



Aryan Age

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PM highlights women's empowerment as NDA govt marks 12 yrs in office

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday highlighted the achievements of women across various sectors over the past 12 years, asserting that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government's focus on women-led development has expanded opportunities and empowered women to play a larger role in nation-building.

In a series of posts on social media platform X, Modi said the government's efforts had enabled women to make significant strides in fields ranging from financial inclusion and entrepreneurship to education, healthcare, sanitation, housing, sports, science and governance.

"Over the last 12 years, the NDA Government has worked to further women-led development. And, this is visible across sectors," the Prime Minister said.

"From financial inclusion and entrepreneurship to education, healthcare, sanitation, housing, sports, science and governance, women are playing a prominent role across diverse sectors," he added.

Emphasising the government's approach towards women's welfare and empowerment, Modi said the initiatives undertaken during the past decade were rooted in "dignity, opportunity and empowerment".

"The efforts of the NDA Government are rooted in dignity, opportunity and empowerment. They have helped create an environment where women can realise their full potential and contribute even more strongly to nation-building," he said, using the hashtag #12YearsOfNariShakti.

The Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction over the growing presence

of women in emerging and technology-driven sectors, particularly science, space research and innovation.

"I am particularly happy to see India's Nari Shakti make a mark in sectors like science, space and innovation. Their growing participation in emerging fields such as drone technology is opening new avenues of opportunity and transforming development landscape across the nation,"

Modi said. He further underlined the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in promoting financial independence among women and said the government was actively supporting such collectives.

"Our Government is actively supporting Self Help Groups, which are going a long way in making women financially independent," he said.

The Prime Minister's

remarks came as the NDA government highlighted its achievements since assuming office at the Centre in 2014. Over the years, the government has launched several schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic status of women, including initiatives focused on financial inclusion, sanitation, housing, maternal health, entrepreneurship and skill development.

The government has also sought to encourage greater participation of women in leadership roles, science and technology, and emerging sectors such as drone operations and startups.

The hashtag #12YearsOfNariShakti has been used by the BJP and the government to showcase the contribution of women and the impact of various welfare and empowerment programmes implemented during the NDA's tenure.

PM Modi mourns passing of shooting legend Jaspal Rana

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday expressed deep grief over the passing of veteran Indian shooter and renowned coach Jaspal Rana, describing his death as a profound loss to Indian sports and the shooting fraternity.

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister paid tribute to Rana's remarkable contributions to Indian shooting, both as an accomplished athlete and as a mentor to young talent.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Shri Jaspal Rana Ji. His passing is a profound loss to the world of Indian sports," Modi said.

Highlighting Rana's achievements on the international stage, the Prime Minister said, "He brought immense glory to the nation through his extraordinary achievements in shooting. Equally remarkable was his contribution as a mentor,

shaping and guiding young athletes with great dedication."

Modi noted that Rana's commitment to excellence and discipline had earned him widespread respect across the sporting community. "His unwavering commitment to excellence, discipline and service to the sporting world earned him immense admiration," he said.

Extending condolences to the bereaved family and the sports fraternity, the Prime Minister added, "My thoughts are with his

family, friends and the entire sporting fraternity in this hour of grief. Om Shanti."

Jaspal Rana was one of India's most celebrated shooters, winning multiple medals at international competitions, including the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. A specialist in pistol shooting, he played a key role in popularising the sport in India and later devoted himself to coaching and nurturing the next generation of shooters. His contributions to Indian shooting earned him several national honours and a lasting place among the country's sporting icons.

The news of his demise prompted an outpouring of tributes from athletes, coaches and sports administrators, who remembered him as a champion competitor and a dedicated mentor whose influence extended far beyond the shooting range.



World Bank lowers global growth projections to weakest level since COVID-19 amid West Asia conflict



Washington: The World Bank has lowered its global growth forecast to its weakest level since the Covid-19 pandemic, warning that the economic fallout from the conflict in West Asia is spreading well beyond the region and putting additional pressure on countries around the world.

In its latest Global Economic Prospects report released on Thursday, the global lender projected world economic growth of 2.5 per cent in 2026, down from 2.9 pc a year earlier. Global inflation is expected to average 4 pc, reflecting continued price pressures across many economies.

The downgrade comes as rising energy costs linked to the US-Israeli war with Iran continue to ripple through global markets, with higher energy prices leading to surging inflation, as well as increasing the risk of central banks keeping interest rates elevated for longer periods of time, or otherwise tightening their monetary policies for further containment of price growth.

It further warned that developing economies were the ones bearing the brunt of this crisis, due to facing higher import costs, weaker growth prospects and increasing pressure on

public finances.

To help cushion the impact, the institution said it was making up to USD \$60 billion available immediately for developing countries. That figure could possibly rise to as much as US\$100 billion over the next 15 months, depending on demand and evolving economic conditions.

As per the latest report, growth projections for around two-thirds of all economies have been revised down since the World Bank's previous assessment in January.

The bank said geopolitical tensions, ongoing conflicts and uncertainty in global markets continue to weigh heavily on investment, trade and consumer confidence.

Indermit Gill, the institution's chief economist, said ending conflicts would be one of the most effective ways to improve economic prospects, particularly for the more vulnerable and poorer countries that often suffer the greatest consequences despite being far removed from the fighting.

"The first thing is to end the conflict in Ukraine, in the Gulf, and in Central Africa, and not start any new wars," Gill said.

"War anywhere is bad for poor people everywhere."

Rahul Gandhi, Kharge mourn Jaspal Rana, hail his lasting contribution to Indian Shooting

New Delhi: Senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday expressed profound grief over the demise of legendary shooter and celebrated coach Jaspal Rana, describing him as one of India's greatest sporting icons whose contributions transformed the country's shooting landscape and inspired generations of athletes.

In a post on social media platform X, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said he was "deeply saddened" by the passing of Rana, whom he described as one of India's finest shooting champions and an inspirational mentor.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Jaspal Rana ji, one of

India's finest shooting champions and a mentor who inspired generations of athletes," Gandhi said.

Highlighting Rana's influence beyond his competitive achievements, Gandhi noted that his commitment to excellence and his service to Indian sport would be remembered for years to come.

"His dedication to excellence and his immense contribution to Indian sport have left an enduring mark on our nation," he said, while extending his sympathies to the bereaved family and the sporting community.

"My heartfelt condolences to his family, loved ones, and the entire sporting fraternity," Gandhi added.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also paid tribute to the shooting legend, calling him a towering figure in Indian sport and one of the country's greatest shooting champions.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Jaspal Rana ji, a towering figure in Indian sport and one of our greatest shooting champions," Kharge said in his message on X.

Recalling Rana's achievements as both an athlete and a coach, Kharge said his contribution to Indian sport went far beyond the medals he won for the country.

"From bringing glory to India on the world stage to nurturing

future generations of shooters, his contribution to Indian sport was truly extraordinary," he said.

Kharge also referred to Rana's stint in public life, noting that he had sought to serve his home state of Uttarakhand beyond the sporting arena. "He even delved in public service to work for his state of Uttarakhand," the Congress chief said.

Offering condolences, Kharge said, "My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the entire sporting fraternity."

Rana, one of India's most decorated shooters, passed away on Thursday night at the age of 49 following a cardiac emergency. Widely regarded as a pioneer of Indian shooting, he won

multiple medals at international competitions, including the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, and later emerged as one of the country's most respected coaches. His guidance played a significant role in shaping a new generation of Indian shooters and strengthening India's standing in the sport on the global stage.

Tributes have poured in from across the political spectrum and the sporting fraternity, with leaders, athletes and officials remembering Rana not only for his remarkable achievements but also for his dedication to mentoring young talent and advancing Indian shooting.



Cockroach Party to hold student protest again in Delhi on June 20: Abhijeet Dipke joins protest in Lucknow

Lucknow: Cockroach Janata Party chief Abhijeet Dipke on Friday joined the students here, who were protesting against exam paper leaks and demanded the removal of union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan from his post.

The protest was held at the Eco Garden in the state capital.

During his 40-minute stay, Abhijeet delivered a speech and called on the youths to join a similar protest in Delhi on June 20.

In his address, Abhijeet said, "Our country was built through a movement. Had there not been a movement, we wouldn't have achieved independence today. If there hadn't been a movement against the Emergency,

there wouldn't be democracy today. Protesting is the greatest form of patriotism. Whether it's a clerk or anyone, anyone found guilty of leaking NEET papers must resign."

Abhijeet, who reached Lucknow after midnight, arrived at Eco Garden at 1:30 p.m., holding a Constitution book in his hand. He was escorted inside by police under a security cordon.

Hundreds of police personnel from the RAF (Rapid Action Force), PAC, and local police were deployed during the protest.

Students and supporters arrived with posters and banners. They chanted slogans like "Stop the paper leak, stop it" and "Release the UPSC score cards, release them." Some students also protested against the Cockroach Party and Abhijeet Dipke. They said, "Our movement has nothing to do with the Cockroach Party. They are playing politics. If Abhijeet Dipke comes here, our movement will be destroyed."

Abhijeet's Cockroach Party previously protested in Pune on June 11 and at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on June 6.



Smriti Irani's name found missing from panchayat voter list in Amethi

Amethi: The name of former union Minister and ex Amethi MP Smriti Irani was found missing from the voters' list published for the three-tier Panchayat voter list in Medan Mavai Gram Panchayat in Amethi district.

Smriti Irani's name was included in the voters' list in the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. After the matter came to light, District Magistrate Amethi Sanjay Chauhan ordered an investigation into the matter.

The missing name of former union Minister Smriti Irani from the Panchayat voter list in Amethi has raised serious questions about the

district administration. This was revealed during the final publication of the Panchayat voters' list on June 10. Smriti Irani's name was included in the Medan Mavai Gram Panchayat in the district in the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Smriti Irani also came here to cast her vote from the same constituency in the 2024 general elections.

Former union Minister

Smriti Irani was elected MP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, defeating Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Smriti Irani built her house in Medan Mavai village after winning the 2019 elections. After the house was built, Smriti Irani became an Amethi voter.

Regarding the matter, BJP District President Sudhanshu Shukla stated that an application for Smriti Irani's name to be included has been submitted. Officials have assured that her name will be added after proper verification.

District Magistrate Sanjay Chauhan stated that an investigation has been ordered. The true cause will become clear once the report is received.



Trump claims MOU between US-Iran for reopening Strait of Hormuz and lift sanctions off of Tehran to be signed soon

Washington: US President Donald Trump has claimed that a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the US and Iran for reopening the Strait of Hormuz without tolls, as well as ease sanctions on Tehran in stages, and further extend the current ceasefire for 60 days, will be signed soon.

According to officials familiar with the discussions, the proposed agreement would create a framework for facilitating broader talks related to Iran's nuclear programme while also seeking to stabilise regional flashpoints, including Lebanon.

According to a diplomat

from one of the mediating countries and a US official, the text, while agreed in principle by both sides still requires final approval, reports Axios.

The diplomat said that Washington and Tehran had "agreed on the text of a deal", though key political sign-offs remain outstanding.

Sources familiar with the process said the agreement had received approval from senior Iranian officials but is yet to be formally endorsed by Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, with a spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry confirming that Tehran had "not yet reached a final decision".

One of the MOU's

central provisions would first and foremost require Iran to agree on never acquiring a nuclear weapon, and resolve the standoff around its enriched uranium.

A senior US official said one option under discussion involves down-blending Iran's enriched uranium inside the country under international supervision, rather than transferring it abroad.

Any steps on Iran's nuclear program would only take place if a second deal is reached — an uncertain prospect given how difficult the far less technical negotiations over the MOU have been.

The diplomat claimed the MOU "goes into details

on all the nuclear issues" and "satisfies all U.S. levels within 30 days. Iran would also agree to suspend temporary sanctions waivers allowing oil exports for an initial 60-day period. Further sanctions relief would depend on implementation of the deal and progress in follow-up negotiations.

"There is no set date for sanctions relief and it will be tied to the implementation of the deal," the diplomat said.

Another key issue which is yet to be resolved is the fate of billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen overseas.

While Iran has sought immediate access to some of its funds, the US argued that any release should occur in tranches and be linked to compliance.

US officials previously



indicated Iran could receive temporary sanctions waivers allowing oil exports for an initial 60-day period. Further sanctions relief would depend on implementation of the deal and progress in follow-up negotiations.

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According to US officials, Iran and Qatar have reportedly discussed a mechanism that would allow Tehran access to a portion of its frozen funds in Qatar for humanitarian purchases.

The latest breakthrough comes following hours of talks in Tehran on Wednesday night involving Qatari mediator Ali Al-Thawadi and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

During the negotiations, Al-Thawadi held multiple conversations with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, according to officials familiar with the discussions.

Preparations for a

possible signing ceremony appear to be underway. Four US Air Force C-17 transport aircraft departed for Europe on Thursday carrying equipment that could support travel arrangements for senior US officials, including Vice President JD Vance, if an agreement is finalised.

The deal, jointly mediated by Qatar and Pakistan, is expected to be known as the Islamabad Agreement if both sides ultimately approve and sign the text.

"We are working with the parties to put the final touches on the deal and set a date for the signing ceremony," the diplomat said.



Siddaramaiah denies bias in Backward Class grant allocation

Bengaluru: Former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday rejected allegations of discrimination in the allocation of grants by the Backward Classes Welfare Department, asserting that the preliminary sanction process was carried out strictly in accordance with government norms and without favouring any particular community.

In a clarification issued amid criticism over the distribution of grants to backward class organisations, Siddaramaiah said the department had granted preliminary approval for projects worth Rs 71.85 crore for the construction of community halls and student hostels benefiting around 155 backward class associations and organisations across the state.

He emphasised that the approved list was only a preliminary sanction and not the final list of beneficiaries.

Responding to allegations that the Kuruba community had received a disproportionately higher share of the grants, Siddaramaiah said the number of applications submitted by Kuruba organisations was significantly higher than those from other communities.



"The grants were sanctioned after examining applications received by the department. No discrimination was intentionally made against any community," he said.

He added that applications submitted by organisations belonging to several other backward communities were also under consideration and would be processed in the coming days.

According to the former Chief

Minister, preliminary approvals have been issued for projects benefiting communities including Kuruba, Madiwala, Lingayat, Vokkaliga, Besta, Balija, Golla, Jetti, Kumbara, Arasu, Helava, Savita Samaj, Uppara, Ganiga, Kuruhina Shetty, Halakki and Reddy, among others.

Siddaramaiah clarified that the order issued by the department does not amount to the release of funds. Beneficiary organisations must first

submit required documents, including building licences from local bodies, three-year audit reports and other records, through the respective district administration to the Backward Classes Welfare Department.

He said grants would be released in three phases based on the progress of construction works and periodic reviews conducted by the government.

Explaining the allocation formula, Siddaramaiah said existing government guidelines mandate that 70 per cent of grants be earmarked for communities falling under Category 1 and Category 2A, while the remaining 30 per cent is reserved for communities under Categories 3A and 3B.

He maintained that some communities received larger allocations primarily because a greater number of eligible groups belong to Categories 1 and 2A and because of the volume of applications received.

The clarification comes amid a political controversy over the distribution of welfare grants, with opposition parties and some community leaders alleging bias in the selection of beneficiaries.

Telangana emerging as major logistics hub, ready for future investments: Sridhar Babu

Hyderabad: Telangana is rapidly emerging as one of India's most promising logistics destinations, backed by strategic infrastructure investments, progressive policies and a future-focused vision, State IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu said on Friday.

Delivering the keynote address at the International Conference on Shipping and Logistics 2026 (ICSL 2026), organised by the Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) at HICC, the Minister said logistics is the backbone of economic growth, connecting manufacturers, farmers, businesses and markets.

He noted that in today's global trade environment, resilience, speed, reliability and adaptability have become as important as efficiency.

Highlighting Telangana's achievements, Sridhar Babu said the state contributes nearly five per cent to India's GDP, ranks seventh among merchandise-exporting states and recorded ex-



ports worth over Rs 1.61 lakh crore during 2024-25. Despite being landlocked, Telangana has transformed its geographical position into a strategic advantage through strong multimodal connectivity, Logistics Policy 2.0, expanding air cargo infrastructure and the upcoming Mega Multimodal Logistics Park at Manoharabad.

Inviting investors and industry leaders to partner with the state, the Minister said Telangana is ready to support industry, connect markets and build the logistics ecosystem of the future.

FTCCI President Ravi Kumar said Hyderabad is well-positioned to emerge as India's premier hub-and-spoke logistics destination, while Logistics Committee Chairman Kamal Jain said the conference brought together policymakers, industry leaders, technology providers and academia to discuss the future of India's logistics sector.

The conference featured panel discussions on cargo infrastructure, multimodal freight transport, AI-driven logistics, and workforce development.

Bihar CM mourns death of three SHOs, driver in Begusarai road accident

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Friday expressed deep sorrow over the death of three Station House Officers (SHOs) and a vehicle driver in a tragic road accident in Begusarai district.

In his condolence message, the Chief Minister described the incident as "extremely sad and painful."

The four victims, including three police station heads from Madhepura district, were killed when their car col-

lided with a truck on National Highway-31 under the Sahebpur Kamal police station area of Begusarai late Thursday night.

"This irreparable loss is a profound shock to the entire police family," Choudhary said.

He prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls and conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The Chief Minister also assured that the Bihar government stands

firmly with the grieving families during this difficult time and will extend all possible support to them.

The deceased include the SHOs of Belari, Arar and Ratwara police stations in Madhepura district, along with the driver of the vehicle. All the three officers were returning to Madhepura by car after completing a training programme in Patna, when the accident took place.

Police have initiated an investigation into the accident.

Omar suggests opening Awantipora air base for civilian flights during Srinagar airport closure

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has suggested opening the strategic Indian Air Force air base at Awantipora in south Kashmir for limited civilian flight operations during the proposed closure of Srinagar International Airport in October this year.

The proposal was raised by the chief minister during separate meetings with union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu in New Delhi, where he expressed concern over the proposed shutdown of Srinagar airport from October 1 to 16 under Phase III of the runway resurfacing project.

A J&K government spokesman said during the meetings, the Chief Minister underscored the importance of maintaining uninterrupted air connectivity to Jammu & Kashmir, particularly during the peak autumn tourism season when the Valley attracts a large number of visitors from across the country.

While acknowledging



that the resurfacing works are essential for operational safety and fully respecting the operational assessment of the Indian Air Force, Omar Abdullah expressed concern over the timing of the final phase of the project, which coincides with one of the busiest periods for the tourism sector.

The chief minister informed the union ministers that air services to the Valley have already been curtailed since April owing to the earlier phases of the resurfacing programme. He noted that a complete suspension of flights during the first half of

possibility of shortening or phasing the final stage of the runway works without compromising safety or operational requirements.

He further requested that, in the event a complete closure of Srinagar Airport becomes unavoidable, minimal civil flight operations, commensurate with the operational capacity of the Awantipora Air Base, may be permitted from the air base during the closure period to ensure essential air connectivity for the region.

Recalling his earlier tenure as Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah noted that during the runway resurfacing works in September 2010, civil flights had successfully operated from Awantipora under a coordinated arrangement involving the ministries of defence and civil aviation.

"We are working on possible alternatives to minimise the disruption & maintain a basic flight schedule as was done in the past when the airport closed for similar reasons in 1998 & 2010," the Chief Minister said.

Inquiry ordered into alleged police misconduct at Kunzer police station

Srinagar: J&K Police on Friday ordered an inquiry into alleged misconduct by police personnel at Police Station Kunzer in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

According to police the incident stems from June 10, when a police team from PS Kunzer was executing a status quo order issued by the Judicial Magistrate 1st Class (JMIC) Tangmarg, in Dhobian village and initiated legal and preventive proceed-

ings.

Police said an altercation later reportedly took place inside the police station involving an advocate and police personnel, following which allegations regarding the conduct of police officials surfaced.

"In view of the concerns expressed and in order to ensure complete transparency, fairness and objectivity, SSP Baramulla has directed for a detailed inquiry into the entire sequence of events,

which has been entrusted to a Gazetted Officer," the statement said.

The inquiry shall examine all aspects of the incident, including the conduct of all persons involved, the circumstances leading to the registration of the case, and any allegations of misconduct or use of force.

"Statements of all concerned persons shall be recorded and all available evidence shall be examined," police statement said.

"..It is assured that if any lapse, misconduct or deviation from established procedures on the part of any police personnel is found during the course of inquiry, appropriate action shall be taken and accountability shall be ensured strictly in accordance with law," police added.

The investigation into the registered case and the departmental inquiry will proceed independently, police said.

Focus on "trident" strategy for reviving Bengal's industry and economy: CM Suwendu Adhikari

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday unveiled an ambitious "trident-shaped" strategy for reviving industry in the state.

Adhikari said his government will revive manufacturing and attract investment to the state by focusing on a three-pronged strategy of promoting heavy industries, Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) and food and horticulture processing.

Addressing a press conference organised by the BJP to mark 12 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government at the Centre, Adhikari said restoring confidence among investors was essential to accelerating economic growth and creating employment opportunities across the state.

He said the state's new BJP government was working on what he described as a "trident-shaped" development model.

"It is centred on heavy industries, MSMEs, and food and horticulture processing," said the chief minister.

The initiative would include the establishment of processing units and ancillary industries aimed at strengthening the rural and industrial economy.

"We have formed a team and a minister is overseeing the preparations. We are receiving several proposals, but we do not want to make promises that cannot be fulfilled," Adhikari said.

Highlighting the state's industrial potential, he stressed the importance of railway-linked manufactur-



ing and engineering sectors. Referring to the Kanchrapara Railway Workshop, he said its expansion, along with the development of rail-centric industries, could generate substantial employment opportunities. He also added that other railway workshops across the state will be revived and expanded.

"The railway workshops have a tremendous potential to generate jobs. We will focus on expanding them," Adhikari said.

He also revisited the issue of Singur, saying his government would seek to bring the Tata Group back to West Bengal. He noted that the land acquired for the abandoned Nano project was no longer under government control, having been returned to the original landowners.

Tata Motors had abandoned their plans to bring out the Nano car from the rural pocket of Singur in Hooghly district, but aborted the project following an intense anti-land acquisition agitation spearheaded by the then principal opposition Trinamool Congress. The Nano

later rolled out from Gujarat's Sanand.

According to him, agriculture and pisciculture are no longer viable on much of the land because of structural alterations made during the earlier industrial project. "The land contains rods, cement and other construction materials, making cultivation difficult," he said.

The CM said his government would welcome investment but would subject prospective investors to rigorous scrutiny before extending support or allocating land.

"We want credible business players to come to Bengal. We will examine whether companies have been involved in bank fraud, land fraud or money-laundering investigation. We will also determine whether they genuinely intend to establish industries here or are merely visiting for courtesy meetings or investment summits," he said.

Adhikari maintained that improved governance, industrial expansion and job creation would help revive Bengal's economy and the government has already set the ball rolling.

Sajad Lone questions timing of Omar-Modi meet ahead of NC proposed protest on statehood

Srinagar: Peoples Conference president and MLA Sajad Lone took a dig at Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, questioning the timing of the interaction ahead of the National Conference's proposed protest at Jantar Mantar demanding restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

In a post on X, Lone said that although he was abroad, he couldn't stop himself from reacting after learning about the meeting between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister.

Calling the proposed protest "a joke", Lone said there was "a sense of timing" and argued that the Chief Minister should have

met the Prime Minister after the protest instead of before it.

"A start to the proposed protest at Jantar Mantar. What a joke. There is a sense of timing. Even if we will be lectured now that the date had been fixed earlier, CM sahib should have met after the protest," Lone wrote on Thursday evening.

Drawing parallels with the events preceding the August 5, 2019 abrogation of Article 370, Lone alleged that leaders had similarly met the Prime Minister shortly before the constitutional changes and subsequent detentions.

"Why do I get this feeling. They did the same in 2019. And met the same PM sahib a day or so before abrogation. And I think final-



ised who will be housed where after detention," he said, while also taking a sarcastic swipe at the Chief Minister, accusing him of "cracking a joke at the expense of those who voted for him." "I can visualise CM sahib telling PM sahib. Sir we have to do some bit of theatrics. That fake wooden

smile. Sir, Uncle must have briefed you," Lone said.

On Thursday J&K Chief Minister called on Prime Minister in New Delhi and discussed a range of key issues concerning Jammu & Kashmir, including the early restoration of statehood, the economic situation and developmental priorities of

J&K.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister conveyed the aspirations of the people of Jammu & Kashmir for the early restoration of statehood, underlining that it would mark an important step in strengthening democratic institutions, deepening public participation and advancing the next phase of the region's development.

He requested that the process be taken forward at the earliest.

Last week, after a marathon meeting, the National Conference announced that its legislators and MPs would stage a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on the opening day of the Monsoon session to press for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

Child labour, blot on humanity, every child deserves education and dignity: Prem

Patna: On the eve of World Day Against Child Labour, Bihar Legislative Assembly Speaker Prem Kumar said that child labour continues to remain a serious blot on society and humanity, and called upon all sections of society to work collectively to ensure that every child enjoys a safe, secure and dignified childhood.

Addressing the issue, Prem Kumar emphasised that children are the foundation of the nation's future and that safeguarding their rights and well-being should be a shared responsibility. He said the persistence of child labour reflects a challenge that demands sustained public awareness and coordinated action.

The Speaker stated that every child has the fundamental right to a secure childhood, quality education, proper nutrition and a life of dignity. Denying children these basic rights by forcing them into labour, he said, deprives them of opportunities necessary for their physical, emotional and intellectual development.

He observed that child labour not only violates the constitutional and fundamental rights of children but also weakens the country's prospects for progress. According to him, a nation cannot achieve its full potential if its children are compelled to sacrifice their education and childhood for survival. Prem Kumar highlighted

that both the Central Government and the Bihar Government have been implementing several welfare initiatives aimed at eliminating child labour and ensuring that children remain within the education system.

He pointed to programmes such as the Right to Education Act, which guarantees free and compulsory education for children, as an important tool in addressing the root causes of child labour. The legislation, he noted, has played a significant role in increasing school enrolment and reducing barriers to education. The Speaker also referred to the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, describing it as a comprehensive initiative designed to

improve access to quality education and strengthen educational infrastructure across the country. Such measures, he said, encourage children to attend school rather than enter the workforce prematurely. He further highlighted the contribution of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, stating that the programme not only addresses nutritional needs among school-going children but also serves as an incentive for families to send their children to school regularly. Apart from educational interventions, Prem Kumar said various social security measures introduced by governments are helping vulnerable families

Briefs :

Police bust 2 Inter-state arms syndicates, arrests 6; 26 pistols recovered

New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi Police has busted two inter-state illegal arms supply syndicates and arrested six key members allegedly involved in procuring and supplying weapons to gangsters operating in Delhi-NCR. A total of 26 illegal semi-automatic pistols and eight live cartridges were recovered during the operation, along with six mobile phones, SIM cards and three vehicles used for transporting the firearms. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell-Northern Range) Narra Chaitanya (IPS) said the Special Cell had been continuously working to dismantle arms syndicates active in Delhi and the NCR. He said sustained surveillance and intelligence gathering over several months helped the police crack the networks, which sourced weapons from Madhya Pradesh and supplied them to criminals linked to the Manjeet Mahal, Gogi and Randeep Bhati gangs. The arrested accused have been identified as Ravi Kumar (38), a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad; Sunil Tanwar (33), a resident of Baghat district in Uttar Pradesh; Yogesh (32), a resident of Dwarka in Delhi; Rajat alias Rajju (27), a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad; Saurabh (27), a resident of Baghat district.

Delhi's Britannia Chowk renamed after veteran journalist Ashwini Chopra

New Delhi: Britannia Chowk in North West Delhi was renamed on Friday as Ashwini Chopra Chowk to honour the veteran journalist, Ashwini Kumar Chopra, former editor of the Punjab Kesari Group. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu unveiled the plaque during a formal renaming ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, Gupta said Chopra was a "fearless journalist" who pursued truth and used his pen to amplify the voice of society, bringing issues of public concern into the national discourse. As a tribute to his contributions to society, the Delhi government dedicated the roundabout in his name, marking his birth anniversary. Sandhu applauded Chopra for his courage and affection, and urged the residents to join hands with the government and Chopra's family members to make this roundabout the cleanest in the city. "Now the collective responsibility of citizens, the administration and the family is to ensure that this chowk becomes one of Delhi's cleanest, most beautiful and well-maintained public spaces," Sandhu said. Chopra was a senior journalist and a former Member of Parliament (MP).

Three killed, two critical after massive fire in Govindpuri residential building

New Delhi: At least three people lost their lives, and two others were in critical condition after a major fire broke out in a five-storey residential building in South East Delhi's Tughlakabad Extension this morning. According to the police, the incident occurred during the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. A team of Police Station Govind Puri is looking into the matter. The police said a PCR call regarding the incident was received at 2:24 am. Local police teams immediately reached the spot and were soon joined by the SHO, ACP, additional DCPs and DCP of the South East district. Firefighters and emergency responders launched a rescue operation to evacuate residents trapped inside the smoke-filled building.

Delhi CM announces Rs 10 lakh relief for victims of fire, building collapse

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday paid tribute to the victims of the recent fire tragedy in Hauz Rani, Malviya Nagar, and the building collapse in Saidulajab, Saket, while announcing financial assistance for the affected families and honouring citizens and officials who played a crucial role in rescue operations.

At a solemn programme held at the Delhi Secretariat, the Chief Minister remembered those who lost their lives in the two incidents and praised the courage and selflessness displayed by rescuers, police personnel, administrative officials and local residents. A two-minute silence was observed in memory of the deceased.

Addressing the gathering, Gupta announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh for the families of each person who died in the two tragedies and financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh for those injured. Expressing deep condolences, the Chief Minister said the incidents had caused immense grief and suffering. "There are moments that shake the conscience of society. The Malviya Nagar fire and the Saket building collapse were such heartbreaking incidents that left many families with unbearable and ir-

reparable pain," she said.

She noted that an entire family perished in the Hauz Rani fire, while families of foreign nationals who had

mendation certificate and a cheque of Rs 21,000 in recognition of their service.

Among those specially recognised was Riyazuddin



travelled to India for medical treatment were also affected by the tragedy. The pain, she said, extended beyond the immediate victims and was shared by society as a whole.

The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure that compensation and relief are provided promptly and transparently so that affected families receive timely support.

During the ceremony, Gupta honoured several individuals for their exceptional contribution to rescue and relief operations. Each was presented with a com-

Mansoori, who displayed remarkable presence of mind during the Hauz Rani fire by arranging mattresses that helped save several lives. The Chief Minister also ensured reimbursement of the cost of the mattresses used during the rescue effort.

Praising the role of local residents and emergency responders, Gupta said the swift action of citizens, police personnel and officials helped prevent a greater loss of life. "Despite limited resources, the courage, service and collective spirit displayed by citizens and police personnel remain a source of

inspiration for all of Delhi. The Delhi Government salutes all such heroes who set an example of humanity," she said.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to standing with affected families and said efforts would be intensified to strengthen safety standards, disaster management systems and public awareness measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Among those honoured for their role in rescue operations during the Saket building collapse were Chander Prakash, District Project Officer of the South District Disaster Management Authority, Inspector Ritesh Kumar Sharma, Constables Manish Kumar Jangid, Vivek Shukya and Angad Meena, along with local residents Kapil Giri, Harjeet Kumar and Dr Rafiq Khan.

Several other citizens, police personnel and volunteers who participated in rescue efforts during the Malviya Nagar fire were also honoured.

Gupta said the Delhi Government would continue to encourage acts of courage and compassion, adding that service to humanity remains the highest value and guiding principle of governance.

Thunderstorms cool Delhi, but IMD forecasts gradual rise in mercury

New Delhi : Sporadic rain, thunderstorms, and gusty winds brought significant relief from the scorching summer heat across Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) on Friday, with temperatures dropping sharply under the influence of multiple weather systems active over northwestern India.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a western disturbance persisting as a cyclonic circulation over north Haryana and adjoining areas, coupled with cyclonic circulations over central Pakistan and southeast Rajasthan, has triggered unstable weather conditions across the region. The seasonal trough stretching from Pakistan to Gangetic West Bengal is also contributing to the prevailing weather pattern.

Thunderstorms accompanied by rainfall were reported from most parts of Delhi during the past 24 hours, leading to a noticeable fall in temperatures. Maximum temperatures dropped by 4-5 degrees Celsius, while minimum temperatures plunged even further, remaining well below normal at several locations.

At Safdarjung, Delhi's primary weather observatory, the maximum temperature was recorded at 34.6 degrees Celsius, 5.3 degrees



below normal and 4.1 degrees lower than the previous day. The minimum temperature settled at 22.8 degrees Celsius, a sharp decline of 7.2 degrees and 5.2 degrees below the seasonal average.

Rainfall measurements showed Ayanagar receiving the highest precipitation among major stations with 12.4 mm, followed by Safdarjung with 11.2 mm and Lodhi Road with 9.8 mm. Other areas, including Ridge, Pusa, Rajghat, and Mayur Vihar, also recorded rainfall. Strong southeasterly winds ranging between 35 and 45 kmph, with gusts reaching up to 65 kmph, swept across the city.

Across the NCR, temperatures remained significantly below normal. Gurgaon recorded a maximum temperature of 32.6 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 24.4 degrees Celsius, while Mayur Vihar emerged as one of the coolest locations with a daytime temperature of

30.7 degrees Celsius.

The IMD noted that maximum temperatures across most parts of Delhi remained markedly below normal, while minimum temperatures were appreciably to markedly below average levels. For Friday night, the weather office has forecast a generally cloudy sky with sustained winds of 20-30 kmph. Very light to light rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds reaching 40-50 kmph, gusting up to 60 kmph, is likely in some parts of the city. Similar weather conditions are expected on Saturday, with the possibility of light rain, thunderstorms, and gusty winds during the afternoon and evening hours. Daytime temperatures are likely to rise slightly to between 36 and 38 degrees Celsius. From Sunday onwards, temperatures are expected to climb gradually as the influence of the current weather systems weakens.

Three more die in Govindpuri fire; AAP seeks release of inquiry reports on recent blaze incidents

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday demanded that the Delhi Government make public the inquiry reports related to recent major fire incidents, following the deaths of three more people and injuries to several others in a fire at a five-storey building in Govindpuri, South-East Delhi.

Addressing the media, AAP Delhi president Saurabh Bharadwaj said inquiry reports announced after major fire tragedies in Palam, Vivek Vihar, and Malviya Nagar have not yet been released. He said making these reports public would help determine the causes of the incidents, identify those responsible, and enable corrective measures to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Referring to the Govindpuri fire, Bharadwaj said local residents played a cru-

cial role in rescue efforts. According to him, some people trapped inside the building managed to escape by climbing down with the help of sarees tied together. He thanked residents who assisted in evacuating people and attempted to control the fire.

He also questioned delays in the release of inquiry reports into previous incidents. Citing the Palam fire tragedy in which nine people died, Bharadwaj said authorities had indicated that the inquiry would be completed within one to one-and-a-half months, but no report has been made public even after four months.

He similarly referred to the Vivek Vihar fire, which claimed nine lives, and the recent Malviya Nagar fire in which 23 people died, stating that reports promised within a week and three

days, respectively, have not yet been released.

According to Bharadwaj, public disclosure of these reports would help establish accountability, whether related to the fire department or any other agency, and facilitate action against those found responsible. He also said shortcomings in firefighting and rescue operations, if any, could be addressed through such investigations.

Speaking about emergency response, Bharadwaj said he had not yet received complete details regarding the Govindpuri incident, including the time the fire brigade was alerted and when it reached the spot. However, referring to the Malviya Nagar fire, he alleged that despite the presence of a nearby fire station, there had been a significant delay in the arrival of firefighting personnel.

Delhi saw major infrastructure boost under 12 years of Modi government: Rekha Gupta

New Delhi : Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday credited the Narendra Modi-led Central government with driving major infrastructure and welfare projects in the capital over the past 12 years, citing investments in metro expansion, roads, sanitation, healthcare and public transport.

Addressing a press conference to mark 12 years of the Modi government at the Centre, Gupta said Delhi had witnessed "unprecedented transformation" through Central government support.

"Over the past 12 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has transformed the office of the Prime Minister into a medium of public service rather than merely a position of power," Gupta said. She added that the government's focus on development, trust and public wel-

fare had benefited citizens across sectors.

Highlighting Delhi-specific projects, Gupta said the Centre had allocated nearly Rs 3,000 crore for laying sewer networks in unauthorised colonies and preventing untreated wastewater from entering the Yamuna. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, Delhi received Rs 1,550 crore to tackle landfill sites and improve sanitation infrastructure. She said the capital had also received Rs 821 crore in special assistance during 2025-26 for development works. According to Gupta, Delhi's Metro network has expanded to nearly 400 km, while work has begun on an additional 180 km of corridors. She also highlighted the approval of a nearly 10-km metro corridor connecting R.K. Ashram Marg with Indraprastha, which will improve access to

Bharat Mandapam, India Gate and Central Secretariat.

On road infrastructure, Gupta said Delhi had received investments worth Rs 1.25 lakh crore over the past 12 years. Projects such as the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Dwarka Expressway, Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II), Delhi-Dehradun Expressway and Namo Bharat Corridor have significantly improved connectivity.

The Chief Minister also pointed to the induction of 4,550 electric buses under the FAME scheme and approval for 6,130 additional buses under the PM e-Drive initiative. In healthcare, she said 43,000 beneficiaries had availed treatment under Ayushman Bharat in the past year, while a Rs 200-crore trauma centre is being built at GTB Hospital.

"When leadership is clear, intentions are honest

and national interest remains the highest priority, even the most challenging goals can be achieved," Gupta said.

Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra said transport infrastructure had undergone a major transformation under the Modi government. He noted that travel times on key routes connecting Delhi with neighbouring regions had reduced substantially due to new expressways and highway projects.

"National highways were once built at the pace of 12 kilometres per day. Today, construction has nearly tripled to 32 kilometres per day," Malhotra said. He said projects including the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Delhi-Dehradun Expressway and improved connectivity to Jewar Airport would reduce congestion and pollution in the capital.

Delhi CM highlights inter-state coordination for Yamuna cleaning; Delhi targets 5,800 E buses by next March

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, presenting her vision on the development of the national capital, on Thursday said that an inter-state panel is working to restore the flow of the Yamuna River and that by March 2027, Delhi will have over 5,800 Electric buses.

Speaking at the 11th meeting of the Governing Council of NITI Aayog, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she presented her vision on the development of the national capital and its role in building 'Viksit Bharat 2047,' emphasizing that the city has emerged as a powerful engine driving the country's transformation.

The Delhi CM said that the identity of a developed nation is not determined merely by economic or technological progress, but by the capability and productivity of its citizens.

Gupta presented information on

her government's schemes and achievements in a systematic manner, giving a detailed account of the work being done across fields of education, health, infrastructure, and social welfare, adding that continuous and serious efforts are underway towards making a 'Viksit Delhi'.

CM Gupta also expressed gratitude to PM and the central government for extending full cooperation in this endeavour of transforming the national capital.

She said with central assistance, nearly Rs 1 lakh crore worth of road infrastructure is being developed in Delhi.

Sharing a major achievement, she said that on the Prime Minister's directions, a special 'Coordination Team' has been formed with neighbouring states of the capital, and rising above differences, the team has begun struc-

tured work to restore the continuous flow of the Yamuna River and tackle the serious problem of pollution.

Gupta shared that Delhi government has launched an effective scheme to provide free bicycles to schoolgirls to reduce the dropout rate in Class 9 in government schools.

On administrative reforms, she said that Delhi has fully implemented e-filing and digitization, set up new 'Command and Control Centres.'

To enhance safety and modernization in transport, three new automated testing stations are being set up in Delhi for fitness checks of commercial vehicles, and with Centre's support, Delhi's metro network has now expanded to nearly 500 km, surpassing that of other states in the country. According to Gupta, her government has strengthened healthcare services by upgrading hospitals.

Delhi Congress, Youth Congress to hold mega job fair in Delhi on June 19

New Delhi: The Delhi Congress and the Indian Youth Congress have announced that they will jointly organise a mega job fair at Talkatora Stadium on June 19, coinciding with the birthday of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi. The initiative is aimed at connecting unemployed youth with prospective employers and creating employment opportunities across the national capital. The announcement was made during a meeting held at the (DPCC) office, Rajiv Bhawan, which was attended by district and block-level Congress leaders, youth representatives and party office-bearers involved in the preparations for the event. According to

Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav, the organisers are targeting outreach to nearly 50,000 job seekers from different parts of the city. He said the objective is to ensure maxi-

mum participation by unemployed youth and provide them with direct access to recruiters. Yadav stated that the job fair is being planned on a much larger scale this year.

CRRI, MCD sign agreement for road quality assessment and pothole repair technology

New Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI) signed an agreement aimed at improving road assessment, quality control, and maintenance practices across the capital.

Under the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), signed on Wednesday, CSIR-CRRI will provide technical support for functional and structural evaluation of roads, supervise construction quality, and

conduct capacity-building programmes for MCD engineers and staff.

The two organisations also signed a Technology Management Agreement to implement ECOFIX, a pothole-repair technology developed by CSIR-CRRI using processed iron and steel slag aggregates.

Officials said the collaboration seeks to improve the durability and performance of Delhi's roads through scientific assessment methods and the adoption of new maintenance technologies. Speaking at the

event, MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar said technology-based approaches were

becoming increasingly important in urban road planning and maintenance.

Editorial

On the Threshold of Change!

The public outcry erupting in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is not merely an outburst of local discontent; it is an explosion of popular sentiments that have been suppressed for decades. It appears that the patience of citizens living under the shadow of economic crisis, political neglect, and restrictions on human rights is running out. In this context, the issue of occupied Kashmir has once again moved to the center stage of international discourse, offering clear indications that the region's future stands at a new historical crossroads.

The territory of Jammu and Kashmir held by Pakistan represents more than just a border dispute between two nations; it is a raw, lingering wound from the unfinished business of India's Partition. The consequences of political decisions made in 1947, Pakistan's military interventions, and the complexities of international politics continue to impact the lives of millions today. The question of how much autonomy actually exists in this region which has styled itself as 'Azad Kashmir' (Free Kashmir) for decades has once again confronted the world. The widespread agitation that has erupted in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in recent days, the harsh crackdown that followed, and the mounting local discontent clearly signal that the region has reached a pivotal historical juncture.

Today, Pakistan's economy is grappling with a severe crisis. Soaring inflation, a heavy debt burden, energy shortages, and unemployment have already made life difficult for ordinary citizens. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir has also borne the brunt of this situation. The movement launched by the Joint Awami Action Committee focusing on issues such as electricity tariffs, rising prices of essential commodities, political representation, and local rights has gained significant momentum in recent days. The organization was banned, numerous activists were arrested, and large-scale security forces were deployed to crush the agitation. Violent clashes resulted in loss of life, internet services were suspended, and serious questions regarding human rights were raised. These events have once again cast doubt on Pakistan's democratic system.

From India's perspective, this region has always been an integral part of its sovereign territory. Maharaja Hari Singh merged Jammu and Kashmir with India by signing a legal instrument of accession in October 1947. Subsequently, Pakistan seized a portion of this region through a tribal invasion. While a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations later established the Line of Control, this did not legitimize Pakistan's occupation. In 1994, the Indian Parliament unanimously passed a historic resolution reaffirming the stance that the entire Jammu and Kashmir region including the areas held by Pakistan is an integral part of India. This position remains a cornerstone of India's foreign policy to this day.

The significance of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir extends beyond mere territory; the region is highly sensitive from cultural, religious, strategic, and economic standpoints. The Sharda Peeth in the Neelam Valley is regarded as an ancient seat of learning for Indian culture. Scholars from across the Indian subcontinent once flocked there for study, yet today, this heritage stands neglected. Furthermore, there have been long-standing grievances regarding the imposition of Urdu and Punjabi influences on local languages and cultural identities. A struggle persists to preserve languages such as Pashoto, Shina, Hindko, Balti, and Pahari. History has repeatedly shown that when a region's language and culture are weakened, the historical identity of that society is also jeopardized.

Concerns are also consistently being raised regarding demographic changes in Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. A sense of alienation is growing among locals, who feel relegated to a secondary status in political decision-making processes. Amidst this, the conflict over reserved seats in the legislative assembly has intensified in the run-up to the upcoming elections. Local citizens feel that decisions regarding their future are made in Islamabad, while they are merely presented with a façade of nominal autonomy. Consequently, a movement that began with economic grievances has now transformed into a struggle for political dignity and representation.

China's role in this entire equation is equally significant. Although the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered an economic lifeline for Pakistan, a substantial portion of it passes through territory claimed by India. For this reason, India has firmly opposed the project from the outset. By raising the issue of sovereignty, India has consistently articulated its stance on the international stage. While China's growing investment has heightened the region's strategic importance, there is little evidence to suggest that local citizens have reaped the expected economic benefits.

Following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, India adopted a clearer and more assertive stance regarding Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently, references to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan began to feature more prominently in India's official discourse. In the Indian Parliament, on diplomatic platforms, and in various government statements, it is consistently reiterated that this territory is an integral part of India. Consequently, India closely monitors political developments in the territories under Pakistan's control.

However, this issue cannot be viewed solely through the lens of nationalism. The residents of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are, first and foremost, human beings. Ensuring their access to security, dignity, development, education, healthcare, and democratic rights is also a responsibility of the international community. The situation is further exacerbated by actions such as firing upon protesters, internet shutdowns, mass arrests, and the practice of equating dissent with terrorism. History has repeatedly demonstrated that suppression, rather than dialogue, is not a sustainable long-term solution for governance. The events unfolding in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir today are not merely a symbol of local discontent; they represent the struggle for self-respect waged by the people of that region. For India, this issue transcends a mere border dispute; it encompasses historical, cultural, and constitutional rights. Conversely, for the citizens living there, it is a question of living with dignity. Consequently, the times ahead will prove decisive for the region. While it is difficult to predict the direction the situation will take, one thing is certain: the hearts of the people cannot be won through the threat of the gun. Ultimately, the course of history aligns with the aspirations of the people. Developments in occupied Kashmir demonstrate that truth, no matter how long it is suppressed, cannot be buried forever. As the aspirations for justice, dignity, and self-respect among the people of that land intensify, so too will the pressure to find a definitive resolution to this issue.

Therefore, there is a need to view the developments in this region not merely through a strategic lens, but against the touchstone of human values and historical reality. History has repeatedly proven that the legitimate expectations of the people ultimately pave the way for change, and that very moment becomes the decisive turning point in any conflict.

Reform Linked MoUs signed with Manipur and Bihar under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

As a remarkable step towards sustainable, assured, and citizen-centric rural drinking water supply across India, reform-linked Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed today under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0 with two States (Manipur and Bihar).

The reform-linked MoU mandates a Gram Panchayat-led, service-based and community-centred model of rural water governance, aligned with the objectives of Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 and seeks to ensure that every rural household has access to drinking water supply in adequate quantity and of prescribed quality on a regular basis, through strengthened community participation (Jan water supply systems, thereby enhancing the living standards of rural communities contributing to long-term water security aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

The MoU with Manipur was signed in the presence of the Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C.R. Patil, and Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh.

For Bihar, the MoU signing was done in the presence of Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C.R. Patil, and Minister of State, Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary and Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, Minister (PHE) Bihar, during separate scheduled meetings. Senior officials from the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), including Shri Ashok K. K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS, Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM), Joint secretary, and Director were present during the MoU signing. For Manipur, MoU was exchanged between D Senthil Pandiyan, Joint Secretary, NJJM, and Dr. Neil-inthang Teilien, Secretary to Chief Minister, Manipur in the presence of Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Patil, Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh, and Deputy Chief Minister (PHED), Manipur, Shri Losii Dikho.

Marking a pivotal moment in Centre-State collaboration, the MoU with State of Bihar was formally signed after Manipur. The meeting commenced in the presence of Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Patil, Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary, Minister of State, Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, Min-



ister (PHE) Bihar and other key officials from the State & DDWS.

The MoU was signed and exchanged by Shri D Senthil Pandiyan, Joint Secretary, NJJM, and Shri Rajesh Kumar, Principal Secretary, PHE Department, Bihar.

Addressing on the occasions, Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Patil said that Jal Jeevan Mission, launched under the leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has transformed rural drinking water supply across the country and reduced the drudgery of fetching water especially by women and girls. Under JJM 2.0, now the focus is on sustaining the infrastructures created under the Mission, functionality of tap connections, water quality, source sustainability, O&M, community ownership and regular monitoring as key priorities.

The Minister also stressed the need for water conservation, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, catchment area protection using Finance Commission and VB-G RAM G funds. He stressed community-based water quality monitoring and said Gram Panchayats, District Water and Sanitation Missions, State Water and Sanitation Missions and local communities must work together to ensure reliable drinking water services. He reiterated the Government of India's continued support to the State in achieving the Mission's objectives.

Addressing Manipur, he expressed confidence that the state would soon complete the remaining tap connections and join the group of States and Union Territories that have achieved universal rural tap water coverage. Appreciating the resilience shown by the State in continuing implementation despite difficult conditions, Shri Patil remarked that Manipur's

achievements would serve as an inspiring example of commitment to ensuring safe drinking water for every rural household.

To the state of Bihar, the Union Minister asked to ensure proper O&M, and said he is confident that Bihar will complete the remaining work with the same commitment and determination that has enabled it to achieve over 90 per cent coverage. The State's contribution will be important in realising the

works, policy reforms, sustainable funding mechanisms, and community participation. These measures, he said, would help transform the Mission from a government programme into a people-centric movement aimed at securing safe and reliable drinking water services for rural communities.

He appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Jal Shakti in formulating the guidelines for JJM 2.0 and

achieving significant strides in expanding rural drinking water infrastructure and improving service delivery despite numerous geographical and socio-economic challenges in the state.

He assured that Bihar remains committed to working closely with the Government of India to achieve the shared goal of safe and sustainable drinking water for all.

In his opening remark during signing of MoU with



vision of Viksit Bharat- Viksit Bihar and ensuring improved quality of life for millions of citizens. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh said, it was a privilege to witness the signing of the Reform-Linked MoU between the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Government of Manipur under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0. He noted that the next phase of the mission represents a strategic shift from a primary focus on infrastructure creation to ensuring long-term, sustainable drinking water service delivery. He highlighted that JJM 2.0 places emphasis on service delivery, source sustainability, digital monitoring frame-

reiterated the State Government's full commitment to implementing the reform agenda and achieving the Mission's objectives for improving the quality of life and ensuring sustainable water security for all.

In his address, Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, Minister PHE Department of Bihar, said that Bihar has remained firmly committed to ensuring safe and adequate drinking water for every rural household. Even before the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission, the State Government initiated the ambitious 'Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal' programme in 2016. Under this initiative, an extensive rural water supply network has been developed. However, Central assistance has helped a lot in

Bihar, Shri Ashok K. K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS underscored that the MoU prioritises not just infrastructure setup of pipelines, but sustainable services managed at the grassroots level. He emphasised decentralisation and community ownership, with Gram Panchayats and Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) being empowered to manage and operate in-village water supply systems. While stating the importance of the MoU signing with the State and UT, Shri Meena highlighted that the MoU is a shared commitment between the State/UT which ensures the upholding of JJM 2.0 guidelines in order to provide safe, secure and sustainable drinking

water to the rural households.

Emphasising the importance of institutional mechanisms for sustainable water service delivery, the Secretary stressed that District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) meetings should be conducted regularly by all District Collectors. He noted that timely meetings would facilitate the preparation of Village Action Plans and support the certification of panchayats as capable institutions for managing rural water supply systems. The Secretary underlined that district administrations would play a crucial role in monitoring implementation, conducting periodic reviews, and extending necessary support to Gram Panchayats whenever required.

He also mentioned that this step is an initiative which aligns with the fulfillment of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Har Ghar Nirantra Nal Se Jal vision.

During the MoU with Manipur, Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, AS&MD, NJJM, in his opening remarks, underscored the importance of Manipur in the development of the North-Eastern region and acknowledged the progress made by the State in the rural drinking water sector over the past two years.

He emphasised that the objective of the Jal Jeevan Mission goes beyond merely providing tap connections; it aims to ensure reliable access to safe and clean drinking water for the next 25-30 years. He noted that achieving this goal requires addressing existing gaps and challenges in water supply systems, strengthening infrastructure, and ensuring the sustainability of investments made under the mission. The Mission Director further highlighted the structural reforms being pursued under JJM 2.0, guided by the Union Minister for Jal Shakti, to strengthen long-term service delivery and water security. He expressed confidence that Manipur would actively advance these reforms and reiterated the Government of India's commitment to providing continuous technical support, capacity building, and handholding assistance to the State for the effective implementation of the Mission. Under JJM 2.0, 33 States/UTs out of 34 JJM States/UTs have already signed the MoU with DDWS, Government of India.

PMKVY: Building One of the World's Largest Skilling Ecosystems

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), under the leadership of Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, marks twelve years of Skills, Scale and Transformation, highlighting the growth of one of the world's largest skilling ecosystems and its contribution to India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Over the past twelve years, the Ministry has built a comprehensive skilling ecosystem that integrates vocational education, industry-led training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship development, digital public infrastructure and international workforce mobility into a unified national framework. Through sustained reforms, institutional strengthening and deep collaboration with industry, academia and state governments, Skill India has evolved into one of the world's largest and most diverse skilling ecosystems.

Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, said, "The journey of the last twelve years reflects India's growing recognition that

skills are among the most powerful enablers of opportunity, productivity and economic transformation. The Ministry has worked to create an ecosystem where skills are viewed as an integral part of learning, employability and lifelong growth, alongside formal education. As technologies reshape industries and the nature of work continues to evolve, our focus is on preparing India's youth not only for existing opportunities, but also for jobs and enterprises that will emerge in the years ahead.

Through stronger industry partnerships, digital innovation, entrepreneurship support and global mobility pathways, we are building a workforce that is confident, competitive and ready to contribute to India's development journey."

The Ministry's impact is visible across every stage of the skilling lifecycle. India's vocational training infrastructure has expanded significantly, with the number of Industrial Training Institutes growing from 9,776 in 2014 to more than 13,888 today. Together with National Skill Training Institutes, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras and Jan Shiksha Sansthan, these institutions have expanded access to quality skill development opportunities across the country.

The Ministry has also estab-

lished three Indian Institutes of Skills (IIS) in Gandhinagar, Mumbai and Kanpur, creating state-of-the-art centres of excellence to deliver industry-aligned, future-ready training.

Apprenticeship has emerged as one of the strongest bridges between education and employment. More than 56.08 lakh apprentices have been engaged since 2016, supported by reforms that have improved participation from both industry and youth while strengthening on-the-job learning opportunities.

The Ministry has also driven large-scale short-term skilling interventions through flagship programmes such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, under which more than 1.64 crore candidates have been trained. Simultaneously, entrepreneurship development initiatives led through the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) have trained over 25 lakh beneficiaries under Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs), creating pathways for enterprise creation, self-employment and livelihood generation across urban, rural and aspirational districts.

A defining feature of the Ministry's transformation journey has been the creation of a digital-first

skilling ecosystem.

The Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) has emerged as an integrated digital public infrastructure for skills, bringing together skilling, jobs, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship opportunities on a single platform. Today, more than 1.5 crore candidates are registered on SIDH, with over 1,000 courses available in 23 languages. Programmes such as SOAR (Skill for AI Readiness) have further accelerated AI awareness and preparedness among learners and educators with 50+ AI Courses and Qualifications across sectors, recording over 4.5 lakh enrolments since launch across emerging technology domains.

India's excellence in skills has also been reflected on the global stage through its performance at WorldSkills competitions. Team India has steadily strengthened its standing among the leading nations, improving its global ranking from 29th in 2015 to 13th in 2024.

India's participation in IndiaSkills and WorldSkills has evolved into a national movement for skill excellence, inspiring youth to pursue world-class standards and showcase the capabilities of Indian talent on international platforms.

Recognising India's growing role as a global talent partner, the Ministry has also expanded its fo-

cus on international workforce mobility.

Through government-to-government partnerships, skill-based mobility agreements and the establishment of Skill India International Centres, India is creating trusted pathways for skilled professionals to access opportunities in global labour markets.

The Ministry's reform agenda continues to evolve in response to the changing world of work. Through initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SE-TU), future skills programmes in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and emerging technologies, and stronger integration of skilling with education under the National Education Policy 2020, the Ministry is building a workforce prepared for the opportunities and challenges of the future.

As MSDE completes twelve years, its focus remains firmly on strengthening quality, expanding access, deepening industry partnerships, promoting entrepreneurship, accelerating apprenticeship adoption and positioning India as a global hub for skilled talent.

The achievements of the past decade provide a strong foundation for the next phase of India's growth story, powered by skills, innovation and human potential.



Briefs :

Haryana Signs Health Agreement to Help Mothers and Children

Chandigarh: The state health department has signed an agreement with the Medanta Foundation to upgrade a community health center in the Mahendragarh district.

The main goal of this partnership is to improve healthcare services for mothers and young children living in distant areas. The health minister and the head of the medical foundation exchanged the official papers today.

The health minister called this step a historic move for the state. She stated that working together with private medical experts helps bring top-quality healthcare right to the doorsteps of people living far from big cities. The partnership is expected to greatly improve health tracking for families in the region. It ensures that local clinics have better resources to handle medical needs safely. The Haryana state health department has taken a momentous stride toward transforming rural healthcare by entering into a formal agreement with the Medanta Foundation, an initiative aimed at completely modernizing and upgrading a vital community health center located within the Mahendragarh district. This collaborative effort signifies a major milestone in the state's ongoing mission to bridge the gap between urban medical excellence and rural healthcare accessibility, ensuring that underserved populations receive top-tier medical attention.

State Government Limits Foreign Travel and Fuel Use to Cut Costs

Chandigarh: The Haryana government has announced strict new rules to cut down public spending. These rules follow a call for saving public money made by the Prime Minister.

Under the new orders, government workers are banned from taking official or personal foreign trips until September 2026, unless they need medical care. At least half of all government meetings must now take place online to avoid traveling.

The state has also put a temporary ban on public rallies, vehicle marches, and big roadshows for the next few months. Additionally, the number of cars used in official leader convoys will be cut in half.

The finance department will enforce a 20 percent cut on fuel expenses for all offices. The government will also stop buying any fuel-run cars, switching completely to electric vehicles. Officials noted that these saving steps are necessary because global conflicts have caused fuel prices to rise.

The Haryana government has introduced a series of stringent fiscal measures aimed at significantly curtailing public expenditure across all state departments and administrative levels. This decisive policy shift comes as a direct response to a broader national call for financial prudence and the conservation of public funds issued by the Prime Minister. By enforcing these strict guidelines, the state administration intends to optimize its budgetary allocations and ensure that public resources are utilized with the utmost efficiency and responsibility during a challenging global economic climate.

Haryana Plans to Build Very Tall Sky Building in Gurugram

Gurugram: The state government is planning to build a super tall building in Gurugram that could become one of the tallest structures in the world.

The state infrastructure company has chosen a 6.7-acre plot for this project. The plot sits inside a massive upcoming project area near the Dwarka Expressway.

The building is planned to be between 620 and 700 meters high. If it gets built, it will be much taller than any other building currently standing in India.

The Haryana government has initiated ambitious preliminary plans to construct a monumental, record-breaking supertall skyscraper in Gurugram, aiming to establish a globally recognized architectural landmark that would rank among the tallest structures in the world. This visionary project represents a massive leap forward for the state's urban development strategy, reflecting its intent to position Gurugram as an elite international business and commercial hub. By proposing a structure of such unprecedented scale, the state administration is making a definitive statement about its economic ambitions and its readiness to compete with iconic skylines like those of Dubai, Singapore, and major European cities. The creation of this tower is expected to drastically transform the regional landscape, acting as a visual and financial anchor for future high-end



real estate and corporate investments across North India. To bring this massive undertaking to life, the state's flagship infrastructure agency, the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation, has strategically identified and earmarked a prime 6.7-acre plot of land dedicated entirely to the tower's construction. This specific land parcel has been chosen for its long-term development potential and its ability to accommodate the intricate engineering and foundational demands required to support a structure of mega-tall proportions. The assignment of this valuable plot marks the first concrete physical step in a highly structured, phased planning process, serving as

the canvas upon which international architects and structural engineers will eventually collaborate. State officials are treating this land allocation as a critical milestone, ensuring that the surrounding zoning laws and building codes are adjusted to permit a vertical expansion never before attempted in the country. This chosen 6.7-acre plot sits purposefully inside a massive, comprehensively planned upcoming mega-development known as the Global City project, an expansive integrated township spanning over one thousand acres. Positioned as a futuristic city-within-a-city, the Global City development is being built entirely from scratch with a heavy emphasis on state-of-the-art infrastructure, sustainable living, and a modern walk-to-work culture. The supertall building is intended to serve as the crown jewel and central focal point of this entire megatownship, drawing multinational corporations, luxury hospitality brands, and global financial entities into its ecosystem.

four out of the top ten most heavily polluted localities in India were found situated within this single state, highlighting a concentrated regional problem. Among these struggling areas, the municipality of Charkhi Dabri registered the absolute lowest air quality index, earning the grim distinction of being the most polluted spot in the region during this period. The alarming data has raised serious concerns among public health officials and environmental advocates, who are pointing to the region's intense industrial profile as a primary driver of the sudden, drastic drop in breathable air standards. Detailed analytical reports indicate that the air in Charkhi Dabri contained particulate dust concentrations that soared to nearly four times higher than safety thresholds established by international health organizations. This massive surge in airborne pollutants is directly attributed to a combination of intensive local mining operations, large-scale stone-crushing units, and the continuous movement of heavy, uncovered transport trucks navigating the dry, unpaved terrain.

Police Catch Eight Thieves for School Robberies in Karnal

Karnal: The police have arrested six thieves and two scrap buyers who were part of two active gangs. With these arrests, the police have solved 24 different theft cases in the area.

The gangs targeted government schools and daycare centers at night. They mostly stole items used to cook free meals for children.

The police recovered 29 gas cylinders, 13 bags of wheat, two batteries, large cooking pots, two auto-rickshaws, and 69,000 rupees in cash.

The thieves used the auto-rickshaws to check the areas before robbing them. The court has allowed the police to keep the men for three days to ask more questions.

The Karnal police department has achieved a major breakthrough in countering local property crime by successfully apprehending a total of eight individuals linked to a string of burglaries across the district. The group of arrested suspects includes six active thieves and two commercial scrap dealers who allegedly operated as part of two highly organized criminal networks. By systematically tracking the movements of these individuals, law enforcement officials have successfully resolved at least twenty-four separate pending theft cases

that had been reported in the region over recent months. This coordinated police operation is expected to bring a significant measure of relief to public institutions and local administrators who had been struggling to secure their premises against these recurring nighttime raids.

The investigation revealed that these two criminal syndicates purposefully directed their illegal activities toward vulnerable government educational institutions and community daycare centers during the late-night hours.

Instead of seeking high-end electronics, the thieves focused their efforts primarily on targeting kitchen store-rooms and stealing heavy equipment and ingredients used to prepare free daily mid-day meals for young students.

This deliberate targeting of vital social welfare supplies had caused widespread disruption to the daily nutritional programs running in rural and semi-urban schools. By mapping out the recurring pattern of these kitchen break-ins, specialized police teams were able to narrow down their surveillance and identify the key members driving the illicit operation.

Following a series of targeted raids based on action-

able intelligence, the recovery teams managed to seize a massive cache of stolen public property and operational assets used by the gangs. The confiscated items brought to the police station included twenty-nine commercial gas cylinders, thirteen heavy bags of institutional wheat, two high-capacity power batteries, and several large industrial-sized cooking pots. Additionally, the police impounded two auto-rickshaws that were actively utilized by the suspects, along with sixty-nine thousand rupees in hard cash believed to be the direct proceeds from selling stolen goods to the scrap buyers. The recovery of these essential cooking materials means that several local schools will soon be able to reclaim their assets and resume normal meal operations for their students.

The tactical approach used by the thieves involved leveraging the two impounded auto-rickshaws to conduct detailed daytime recon- trines and identify potential targets without raising suspicion. Posing as ordinary commercial transport operators, the gang members would survey the layouts of various government schools, checking for structural vulnerabilities, broken fences, and the absence of nighttime security guards.

Women's Panel Demands Action Against Comedians Over Live Show Remarks

Gurugram : The National Commission for Women has sent an urgent letter to the Haryana police chief regarding a comedy show held in Gurugram. The panel is deeply upset about jokes that made light of forced behavior towards women. The rights group stated that making fun of a woman's choice and dignity can harm public safety and worsen social attitudes. They have ordered the two main performers to appear before the panel on June 22.

The commission wants a full report from the police within seven days showing the exact steps taken against the performers and the event coordinators.

They are also asking the state police to share what steps they plan to take to make sure public shows and digital platforms are not used to promote harassment or disrespectful behavior.

The National Commission for Women has taken a firm and decisive stance by intervening in the fallout of a controversial stand-up comedy show held in Gurugram, Haryana, following intense public outcry over viral clips of the performance. The rights panel took formal, self-initiated notice of the media coverage and widely shared video snippets, which quickly drew sharp criticism



from various segments of society. Expressing profound concern over the nature of the content broadcasted, the federal body immediately dispatched an urgent communication to the Director General of Police in Haryana, urging swift and stringent intervention. The commission's proactive response highlights the growing national focus on accountability within live entertainment and digital media spaces, emphasizing that humor cannot be used as a shield to bypass foundational societal ethics. In its detailed official communication, the prominent women's rights group expressed deep distress over specific segments of the

show that appeared to trivialize, normalize, and make light of non-consensual behavior and sexual coercion directed toward women. The panel observed that portraying a disregard for a woman's fundamental autonomy, consent, and personal dignity as a form of public entertainment is entirely unacceptable and deeply harmful to social progress. They noted that when such highly sensitive issues are treated carelessly before a cheering live audience, it severely undermines long-standing efforts to build a safe and respectful culture. Consequently, the commission has officially issued formal notices to the two pri-

mary performers featured in the footage, commanding them to appear in person before the institutional panel on June 22 to address the serious allegations.

The federal commission has firmly articulated that the casual glorification or normalization of behaviors that attack the core dignity and bodily autonomy of women can have dangerous, far-reaching consequences for public safety and general social attitudes. By allowing such messaging to spread unchecked under the guise of comedy, public spaces run the risk of desensitizing audiences and worsening systemic biases against gender safety.

Female Police Officer Caught Taking Cash in Gurugram

Gurugram: A female police officer has been caught by the Anti-Corruption Bureau for taking a 50,000 rupee cash bribe. The officer worked at the Manesar Women's Police Station.

The officer was caught in the act of accepting the money. The police have filed a corruption case against her and are looking further into the matter.

Officials said that two brothers named Balram and Mukesh were named in a crime report at her police station. The officer was in charge of the case and demanded cash to clear their names from the official papers. One of the brothers told the anti-corruption team about the demand. The team then set up a trap using special marked money.

The man gave the money to the officer near the police station. The team immediately caught her and found the marked cash with her. They are now taking legal action against her. The Anti-Corruption



Bureau has successfully executed a targeted sting operation in Gurugram, leading to the apprehension of a female law enforcement official who allegedly accepting a substantial cash bribe. The

official, identified as Head Constable Kavita, was stationed at the specialized Manesar Women's Police Station when she became the subject of a rigorous corruption investigation. Law en-

forcement authorities confirmed that the arrest was made directly during the commission of the offense, leaving little room for ambiguity regarding the immediate transaction. Following

Court Supports Firing of Worker Over Careless Duty

Chandigarh: The High Court supported the decision to fire a community care worker after a pregnant woman in her area died without being noticed. The worker tried to defend herself by saying the woman did not look pregnant.

The court rejected her excuse, calling it unrealistic. The job of the worker required her to visit homes regularly and actively find and help pregnant women.

The worker claimed that the woman's family did not inform her about the condition. She said she saw the woman moving fast and carrying heavy items, so she assumed the woman was not pregnant.

The judges said this showed a major failure in doing her job properly. They ruled that health workers cannot escape their duties by making simple guesses, and dismissed her appeal.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has formally upheld the termination of a community healthcare worker, ruling that professional negligence in tracking vulnerable patients is grounds for immediate dismissal. The judicial decision

follows a severe administrative review initiated after an unregistered pregnant woman residing within the worker's assigned jurisdiction passed away without receiving essential state medical support. The terminated employee attempted to legally contest her firing by arguing that the woman's physical appearance did not clearly indicate her pregnancy, an excuse that the bench ultimately deemed entirely invalid.

By dismissing the worker's appeal, the court has reinforced the high standard of accountability expected from grassroots public health personnel responsible for maternal welfare.

The presiding judges completely rejected the worker's defensive arguments, characterizing her line of reasoning as highly unrealistic and incompatible with the core mandates of public service.

The court emphasized that the foundational responsibilities of a community care worker explicitly require proactive field engagement, including regular doorstep visits to families and the active identification of expectant mothers.

Haryana Targets One Trillion Dollar Economy by 2047

Chandigarh: Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini announced that Haryana is working on a major plan to grow its economy to 1 trillion dollars over the next two decades. He shared this plan at a major national development meeting with the Prime Minister in Delhi.

The leader asked the central government to include Haryana in its upcoming big industrial park plans. He also requested special support to make the state a top hub for advanced technology, computer chips, and data centers.

Haryana aims to raise the average income of its citizens significantly. The state also wants to create a national center for artificial intelligence and set up green energy projects.

To attract huge financial investments and create 10 lakh new jobs over the next five years, the state has launched a fresh industrial policy. The leader also highlighted that Haryana is leading the country in job training programs and sports development.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has officially announced that the state of Haryana is actively executing a comprehensive long-term economic strategy designed to scale its gross state domestic product to an



unprecedented one trillion dollars over the next two decades.

This ambitious financial blueprint was formally presented during a high-level national development council meeting convened by the Prime Minister in New Delhi, where state leaders gathered to align regional growth models with national targets.

The Chief Minister emphasized that Haryana's geographic advantages, robust industrial base, and proximity to the national capital position it uniquely to drive the next wave of India's economic expansion. The presentation of this vision marks a significant shift from routine adminis-

trative planning toward an aggressive, multi-decade transformation aimed at turning the state into a global economic powerhouse by the centenary of the nation's independence. To secure the foundational infrastructure required for such massive growth, the Chief Minister formally requested the central government to integrate Haryana into its upcoming phase of national mega-industrial park developments. He specifically advocated for strategic central support and specialized fiscal incentives to establish the state as India's premier destination for advanced technology manufacturing, semiconductor fabrication, and high-capacity data centers.

The state administration argues that creating a highly subsidized, tech-ready ecosystem is essential to attract top-tier global tech giants and chipmakers who are currently looking to diversify their supply chains. By anchoring these capital-intensive industries within its borders, Haryana intends to move up the value chain from traditional manufacturing to high-tech engineering and digital infrastructure management.

A core socio-economic pillar of this vision involves significantly raising the per capita income of Haryana's citizens, ensuring that the fruits of macro-economic growth are distributed equitably across both urban and

rural populations. In tandem with rising incomes, the government is planning to establish a national center of excellence for artificial intelligence, positioning the state at the forefront of the global digital revolution. This proposed AI hub will focus on developing localized applications for agriculture, governance, and industrial automation, bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and practical field implementation. Furthermore, the state is concurrently launching large-scale green energy projects to ensure that this rapid industrial escalation remains ecologically sustainable and reduces long-term reliance on fossil fuels.

To catalyze immediate financial inflows and address employment needs, the state has rolled out a fresh, investor-friendly industrial and investment promotion policy aimed at generating over ten lakh new jobs within the next five years alone.

This policy introduces streamlined single-window clearances, labor law flexibilities, and targeted capital subsidies to encourage both domestic conglomerates and foreign direct investors to set up manufacturing plants in the region.

Haryana Plans Easy Passport-Style Property System for Gurugram and Faridabad

Gurugram: The Haryana government wants to change how people register their properties. They plan to run registration offices like passport offices to stop long lines and remove middle agents. The state minister has sent this plan to the Chief Minister for approval. The government wants the new system to be open and fast so nobody can delay the work. If it works well in Gurugram and Faridabad, they will use it across the whole state.

The new system will give people specific time slots and tokens. Everything will move online, making it hard for anyone to demand bribes or cause delays. These two cities were chosen first because they have a very high number of property sales every day.

For a long time, these offices had issues with fake papers and delays. The new rules aim to make officers responsible and ensure citizens can do their work easily without paying extra money to middlemen.

The Haryana government is planning a major overhaul of its property registration process by modeling local registries after the highly efficient, streamlined system used by modern passport offices. This progressive initiative is being designed specifically to eliminate chaotic crowds, reduce processing times, and completely remove unauthorized middle agents who often exploit the loopholes in the current administrative setup. The pro-

posed structural reform has been officially drafted by the state minister and forwarded directly to the Chief Minister for final review and administrative approval. By introducing this model, the government aims to replace outdated bureaucratic hurdles with a sophisticated, user-friendly system that prioritizes public convenience and professional accountability.

The core philosophy driving this new system is the creation of a highly transparent, fast-tracked workflow that leaves absolutely no room for deliberate delays or administrative bottlenecks. If the pilot project achieves its intended success in the high-demand urban zones of Gurugram and Faridabad, the state administration intends to scale the model and implement it across all districts of Haryana. This phased rollout ensures that the software, staff training, and logistical frameworks are thoroughly tested and refined in complex environments before a broader statewide launch. The ultimate goal is to establish a standardized, elite level of public service delivery that treats every property buyer with dignity and efficiency. Under the passport-style architecture, citizens will be required to book specific time slots and obtain unique identification tokens through a centralized online portal before visiting the office. This digital transformation ensures that every step

of the verification process moves forward on a strictly monitored online timeline, making it incredibly difficult for corrupt actors to demand illicit bribes or create artificial delays. Gurugram and Faridabad were deliberately chosen to pioneer this initiative because they handle an exceptionally high volume of real estate transactions daily, making them the ultimate testing grounds for high-capacity administrative reforms. By digitizing the operational pipeline, the state is effectively creating a transparent paper trail for every transaction. For many years, traditional property registration centers have grappled with persistent systemic challenges, including the submission of fraudulent documentation, unexpected delays, and the unchecked influence of middlemen. The newly proposed regulations aim to counter these vulnerabilities by placing direct, measurable responsibility on the presiding registration officers while ensuring that citizens can complete their work smoothly without paying extra fees to unauthorized brokers. The introduction of strict internal audits and time-bound service guarantees will force the departments to operate with maximum integrity. This bold policy shift marks a significant step toward clean governance, transforming property registration from a stressful chore into a seamless, modern experience for the public.

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Haryana Sets Up Special Anti-Terrorist Police Force

Chandigarh: The Haryana Government has officially formed a new Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) to handle serious security risks, collect secret information, and investigate complex cases.

The special group will be led by a high-ranking police officer and will include a highly trained commando unit similar to national security guards. The squad will have its own dedicated police station with legal, money-tracking, and forensic experts.

The new force will use high-tech units to keep an eye on illegal online spaces and look out for suspicious activities. It will also run community programs to keep young people away from extreme and dangerous ideas.

This decision comes after several major security problems in the region, including a past blast near Delhi and explosive materials found in Faridabad. Until now, standard police branches handled these security tasks, but this new squad will work completely on its own.

The Haryana government has officially established a dedicated Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) to function as a highly specialized, independent branch within the state's security network. This proactive administrative move aims to significantly enhance the state's capacity to identify, monitor, and dismantle complex security threats before they pose a danger to the general public. By forming this autonomous unit, the state government is shifting its approach from utilizing traditional, over-burdened police branches toward a highly focused operational model. The creation of this specialized force reflects a growing regional commitment to modernize security protocols, ensuring that the state remains fully prepared to handle sophisticated intelligence and investigative tasks.

The newly formed squad will operate under the direct leadership of a high-ranking senior police officer, ensuring a streamlined chain of command and immediate

decision-making capabilities during critical situations. A key component of this specialized force is the inclusion of an elite, highly trained commando unit, whose members have undergone rigorous tactical training modeled after premier national security forces. These specialized commandos are equipped to execute high-stakes operations, rescue missions, and rapid-response tasks with maximum precision and efficiency. The presence of this tactical wing gives the state a highly dependable asset capable of deploying to any location within the region at a moment's notice to neutralize immediate physical risks.

To ensure comprehensive investigative capabilities, the state government has authorized the squad to establish and operate its own dedicated, independent police station. This specialized facility will not rely on standard precinct resources but will instead house its own in-house teams of legal advisors, financial tracking analysts, and forensic science

experts. The integration of these diverse professional fields under one roof allows investigators to build legally resilient cases, track illicit funding networks, and analyze physical evidence with incredible speed. This self-contained operational structure is designed to eliminate the bureaucratic delays that frequently slow down complex cross-border or inter-departmental investigations.

A major focus of the new Anti-Terrorism Squad will be the deployment of advanced, high-tech monitoring units tasked with keeping a vigilant eye on illegal online activities and suspicious digital networks. Recognizing that modern security risks frequently originate or organize within digital spaces, the cyber experts assigned to the squad will utilize cutting-edge software to trace anonymous threats and flag anomalous digital behaviors. These technological capabilities will allow the force to preemptively disrupt coordinated illegal activities before they can manifest in the physical world.

Low Snowfall and Cool Weather Reduce Water Inflow at Bhakra Dam

Ropar: The water coming into the Bhakra Dam is much lower than usual for this time of the summer.

This is happening because there was less snow in the mountains during winter and cool weather delayed the snow from melting.

The water flow is almost half of what it normally is during this month. It is also much less than the water received around the same time last year.

Reports show that the mountains received nearly half the amount of snow they usually get. On top of that, recent winds kept the mountain temperatures lower than what is needed to melt the snow quickly. Experts think temperatures will rise after June 21, which will help melt the snow and bring more water into the river.

Even though less water is coming in, the dam currently has more stored water than last year. However, because the farming season has started, the dam is letting out more water than it is receiving, causing the water levels to drop slightly every day.

The Bhakra Dam, a critical cornerstone of India's



northern water management system located near Ropar, is currently experiencing a significant and unusual drop in daily water inflows during the peak summer season.

This unexpected hydrological deficit has raised concerns among engineers, agricultural planners, and policy experts who rely on the reservoir to sustain multiple states. Ordinarily, this period of the year marks a time of heavy, predictable water accumulation as seasonal shifts bring warmer weather to the upper

atmospheric zones.

However, the current data highlights a stark departure from long-term regional averages, presenting a unique environmental puzzle that demands close monitoring. The situation emphasizes just how deeply dependent the country's primary water reservoirs remain on complex, highly variable mountain weather systems. The underlying catalyst for this reduced water availability stems directly from an exceptionally dry winter season in the upper Hi-

malayan catchment areas, which resulted in a drastically low accumulation of fresh snowfall.

For several consecutive months during the peak winter cycle, the mountainous zones that feed the Satluj River basin experienced prolonged dry spells with minimal precipitation. This lack of a robust snowpack meant that the natural mountain reservoirs, which essentially store water in solid form for the summer months, were severely depleted before the warm season even began.

School Books to Include History of Sikh Gurus in Haryana

Chandigarh: Government schools in Haryana will now teach students about the history of Sikh Gurus and the famous warrior Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in Class 8 history books starting this school term.

This change completes a promise made by the Chief Minister during a memorial event last year. A special team of history experts spent time preparing 16 new pages for the school syllabus.

The new lessons cover the life and journeys of Guru Nanak Dev and trace how the faith grew over time. It teaches children about community kitchens, equality, and helpful service to others.

The chapters also talk about courage, standing up against unfair treatment, and the sacrifices made for justice. Students will also read about Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's military skills and how he set up the first Sikh capital in the region.

The Haryana government has officially integrated the history of the Sikh



Gurus and the celebrated warrior Baba Banda Singh Bahadur into the standard history curriculum for all government schools across the state. This significant educational update will take effect immediately, with the new chapters being introduced into the Class 8 history textbooks starting from the current academic school term. By bringing these narratives into mainstream classrooms, the state education department aims to pro-

vide young students with a comprehensive understanding of regional heritage and the profound historical events that shaped the cultural fabric of northern India. The inclusion of these lessons is designed to ensure that the foundational stories of leadership, resilience, and spiritual philosophy are preserved and studied systematically by future generations.

This curriculum revision marks the fulfillment of a

formal promise made by the Chief Minister during a prominent state-level memorial event held last year, where the administration committed to honoring regional historical icons through education. To execute this directive with historical accuracy, the state government commissioned a dedicated panel of history experts, researchers, and academic scholars to carefully draft the new material. The specialized committee spent

several months reviewing historical texts and archives to compress the extensive lineage into sixteen high-impact, age-appropriate pages for the school syllabus. This rigorous preparation process was conducted to ensure that the timelines, biographical details, and cultural contexts presented to the eighth-grade students are factually precise and educationally enriching.

The newly added chapters offer an in-depth exploration of the life, spiritual journeys, and enduring philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev, tracing the foundational roots and the gradual evolution of the Sikh faith over consecutive centuries. Students will learn about the core social values established during this period, focusing heavily on institutional concepts such as the "langar" or community kitchen, which represents absolute social equality, humility, and selfless service to humanity regardless of caste or status.

Rain Pleases Farmers but Storm Cuts Power in Karnal and Kaithal

Karnal: A heavy night storm brought rain to parts of the state. Farmers were very happy with the rain because it helped prepare their fields for rice planting. However, the strong winds damaged electricity lines and cut off power for many hours.

The storm broke hundreds of electricity poles and transformers, causing massive financial losses. Many families had to spend the night in the dark while repair teams worked through the night.

In Karnal, teams managed to bring back electricity to houses and factories first. They are still working to restore power lines that feed water pumps on farms.

The damage was even worse in Kaithal district, where over 700 poles and many transformers broke down. Dozens of repair teams are working there to fix the lines.

The storm also knocked down many trees, which blocked roads and slowed down traffic. Even with all the trouble, farmers said the rain was a timely gift that saved them money on watering crops.

A heavy nighttime storm swept through the region, bringing substantial rainfall to several districts and eliciting mixed reactions from local communities. For the agricultural sector, the downpour served as an incredibly welcome development, providing immediate relief to farmers who were gearing up for the intensive paddy cultivation season. The natural precipitation effectively soaked the parched agricultural lands, creating optimal soil conditions for rice planting without requiring farmers to expend extra resources on artificial irrigation.

This timely weather event generated a widespread wave of optimism across farming villages, as it significantly reduced initial operational costs and promised a strong start to the summer crop cycle.

However, the positive impact on agriculture was sharply contrasted by severe disruptions to the region's infrastructure, as the storm's powerful wind currents wrought havoc on the electricity distribution network. The fierce gales knocked

down hundreds of electricity poles and severely damaged critical power transformers, triggering extensive blackouts that plunged numerous towns and villages into darkness for consecutive hours. The sheer scale of the structural damage resulted in immense financial losses for the state power corporations, highlighting the vulnerability of utility lines to extreme weather events.

While repair teams were immediately dispatched into the stormy night, thousands of families had to endure a long, uncomfortable night without electricity.

In the Karnal district, utility management teams adopted a strategic, phased approach to handle the widespread power outages, prioritizing residential sectors and industrial zones to restore normalcy as quickly as possible.

Emergency crews worked continuously through the night to mend severed lines and replace shattered poles, successfully reviving power to domestic consumers and manufacturing units by the following morning.



Indian Men's & Women's Hockey teams set for a fortnight of global action

New Delhi: Indian fans are set for an action-packed fortnight as both the Indian Men's Hockey Team and the Indian Women's Hockey Team take centre stage on the international circuit, offering supporters a rare opportunity to witness elite-level hockey almost every day from June 14 to June 28.

The Indian Men's and Women's Teams will be competing simultaneously across Europe and

New Zealand, creating an almost uninterrupted stretch of international hockey for fans to enjoy.

Whether it is the men taking on World No. 1 Netherlands, reigning world champions Germany, arch-rivals Pakistan and World No. 4 England in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26, or the women chasing promotion back to the Pro League at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26 in Auckland, there will be no shortage of storylines, stakes and spectacle. The timing could not be more significant. With the FIH Hockey World Cup and Asian Games on the horizon, the upcoming fixtures offers a fascinating glimpse into the teams' structure ahead of two big events. For coaches, it is an opportunity to test combinations. For players, it is a chance to cement their place in the plans for the sport's biggest



stages. For fans, it is an opportunity to witness two Indian teams chasing success in different continents. The men's team begins its European campaign against the Netherlands in Rotterdam before taking on Germany in back-to-back encounters. Both nations are widely considered among the favourites for this year's World Cup, and the challenge couldn't have come at a better time as the Indian Team prepares to end its long wait for a World Cup title.

Adding another layer of intrigue, the fixtures in the Netherlands will allow the Indian squad to familiarise itself with conditions in one of the host nations for the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup, which will have Belgium as the second host.

Then comes one of the most anticipated chapters

in world hockey. India and Pakistan will renew their historic rivalry — on June 23 and June 26 — in London, where India will also face hosts England. Few fixtures in international sport carry the emotion, history and anticipation of an India-Pakistan contest, and fans can expect both encounters to command global attention.

While the men battle Europe's elite in the FIH Pro League, the Indian Women's Hockey Team will have a major objective of its own.

Competing at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup in Auckland, the women will be chasing

the ultimate prize — a place in next season's FIH Hockey Pro League. Every match carries significance, and a strong performance could provide the perfect

springboard ahead of the upcoming World Cup.

The tournament also presents a valuable opportunity for the squad to continue its upward trajectory against quality international opposition and build momentum heading into a crucial period for the team.

With high stakes, global rivalries and World Cup build-up all converging at the same time, June promises to be one of the most exciting periods on the Indian hockey calendar.

Former Indian hockey legend Rupinder Pal Singh believes fans are in for a memorable fortnight.

"As players, these are the periods we look forward to because every match carries meaning. For fans, it's even more special because there will be Indian hockey on their screens almost every day. The men's

PV Sindhu leads India's World Championships charge

Kuala Lumpur: Former world champion PV Sindhu will spearhead India's challenge at the BWF World Championships 2026 in New Delhi after the Badminton World Federation (BWF) finalised the qualification list for the prestigious tournament scheduled to be held from August 17 to 23.

The upcoming edition of the World Championships assumes added significance for Indian badminton as the country prepares to host one of the sport's biggest events. Competing on home soil, the Indian contingent will look to make the most of familiar conditions and strong crowd support. A total of 10 Indian players and pairs have secured qualification across the five disciplines, reflecting the country's growing depth and competitiveness in international badminton. The qualification list was prepared on the basis of the world rankings published on April 28. Sindhu, one of India's most decorated badminton players, earned her place in the women's singles draw as India's host representative under the BWF qualification rules. The two-time Olympic medalist remains one of the country's biggest medal hopes at the tournament. The 30-year-old created history by winning the women's singles gold medal at the 2019 World Championships, becoming the first Indian to achieve the feat. She had earlier claimed silver medals at the global event in 2017 and 2018, un-



derlining her consistency on the world stage. The BWF qualification list comprises 64 players each in the men's and women's singles categories, while 48 pairs have qualified in each of the three doubles disciplines. The format ensures representation from leading badminton nations while maintaining global diversity. India will have two direct entrants in every category at the World Championships, highlighting the nation's strengthening position in international badminton and its ability to consistently produce elite players across disciplines. In the men's singles competition, Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty secured qualification. Lakshya, who has been one of India's most prominent male shuttlers in recent years, will seek to convert his experience at major events into a strong performance, while Ayush Shetty's qualification marks another important milestone in his emerging career. Sindhu will be joined in the women's singles

event by promising youngster Unnati Hooda. Considered one of the brightest prospects in Indian badminton, Unnati will have an opportunity to test herself against some of the world's best players on one of the sport's biggest stages. India's strongest-ranked entry comes in men's doubles, where the celebrated pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty qualified fourth overall. The duo has established itself among the world's leading combinations and will be viewed as serious contenders for a podium finish. The country's second men's doubles berth was secured by Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun. Their qualification reflects India's improving strength in doubles events, an area that has witnessed considerable progress in recent years. In women's doubles, Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will lead India's campaign after qualifying as the 30th-ranked pair among the entrants.

Canada ready for historic FIFA World Cup opener

Toronto: Canada is bracing for a historic football moment as the 2026 FIFA World Cup opened on Thursday. This year's tournament marks the first time that Canada will host matches for the FIFA World Cup, with the team set to play its opener on home soil against Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday.

In an official statement released on Thursday, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney declared, "Canada is ready for the beautiful game."

Carney noted that Canada first played at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, and that football has flourished across the country since then.

The prime minister highlighted that his government has made an investment of over 750 million Canadian dollars to support the sport, projecting that the tournament is expected to create nearly 25,000 jobs and inject approximately two billion Canadian dollars into the na-

tional economy, according to Xinhua.

At a pre-match press conference held in Toronto on Thursday, Canada head coach Jesse Marsch, accompanied by vice-captain Stephen Eustaquio, expressed the team's readiness and focus.

Addressing the pressure of the tournament opener and the atmosphere of playing at home, Marsch said, "The pressure is real, but it stems from our deep understanding of the responsibility we carry representing our nation." "We want to show the world that Canadian players are not just 'good people' - generous and kind - but also intense and fierce competitors," Marsch added.

Eustaquio, a veteran midfielder with Portuguese heritage, provided a light-hearted yet patriotic response when asked to name the favourites for the title. "Canada. Of course, also Portugal. Canada first," he said.

Mexico, South Korea win World Cup openers

Mexico City: Mexico and South Korea began with victories on an absorbing opening day of the FIFA World Cup.

The tournament kicked off in front of 80,000 fans at Mexico City Stadium with a rousing opening ceremony that included live performances from Shakira, Burna Boy and J Balvin on Thursday.

But the main attraction for the heavily partisan crowd was the football, and the home side didn't disappoint as Julian Quinones and Raul Jimenez scored in each half to secure a 2-0 win over a South African side that finished with nine men.

Quinones capitalized on a turnover to give his side an early lead before Sphephelo Sithole received a red card for bringing down Brian



Gutierrez. Jimenez nodded in Mexico's second goal and South Africa suffered a further blow when Themba

Zwane was also sent off for a high challenge on Roberto Alvarado. Mexico also finished the match a man down

after defender Cesar Montes was dismissed for an ugly challenge on Khuliso Mudau.

"We were superior but the score did not reflect that," Mexico manager Javier Aguirre told reporters, admitting the occasion overwhelmed some of his players. "Things got a little complicated but we relaxed and we did start with a win. Can we make it better? Of course." "When we looked at the stadium, it was incredible. We got a little bit of stage fright." South Africa manager Hugo Broos was encouraged by his team's performance, despite acknowledging Mexico's superiority. "If we show the same mentality and play the same way as today, I'm sure we will have great results in the next two games," he said.

Argentina reclaim top spot in FIFA Men's World Ranking

Zurich (Switzerland): Argentina (1st, up 2), the reigning world champions, will begin their title defence as the world's top-ranked team, with the June FIFA/Coca-Cola Men's World Ranking published just hours before the biggest-ever FIFA World Cup gets under way. Following a series of pre-FIFA World Cup friendlies that marked the second period in which the FIFA/Coca-Cola Men's World Ranking was updated in real time during international matches, Argentina surged back to the summit after victories in both their warm-up fixtures, against Iceland and Honduras. They replace France (3rd, down 2), who slipped behind after losing to Cote d'Ivoire before beating Northern Ireland, and Spain, who were held to a draw by Iraq and then beat Peru. Further down the top ten, Morocco (7th, up 1) continue their rise, reaching their highest-ever position since

the FIFA/Coca-Cola Men's World Ranking was introduced in August 1993. Indonesia, they overtake the Netherlands (8th, down 1), whilst elsewhere in the top 20, Mexico and Uruguay move above Senegal (15th, down 1) and the USA, with Iran entering the top 20. Hungary (39th, up 3), Chile and China PR are the biggest climbers in the top 100, with Serbia (41st, down 4), Mali and Benin registering the biggest drops. Outside the top 100, Lebanon and Bhutan suffer the biggest drops. The FIFA/Coca-Cola Men's World Ranking will also serve as the tiebreaker, according to the Competition Regulations, to confirm the ranking within the group of two or more teams at the end of group stage and to determine which eight teams are the best third-placed teams to advance to the Round of 32 if multiple third-ranked teams are still tied after applying the criteria in steps 1 and 2.

NZ favoured against WI, Ireland ahead of Scotland

Southampton: Defending champions New Zealand Women will begin their ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign against West Indies Women in a high-profile Group clash at The Rose Bowl, Southampton on Saturday, June 13, with the White Ferns entering as strong favourites.

New Zealand hold a clear psychological and statistical edge, having won all of their last five T20I meetings against West Indies Women. The reigning champions also bring a settled and in-form core led by all-round star Melie Kerr, who continues to dominate with both bat and ball, supported by experienced campaigners Sophie Devine and Suzie Bates.

West Indies Women, however, arrive with genuine match-winners capable of changing the game in a matter of overs. Captain Hayley Matthews remains their key pillar, contributing heavily with both bat and ball, while Deandra Dottin's power-hitting and Stafanie Taylor's experience add depth to their batting order. Their bowling attack, led by Chinelle Henry and Afy Fletcher, will look to exploit



English conditions with early movement and spin variation.

The Rose Bowl surface is expected to assist seamers early due to humidity and breeze, before becoming more batting-friendly. Historically, the venue has produced first-innings scores around 148, with teams batting first winning a majority of recent matches. A total in the 150-160 range is likely to be competitive.

Winning prediction: New Zealand Women hold the edge due to superior balance, consistency, and dominance in the head-to-head record, but West Indies' explosive batting lineup keeps

them in contention if they strike early.

Scotland Women vs Ireland Women (Emirates Old Trafford, Manchester)

Ireland Women enter their opener as slight favourites against Scotland Women, backed by stronger batting depth and recent dominance in head-to-head meetings. Gaby Lewis, Orla Prendergast, and Amy Hunter lead Ireland's batting unit, with Prendergast arriving in strong touch after a productive Tri-Series, adding stability and aggressive intent in the middle order.

Ireland's biggest advantage lies in their all-round balance. Prendergast and

Orla aside from batting also provide crucial wickets, while Arlene Kelly leads a disciplined pace attack capable of exploiting early swing at Old Trafford. Cara Murray's leg-spin offers control through the middle overs, which could be decisive if conditions slow down later in the innings.

Scotland Women will look to counter with their own experienced core, led by Kathryn Bryce and Sarah Bryce, who are expected to anchor the innings and accelerate in the middle overs. However, their success will largely depend on how well they handle Ireland's new-ball attack and whether their middle order can resist pressure in key phases of the game.

The Old Trafford surface is expected to be balanced, with early assistance for seamers under overcast skies before settling into a good batting track. Teams winning the toss are likely to bowl first, targeting early breakthroughs before chasing under improving conditions.

Overall, Ireland's superior depth and recent consistency give them a narrow but clear advantage.

France settles into Boston base ahead of World Cup campaign

Boston: France held its first training session in Boston at Bentley University, with Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele and Michael Olise all taking part.

After having arrived in Boston on Wednesday, France kicks off its 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign against Senegal in New Jersey on June 16, before facing Iraq in Philadelphia on June 22 and then taking

on Norway at Boston Stadium in Foxborough four days later.

The team is working to adapt to the time difference and its new surroundings.

"I think it varies from person to person; some people have more trouble adjusting quickly than others. I think it might take a day, two, or three to adjust," goalkeeper Brice Samba said when asked about jet lag. "Starting

yesterday, we started following the American schedule when it comes to meals, so little by little things will fall into place and we'll be adjusted to life here."

Defender Maxence Lacroix said he was impressed by the team's base in Boston. "It's unbelievable. We are really happy to be here. It's going to be a beautiful adventure for us. And yeah, like we say, we are ready to play,"

Lacroix said, according to Xinhua. "I think we have to take it game by game. We have a really good team, of course, but we also have good opponents. In this World Cup, you have the best players in the world and the best teams. So we have to stay focused on ourselves and what we have." Lacroix said appearing at the World Cup fulfilled a long-held ambition. "It's a big dream."

Ski mountaineering body welcomes proposed expansion at 2030 Winter Olympics

Geneva: The International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) has welcomed a proposal by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to expand ski mountaineering's presence at the 2030 Olympic Winter Games to be held in the French Alps, describing the move as a significant step forward in the sport's Olympic journey.

The proposal was approved by the IOC Executive Board on Wednesday and recommends the inclusion of five ski mountaineering events in the competition programme for the 2030 Winter Olympics. The recommendation will now be placed before the IOC Session for final approval later this month.

If ratified, the French Alps 2030 Olympic programme will feature men's individual, women's individual, men's

sprint, women's sprint and mixed relay events in ski mountaineering. The expanded schedule would increase both the visibility and competitive scope of the discipline on the Olympic stage.

The proposal is set to be considered at the 146th IOC Session, which is scheduled to take place on June 24 and 25. A positive vote by IOC members would formally confirm the enhanced role of ski mountaineering at the Games.

The announcement represents another milestone for a sport that is only beginning its Olympic chapter. Ski mountaineering is set to make its Olympic debut at the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games, marking the first time athletes in the discipline will compete for Olympic medals.

At Milano Cortina 2026, a total of

36 athletes are expected to compete in three medal events: men's sprint, women's sprint and mixed relay. These events were selected to introduce the sport to Olympic audiences through fast-paced and spectator-friendly formats.

In its statement issued on Thursday, the ISMF said the proposal for French Alps 2030 reflects the natural evolution of the sport's Olympic programme. The federation noted that the addition of the individual events would provide a more complete representation of ski mountaineering. According to the ISMF, the proposed individual events would showcase many of the traditional qualities that define the discipline, including endurance, technical expertise and the ability to navigate demanding alpine terrain.



BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
75,527.95	2.30%	23,622.90	1.99%	22,599.80	2.19%	69,998.20	2.37%	24,602.25	2.06%	56,814.80	2.97%	60,768.10	2.43%
Previous close 73,832.55	Open 74,709.27	Previous close 23,161.60	Open 23,412.55	Previous close 22,114.45	Open 22,376.45	Previous close 68,378.75	Open 69,318.20	Previous close 24,104.70	Open 24,378.90	Previous close 55,176.75	Open 55,934.10	Previous close 59,325.40	Open 60,115.85
High 75,608.02	Low 74,453.39	High 23,645.35	Low 23,313.90	High 22,618.70	Low 22,295.15	High 70,080.95	Low 68,947.40	High 24,625.50	Low 24,271.70	High 56,867.10	Low 55,726.55	High 60,829.15	Low 59,833.80

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Shriram Finance	954.95	7.75
Bajaj Finance	918.30	5.49
Larsen	4,049.30	4.85
Interglobe Avi	4,709.70	4.60
Titan Company	4,184.00	3.95

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Nestle	1,375.70	-3.29
ONGC	246.20	-2.53
Tech Mahindra	1,429.20	-2.45
SBI Life Insura	1,706.00	-0.76
TATA Cons. Prod	1,100.70	-0.71

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Aug 05	150,550.00	1,618.00 1.09
Silver Jul 03	243,481.00	3,828.00 1.60
Crudeoil Jun 18	8,094.00	-250.00 -3.00
Naturalgas Jun 25	292.40	-2.00 -0.68

Retail inflation rose to 3.93 percent in May

New Delhi: India's retail inflation rose to 3.93 per cent in May, up from 3.48 per cent in April, according to government data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), indicating a moderate uptick in overall price pressures. The data shows that food inflation during May stood at 4.78 per cent on a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) basis, reflecting continued pressure on household budgets, particularly in essential consumption categories. Rural and urban inflation rates also remained elevated, with rural inflation recorded at 4.85 per cent, while urban inflation stood slightly lower at 4.66 per cent. This indicates that price increases were broadly spread across both segments, with a marginally higher impact in rural areas. The Ministry noted that housing inflation for May stood at 2.12 per cent (provisional), highlighting a relatively stable trend in housing-related costs compared to volatile food prices. The corresponding housing inflation rates were 2.73 per cent in rural areas and 1.91 per cent in ur-

ban regions. According to official data, several essential and commonly consumed items helped moderate inflationary pressure. The top items recording comparatively low inflation included potato, peas, motor car, jeep, cumin, motor cycle and scooter. These categories either saw stable prices or relatively slower increases compared to other commodity groups, contributing to a partial balancing effect on the overall inflation basket. On the other hand, certain food and commodity items witnessed higher inflation during the month, reflecting uneven price movements across different consumption segments. Among the items that experienced higher inflation were silver jewellery, tomato, gold, diamond and platinum jewellery, ginger, raisin and monacca, indicating strong price pressure in both food perishables and high-value commodities. Tomato and ginger, in particular, are known for seasonal price volatility, often influenced by supply chain disruptions, weather conditions and agricultural output cycles.

Sensex surges 1,700 points, Nifty ends above 23k amid hopes of US-Iran peace deal

Mumbai: Indian benchmark indices witnessed a strong rally on Friday, driven by aggressive short covering and improving global sentiment. Optimism over a potential US-Iran peace deal, a decline in crude oil prices below USD 88 per barrel, a sharp recovery in the rupee and supportive global cues fuelled buying interest throughout the session. At the close, the Sensex surged 1,695.4 points, or 2.3 per cent, to 75,527.95, while the Nifty gained 461.3 points, or 1.99 per cent, to settle at 23,622.9, reclaiming and closing comfortably above the 23,600 mark.

Buying was broad-based across sectors, with all major indices ending in positive territory. The rally was led by Nifty Realty, Financial Services, PSU Banks, Private Banks, and Consumer Durables, which advanced between 2 per cent and 4 per cent, according to Bajaj Broking's market commen-



tary. The Nifty IT Index was the only relative laggard, underperforming the broader market despite ending the session in positive territory.

The broader market continued to outperform the benchmark indices, reflecting strong investor risk appetite. The Nifty Midcap 100 gained 2.43 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 ad-

vanced 2.80 per cent, indicating widespread participation across sectors.

The Nifty rallied 2 per cent on Friday and closed at the week's high. The index formed a strong bullish candle with a higher high and a higher low, signalling a continuation of the uptrend. It also closed above its 20-day EMA. The index ended

above the two-week trading range of 23,000-23,550, highlighting the strength of the ongoing upmove.

According to Bajaj Broking, sustained trade above Friday's low of 23,313 will keep the bias positive and open the door for further upside towards 23,800 and 24,000 in the coming sessions.

India signs MoU with Assam, Nagaland to boost Hydrocarbon exploration in Northeast

New Delhi: The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the governments of Assam and Nagaland to accelerate domestic exploration and production (E&P) of hydrocarbons in the Northeast region.

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said the Northeast holds significant potential for oil and gas exploration, with Assam alone

accounting for nearly 22 per cent of India's crude oil reserves and around 15 per cent of the country's natural gas reserves.

He highlighted that Nagaland also has considerable hydrocarbon potential in the Naga-Schuppen Belt of the Assam-Arakan Basin, an area with both naturally flowing hydrocarbon resources and large untapped reserves.

The MoU establishes a framework of cooperation between the Centre and the

two state governments, aimed at providing greater certainty to investors, ensuring regulatory coordination, enabling operational continuity, and supporting long-term investment decisions in the upstream oil and gas sector.

The agreement focuses on restarting mineral oil exploration activities in the disputed area belt (DAB) along the Assam-Nagaland border, where operations had remained stalled for more than three decades

due to jurisdictional issues.

The government said the resumption of exploration activities is expected to generate employment, encourage local entrepreneurship, strengthen infrastructure, create opportunities for contractors and service providers.

And contribute to the economic development of communities across the Northeast.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah said the

MoU could significantly boost production capacity in the region, with current extraction levels of around 1,000-1,500 barrels per day potentially increasing more than tenfold.

The framework will also focus on ensuring the safety and security of personnel and assets, improving coordination among stakeholders, encouraging investment in the upstream petroleum sector, and supporting India's broader energy security objectives.

Govt exempts Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) from central excise duties

New Delhi: The Government on Thursday exempted Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) variants containing higher proportions of ethanol from the applicable central excise duties, according to an official order issued by the Ministry of Finance. The move extends an existing tax treatment to newer ethanol blends and is aimed at simplifying the excise framework governing blended fuels.

The exemption will apply to Ethanol Blended Petrol variants such as E22, E25, E27 and E30, which contain 22 per cent, 25 per cent, 27 per cent and 30 per cent ethanol, respectively. These blends are part of the country's broader push towards cleaner fuels and reduced dependence on imported crude oil.

The official order clarified that the exemption is subject to specific conditions. It will be available only when the appropriate central excise duties have already been paid on the petrol component used in the blend and the applicable Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been paid on the ethanol mixed with the fuel.

This means that the tax

relief is not a blanket waiver but rather a mechanism to avoid duplication in taxation. The exemption recognises that taxes have already been discharged separately on the constituent components before the blending process takes place.

According to the government, the objective behind the decision is to remove the "deeming fiction" that existed under the central excise law. The term refers to a legal interpretation that could potentially treat the blended product as attracting excise duty despite duties having already been paid on the individual inputs.

By eliminating this anomaly, the government intends to bring greater clarity and consistency to the taxation framework governing ethanol-blended fuels. The move is expected to ease compliance requirements for oil marketing companies and other stakeholders involved in fuel blending operations.

The exemption has been provided on the same lines as the treatment already available for lower ethanol blends such as E5, E10 and E20. These blends, containing 5 per cent, 10 per cent and 20 per cent ethanol respectively,

had earlier been granted similar relief under the central excise regime.

Officials indicated that the latest notification simply extends the existing principle to newer categories of ethanol-blended petrol introduced as part of the country's evolving biofuel roadmap. It does not represent a fresh reduction in fuel taxes.

Importantly, the government clarified that there is no change in the central excise duty rate applicable on petrol meant for domestic consumption. Consumers should therefore not interpret the notification as a cut in petrol taxes or an immediate trigger for lower retail fuel prices. Instead, the measure is largely administrative and seeks to streamline the tax structure associated with higher ethanol blends. It ensures that the blending process itself does not become a source of unintended tax complications.

India has been steadily increasing the use of ethanol in petrol as part of its efforts to promote renewable energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide an alternative market for agricultural feedstocks used in ethanol production.

Tata Motors to increase prices of passenger vehicle from July 1

New Delhi: The prices of Tata cars are set to be expensive as the Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd is set to increase prices of its passenger vehicle portfolio, including both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric vehicles (EVs) by up to 1.5 per cent from July 1.

This will mark its second hike in three months after the company raised prices of its ICE vehicle range

from April 1, amid escalating cost pressures due to the ongoing West Asia conflict-led disruptions.

The automaker had previously hiked prices of its internal combustion engine (ICE) passenger vehicles from April 1, 2026.

"This price revision is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising input costs and sustained inflationary pressures," the

company said in a regulatory filing.

Further Tata Motors said while it continues to absorb a significant portion of these increases.

A part of the impact is being passed on to customers through this adjustment.

"The extent of the price increase will vary across models and variants, ensuring that the overall value proposition of each is maintained," it

Vipul Organics Limited Partners with Global Specialty Materials Leader OMYA for Exclusive European Distribution of Pigments

Mumbai: Vipul Organics Limited, a leading specialty chemicals company operating in the pigments and dyes segment, has announced a strategic and exclusive distribution partnership with Switzerland-based Omya Group, marking a significant milestone in the Indian company's global expansion journey. The collaboration is expected to strengthen Vipul Organics' footprint across Europe and open new avenues for growth in the specialty chemicals market.

Omya Group is a privately held, multi-billion-dollar enterprise with a strong international presence and a reputation built over more than a century. The company is globally recognised as a leader in the production of industrial minerals and the distribution of specialty chemicals, serving customers across a wide range of industries and geographies.

Under the terms of the agreement, Omya will serve as the sole distributor of Vipul Organics' SunTone® and SunCoat® product ranges throughout the European

market. The exclusive arrangement is aimed at expanding the reach of Vipul Organics' high-performance pigment solutions by leveraging Omya's established distribution network and deep market expertise.

The distribution rights granted to Omya extend across several European territories, including the United Kingdom, Norway, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and Moldova. However, the agreement excludes Switzerland and Poland, where separate arrangements may continue to exist.

Vipul Organics' SunTone® range comprises advanced pigment dispersions and pigment powders that cater to a broad spectrum of industrial applications. These products have earned recognition for their consistency, quality and performance in demanding manufacturing environments.

The SunTone® portfolio finds extensive use in industries such as paints, inks, plastics, textiles and rubber. In addition, the range has applications in automotive

coatings and industrial paints, sectors where durability, colour stability and technical precision are of paramount importance.

Similarly, the SunCoat® range has established itself as a versatile offering in the paints and coatings industry. Designed to deliver reliable colour performance, the products cater to both decorative and industrial requirements. Applications of the SunCoat® range extend to interior and exterior coatings, decorative paints and paper coatings. The products are also used in specialised sectors such as seed coatings, helping provide visual differentiation and functional benefits.

Beyond conventional coatings, SunCoat® products are utilised in detergents for the coloration of both liquid and solid soaps. They also find use in shoe polish formulations as well as artistic and educational colour products, reflecting the versatility of the product line.

According to the company, the partnership brings together the complementary strengths of both organisations.

Bajaj Auto Foundation commits Rs 400 Crore through Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship

Pune: Bajaj Auto Foundation, the CSR arm of Bajaj Auto Limited, on Thursday announced a landmark commitment of Rs 400 crore over the next decade to empower women engineers through the Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship for Women in Engineering (RRBSWE).

The Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship, India's largest scholarship programme for women in core engineering has been conceived for meritorious young women pursuing core engineering disciplines including Mechanical Engineering, Electronics, Industrial Instrumentation, Mechatronics, Robotics, and allied fields. Under the programme, scholars will receive financial support of up to Rs 8 lakh across the course of their engineering education at 40 leading engineering institutions including IITs, NITs, IIITs, and reputed state and private universities.

Beyond financial assistance, the scholarship is designed to nurture the next generation of women leaders in engineering through



structured mentorship, leadership development, industry immersion, and access to professional networks.

The event was held at Bajaj Auto Headquarters in Pune, where the Foundation formally unveiled the scholarship identity and facilitated the inaugural cohort of 506 meritorious young scholars. The event was graced by chief guest Ms. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive Chairperson and Founder of Biocon Limited, alongside Mr. Rajiv Bajaj, Managing Director, Bajaj Auto Ltd.

The scholarship program seeks to address the persistent under-representation of women in core en-

gineering and manufacturing sectors at a time when advanced manufacturing, deep technology, and industrial innovation are becoming increasingly critical to India's economic growth and global competitiveness.

Reflecting the larger commitment towards building India's future workforce through skilling, education, and opportunity creation, the event also marked the unveiling of Bajaj Auto Foundation's overarching proposition - "Where there's a skill, there's a way."

Speaking on the occasion, Rajiv Bajaj said, "Women possess inherent skills of patience, empathy and diligence which are

very strong attributes to excel in core engineering jobs. We identified this long back and made women engineers a significant part of our workforce. In fact, from virtually no women in our operations till around a decade back, today they account for nearly 20% of our workforce. This has brought a meaningful difference to our way of working and contributed to Bajaj Auto's global scale, thereby making us the World's Favourite Indian. This program would extend our learning with the larger manufacturing industry."

Elaborating, he noted: "The Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship for Women in Engineering holds a special

place in my heart, as it carries the name of my beloved mother, Rupa Rahul Bajaj. Her dedication to education and her belief that women can drive change in their communities inspire this program.

The Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship is an investment in talent, ambition, and the belief that opportunity can unlock extraordinary potential. We are deeply committed to ensuring that women play a far greater role in shaping the future of engineering and manufacturing," he added.

Sharing her thoughts on the impact of the announcement, Ms. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said that the future of science, engineering, and manufacturing must be built on inclusion and equal opportunity. "Encouraging more women to pursue core engineering disciplines is not just a social imperative, but an economic one. Initiatives like the Rupa Rahul Bajaj Scholarship can help create a stronger and more diverse innovation ecosystem for India," she observed.