may have connections with a wider network involved in organised crime. Authorities have assured that further action will be taken to identify and apprehend other members of the gang, while security has been tightened in sensitive areas to prevent any retaliatory incidents.

Rahul Gandhi to join Brijendra Singh's 'Sadbhav Yatra' in Gurugram on tomorrow

Gurugram : In a significant show of solidarity, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is set to join former Hisar MP Brijendra Singh during the Gurugram leg of his ambitious "Sadbhav Yatra" this Friday, May 8. Gandhi is expected to walk alongside Singh for approximately two hours starting at 4:00 PM, followed by a public address that aims to galvanize the party's base in Haryana.

The "Sadbhav Yatra," which translates to the "Harmony March," was launched by Singh in October 2025. Inspired by Gandhi's own Bharat Jodo Yatra, Singh has been traversing the state to reconnect with voters and promote social cohesion. This week's march through Gurugram marks a pivotal moment as the journey nears its conclusion.

A Mission for Political Revival Brijendra Singh, a former IAS officer who defected from the BJP to join Congress in early 2024, initiated this yatra following the party's narrow losses in the state assembly elections. His goal has been to traverse all 90 constituencies of Haryana on foot—a feat rarely attempted in the state's political history.

By the time he reaches Gurugram, Singh will have covered over 81 constituencies. The yatra has focused heavily on rural outreach, addressing issues such as agrarian distress, unemployment, and the importance of maintaining communal brotherhood in the face of



what Singh describes as "divisive politics."

Despite the high-profile support from Rahul Gandhi, the yatra hasn't been without its internal challenges. Several senior Haryana Congress leaders, most notably those aligned with former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, have largely stayed away from the event.

Critics within the party have labeled the march a "personal event" rather than an official Congress program. This factionalism has been a recurring theme throughout the walk, highlighting the ongoing struggle for dominance within the state unit as leaders position themselves for future leadership roles. However, Singh's team maintains that the public response has been "phenomenal," particularly in regions like Nuh and Faridabad. Local workers have reportedly turned out in large numbers, suggesting that the yatra has successfully "energized a demoralized cadre" after consecutive electoral setbacks.

For Brijendra Singh, the son of veteran leader Chaudhary Birender Singh, this journey is also a personal test. It serves to establish him as a grassroots leader with a pan-Haryana appeal, moving beyond his traditional family stronghold in the Jind-Hisar belt. The Gurugram stretch is seen as a strategic choice for Rahul Gandhi's participation. As a major urban and economic hub, the city provides a high-visibility platform to project a unified front before the

march concludes its final phase. Following the walk, Gandhi and Singh are expected to address a "Samman Samaroh" (Felicitation Ceremony) to honor the volunteers who have walked thousands of kilometers. This event is intended to signal that the Congress top brass is paying close attention to ground-level organizational efforts in the state.

The timing of Gandhi's visit is crucial. With the state entering a period of political realignment, the Congress leadership is keen to show that it is "on the streets" and listening to the electorate. The presence of the Leader of the Opposition is intended to silence critics who viewed the yatra as a solo venture. Political analysts suggest that Gandhi's involve-

ment may force other state leaders to reconsider their distance. His participation essentially "canonizes" the yatra as a central part of the party's regional strategy, making it harder for rivals to dismiss it as a vanity project.

As the yatra enters its final days, the focus will remain on whether this momentum can be converted into a formal organizational structure. Singh has often remarked during the walk that "the roots of the Congress are deep, but the workers are jittery."

The Gurugram event is designed to provide that missing "remedy" by showing a direct link between the national leadership and the local worker. For the residents of Gurugram, the Friday march will result in significant traffic diversions, with the district administration already preparing for the large crowds expected.

The "Sadbhav Yatra" is scheduled to conclude its 2,500-kilometer journey in Rohtak next week. It will go down as one of the longest sustained political outreach programs in Haryana's history, regardless of the internal party debates it sparked.

With Rahul Gandhi's footprint now officially added to the path, the march has successfully transitioned from a regional experiment into a national headline. All eyes now turn to the speech on Friday evening, which is expected to set the tone for the Congress party's upcoming campaigns in Northern India.

Wedding Fight Breaks Out Over Massive Cash Gift in Haryana

Nuh : A festive wedding in the Mewat region took a dark turn this week when a dispute over a lavish ₹25 lakh currency note garland sparked a violent confrontation. The incident occurred in Nehda village, located in the Punhana subdivision, transforming a celebratory atmosphere into a scene of chaos and stone-pelting that has left the local community in shock. The clash broke out during the pre-wedding rituals of the groom, identified as the son of local resident Pappu. As the wedding procession (baraat) prepared to depart for Ali Mev village, the air was filled with music and joy, with guests gathering to witness the traditional send-off. However, the mood shifted instantly when a massive display of wealth was introduced to the ceremony. The groom's brother-in-law, Nayoom, presented him with an extraordinary garland made entirely of ₹500 currency notes, totaling approximately ₹25 lakh. While such garlands are a traditional part of local celebrations, the sheer scale and monetary value of this specific gift were intended to be a grand gesture of affection and family status. Unfortunately, this display of wealth reportedly triggered a fierce "prestige battle" between relatives. Instead of being viewed as a generous gift, it was perceived as a challenge by other family members. Another close relative, a co-brother (saadu) hailing from Hatiyaka village in Uttar Pradesh, took deep offense at the timing and the scale of the pre-



sentation. The co-brother insisted that the entire procession wait because his side of the family had also prepared an expensive garland and intended to be the ones to honor the groom first. This demand for "social priority" quickly turned the celebratory ritual into a power struggle, with both sides refusing to back down or compromise on their perceived standing. What started as a heated verbal argument between the two families quickly escalated beyond words. Insults were traded, and the situation spiraled out of control as egos took center stage. As tempers flared, members from both sides began hurling stones and bricks at one another, turning the wedding venue into a literal battlefield. The sudden violence caused guests, including women and children, to run for cover in a state of panic. The festive music was replaced by the sounds of shouting and crashing stones. Videos of the stone-pelting, captured by stunned onlookers on their mobile phones, have since gone viral on social media, drawing national attention to the incident. Local police from the

Punhana station rushed to the village after receiving reports of the unrest. Their arrival helped to de-escalate the situation and restore a semblance of order. While the physical altercation caused significant panic and completely disrupted the wedding schedule, authorities were relieved to confirm that no serious injuries were reported. As of Wednesday, May 6, 2026, no formal police complaints have been filed. Sources indicate that the families involved are reportedly attempting to settle the matter internally through a local panchayat or family council. This is common in the region, where families often prefer to resolve disputes outside the legal system to avoid further public embarrassment. However, the incident has reignited a fierce debate among community leaders and social activists in the Nuh district. Despite being a region with a rich cultural history, the practice of gifting extravagant cash garlands—sometimes worth tens of lakhs—has become a common, yet increasingly controversial, symbol of status in Mewat weddings.

Hospital Officials' Wives Caught Taking Salaries for Jobs They Never Did

Rohtak : An investigative report has sent shockwaves through the (PGIMS) in Rohtak. The inquiry revealed a deep-seated corruption scheme where the wives of high-ranking officials were receiving monthly salaries for positions they never physically occupied. This "ghost employee" scam highlights a significant lapse in administrative oversight at one of the region's premier medical institutions. The investigation uncovered that these women were technically hired through an external private outsourcing agency. By using a third-party intermediary, the perpetrators likely hoped to bypass the more stringent background checks and daily physical verification protocols usually applied to permanent government staff. This allowed the women to remain on the payroll under the radar for an extended period. The level of audacity in the scheme is perhaps best illustrated by the discovery that one woman was simultaneously drawing paychecks from six different depart-

ments within the hospital. This logistical impossibility went unnoticed by departmental heads, suggesting either a catastrophic failure of the internal auditing system or a widespread culture of turning a blind eye to the actions of influential figures. In total, the three women identified in the report are estimated to have siphoned off over ₹5 lakh in illegal wages. While the sum itself is significant, the breach of public trust and the misappropriation of funds meant for healthcare services have caused even greater outrage among the local community and hospital staff who perform their duties daily. The scam was not a solo effort; it relied heavily on the active cooperation of internal hospital staff.

The investigative report confirms that several regular employees knowingly facilitated the fraud by signing fake attendance registers. These signatures provided the "paper trail" necessary for the outsourcing company to release monthly payments, creating a veneer of

legitimacy for the non-existent work. As the findings came to light, the PGIMS administration took immediate disciplinary action. The women involved have been officially banned from any future employment or presence within the hospital premises. This move serves as a preliminary step in distancing the institution from the scandal as the legal process begins to unfold. Furthermore, the investigation has led to formal charges against three regular hospital employees. These individuals are accused of professional misconduct and criminal conspiracy for their role in falsifying records. The authorities are currently determining whether these employees were coerced by their superiors or if they received a portion of the stolen funds as a "kickback" for their silence. State authorities and hospital board members are now expanding the scope of the inquiry. Investigators are meticulously combing through bank statements and transaction histories to track the flow of the

embezzled money. The goal is to determine the exact total stolen and to identify if any other "ghosts" remain on the payroll in different departments. This incident has cast a shadow over the "high-ranking officials" whose wives were at the center of the controversy. While the report focuses on the fraudulent wages, the underlying implication is a gross abuse of power. Questions are being raised about how much these officials knew regarding their spouses' illegal income and whether they used their influence to pressure subordinates into compliance. The private outsourcing company responsible for the hiring is also under the microscope. Investigators are looking into whether the company was a victim of the officials' influence or an active participant in the scheme.

If the agency failed to verify the physical presence of its employees, it could face the termination of its contract with the state government and potential legal penalties.

Court Angry After Jail Fails to Take Cancer Patient to the Hospital

Gurugram : In a landmark judgment that has sent ripples through the legal and administrative corridors of Haryana, a Gurugram court has issued a blistering indictment of the state's prison and police departments. The court characterized the denial of critical medical care to an inmate suffering from stage-four cancer as nothing less than a form of "structural violence." This ruling, delivered by Additional Sessions Judge Dr. Gagan Geet Kaur on May 5, 2026, marks a pivotal moment in the fight for the fundamental rights of prisoners. The case centers on Rishi Raj, an inmate currently incarcerated in Bhondsi Jail, who is battling an advanced and aggressive form of cancer. Due to the severity of his condition, Raj required urgent and specialized consultations at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. However, his journey toward treatment was repeatedly blocked not by medical limitations, but by bureaucratic failures and administrative apathy.

Despite multiple court orders explicitly directing the jail authorities to facilitate his treatment, the prisoner was forced to miss several life-saving appointments. The Bhondsi jail administration consistently offered the same excuse: a lack of available police escort guards to transport him to the hospital. This logistical bottleneck effectively

acted as a death sentence for a patient already in a fragile state. Upon closer scrutiny, the court revealed a disturbing timeline of negligence that spanned several months. Raj was first referred to AIIMS as early as April 2024, yet he missed his very first appointment. While he managed to attend a few subsequent visits, a critical follow-up in late April 2026 was missed entirely, once again due to the "unavailability of guards," highlighting a chronic and systemic failure. Judge Dr. Gagan Geet Kaur was unwavering in her rejection of the "shortage of force" defense. She noted that in the 21st century, allowing a dying patient to suffer because of minor logistical hurdles is not just "unfortunate," but a direct strike at the core of human rights. The judge emphasized that the state cannot hide behind administrative shortages when a human life is at stake.

The court's ruling deeply explored the "Duty of Care" that the state owes to those it holds in custody. The judge reiterated that incarceration does not—and cannot—extinguish a person's constitutional right to health and life. By failing to provide the necessary transportation, the system essentially allowed Raj's condition, which included acute pain and severe urinary complications, to deteriorate unchecked. The use of the term "structural violence" is particularly significant in this legal context. It moves

the conversation beyond simple negligence into the realm of systemic harm. The court recognized that the state's failure to organize its resources effectively resulted in a "slow violence" that was just as damaging to the inmate as any physical assault would be. To prevent further harm to Rishi Raj and others in similar positions, the court has mandated a radical shift in how medical emergencies are handled for inmates. The Bhondsi Jail Superintendent has been issued a "Mandatory Compliance" directive, ensuring that all future medical tests, specialist consultations, and treatments are carried out strictly on their scheduled dates without fail. Furthermore, the court has ordered the police department to re-evaluate its operational priorities. Medical emergencies involving inmates must now take precedence over routine administrative duties. This directive ensures that a lack of personnel can never again be used as a "shield" or a convenient excuse to deny a citizen their basic right to healthcare. The ruling has set a powerful legal precedent for accountability. By holding the state responsible for the bureaucratic delays that exacerbated Raj's cancer, the court has sent a clear message: the state is liable for the health and safety of every individual under its watch, regardless of their legal status or the crimes they are accused of.

Investigation Starts After Young Man Found Dead in Faridabad Guest House

Faridabad : Mystery in Gurugram: Interior Designer Found Dead in Wazirpur Guest House

The Gurugram police have launched a comprehensive investigation into the mysterious death of a 26-year-old interior designer named Nazir, whose body was discovered in a guest house on Wazirpur Road. What began as a routine stay on Tuesday night ended in a grim discovery that has left the local community and the victim's family reeling.

Nazir had reportedly checked into the guest house on Tuesday evening accompanied by a female friend, identified as his girlfriend. The couple, both residents of the local area, had sought a private space to spend the evening, but the night took a tragic and unexplained turn within the confines of their rented room.

The alarm was first raised by the guest house staff during the early hours of Wednesday morning. Work-

ers became increasingly concerned when they failed to receive any response from the room during routine checks and noticed an eerie silence emanating from behind the door, which remained locked from the inside. Upon receiving a distress call from the establishment, police officers arrived at the scene and were forced to break down the door to gain entry. Once inside, they were met with a harrowing sight: Nazir was found hanging from the ceiling fan. Despite the immediate arrival of emergency services, he was pronounced dead at the spot. While the initial scene suggested a case of suicide, Nazir's family has come forward with grave allegations, refusing to believe he took his own life. They have formally requested that the police investigate the possibility of murder, pointing toward a potential conspiracy involving his companion and the guest house staff. The family's sus-

picious are rooted in the turbulent nature of the couple's relationship. According to statements given to the police, Nazir and the woman were involved in a heated confrontation shortly before the incident. Relatives claim the argument centered on a potential breakup, which had reportedly reached a boiling point that night. Adding a layer of complexity to the investigation is the personal background of both individuals. Authorities confirmed that both Nazir and his girlfriend were married to other people and both had children from their respective marriages. This complicated personal dynamic is being closely scrutinized as a potential motive for conflict. The woman who was with Nazir at the guest house is currently being questioned by investigators. Police are attempting to reconstruct a timeline of the hours leading up to the death, looking for inconsistencies in her statements regarding the fight and

the moments before Nazir was found. The guest house staff are also under the scanner. Investigators are checking CCTV footage from the hallways and the entrance to see if anyone else entered or exited the room during the night. The management is being questioned about the security protocols in place and whether any shouting was heard prior to the discovery. Forensic teams spent several hours at the scene collecting evidence, including fingerprints and Nazir's mobile phone. The digital trail, including recent text messages and call logs between the couple, is expected to provide critical insight into the emotional state of the deceased before his passing. The victim's body has been sent for a post-mortem examination at the civil hospital. Police officials have stated that they are waiting for the detailed medical reports to determine the exact cause and time of death. These findings will be cru-

cial in distinguishing whether the act was a self-inflicted suicide or a staged crime.

"We are exploring all angles," said a senior police official involved in the case. "While the door was locked from the inside, we cannot rule out foul play until the forensic and autopsy reports are on our desk. The family's concerns are being taken very seriously." The local neighborhood has been gripped by the scandal and the tragedy. Residents of Wazirpur Road expressed shock at the incident, noting that while the guest house is a frequent stop for visitors, such a violent or tragic end is rare for the area. Meanwhile, the victim's family continues to demand a swift and transparent probe. They have alleged that Nazir was a "strong-willed individual" who would not have resorted to such an extreme step over a relationship dispute, further fueling their belief that there is more to the story than meets the eye.

Haryana Sikh Committee Wants Tough New Laws Against Sacrilege

Chandigarh : Protecting the Sacred: HSGMC Pushes for Stringent Anti-Sacrilege Law in Haryana The Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (HSGMC) has formally approached Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini with a proposal to enact a new, rigorous law aimed at punishing those who disrespect the Guru Granth Sahib. This move, occurring in May 2026, seeks to align Haryana's legal framework with that of neighboring Punjab, which recently passed landmark legislation to address the same issue. The momentum for this request stems from the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, passed unanimously by the Punjab Assembly. The Punjab law mandates severe penalties, including imprisonment ranging from seven years to life and heavy fines for acts of desecration. Seeing this as a necessary deterrent, HSGMC President Jagdish Singh Jhinda argued that Haryana must not lag in

protecting the sanctity of holy scriptures. In his letter to the Chief Minister, Jhinda emphasized that the disrespect shown toward the Guru Granth Sahib—viewed by Sikhs as a living Guru—is not merely a local crime but an assault on the global Sikh community's sentiments. He pointed out that existing legal provisions are often insufficient to prevent repeated incidents of sacrilege, which frequently serve as flashpoints for communal tension. Beyond the state level, the HSGMC has also escalated the matter to the national stage. The committee has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, advocating for a comprehensive national law on sacrilege. Their argument is that while Punjab has taken a strong lead, a patchwork of state laws creates jurisdictional gaps that "unscrupulous elements" can exploit to evade harsh punishment. The proposal has sparked a complex debate within the Sikh community. While there is broad agreement on the need for protec-

tion, groups like the Akal Takht and members of the SGPC have expressed reservations about how these laws are drafted. They argue that the state should not interfere in internal religious affairs without taking representative Sikh institutions into full confidence, fearing that such laws could inadvertently place undue responsibility on gurdwaras and their staff.

Despite these internal discussions, the Haryana committee remains firm in its stance. They believe that by categorizing sacrilege as a high-stakes criminal offense, the state can send a powerful warning to potential offenders. The HSGMC views this legislation as a "deterrent framework" that would safeguard holy sites and ensure that justice is swift and severe. As the summer of 2026 progresses, the ball is now in the court of the Haryana government. With the Punjab model already in effect, the pressure on Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini to adopt similar measures is mounting.



Just stuck to the process: Samson after match-winning knock against DC

New Delhi: Wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson continued his strong run for Chennai Super Kings, scoring an unbeaten 87 to guide his side to an eight-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026. After the win, Samson said his success this season has come from staying calm and sticking to the basics.

"They're calling me Chetta, but I like Sanju more. You try to see what works well, stick to the basics, and trust your hands to do the rest. I just stuck to the process, and it's working out well.

"I've been doing it for the last 3-5 years, it's a tactical bit as well. I move around a bit according to the bowlers. I'm always like this. The biggest change is you're seeing more of me, but I'm always calm," Samson said after being named Player of the Match.

Samson's knock ensured CSK were always in control as they chased down 156 with 15 balls remaining. He also put together an unbeaten 114-run partnership with youngster Kartik Sharma.

Samson said he read the pitch early and trusted his ability in the middle overs.

"Looking at what we were chasing and how the wicket was behaving, even if we were 30 or 35 for 1 in the batting powerplay, looking at the shots I can play in the middle overs and against the spinners, I was confi-



dent about scoring runs.

On missing out on a century, Samson, who had earlier scored an unbeaten hundred against DC this season at Chepauk, said, "Hundreds are always special. There was a desire, but I had to be a bit too selfish to get it. My partner was playing well and winning the game gave me more confidence and happiness. A few more matches to come, let's see if it comes around."

Kartik, who remained not out on 41, said Samson's guidance helped

him adjust to a tricky surface. "Yes, it was fun. We had a good partnership for a long time. It was helping the spinners - the ball was stopping and turning a lot.

"I knew it was not a big score, and we could take our time, which we did. (Sanju) bhैया said that it was a slow wicket and told me to do what comes to me, which I did. There was no such target. Just play in a good range and hit the ball. Play the ball, that's all," he said.

Hussey credits Sanju's calmness

and maturity

CSK batting coach Michael Hussey believes that Samson's calmness and match awareness played a key role in helping youngster Kartik settle during the chase, as the pair stitched together a match-winning partnership at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here.

Praising the youngster's temperament and skill, Hussey also highlighted the importance of having an experienced

batter like Samson at the other end to guide the 20-year-old through the chase.

"I think it's really important for someone like Sanju with all his experience to be out there in the middle with a young player like Kartik, who's still learning his craft, really, just to keep him calm, talk him through the situation. But I thought Kartik showed a lot of maturity as well. He didn't panic when he was going at about a run a ball," Hussey said. "It could have been easy to think I need to hit a few sixes here, but that's one of his real strengths. He's got good game sense and good batsmanship skills as well as some good power. And I truly believe that there's still a place in the modern game for guys that have good craft and be able to play the situation well, assess the conditions well, not just have power to be able to blast the ball out of the park," he added.

KSCA denies role in IPL ticket scam, rejects links to accused

Bengaluru: Under mounting scrutiny over the alleged IPL 2026 ticket black-marketing racket, the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on Wednesday issued a strong clarification distancing itself from the ongoing probe, even as Bengaluru police investigations reportedly pointed to a wider network involving insiders, corporate allocations, and suspected links to individuals connected with the cricket establishment.

In a statement issued here, KSCA spokesperson Vinay Mruthunjaya asserted that the association had "no role whatsoever" in the sale of tickets to the general public for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

He said public ticketing was handled entirely through the franchise's authorised platforms and ticketing partners, while KSCA only received a limited quota for affiliated clubs, permanent members, and select statutory authorities.

The association also rejected reports linking it to the accused in the case, maintaining that the entities

and individuals under investigation had "no direct or indirect association" with KSCA and were not members of the body.

KSCA assured "full cooperation" with the Central Crime Branch (CCB), which is probing the alleged resale of IPL tickets at massively inflated prices.

The clarification comes amid an intensifying Bengaluru police investigation that has already led to at least 11 arrests in connection with the alleged black-market racket surrounding high-demand RCB matches this season.

According to investigators, tickets purchased through online corporate allocations were allegedly diverted and resold outside the stadium and through informal networks for exorbitant sums.

Police said the probe gathered momentum after the arrest of Chandrashekar P, a canteen worker employed inside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, who was allegedly caught attempting to sell more than 180 IPL tickets in the black market during the April 15 RCB-Lucknow Super Giants clash.

The tickets, originally priced between Rs 1,200 and Rs 13,000, were allegedly resold for as much as Rs 15,000 to Rs 32,000 each.

Investigators reportedly uncovered a larger syndicate involving bulk ticket procurement through private firms and corporate channels before resale through touts and intermediaries. The CCB probe found that at least 181 tickets worth around Rs 17.52 lakh had been diverted into illegal resale circulation.

Police were also examining the role of alleged KSCA-linked individuals, including one Ganesh Harikesh, who is believed to be absconding and suspected to be a key figure in the network.

Investigators are probing whether privileged access to corporate or insider allocations enabled systematic black marketing during marquee IPL fixtures in Bengaluru.

The controversy has added to pressure on the Bengaluru cricket administration at a time when the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has shifted the IPL 2026 playoffs and final away from Bengaluru.

IGU to send three-member team for 2026 Queen Sirikit Cup

New Delhi: The Indian Golf Union (IGU), the National Sports Federation recognized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) and International Golf Federation (IGF), will send a three-member Indian team to compete in the prestigious Queen Sirikit Cup in June at the Sentul Highlands Golf Club in Bogor, Indonesia. The event is scheduled from May 12 to 15, 2026.

Organised by the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC) in association with The R&A (world golf rules governing body), a total of 15 countries including defending champions South Korea will be competing in the tournament - Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The team will be led by 2025 Ladies Order of Merit champion Guntas Kaur Sandhu, who has been consistent in 2026 as well. The Chandigarh golfer has six wins under her belt and 17 top-10 finishes from 20 starts in the 2025-26 IGU season. She recently won the Ladies and Combined A&B category titles of the IGU West Bengal Ladies & Junior Girls Championship in April. The other members of the team are Haryana's Ceerat Kang and Keya Badugu of Delhi. Vandana Aggarwal will be accompanying the team as manager.



Guntas expressed her excitement about competing in the prestigious tournament, saying: "Representing the country is a huge honour. The Queen Sirikit Cup is a prestigious team event in amateur golf. It is a major event in my career as it gives me international exposure and opportunity to compete with the best players, work harder, stay focused and enhance my game. IGU has been extremely supportive in helping me improve my game. The Queen Sirikit Cup, officially known as the Amateur Ladies Asia-Pacific Invitational Golf Team Championship and named after Thailand's erstwhile queen, was inaugurated in 1979 and India has competed in this tournament ever since the inaugural edition that featured nine nations. In 2023, Avani Prashanth won the individual title in the Queen Sirikit Cup, ending a 43-year title drought.

"Avani Prashanth's victory in 2023 is a big source of inspiration for me. Watching an Indian golfer achieve success at international stage gives me motivation and the belief that I can do it too," the 15-year-old said.

Played over 54 holes, the event is made up of teams of three players with the best two daily scores being counted. The winning team receives an exemption into The R&A Girls Amateur.

Ceerat said that such events help her get out of her 'comfort zone' and express herself on different layouts. "I am excited to be participating in the Queen Sirikit Cup. It is something I have always looked forward to. It really helps me come out of my comfort zone in different conditions, different courses and against the best international players. I would like to thank the IGU as they have guided me throughout my golfing journey.

India keeps sporting ban on Pakistan, allows multilateral events

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has decided to continue its existing policy on sporting ties with Pakistan, keeping a complete ban on bilateral engagements between the two countries. However, the exemption for multi-nation competitions such as ICC events, the Olympics and the Asian Games will remain in place. In an official circular sent to National Sports Federations, the Indian Olympic Association, the Sports Authority of India, as well as the Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs, the government made its position clear. "Insofar as bilateral sports events in each other's country are concerned, Indian teams will not be participat-

ing in competitions in Pakistan. Nor will we permit Pakistani teams to play in India."

"With regard to international and multilateral events, in India or abroad, we are guided by the practices of international sports bodies and the interests of our own sportspersons. It is also relevant to take into account India's emergence as a credible venue to host international sports events."

This decision comes at a time when India is preparing to host several major global tournaments and has its eyes on more in the future. The country will host the Commonwealth Games in 2030 and has also submitted a bid for the 2036 Olympics. In cricket, India



is set to stage the ICC Champions Trophy in 2029 and the Men's ODI World Cup in 2031. India is also aiming to bring the Asian Games back to the country for the first time since 1982, having expressed interest in hosting the 2038 edition. The proposal was discussed at the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) executive

board meeting last month.

At the same time, the ministry emphasised that it wants to make India more accessible and attractive for international sporting events by easing visa norms for participants and officials. "To position India as a preferred destination for hosting international sporting events, the visa

process for sportspersons, team officials, technical personnel, and office-bearers of International Sports Governing Bodies shall be simplified. In respect of office-bearers of International Sports Governing Bodies, a multi-entry visa shall be granted on a priority basis for the duration of their official tenure, subject to a maximum period of five years," it said. "This shall facilitate their smooth movement into and within the country, in accordance with international norms. Due protocol and courtesies, as per established practice, shall be extended to the Heads of International Sports Governing Bodies during their visits to India," the ministry added.

Mullanpur to host IPL playoffs for second consecutive year

Chandigarh: The Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium is set to host high-intensity playoff action for the Indian Premier League 2026 season, reaffirming its growing stature as a premier cricket venue in the country.

Located in New Chandigarh, the modern stadium has once again been entrusted with key fixtures, marking the second consecutive year it will stage crucial playoff matches.

According to the schedule released by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, the venue will host the Eliminator and Qualifier-2 matches, both of which are pivotal in determining the finalists.

The Eliminator will feature the teams finishing third and fourth in the league standings, while Qualifier-2 will be contested between the loser of Qualifier-1 and the winner of the Eliminator.

These matches are expected to draw significant attention, given their high-stakes nature and the intense competition typically associated with the playoff stage.

Amarjeet Mehta, President of the Punjab Cricket Association, expressed confidence in the venue's readiness to host the marquee fixtures. He stated that the successful organisation of playoff matches at the stadium in the previous season

played a key role in the BCCI's decision to once again award hosting rights to the PCA.

Mehta assured that extensive preparations are underway to ensure a seamless experience for players, officials, and spectators.

He emphasised that the association is committed to delivering memorable matches, with a strong focus on infrastructure, crowd management, and overall fan engagement.

RCB look to regain rhythm against struggling LSG

New Delhi: Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be eager to bounce back and regain their batting rhythm after a rare collapse in their previous match as they take on bottom-placed Lucknow Super Giants in the reverse leg clash at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Thursday.

Currently second on the table, RCB are level on 12 points with four other teams, making this a crucial phase in their play-off push. The side will be keen to quickly move past their four-wicket defeat to Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad.

That loss exposed an unusual fragility in RCB's batting, as they tumbled from 79 for 2 to 96 for 6 in just three overs, eventually getting bowled out for 155.

With Phil Salt sidelined due to a finger injury, the onus now falls on Jacob Bethell to partner Kohli at the top and provide quick starts. Bethell has already shown glimpses of his potential and the team will hope he can convert that into a big performance soon.

Having had a week's break, RCB will head into the match feeling refreshed and better prepared.

In contrast, Lucknow Super Giants have struggled for momentum and are currently at the bottom of the table, having lost five of their last six games.

Their only win in that stretch came in a Super Over against Kolkata Knight Riders, but they failed to build on it and were comfortably beaten by Mumbai Indians in their previous outing.

LSG's campaign has been hampered by inconsistency, frequent changes in strategy, and an inability to close out matches. Their key batters - Mitchell Marsh, Rishabh Pant, Aiden Markram and Nicholas Pooran - have not been



able to deliver consistently, and the constant reshuffling of the batting order has only added to their problems. Pant, in particular, has come under pressure for his white-ball form.

RCB, meanwhile, will take confidence from their bowling unit, which has been one of their strengths this season. The experienced pair of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood have worked effectively together, including a standout performance when they bowled Delhi Capitals out for 75 on April 27. Bhuvneshwar has been especially effective with the new ball, while Hazlewood has provided control and breakthroughs.

Krunal Pandya has also been a key contributor with nine wickets, using his vari-

ations smartly, while Suyash Sharma and Romario Shepherd showed promise in the previous game despite the overall result.

For LSG, Prince Yadav and Mohsin Khan have been the most reliable bowlers, picking up 13 and 10 wickets respectively. Mohammed Shami began the season well but has struggled in recent matches, conceding runs at crucial stages.

A major concern for LSG has been their inability to contain runs at the death, often allowing opponents to accelerate, which could be a challenge against an attacking RCB batting line-up. RCB had won the first meeting between the two sides by five wickets and will take confidence from that result as they look to strengthen

their position in the standings.

Squads: Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Rajat Patidar (c), Tim David, Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Phillip Salt, Jitesh Sharma, Jacob Bethell, Krunal Pandya, Romario Shepherd, Abhinandan Singh, Josh Hazlewood, Rasikh Salam Dar, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Suyash Sharma, Swapnil Singh, Nuwan Thushara, Venkatesh Iyer, Jacob Duffy, Mangesh Yadav, Jordan Cox, Vicky Ostwal, Vihaan Malhotra, Kanishk Chouhan, Satvik Deswal.

Lucknow Super Giants: Rishabh Pant (c&wk), Abdul Samad, Akshat Raghuvanshi, Ayush Badoni, Mukul Choudhary, Himmat Singh, Josh Inglis (wk), Aiden Markram, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Arshin Kulkarni, George Linde, Mitchell Marsh, Shahbaz Ahmed, Akash Singh, Avesh Khan, Mohammed Shami, Mohsin Khan, Anrich Nortje, Prince Yadav, Digvesh Rathi, Manimaran Siddharth, Arjun Tendulkar, Navam Tiwari, Mayank Yadav.

DC head coach Badani backs Kuldeep despite lean run in IPL 2026

New Delhi: Following an eight-wicket loss to Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2026, Delhi Capitals head coach Hemang Badani backed struggling wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav, saying the team will continue to support him as he looks to regain form.

At the Arun Jaitley Stadium, DC's spin attack could not match the control shown by CSK spinners, while Kuldeep had another tough outing, conceding 34 runs in three overs without picking up a wicket.

"We would ideally want Kuldeep to be better than this. But we will rally around him. He's been somebody who's been a part of this side for many, many years and has done well. I think he can turn this around," said Badani in the post-match press conference.

Kuldeep, once a key figure in the middle overs for DC, has struggled this season. In IPL 2026, he has taken just seven wickets in 30 overs at an economy rate of 10.36, while also conceding

the most sixes among spinners in the competition.

Badani said it was more about form than anything technical and expressed confidence that the spinner would bounce back soon. "I think it's more the case of just about somebody's striking form. He hasn't struck peak form yet. He hasn't bowled at the speeds that he would normally bowl. I think it's a question of time.

"I mean, we have the faith in him. More than anything else, it's crunch time for us. It's quite simple for us. It's more like a knockout tournament for us right now. We have to win 4 in 4 games and we still have a chance to qualify," he added.

Badani also spoke about captain Axar Patel, whose batting form has dipped this season, though he has contributed with the ball.

"With Axar, I think it's again a question of somebody who's (trying to find form). There are people who have played cricket at the highest level - like he's a double World Cup winner.

You work with them and you give them faith. They have faith in themselves in the sense that they have played the game.

"They have figured out the ways and means of going through the grind, struggles and how you come back. They've

done it all and I have the faith that he'll come good. He's had a wonderful time with the ball and those figures, I would take it on any given day," added Badani.

Despite a brief fightback in the innings, DC were unable to defend their total, as Sanju Samson anchored the chase with a composed knock.

"It's more the case that if we had put on about 20 more odd runs, Sanju would not have been able to pace the innings the way he did. He literally knew what he had to do.

He just said, let me see off the best bowlers. The best bowlers were probably Ngidi and Axar on a surface like this and that's pretty much what he did.



MARKET

BSE Sensex

Close	Percent change
77,958.52	1.22%
Previous close	Open
77,017.79	77,424.36
High	Low
78,022.78	76,773.25

Nifty 50

Close	Percent change
24,330.95	1.24%
Previous close	Open
24,032.80	24,171.00
High	Low
24,356.50	23,997.90

Nifty 500

Close	Percent change
23,133.40	1.43%
Previous close	Open
22,808.25	22,978.95
High	Low
23,150.90	22,849.95

Nifty Next 50

Close	Percent change
71,691.45	1.51%
Previous close	Open
70,627.30	71,260.20
High	Low
71,764.15	70,808.00

Nifty 100

Close	Percent change
25,312.60	1.29%
Previous close	Open
24,990.30	25,148.80
High	Low
25,332.25	24,973.20

Nifty Bank

Close	Percent change
55,981.05	2.63%
Previous close	Open
54,547.05	55,113.40
High	Low
56,078.80	54,587.20

Nifty Midcap 100

Close	Percent change
61,326.70	1.76%
Previous close	Open
60,264.50	60,925.95
High	Low
61,389.15	60,759.70

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Interglobe Avi	4,520.20	6.65
TMPV	358.15	5.29
Shriram Finance	1,004.10	4.12
Trent	4,289.80	3.73
Asian Paints	2,519.00	3.66

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
ONGC	280.80	-3.16
Reliance	1,437.90	-1.76
Larsen	4,008.50	-1.13
Power Grid Corp	315.95	-1.10
NTPC	394.85	-0.95

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	152,672.00	2,919.00 1.95
Silver Jul 03	254,206.00	9,890.00 4.05
Crudeoil May 18	9,075.00	-623.00 -6.42
Naturalgas May 26	256.60	-10.40 -3.90

South India emerges as hub for ultra-luxury housing; Hyderabad takes the lead

New Delhi: South India's housing market is emerging as a hub for the ultra-luxury segment, moving beyond its traditional mid-income demand.

Three southern cities, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai-recorded 811 ultra-luxury home sales (priced at Rs 10 crore and above) worth a combined Rs 11,246 crore in FY26, according to a joint report by India Sotheby's International Realty and CRE Matrix.

In the region, Hyderabad has emerged as the clear leader in South India's ultra-luxury segment, with 625 units sold, totaling Rs 8,562 crore-constituting 77% of the total ultra-luxury sales across the three cities.

A Tale of Three Cities: Scale, Velocity, and Prestige Hyderabad's luxury segment has seen a structural transformation, growing 3.5x from Rs 2,447 crore to Rs 8,562 crore in just four years. A defining feature of the Hyderabad market is

the scale of its product; nearly 57% of sales are for apartments larger than 8,000 sq. ft., with villas and row houses accounting for 40% of the FY'26 total value.

According to the report, at Rs 10 crore, buyers can get 6,210 sq ft in Hyderabad as compared to 3,930 sq ft in Bengaluru, and 4,290 sq ft in Chennai.

Hyderabad offers significantly larger homes at similar price points, making it highly attractive for luxury buyers.

Bengaluru recorded 128 units sold at value of Rs 1,957 crore. While volumes are lower than Hyderabad, the city stands out for rising demand for premium living, strong tech-driven wealth creation, and rapid transformation of new micro-markets.

Chennai recorded 58 units sold at the value of Rs 727 crore. Chennai's luxury market remains more conservative, rooted in legacy ownership, and slower to scale compared to peers.

Stock market ends on strong note amid buying across sectors

New Delhi: The Indian stock market on Wednesday ended on a strong note amid buying across the sectors barring power and FMCG names. At close, the Sensex was up 940.73 points or 1.22 percent at 77,958.52, and the Nifty was up 298.15 points or 1.24 percent at 24,330.95. Broader markets outperformed the benchmark, with the Nifty Mid, Smallcap indices rising nearly 2% each. The Indian rupee staged a strong recovery in today's session after hitting a fresh low of 95.43 in the previous session, closing higher by 68 paise at 94.61 against the previous close of 95.29 per dollar. The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped to Rs 473 lakh crore from below Rs 467 lakh crore in the previous session. Among the sectors, except power, FMCG, energy, all other sectoral indices ended in the green with auto,



media, private bank, PSU Bank, realty, metal, pharma up 1-2%. On nifty, the key gainers were Interglobe Aviation, Trent, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Shriram Finance, Asian Paints. While on the losing end were ONGC, L&T, Reliance Industries, Power Grid Corp

and NTPC. More than 160 stocks touched their 52-week high on the BSE. These included HFCL, Bank of Maharashtra, Marico, Aditya Birla Capital, Data Patterns, SAIL, Natco Pharma, Adani Green Energy, Vardhman Textiles, Nestle India, Syrra SGS, Cummins,

Lloyds Metals, Apar Industries, Kirloskar Oil, J&K Bank, Hitachi Energy, Schneider Infra, among others. The key OMCs, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Indian Oil Corporation, advanced 5.5% and 4.6%, respectively. Ather Energy, Vardhman Textiles.

Services activity expands rapidly in April, PMI rises to 58.8

New Delhi: The services sector in India has expanded at a rapid pace in the first five months of the fiscal year, supported by stronger domestic demand, higher e-commerce activity, and improved new order inflows, according to the HSBC India Services PMI.

The seasonally adjusted index rose to 58.8 in April, after touching a 14-month low of 57.5 in March.

The spike in the HSBC India Composite PMI Output Index signaled a faster expansion in private sector output, as both manufactur-

ing and services activity regained momentum.

The survey highlighted that the growth was driven by stronger domestic demand, new orders, competitive pricing, and increased e-commerce activity, even as export growth weakened and cost pressures remained elevated due to the West Asia war.

Services firms reported a sharp increase in operating expenses in April. Although input cost inflation eased from March, it remained among the highest levels recorded since November 2024.

Higher prices for food items, including cooking oil, eggs, gas shortages, meat and vegetables along



with increases in gas and labour costs, drove overall expenses, the report added. Services firms re-

mained optimistic about future activity, overall business confidence weakened compared with March, it added.

Employment rose across all four broad areas of the services economy tracked by the survey. Stronger growth in new business supported an increase in hiring at the start of the first fiscal quarter.

The private sector manufacturing activity growth recovered in April as HSBC's India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), compiled by

S&P Global, which measures monthly change in manufacturing output, rose to 54.7 in April, up from 53.9 in March.

The growth was riding on the back of sharper export growth, after plummeting to a four-year low in March due to West Asia-linked disruption.

A weighted average of new orders, output, employment, suppliers' delivery times and stocks of purchases indices was lower than the Flash India Manufacturing PMI of 55.9, released last month.

DFS clears viability plan 2.0 to improve financial health and competitiveness of RRBs

New Delhi: The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has approved a revised Viability Plan 2.0 for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), covering a three-year period from 2025-26 to 2027-28, aimed at strengthening their financial sustainability and long-term competitiveness, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance.

The move builds upon an earlier framework introduced by DFS for the period FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25, which focused on institutionalising performance monitoring and improving governance standards across RRBs.

With Viability Plan 2.0, the government seeks to fur-

ther refine and deepen these reforms by introducing a more structured and comprehensive performance evaluation system.

The revised plan outlines a set of thirty performance parameters designed to assess the functioning of RRBs across multiple dimensions.

These parameters are organised around four key pillars—operational excellence, asset quality, profitability, and growth—ensuring a holistic approach to performance measurement.

Under operational excellence, the plan emphasises efficiency improvements, better service delivery, and increased adoption of digital

technologies.

The asset quality pillar focuses on maintaining healthy loan portfolios, reducing non-performing assets (NPAs), and strengthening recovery mechanisms.

Profitability metrics aim to ensure that RRBs remain financially viable, with sustained earnings and improved return ratios over time.

The growth pillar, meanwhile, seeks to expand the outreach of RRBs, particularly in rural and underserved areas, while boosting credit flow.

Key indicators identified under the plan include Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR), credit-deposit ratio.

India becomes top remittance recipient, receiving over \$137 billion

New Delhi: India became the top remittance recipient country in the world and the only nation to surpass 100 billion dollars, the UN agency on migration said, adding that the country received over 137 billion dollars in remittances in 2024.

"India consistently leads as the top recipient of remittances, followed by Mexico," the World Migration Report 2026, released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said.

In 2024, India, Mexico, the Philippines and France were the top four remittance recipient countries globally. India, however, continued to be well above the rest, receiving more than \$

137 billion, and remained the only country to surpass \$ 100 billion, the report said.

United States of America has consistently been the top remittance-sending country in the world, with a total outflow surpassing \$ 100 billion in 2024.

As per the UN report, the distribution of remittances varies across regions as well, with South Asia estimated to experience the highest growth in 2024 at 11.8 per cent, driven by continued strong inflows to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Since 2010, India has been the top remittance receiving country in the world, when it had received 53.48 billion dollars, which grew over the years to 68.91

billion dollars in 2015, 83.15 billion dollars in 2020 and 137.67 billion dollars in 2024.

Asian countries continue to account for the largest share of internationally mobile students. In 2022, more than one million international students came from China, the single largest origin country worldwide. India ranked second, with over 620,000 students abroad. Beyond these two leading countries, origin country numbers drop considerably: Uzbekistan (150,000), Viet Nam (134,000) and Germany (126,000) follow, while the United States, France, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Nepal each had between 95,000 and

115,000 students studying abroad. More than half of the world's internationally mobile students reside in countries in Europe and North America.

The Indian diaspora has been instrumental in the expansion of India's technology sector, report said.

As per the UN report, all of the five largest migration corridors involving countries in Oceania comprise migrants to Australia, with the largest corridor being from the United Kingdom to Australia.

Just over 1 million migrants from the United Kingdom were living in Australia in 2024, and this number has remained relatively stable over the last 35 years.

BASF's Global Service Hub operations to commence in Hyderabad in Q2 FY26

Hyderabad: BASF, the global chemicals major, will establish a Global Service Hub for its Global Business Services (GBS) division in Hyderabad, with operations scheduled to commence in the second quarter of the current fiscal.

The company submitted a Letter of Intent (LoI) to Telangana IT Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu on Tuesday.

The announcement was made in the presence of senior leadership, including Tobias Dratt, President, Global Business Services at BASF; Alexander Gerding, Managing Director, BASF India Limited and Head of BASF Group Companies in India; Michael Hasper, Consul General, Consulate Gen-

eral of the Federal Republic of Germany in Chennai, India.

The hub, to operate under BASF Global Business Services Private Limited, will support global operations across key functions such as finance, human resources, supply chain, regulatory services, and in-house consulting.

Hyderabad was selected after a competitive global evaluation, with BASF citing the city's strong talent pool, supportive policy ecosystem, and mature enterprise infrastructure as key advantages.

Earlier this year, the company had also announced a Global Digital Hub in the city, marking continued investment in Telan-

gana. Speaking on the occasion, Sridhar Babu said Hyderabad has emerged as one of India's fastest-growing Global Capability Centre (GCC) hubs, adding over 75 GCCs in the past year.

He noted that the state is targeting over 100 new GCCs and more than one lakh jobs this year.

He also highlighted initiatives such as AIKAM, the Young India Skills University, a proposed 200-acre AI City, a Quantum Hub, and iBioLab to position the state as a leading innovation and engineering destination.

Tobias Dratt said the new hub will lay a strong foundation for BASF's future Global Business Services operations, adding that Hyderabad offers the right

ecosystem and talent base for scalable, high-quality services worldwide.

Alexander Gerding described the development as a significant milestone in BASF's long-standing presence in India, noting that it aligns with the company's "Winning Ways" strategy and strengthens its global capabilities. He added that co-

locating Global Business Services and Global Digital Services in Hyderabad will enhance collaboration and reinforce the city's strategic importance within BASF's global network.

The Hyderabad hub will complement BASF's existing global service centres in Berlin (Germany), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Montevideo (Uruguay).

ITP Aero Breaks Ground on New Hyderabad Facility, Creating 350 Jobs by 2027

Hyderabad: ITP Aero on Tuesday announced it has broken ground on a new aerospace manufacturing facility in Hyderabad, expanding its footprint in India and reinforcing a 15-year presence in the region.

The site is expected to be fully operational in 2027 and will create more than 350 skilled jobs over the next five years, the company said in a release.

The new plant will produce commercial aviation engine components, including fabricated and machined parts, to meet growing global demand in the civil aerospace sector.

The expansion marks the next phase of the company's growth in India, strengthening its role in international supply chains.

Telangana IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu said "With this investment, we are building on a trusted partnership and a strong industrial base."

"The facility will boost skilled employment and further develop our aerospace man-

ufacturing ecosystem," he added

Carlos Alzola, Managing Director of ITP Aero Group, said the expansion reflects confidence in the region's capabilities. "Hyderabad has been central to our industrial journey. This milestone underscores our long-term commitment to supporting the growth of commercial aviation worldwide."

The company recently appointed Sandeep Sharma as Managing Director, India. He said the new facility would deepen engagement with local suppliers while enhancing manufacturing capacity. "Hyderabad offers a strong combination of talent, infrastructure and collaboration, enabling us to scale with confidence," he said.

ITP Aero currently employs around 250 people in its Hyderabad manufacturing operations. The additional jobs are expected to contribute significantly to regional economic development and advanced manufacturing capabilities.

Vijayawada: In a major boost to India's advanced manufacturing and data centre infrastructure ecosystem, Carrier today commenced construction of its industrial-grade chiller manufacturing facility in Sri City with an investment of over Rs 863 crore. The project is expected to create more than 721 direct jobs over 3,000 direct and indirect jobs, while significantly strengthening Andhra Pradesh's emergence as a global hub for advanced HVAC manufacturing, engineering and innovation. The groundbreaking ceremony was at-

tended by Andhra Pradesh Minister for IT & Electronics Nara Lokesh along with David Gitlin, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Carrier Global, and Michael L. Gierges, President, Climate Solutions Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa. The upcoming facility will manufacture high-capacity commercial HVAC chillers exceeding 1,500 TR in India and house 15 advanced testing and R&D laboratories, positioning Andhra Pradesh at the forefront of high-end industrial cooling systems. The project marks another milestone in Andhra

Carrier commences construction of Rs 863 Cr advanced chiller manufacturing facility



Pradesh's larger strategy to move beyond attracting data centres toward building the

full manufacturing ecosystem that powers the AI economy. Carrier's investment is ex-

pected to catalyze a broader supplier and component manufacturing network in Andhra Pradesh, accelerating the state's "Make in India, Make for the World" vision. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Nara Lokesh said: "Andhra Pradesh is building far more than data centres - we are building the entire ecosystem that powers the AI revolution. From cooling systems and electronics to advanced infrastructure manufacturing, our goal is to make Andhra Pradesh the data centre manufacturing capital of India."