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PAGE 5 NATION
 Nadda slams Opposition walkout during Jaishankar's statement

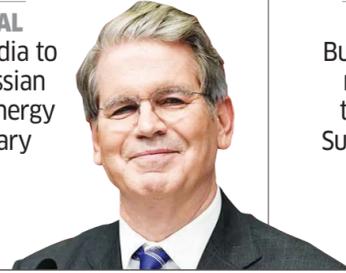


PAGE 7 LAW & JUSTICE
 SC nod to extension for tribunal members

PAGE 10: BUSINESS
 Oil boils, throws GDP in cauldron



PAGE 12 GLOBAL
 Urged India to buy Russian oil: US Energy Secretary



PAGE 16 SPORTS
 Bumrah is a national treasure: Suryakumar Yadav



PIONEER IN SHORT

TWO KILLED IN DELHI BUS CRASH

Two people were killed and another injured after a speeding DTC bus rammed multiple vehicles in Delhi's Nihal Vihar on Monday, police said. The incident triggered protests, during which an angry mob vandalised the bus involved and set another DTC bus on fire. Police confirmed the driver has been apprehended. The crash occurred at 9.45 am on Najafgarh-Nangloi Road, when the bus hit a scooter, motorcycle, hand-rickshaw, and pedestrians. A seriously injured woman was taken to Mansa Ram Hospital. Around 500 people gathered, vandalising the bus and torching another. Five nearby buses also suffered minor damage. Police said the situation is now under control, with heavy security deployed. Delhi Fire Services reported extinguishing the fire by 11 am. Videos on social media showed the bus engulfed in flames, while cables and vehicle parts dangled from the damaged bus. Eyewitnesses alleged authorities were slow to respond, with injured victims initially transported in e-rickshaws. Traffic remained heavily disrupted. Police have not yet released details of the deceased.

Opposition stalls its motion against Birla in Lok Sabha

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA
 New Delhi

In a bid to keep alive the move to remove Om Birla and prevent him from presiding over the House, Opposition parties on Monday disrupted proceedings in the Lok Sabha, demanding a debate on the West Asia crisis even as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the issue.

The House, which resumed after a break, had only the no-confidence motion against the Speaker on its agenda. Opposition MPs shouted slogans and held placards reading: "Middle East is burning, Indians are stranded, there is no oil. Modiji, stop bowing to (Donald) Trump."

A senior Opposition MP confirmed to *The Pioneer* that the disruption was planned. "It was done tactically to keep the issue alive. If a decision were taken on Birla, the matter would have ended. In the strategy meeting we



Congress President and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during a meeting with the floor leaders of the INDIA alliance, in New Delhi

decided to stall the motion and force the Government to discuss the West Asia situation," the MP said.

Presiding officer Jagdambika Pal reminded members that the no-confidence motion against the Speaker was already on the agenda and that their adjournment notice seeking a debate on West

Asia could not be taken up. He accused the Opposition of holding the House "hostage" and wasting nearly ₹9 crore a day of taxpayers' money, describing its conduct as "immature and irresponsible". Pal said both the Government and the Chair were ready to take up the resolution, but the Opposition was creating

obstacles even as Birla stayed away from presiding over proceedings until the motion against him is settled.

The Government is unlikely to allow a separate discussion on the West Asia crisis, maintaining that Jaishankar has already briefed both Houses.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Large defaulters list: Big corporates, banks connive to 'leak' public money

J GOPIKRISHNAN
 New Delhi

A day after *The Pioneer* reported on the large defaulters' list of public sector banks based on data from TransUnion CIBIL, the database was taken down on Monday morning. Partial data was restored later in the day.

The list of large defaulters across 11 Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) banks totals over ₹29 lakh crore. Two banks — State Bank of India and Union Bank of India — together are staring at ₹15.75 lakh crore in defaults. Union Bank alone faces ₹9.96 lakh crore in defaults, while SBI's exposure stands at ₹5.79 lakh crore. A large share of these loans were reportedly sanctioned without recoverable collateral.

Several defaulting companies secured loans by pledging shares, whose prices were allegedly inflated in stock markets. Many of these pledged shares have since been liquidated or sharply corrected during proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Among the largest defaulters are Anil Ambani and his companies, with loans

13 BANKS. DUES: ₹48,282 CRORE

State Bank of India
Union Bank
Central Bank
Canara Bank
Punjab & Sind Bank
Bank of Maharashtra
Axis Bank
UCO Bank
Karur Vysya Bank
IFCI
NABARD
India Overseas Bank
Federal Bank

The Pioneer Exclusive PART-2

cases company staff are listed as directors and guarantors, complicating recovery efforts.

Data from TransUnion CIBIL shows 13 banks extended about 70 loans to Ambani and his firms. Central Bank of India alone sanctioned six loans worth ₹3,046 crore to the now-defunct Reliance Naval and Engineering Limited.

The bank later issued six loans totaling ₹1,582 crore to Reliance Communications. The company had dues of about ₹48,000 crore and was acquired through insolvency by his brother Mukesh Ambani for just ₹430 crore.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



IT DEPT TARGETS EATERIES NATIONWIDE

The Income-Tax Department has launched a multi-city verification exercise targeting restaurants after its Hyderabad investigation wing uncovered alleged under-reporting of sales through manipulated billing software, officials said on Monday. The probe involves surveying office premises of several restaurants, including around five in Delhi, to examine their billing systems. The exercise is expected to conclude in a few days. The investigation began when the Hyderabad wing inspected a local company that develops restaurant billing software. Officials discovered that certain hotels and eateries were allegedly altering the software to under-report revenue, potentially evading taxes. Authorities estimate the suspected tax evasion in Hyderabad alone could run into crores of rupees.

EAM briefs Parliament on West Asia conflict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 New Delhi

The Union Government on Monday said India favours dialogue and diplomacy for ensuring peace in West Asia and its overriding priority is the wellbeing of the Indian community in that region. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar made a suo motu statement on the conflict in the Lok Sabha. He also informed the House that national interest, including energy security and trade flows, are paramount for the Government.

Speaking amid loud slogans by opposition MPs demanding a full-fledged discussion, the minister, who had addressed the Rajya Sabha earlier in the morning,

said Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to closely monitor emerging developments and the relevant ministries are coordinating to ensure effective responses.

The Government also informed the Parliament that Iran had sought India's permission for three of its ships to dock at Indian ports and the approval was granted the next day.

In a statement in the Parliament, Jaishankar said one Iranian vessel, IRIS LAVAN, docked in Kochi on March 4 and its crew members are currently staying in Indian naval facilities. It was for the first time a senior minister said that Iran requested for docking of three of its ships in Indian ports.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



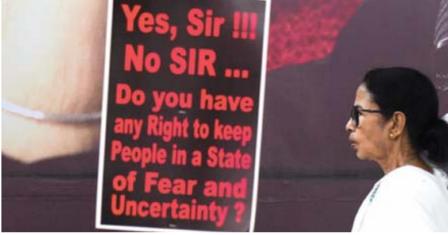
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi

TMC, ECI clash over West Bengal polls

RAJESH KUMAR
 Kolkata/New Delhi

The tussle between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Election Commission of India (ECI) took an ugly turn on Monday, when the former accused the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and two election commissioners of disrespecting women.

Earlier in the day, the ECI cautioned State authorities that any negligence in maintaining law and order or ensuring free and fair elections would invite strict



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during a sit-in protest against alleged arbitrary deletions in the post-SIR voter list in Kolkata

action. According to the officials, the CEC sought an explanation from the State police on why West Bengal

does not have a Narcotics Advisory Committee like other states. When Director General (Law and Order)

Vineet Goyal attempted to respond, officials said he was asked to ensure immediate corrective steps.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused CEC of threatening State officials during a meeting, warning that "false bravado" by constitutional authorities was unacceptable. Her remarks came against the backdrop of the Election Commission's full bench meeting with senior administrative and police officials of the State earlier in the day.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Notice issued to Kejriwal, others in excise policy case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 New Delhi

Issuing notice to Arvind Kejriwal and others, Delhi High Court on Monday issued interim stay on action against the CBI officer, ordered by the trial court in the discharge order in the excise policy case. Hearing the arguments of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, Justice Swarana Kanta listed the CBI's petition for hearing on March 16. The Enforcement Directorate has also approached the High Court to expunge observations made by a trial court regarding its money laundering investigation.

The court said it would pass an order asking the trial court to defer proceedings to a later date in the connected money laundering case probed by the Enforcement Directorate to await the



Arvind Kejriwal during the AAP's regional booth conference in Surat

outcome in the present matter. On a request made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on behalf of the investigating agency, the court further indicated that it would stay the operation of the "prejudicial" remarks by the trial

court on the CBI officials. Mehta urged the court to finally decide the CBI's plea by fixing a time schedule for the hearing.

Mehta contended that the trial court order discharging Kejriwal and Sisodia in the excise policy case was perverse and "turned the criminal law on its head". The excise policy case was one of the biggest scams and a clear case of corruption, he alleged. "This is one of the biggest scams in the history of the capital of this nation and therefore, a national shame. Scientific investigation is carried out," Mehta submitted.

Asserting that the trial court passed an order of acquittal in favour of Kejriwal, Sisodia and others without a trial, Mehta argued that meticulous evidence was collected by the agency "cannot be brushed away".

Leadership change in Iran escalates West Asia and oil concerns

ASHOKE RAJ
 New Delhi

US President Donald Trump said he is "not happy" with Iran's choice of a new supreme leader after Tehran appointed cleric Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his father. Israel too warned that the new supreme leader could become a target if hostilities persist.

Earlier, in a message posted on social media, the Israel Defense Forces cautioned members of Iran's clerical leadership against participating in the process of appointing a new leader. "We warn all those who intend to participate in the successor selection meeting

that we will not hesitate to target you. This is a warning," the Israeli military said, as Iran's clerical body prepared to decide on the next supreme leader.

The appointment comes amid intensifying military confrontation in the region as Israel continued targeting Iranian military infrastructure and senior figures as part of its campaign against Tehran.

Trump's remarks came shortly after Iran formally announced Mojtaba Khamenei as the country's new supreme leader, a move widely interpreted as reinforcing the dominance of hardline factions within Iran.



Mojtaba Khamenei was named as Iran's next Supreme Leader on Monday

Meanwhile, the conflict in West Asia pushed oil prices. Crude oil prices jumped 30 per cent early to nearly \$119.50 a barrel, one of its

biggest one-day jumps on record, before settling near \$106 per barrel, up 14 per cent, before the opening bell. This triggered a stock

CRUDE SURGE HITS MARKETS HARD

New Delhi: Shares of oil marketing companies and paint manufacturers fell sharply on Monday as crude prices surged amid escalating West Asia tensions. Bharat Petroleum dropped 6.12 per cent, Hindustan Petroleum 5.05 per cent, and Indian Oil 4.30 per cent, while Brent crude jumped 14.17 per cent to \$105.9 per barrel. Paint stocks also slid, including

Shalimar Paints (-4.18 per cent) and Asian Paints (-2.75 per cent). "The surge in oil prices hit energy-linked sectors as margins get squeezed," said Hariprasad K, Livelong Wealth founder. The BSE Sensex lost 1,352 points to 77,566, and Nifty fell 422 points to 24,028. The moves follow US-Israel strikes on Iran and Iranian attacks across Gulf bases.

ongoing strikes have killed more than a thousand civilians and injured thousands more.

Trump also said that any decision about ending the war involving Iran would be taken jointly with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Earlier, Trump had suggested that Washington should have a role in approving Iran's next leader. In comments to US media before the appointment, he said the new leader "would have to get approval from us," warning that without such acceptance "he's not going to last long."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

market bloodbath in India, with investors losing over ₹12 lakh crore in a single day from a rout driven by heavy equity sell-offs and foreign

investor outflows. Iran vowed to continue resisting aggression by the United States and Israel. Iranian officials say the

Youtuber Anurag Dobhal out of ICU, undergoes surgery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Bigg Boss 17 contestant and popular YouTuber Anurag Dobhal, who sustained serious injuries in a car crash, was shifted from the ICU to a hospital ward and underwent orthopaedic surgery for his right hip, hospital authorities said on Monday.

According to investigators, Dobhal was livestreaming on social media during the drive, referring to it as his "final ride." Medical Superintendent of Max Super Speciality Hospital, Vaishali, Dr Preeti Goel, said that the 28-year-old content creator is currently haemodynamically (stable pumping heart and good circulation of blood) stable.

"Dobhal has been shifted from the ICU to a room. He is haemodynamically stable and is on room air oxygen. He has been taken to the operation theatre for orthopaedic surgery of his right hip," Goel said.

She added that Dobhal is under close observation and only his wife has been permitted to meet him. "We have permitted only his wife,



YouTuber Anurag Dobhal

Ritika, to visit him. No one else has been allowed to meet him, and he is being kept under intense observation," Goel said.

Meanwhile, police are continuing their probe into the circumstances surrounding the accident, including whether the crash was accidental or deliberate.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rural) Surendra Nath Tiwari said investigators are analysing CCTV footage from the area to determine the sequence of events leading up to the crash.

"Only Dobhal can explain his mental state at the time he crashed his vehicle into

the divider. We are examining CCTV footage to determine if he lost control of the steering or deliberately rammmed the vehicle," Tiwari said.

Police officials involved in the probe suspect that the SUV was travelling at a very high speed on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, possibly above 150 km/h, at the time of the crash.

Video clips circulating on social media show Dobhal hosting a livestream on Instagram on the night of March 7 while driving his Toyota Fortuner at a speed of around 150-160 kmph before the vehicle crashed into a

road divider.

During the stream, which allegedly had around 80,000 viewers watching live, Dobhal is heard referring to the drive as his "last ride", triggering concern among viewers. The accident occurred late Saturday night near the Hawa Hawal restaurant in the Masuri police station area of Ghaziabad, police said.

Information about the incident came through the 112 emergency helpline, prompting police personnel to rush to the scene. By the time they arrived, Dobhal had already been taken to Subharti Hospital by locals and police officers. He was later transferred to Max Super Speciality Hospital in Vaishali for further treatment, Tiwari said.

Dobhal sustained serious injuries after his Toyota Fortuner allegedly crashed into a divider on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway while he was travelling towards Delhi from Dehradun.

The collision was severe, causing the vehicle to flip over and land in the opposite lane, leaving the SUV extensively damaged, police said.

Delhi to get State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation, Government signs MoU with Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of India under the National Organ Transplant Programme. The MoU will pave the way for the creation of a State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) in the national Capital.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the agreement marks a major step toward building a more structured and efficient organ donation system in the city. "Organ donation will give many people a new lease on life," the Chief Minister said, adding that the establishment of SOTTO will make the transplant ecosystem in Delhi better organised and coordinated. Under India's organ transplant framework, transplantation activities operate through a three-tier system defined by the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, and its subsequent rules notified in 2014.

At the national level, coordination is managed by the National Organ and Tissue



Transplant Organisation (NOTTO). Regional responsibilities are handled by Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (ROTO), while individual states operate their own State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTTO).

The Chief Minister said that until now, many coordination functions related to organ transplantation in Delhi were handled through NOTTO. Despite the presence of several transplant centres in the Capital, a dedicated SOTTO had not yet been established in the city. The new body will create a state-level system to manage transplant-related activities more efficiently.

According to the Chief

Minister, SOTTO will streamline several key processes. These include managing organ allocation and waiting lists, coordinating between transplant hospitals and organ retrieval centres, and promoting deceased organ donation across the Capital.

The organisation will also play an important role in establishing "green corridors" that allow organs to be transported quickly between hospitals during transplant procedures. In addition, it will maintain transplant records and ensure proper reporting of transplant activities. Training programmes will also be organised for transplant coordinators and hospital staff.

These initiatives aim to

improve skills and strengthen the overall capacity of healthcare institutions involved in transplant procedures. The Chief Minister said the partnership with the central government will provide important financial and institutional support for the initiative.

Under the agreement, the Centre will provide financial assistance to establish and run SOTTO. This will include one-time infrastructure support for setting up offices and developing IT systems needed for transplant coordination.

The Central Government will also provide regular grants to cover manpower and operational expenses associated with running the organisation. In addition, assistance will be provided to expand transplant-related infrastructure in government hospitals across Delhi. This includes support for developing organ retrieval centres and enhancing transplant facilities in public healthcare institutions.

Officials said these measures will help strengthen Delhi's transplant ecosystem and improve coordination between hospitals and transplant authorities.

From 2002 to 2026: Delhi Metro enthusiast continues first-ride tradition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

From being a passenger in the inaugural Delhi Metro in 2002 to his latest ride in new corridors this year, Anil Marwah has kept the tradition of taking the first ride on new routes alive for more than two decades now.

For most people, a new metro line means a faster commute, but for the 65-year-old, it means another page in a carefully preserved album, an album not of photos but of metro smart cards.

As the two new metro routes connecting Majlis Park to Maujpur and Majlis Park to Deepali Chowk were inaugurated on Sunday, the metro enthusiast was once again present with his albums, continuing his 24-year-old tradition and becoming one of the first passengers on the new corridors.



The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) commenced train services at 3 pm on the two newly inaugurated corridors after they were flagged off earlier in the day by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Marwah, proudly displaying his collection, said that his album consisted of every first-day Delhi Metro smart card issued for the newly opened corridors.

His carefully preserved collection includes the cards, photographs from inaugural rides before entering the metro, newspaper clippings and even recognition from

the Limca Book of World Records, all neatly stored in albums he carries to metro inaugurations.

"My story with Delhi Metro started on December 25, 2002. Earlier, I had lived in Japan for a year from 1988 to 1989, and I was very fascinated that the metro trains there ran through the colonies. I used to wonder when something like that would start in Delhi," Marwah said.

He recalled that when the metro finally started, he was living in Rajender Nagar and went with his son to Shahdara so that they could take the first ride.

"We couldn't get a ticket, so we bought a card for the first trip. After that, as new extensions kept getting added, I kept trying to get the cards and travel on them as the first passenger. I have managed to maintain the passion all until today," he said.

LG, CM inaugurate 'Shri Parth-Sarathi Rath' sculpture

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday inaugurated the newly installed 'Shri Parth-Sarathi Rath' sculpture at Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg near Delhi Gate.

The large artistic installation has been developed by the Public Works Department of Delhi (PWD) and is expected to become a new landmark in the historic central Delhi area.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Saxena said making Delhi a well-planned and visually appealing city is a shared vision of the administration and the Government. He added that several beautification and infrastructure initiatives are being undertaken to improve the city's appearance and public spaces.

The Chief Minister said the Delhi Government remains committed to keeping the

capital clean, attractive, and vibrant. She said projects such as park development, urban beautification, and the installation of artistic structures in public spaces are helping strengthen the cultural identity of the city. The event was also attended by Parvesh Sahib Singh, Cabinet Minister in the Delhi Government, and Tarvinder Singh Marwah, MLA from Jangpura, along with several other officials and dignitaries.

The lieutenant governor described the installation as an important addition to the city's urban landscape. He said the project took nearly seven to eight months of continuous work by engineers and workers before it was completed.

Saxena praised the PWD team for successfully executing the project and said such artistic installations help enhance the beauty of public spaces while creating new landmarks for residents and visitors.

According to officials, the



'Shri Parth-Sarathi Rath' has been designed with durability and long-term structural strength in mind. The structure has an estimated lifespan of about 50 years.

The Chief Minister said the Delhi Gate and the Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg area have significant historical and cultural value. The concept behind the Parth-Sarathi Rath installation was developed keeping the heritage of the location in mind. She said the project is aimed at enhancing the identity and

visual appeal of this historic zone while providing citizens with well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing public spaces.

"Providing clean and attractive public spaces is one of our key priorities," the Chief Minister said, adding that such initiatives improve the overall urban environment and create a better public experience for residents. The sculpture itself is a large chariot-inspired structure representing Parth-Sarathi, a symbolic refer-

ence associated with Indian cultural and mythological traditions.

Officials said the installation has been constructed using 10 millimetre-thick 316-grade stainless steel plates. The structure measures approximately 30 feet by 20 feet and weighs around 5,500 kilograms. To highlight the installation during the night, the site has been equipped with a dedicated lighting system. A total of 12 spotlights and 12 floodlights have been installed to illuminate the sculpture and enhance its visual impact after sunset.

Landscaping and horticulture work have also been carried out around the installation to improve the surrounding area and create a more visually appealing public space. Officials said the project is part of a broader initiative by the Delhi government to improve the aesthetics of the city and develop distinctive public landmarks.

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POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFASIA ACT 2002

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagee(s) mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagee(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates.

The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagee(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby notified not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Axis Bank Ltd.

The Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagee(s) attentions is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redress the secured assets.

Sr No	Name of Borrower/ Co-borrower	Date of Possession	Amount in Demand (Rs.)
1.	Mr. Amit Kumar Singh S/o. Mr. Uma Shankar Singh Fca-1744, S.G.M. Na-Gar, Near Mohan Dairy, Faridabad, Haryana-121001	02-Dec-2025	Rs. 18,89,023/-
2.	Mr. Prem Sheela M/o. Mr. Amit Kumar Singh Fca-1744, S.G.M. Na-Gar, Near Mohan Dairy, Faridabad, Haryana-121001	07-Mar-2026	(Rupees Eighteen Lakh Eighty Nine Thousand Twenty Three Only)

PROPERTY ADDRESS OF SECURED ASSETS: Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit bearing No. 1-12A05, on 12 A Floor, lower-1, total super area approximately 1150 Sq. Ft. (105.83 Sq. Mtrs.) and built up area 725 Sq. Ft. (67.35 Sq. Mtr.), 2BHK, along with right to use One Covered Parking Space in the 'Ace City', built on Plot No. GH-01 situated at Sector-01, Greater Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. along with undivided, unregistered, undivided lease-hold rights in the portion of the said land underneath the building, comprising of several Blocks comprising the Complex, in proportion the super area of the said Flat/Dwelling Unit, as per the enclosed plan and bounded as follows - East - As Per The Floor Plan, West - As Per The Floor Plan, North - As Per The Floor Plan, South - As Per The Floor Plan

The above-mentioned Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagee(s) are hereby given a 30 days' notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Dated: 10.03.2026, Place: NOIDA Sd/-, Authorized Officer, Axis Bank Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client 1. Sh. Shyraj Singh & 2. Sh. Mohit Bahal owner of U.G.F, Block-S/14, Western Portion, Area 450 Sq. Kharsa No. 94/14, Situated At Village Bura, Sant Nagar, and My Client purchase property from 1. Sh. Ajay Kumar Bansal & 2. Smt. Manju Bala vide GPA, ATS & Will dated 14.07.1997, now My Client wants to sell aforesaid property. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile :- 9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that My Clients Sangam Lal Sharma S/o Raghuraj Sharma and Meera Sharani W/o Sangam Lal Sharma R/o H.No. A-433, Block A, Veena Enclave, Ratan Park, Nangloi, Delhi-110041, have disowned their daughter Preeti (Aadhaar No. 847226791719) from all their movable/immovable properties and severed all their relations both legal & social by their deed to their respective behavior. Any person dealing or relation with preeti shall be doing so at his/her own risk, and my clients shall not be responsible for the same.

Sanjeev Dwivedi (Advocate)
48, Gajandhar Block, Tis Hazari Courts, ND-54

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Ref: i) Tender Notice No. 75/2025-26 dated 01.01.2026 (S.No.2)
ii) Tender No. 08255739 due on 13.03.2026

In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 13.03.2026 to 27.03.2026. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in.

SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE 794/2026

ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

प्लॉट संख्या-01, सेक्टर-नॉलेज पार्क-4 ग्रेटर नोएडा सिटी, जिला-गौतमबुद्ध नगर (उ०प्र०)

सार्वजनिक सूचना

ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अंतर्गत M/s Sunrise Structures & Developers Pvt. Ltd., भूखण्ड संख्या-REP-02A, Sector-27, Greater Noida को दिनांक 07.03.2017 को मानचित्र स्वीकृति प्रदान की गयी थी। तदोपरान्त विकासकर्ता द्वारा (Recreational Green Project) को आंशिक अधिभोग प्रमाण-पत्र हेतु ऑनलाईन के माध्यम से आवेदन संख्या-CC-8888 दिनांक 21.08.2024 है। तत्कम में UP-Apartment Act-2010, Amendment 2016 in Section-4 Sub Section-B के अंतर्गत परियोजना के आवंटियों से आगति/स्वाधन आगति किये जाने का प्रवचन है। इस सम्बन्ध में विकासकर्ता द्वारा प्रस्तुत स्वीकृति मानचित्र एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 परीक्षण किन्ही भी कार्यदिवस में सुबह 9.30 से सायं 6.00 बजे के मध्य नियोजन विभाग में तथा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट पर किया जा सकता है।

अतः उपरोक्त परियोजना के आवंटियों द्वारा Sanction Map एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 के सम्बन्ध में सूचना प्रकाशित करने के 30 दिनों के अन्दर आपत्तियाँ/स्वाधन आगति की जाती है। उपरोक्त के निहितार्थ अपनी आगति Email Id-gmplaning@gnida.in पर अथवा लिखित रूप में अपने आवेदन पत्र, नाम, पता एवं दूरभाष नम्बर के साथ कार्यालय समय व कार्यदिवस में ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण के मुख्य प्रशासनिक कार्यालय, भूखण्ड संख्या-1, नॉलेज पार्क-4, ग्रेटर नोएडा में स्थित महाप्रबन्धक (नियोजन/वास्तु) को सम्बोधित करते हुए सूचना प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिवसों के अन्दर जमा करायी जा सकती है।

प्रभारी महाप्रबन्धक (नियोजन/वास्तु)
ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

NDMC launches intensive sanitation campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Monday launched an intensive sanitation campaign across its jurisdiction to make the Capital area clean, green, and dust-free.

NDMC has deployed about 1,574 sanitation workers to carry out cleaning and waste management activities under the drive.

The campaign covers a wide range of tasks, including the removal of garbage and construction debris, the cleaning of parks, underpasses, schools, Government buildings, and places of worship.

Announcing the drive on March 9, NDMC Chairman Keshav Chandra directed senior officials to closely monitor sanitation operations and ensure effective implementation across all sanitation circles.

As part of the campaign, NDMC has appointed 14 heads of departments as nodal officers, each responsible for supervising sanitation activities in one circle. These officers will oversee field operations, coordinate staff deployment, and ensure daily monitoring and reporting.

The chairman has also started visiting one sanitation zone every day to review on-ground conditions and ensure improvements in hygiene and cleanliness across the NDMC area. Officials said the campaign aims to strengthen waste management, reduce road dust, and improve the



overall urban environment in the national Capital's central administrative district.

One of the major challenges during this season is the large quantity of dry leaves falling from avenue trees. According to NDMC data, about 43 tonnes of fallen leaves are collected every day during the leaf-falling season. These leaves are gathered from roads, markets, footpaths, and green belts.

The collected leaves are transported to the waste-to-compost plant in Okhla, where they are processed into organic compost. The compost is later reused for horticulture and maintenance of green areas in the city. To manage leaf collection and waste transportation, the civic body has deployed eight open trucks, five hywa trucks, and seven compactors.

NDMC also handles a total average waste load of around 310 tonnes per day. Out of this, about 246 tonnes is dry waste that is sent to waste-to-energy facilities, while approximately 64 tonnes of wet waste and horticulture waste are processed for composting.

Mechanised cleaning has also been intensified as part of the sanitation drive.

Office of Superintending Engineer
6th circle, P.W.D. Uttarkashi
E-Mail : sepwduki@rediffmail.com Tel./Fax No-01374-222127

Letter No. - 1049/56 M-06/2026/03/2026 Date 14.03.2026

National Competitive Bid (E-Tendering)

On behalf of the Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, Superintending Engineer 6th circle, PWD Uttarkashi invites item Rate Tender through e-tendering (Two bid system), for the following work. All the information regarding tender shall be available on web site <https://www.uktenders.gov.in> from dated 12.03.2026 at 05.00 PM.

S. N.	Name of work	Earnest money (In Lacs)	Tender Cost (in of Rupees)	Validity (days)	Completion period (Month)	Category of Contractor
1	Renewal of P.C in Badethi-Banchaura - Badrigaad motor bandh at km 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 35, 36, 37, 40, 42 under annual repair 2026-27	3.15	5000+18% GST	90 day	3 Month	For Road work registered in "C" or higher PWD Uttarakhand

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client Sh. Sahil, Sh. Sudhir Kumar and Sh. Girish Chandra owner of Plot No. 2-84, Area 60.4 Sq. Yds., Kharsa No. 322, My Client Garden, commercial area of Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-59, and My Client purchase property from M/s Shri Purni Real Estate Private Limited thru Director Sh. Rajesh Kumar vide GPA, ATS & Will dated 26.08.2025, now My Client wants to sell aforesaid property. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile :- 9899013918

THE DELHI GOLF CLUB

Dr. Zakir Hussain Road, New Delhi-03

Quotations are invited for "Purchase of 600 NOS Trolly Bag of reputed, well-known & established brands. Detailed RFP can be downloaded from DGC website <https://delhi.golclub.org/tendernotice/> Sealed forms mentioning word "PURCHASE OF 600 NOS TROLLY BAG" in capital letters on top of the envelope must reach us before 12:00 Hrs on 12th Mar 2026. Tender Box is placed in the Main Office of DGC.

Lt. Col. Rohit Singh (Retd)
Secretary
The Delhi Golf Club

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client Sh. Vikram Singh owner of Plot No. S-97, Area 50 Sq. Yds. Kharsa No. 14/19 & 14/20, Qutub Vihar Phase-I, D-Block, New Delhi-110071, and My Client purchase property from M/s Shri Purni Real Estate Private Limited thru Director Sh. Rajesh Kumar vide GPA, ATS & Will dated 13.02.2026, now My Client wants to sell aforesaid property. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile :- 9899013918

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client Sh. Praveen Mittal owner of Plot Bearing No. 493, Area Measuring 297 Sq. Mtrs. Situated In The Residential Colony Known As Sector-43, Urban, Estate Gurugram Tehsil Wazirabad, Distt. Gurugram, Haryana, and My Client have Lost Original 1st copy of Sale Deed No. 14703, dt.26.08.2010 And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760 - Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile :- 9899013918



DTC bus mows down 2 in Nangloi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Two people were killed, and a woman was injured after a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus hit multiple vehicles and pedestrians on the Najafgarh-Nangloi Road in Outer Delhi on Monday morning, triggering protests in which angry locals set the bus on fire and damaged several others. The accident occurred around 9:45 am near the Kamaruddin Nagar village turn in the Nihal Vihar police station area.

According to police, a DTC cluster bus (DL 1 PD 6223) coming from the Najafgarh side first hit an e-rickshaw and then rammied into a scooter, a motorcycle, a hand rickshaw, and pedestrians walking along the road.

Three pedestrians were seriously injured in the collision. They were rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment. Two of the injured later died during treatment, while a woman is still undergoing treatment for her injuries.

One of the deceased has been identified as Ravikant, a 33-year-old resident of Nihal Vihar. Police said he originally belonged to the state of Bihar. According to preliminary information, Ravikant came from a family



A burnt DTC bus after it hit multiple vehicles in Outer Delhi's Nangloi area, in New Delhi

PANKAJ KUMAR

engaged in the transport business. He was reportedly on his way to a company in Nangloi around 9:30 am when the accident occurred. The injured and deceased were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital and Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, while the injured woman is undergoing treatment at Mansa Ram Hospital.

The accident sparked heavy anger among local residents. Soon after the crash, a large crowd gathered at the spot and began protesting. According to

police, around 500 people assembled at the site and set the bus involved in the accident on fire.

Another DTC bus (DL 1 PD 5674), which was approaching from the Nangloi side, was also found burnt during the violence. In addition, five other buses on the route suffered minor damage as angry protesters vandalised vehicles after the accident. Police teams reached the spot within 5 to 10 minutes and managed to bring the situation under control. Authorities said the driver of

the bus has been detained for questioning.

Police have started an investigation to determine the exact cause of the accident. Officials are also examining whether speeding or negligent driving led to the crash. The police said that legal action is being taken in the case as per the law.

The incident caused a temporary disruption on the busy Najafgarh-Nangloi Road as emergency teams and police cleared the damaged vehicles and restored traffic movement. Officials said

further investigation is underway, and more details will emerge after statements of witnesses and the driver are recorded. The situation in the area is currently under control, police added.

The brother of one of the two men killed in a DTC bus accident in west Delhi alleged that rash driving by the driver, who was racing against another bus to overtake it, led to the tragedy as he mourned the death of the 39-year-old, the sole caretaker of their elderly parents.

His elder brother Manish said the family is struggling to come to terms with the sudden loss. "He was recently divorced and lived with our parents, who are around 60 years old, in Nangloi. He used to take care of them. On Monday morning, he left home for the office like any other day, but he never returned," Manish said.

Alleging negligence, he claimed that buses often race against each other on the stretch without caring about public safety. "They drive rashly and compete with each other just to save a few minutes. Now who will take responsibility for his death? Our parents are old and completely shattered. They cannot bear such pain at this stage of their lives," he said.

Beaten with belt by group of boys: Manipuri woman on attack in park

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A Manipuri woman has alleged that she was beaten with a belt and attacked with a knife after she objected to sexual and racial remarks by a group of boys in a south Delhi park.

The police have apprehended four juveniles in connection with the incident that took place Sunday evening in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar near the Saket District Court Complex.

The woman and her friend had gone to the park for a walk and were taking pictures when around six to seven boys started teasing them with sexual slurs, the police said.

"When we objected and asked them to stop, the group allegedly became aggressive and called us 'prostitutes' while making racist remarks and using abusive Hindi slang," the woman said in the complaint.

She alleged that the situation quickly escalated into violence. "They became aggressive and started physically assaulting me. They did not stop even after beating me."

She alleged that one of the attackers took out a knife



and attempted to stab her, forcing her to run away from the spot.

"When I fell running, they took an iron belt and hit me on the back of my head, causing bleeding in my right ear," she said.

The woman alleged that she and her friend begged the attackers to stop, but the assault continued.

"We were begging them not to beat us anymore. While we were running, we called for help, but nobody tried to stop the assault and harassment on us," she said.

The woman said she had never seen the attackers before.

"For me, it was shocking: I do not know them, I saw them for the first time, how could they attack me in daylight!" she said, according to the complaint.

The local SHO and other staff rushed to the spot and met the injured woman after a distress call, the police said.

They said the woman told them that some boys aged around 15 to 16 years were there in the park and began passing abusive remarks and sexual slurs. When she objected, they allegedly became aggressive and started quarrelling with her.

According to the police, one of the accused hit the woman with a waist belt, causing minor injuries.

She was taken to Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital, where doctors noted a slight laceration behind her ear and mild swelling with abrasion on the right chin, they said.

She was later referred to Safdarjung Hospital for further examination.

Justice topmost priority: CM Rekha to kin of man killed in Holi brawl

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday met the kin of a 26-year-old man who died in a Holi brawl in Uttam Nagar and said ensuring justice to the family is the "topmost priority" of her Government. "The Delhi government, with complete sensitivity, responsibility and firmness, stands with the affected family," she said and added, "Providing justice to them is the topmost priority of her government," she wrote on X.

The Delhi Police has so far arrested 14 and apprehended two minors in connection with the killing of Tarun in a clash between two families on Holi in southwest Delhi's Uttam Nagar.

"The grief of Tarun's family is profound and unbearable. Clear directions have been issued to ensure prompt legal action for the strictest punishment to all the culprits in this heinous offence," the CM said in her post.

The chief minister asserted that such inhuman inci-



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta meets a family member of Tarun, who was killed in a Holi clash in Delhi's Uttam Nagar at the Delhi Secretariat in New Delhi

PTI

dents in Delhi would not be tolerated at any cost.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police has arrested seven more people and apprehended a minor in this case. With the latest arrests, the total number of people arrested in the case has gone up to 14. Two minors have also been apprehended.

Among those arrested in the latest crackdown are three women, namely Sayra alias Kali (40), Sharifan (50) and Salma (36), all residents of Uttam Nagar. They were

taken into custody earlier for questioning in connection with the incident, a senior police officer said.

Following the partial demolition of the house belonging to the family of the accused in the Uttam Nagar killing, MCD officials announced on Monday that there are no plans for a major anti-encroachment drive in the area in the near future. The accused is involved in the Uttam Nagar Holi clash case, in which a 26-year-old man was killed.

He was India's ambassador to the United States from February 2020 to January 2024. Previously, he served as the deputy chief of mission at the embassy in Washington from July 2013 to January 2017 and as the first secretary (political) from 1997 to 2000, with the responsibility to liaise with the US Congress.

The 63-year-old former diplomat had also been at the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations from July 2005 to February 2009.

Sandhu to take oath as LG on March 11

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi's Lieutenant Governor designate Taranjit Singh Sandhu is scheduled to take the oath of office in a ceremony at Lok Niwas on March 11.

Sandhu, an experienced former diplomat, will be administered an oath as the national capital's 23rd LG by the Delhi High Court chief justice.

The ceremony is scheduled to be held at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, they said. His predecessor Vinai Kumar Saxena has been appointed as the Lt Governor of Ladakh.

Preparations were underway for the oath ceremony at Lok Niwas (formerly Raj Niwas). Saxena is scheduled to take the oath as Ladakh LG on Friday, officials said, adding that he was in the process of moving out.

Earlier in the day, the new LG visited Lok Niwas and met Saxena, they said.

Sandhu, a 1988-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, was one of the most experienced Indian diplo-



mats on United States affairs. He served in the Indian mission in Washington DC multiple times.

He was India's ambassador to the United States from February 2020 to January 2024. Previously, he served as the deputy chief of mission at the embassy in Washington from July 2013 to January 2017 and as the first secretary (political) from 1997 to 2000, with the responsibility to liaise with the US Congress.

The 63-year-old former diplomat had also been at the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations from July 2005 to February 2009.

JNUSU announces referendum seeking removal of Vice Chancellor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

In a significant move, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) has announced to conduct a student referendum on Tuesday across all schools of the university, focused on whether the university's Vice Chancellor should be removed from her position.

The referendum emerges amid rising tensions and controversies on campus, especially following alleged casteist remarks by the VC and the suspension of key student leaders.

As students and former JNUTA members prepare to oversee the vote, the administration faces intensified calls for accountability and change. The referendum will be overseen by former members of the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA), and the results of the same will be released on Wednesday. No response was immediately received from the JNU VC's office.

"Taking into account the casteist remarks made by the JNU VC recently, the referendum will open the field for stu-



dents to express their opinion on whether the VC should continue to remain in her position or be removed. The voices of the students will be heard," former JNUSU president Nitish Kumar said.

JNU, as well as the university students' union, has recently been mired in several controversies. The university campus has seen continued protests since early February, after the university had suspended the four JNUSU office bearers, along with former JNUSU president Kumar, for two semesters. This suspension had been issued for "extensive damage to university property" during a November 21, 2025, protest at the Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library.

This incident was followed by even more protests for revocation of the suspension

order, clashes between Left and Right-wing students and alleged controversial remarks on caste made by the JNU VC, which has attracted criticism from students as well as teacher bodies.

A JNUSU statement recounted, "All this reached its crescendo with the police detaining more than 50 students and arresting 14 of them for marching to the MoE (Ministry of Education) demanding UGC (University Grants Commission) regulations, funds and the resignation of the VC for her casteist remarks. The JNU-14 had to spend three days in Tihar Jail, and the VC made no statement condemning the police."

JNUSU members added that in the absence of any action by authorities, despite repeated complaints made by the former JNUSU president to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) seeking disciplinary action against the VC and repeated demands from students and teachers asking the MoE to provide clarification on the VC's statements, the referendum has been called to intensify the movement.

BJP welcomes HC direction in excise policy case, AAP says its acquittal still stands

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Aam Aadmi Party engaged in a war of words on Monday, each interpreting the Delhi High Court order in the excise policy case in its favour.

The BJP welcomed the high court's directions, saying that it marked the end of the AAP's brief celebrations. The AAP, however, maintained that the court has only temporarily stopped administrative action against the CBI officials and not stayed the discharge of its leaders.

Delhi Minister Ashish Sood



slammed AAP saying it started celebrating a trial court's decision a little too early. "The high court by staying the lower court's observations has proved that AAP's claim that there was no (excise policy) case at all, was hollow," Sood said in a

press conference. He said that a CAG report has said that the liquor scam involved over Rs 2,000 crore, and 170 mobile phones and 43 SIM cards used by the accused were destroyed.

The high court on Monday sought replies from former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and 21 others on a petition filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) challenging a lower court's decision to discharge them in the liquor policy case.

The high court also indicated that it would stay the trial court's "prejudicial"

remarks against the CBI officials. Addressing a press conference, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva welcomed the high court's decision to admit the CBI petition.

"The lower court's acquittal of Kejriwal is not a very unusual development. In the past, several scam-accused leaders such as Lalu Prasad Yadav, A Raja and Kanimozhi were discharged by lower courts, and they celebrated briefly, but many were later given major punishments," he said.

On February 27, a CBI court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and other accused in the excise policy case.

Delhi Transport Corporation to commercialise spaces inside Kashmere Gate ISBT for 2 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

In an effort to generate revenue, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) plans to lease several commercial spaces inside the busy Kashmere Gate ISBT on a two-year license period.

According to officials, around 20 spaces have been identified at the interstate bus terminal (ISBT) in Central Delhi, which can be developed into retail shops, service outlets, and convenience stores.

"As part of its mandate to generate sustainable revenue and provide better facilities to



commuters, Delhi Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (DTIDC) intends to commercially utilise available bare spaces at ISBT Kashmere Gate for various commercial activities," an official said.

The ISBT Kashmere Gate is one of the busiest bus terminals in Delhi, with very high daily footfall of commuters, visitors and staff.

"The terminal is strategically located and well-connected by metro, roads and other

modes. A tender has been floated inviting companies in this regard," he added.

According to officials, dedicated areas, including bus bays and several other blocks, have been identified for the development and operation of various commercial establishments to meet the needs of commuters.

"The spaces will be handed over on an 'as is where is' basis, operation and maintenance by the selected Licensee. High captive footfall presents an excellent opportunity for reputed operators to establish commercial outlets with customer-friendly setups.

Govt strengthens Yamuna banks between ITO, Sarai Kale Khan to improve flood management

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

To reduce flood risk in the city, the Delhi Government has begun strengthening the Yamuna riverbank by 'stone pitching' and upgrading drainage infrastructure between ITO and Sarai Kale Khan.

The work includes reinforcing vulnerable stretches of the embankment and improving access roads along key drains and the Millennium Bund to ensure that flood management can

be carried out more effectively during heavy rainfall, officials said on Monday.

Approach roads along Drain No. 12 are being strengthened to ensure the smooth routine cleaning and emergency response during the monsoon.

Another major component of the project is also active at the 'Millennium Bund,' located on the right bank of the Yamuna River near the Sarai Kale Khan area in South Delhi. This embankment acts as a protective barrier against the river.

The initiative is being undertaken by the Delhi Irrigation and Flood Control Department (I&FC), which is responsible for flood management and riverbank protection in the city.

"This is a crucial step in strengthening the embankment and ensuring the safety of the riverbank while protecting the area from future erosion," a senior government official said.

According to officials, work is underway on the Millennium Bund to prevent soil erosion through the



File Photo

stone pitching process.

"The government hopes that strengthening embankments along the Yamuna and improving the drainage network will help mitigate flood risks and enhance the city's preparedness for extreme weather events," flood control minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said.

The measures will likely improve the drainage network and reduce the risk of flooding and waterlogging in surrounding areas during the monsoon season, he added.

Stone pitching is a method in which stones are placed on the slope to prevent soil erosion.

The initiative is being undertaken by the Delhi Irrigation and Flood Control Department (I&FC), which is responsible for flood management and riverbank protection in the city.

Officials said the department has been working continuously to improve the effectiveness of flood-control infrastructure, particularly in areas prone to waterlogging during heavy rainfall.

"These drains had been causing waterlogging in their respective catchment areas for several years. The department carried out large-scale desilting, widening and deepening of drains, removal of bottlenecks and encroachments," he added.

In 2023, areas along the Yamuna River experienced heavy flooding for days as the river level was at its highest. Drain No. 12, a regulator drain under the I&FC department, had to be reinforced with sandbags by the army to control flooding in the city.



IN FOCUS

IndiGo flight faces airspace curb woes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Manchester-bound IndiGo flight, operated with a leased Boeing 787 aircraft, returned to the national capital on Monday due to certain restrictions when the plane was to enter the Eritrea airspace. Also, an IndiGo flight from London Heathrow to Mumbai was diverted to Cairo following issues related to entering Eritrea airspace, sources added.

The flight to Manchester was airborne for more than six hours before it decided to turn back. By the time it landed in the national capital, the flight had been in the air for over 12 hours. It had taken off from Delhi at around 12.40 am and landed

back in the national capital at about 2.30 pm on Monday, as per information available with flight tracking website Flightradar24.Com.

"Our flight 6E 033 operating from Delhi to Manchester had to return to its origin due to last-minute airspace restrictions, owing to the ongoing situation in West Asia. We are working with the relevant authorities to explore the possibilities of resuming the journey," IndiGo said in a statement.

The sources said that there were some approval issues with Eritrean authorities, and after a risk assessment, it was decided that the flight would return to Delhi. Eritrea is an African country.

Meanwhile, flight 6E2 from London Heathrow to



Mumbai was diverted to Cairo (Egypt) due to the approval issues with the Eritrean authorities, the sources said.

The flight, operated with a leased Boeing 787 plane, was airborne for nearly six hours before the decision was

taken to divert to Cairo.

Overall, the flight was airborne for more than eight hours before landing at Cairo, as per information from Flightradar24.Com.

One of the sources said the airline would not be operating the flight from Cairo to

Mumbai on Monday as the crew had exhausted flight duty time. The airline is working to arrange visas and hotel accommodation for passengers, and the flight is expected to fly to Mumbai on Tuesday, the source added.

There was no immediate statement from the airline on the 6E2 flight.

IndiGo is operating its flights to European cities and London, except for Athens, with Boeing 787-9 planes leased from Norway's Norse Atlantic Airways.

In the wake of the Middle East conflict, regulator EASA (European Union Aviation Safety Agency) has barred aircraft, including those of Norse Atlantic, registered with it from using certain air-

spaces in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia.

As a result, IndiGo is now taking the longer flight route through Africa to enter Europe.

For the European flights, the airline flies over the Arabian Sea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Red Sea and Egypt before entering Europe.

Meanwhile, the flights to Athens are operated with IndiGo's A321 XLR planes.

Generally, Indian carriers use the airspaces in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, to operate flights to Europe. IndiGo, in the statement, also said that due to the evolving situation in and around the Middle East, some of its flights may take longer routes or experience diversions.

Saffron crowd wants to swallow TN, DMK won't allow it: Stalin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tiruchirappalli

In a scathing attack on the BJP, ruling DMK president and Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday alleged that a "saffron crowd" wanted to "swallow" the southern state, but asserted his party would not allow that.

Addressing a mega party conference here, he also took on his rival, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, accusing him of becoming a "slave" to the BJP in order to become CM.

Further, with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar set to step down, he said that state never had a BJP CM, and that after winning polls by showcasing the JD (U) veteran,



"now they have sidelined him". A 'Saffron crowd,' an obvious reference to the BJP, wants to "swallow Tamil Nadu". DMK will not allow it to happen, the CM asserted.

To win over the state, BJP was gradually "swallowing"

AIADMK, he alleged.

He claimed that it will be "no entry" for the NDA in Tamil Nadu and asserted that he would continue to rule the state so long as the DMK Government's welfare initiatives lasted. "It will always be no-entry for NDA in Tamil Nadu, no-entry to NDA's dabba (dysfunctional) engine in the state... as long as the welfare schemes we brought are in place, Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin will rule Tamil Nadu," he said.

The upcoming Assembly election will see the DMK exposing the BJP by "tearing the AIADMK mask" being worn by it. "Can people not identify the BJP if AIADMK mask is used," the Chief Minister asked and hit back at

rivals TVK and AIADMK over his 'TN vs NDA and TN vs Delhi' slogan for the Assembly polls.

He lashed out at the Centre for allegedly denying funds due for the state.

Listing out the numerous initiatives of his Government, he said 5.40 lakh male students were provided a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 under the 'Tamil Puthalvan Thittam', while a similar aid was being extended to 6.95 lakh women student beneficiaries of 'Puthumai Penn Thittam'. As many as 19.34 lakh children benefited through the CM breakfast scheme. Also, Stalin listed the monthly grant of ₹1,000 to 1.31 crore women as among the numerous achievements of

his five year-old rule.

He said that during the 2016-21 AIADMK regime, only 471 MoUs were signed but in the DMK's tenure, about 1,190 MoUs were inked.

"The 7-goals outlined in the run up to the 2021 polls, in Tiruchirappalli, have been achieved. We have a legacy, we named the State as Tamil Nadu.

We are assembled here to take a vow for the DMK to rule forever," he said.

Tiruchirappalli was synonymous with a turning point and a big win for the party he said and used a cricket analogy to emphasise that not only the opening runs but also the boundaries made at the close of the game mattered in securing a victory.

Woman jumps into well with her 3 daughters in Haryana's Nuh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

A 28-year-old woman allegedly committed suicide along with her three daughters by jumping into a well in a village in Haryana's Nuh district on Monday, police said.

The deceased woman's father, Hanif, in his complaint, alleged that his daughter took the extreme step due to her in-laws, who tortured her not only over dowry, but also for not having a son, police said.

Acting on his complaint, the police have registered a murder case against the

woman's husband and four in-laws, Ferozpur Jhirka SHO Subhash Chand said, adding that the bodies have been sent for postmortem.

Upon receiving the information on Monday morning, police and fire brigade teams reached the spot and, with the help of the villagers, pulled out the bodies.

The police identified the deceased woman as Shahila, 28, and her daughters — Aksha, 7, Sanofia, 4, and a 6-month-old baby — residents of Badopur village.

A six-month-old girl was found tied to the back of the woman, they added.

According to locals, Shahila, along with her daughters, was seen going towards the village well in the wee hours of Monday.

Upon hearing the noise, villagers gathered at the scene, and since the well was very deep and filled with water, no one dared to go down. The bodies of two girls were pulled out first, and later, the team extracted the bodies of Shahila and her third daughter, they added.

When the woman's body was finally recovered, her daughter was found tied to her back, the sight of which brought tears to the eyes of the rescuers.

Rajasthan Assembly passes bill allowing more children in Panchayat Rajasthan polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on Monday removed the disqualification for contesting panchayat elections on the ground of having more than two children by amending the state's Panchayati Raj Act.

The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was passed by voice vote after a debate in the House.

According to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill, Section 19 of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, provides general disqualifications for members of a panchayat, with clause (i) stating that a person having more than two children is disqualified from being chosen as, or from continuing as, a member of a panchayat.

"The state Government has observed that many capable individuals who have the ability to inspire and serve the public and possess the vision to lead grassroots institutions like panchayats are unable to contest elections because they have more than two children," the statement said. In view of this, the state Government has decided to



remove this disqualification from Section 19 of the said Act of 1994. Prior to this, the Rajasthan Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy University, Ajmer Bill, 2026 was also passed by voice vote.

Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devnani said Ajmer has received its second state university after 38 years under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma. "With the establishment of this university, my dream has been fulfilled," said Devnani, who represents the Ajmer North assembly constituency.

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Ayurveda, Yoga

and Naturopathy Prem Chand Bairwa said in the assembly that the state Government is moving firmly towards strengthening health services through traditional systems of medicine.

Describing the establishment of the university in Ajmer as a historic initiative, Bairwa said it would help achieve the goal of a "prosperous Rajasthan through a healthy Rajasthan".

Bairwa said the establishment of the university, announced in the 2024-25 state Budget, would further strengthen higher education and research facilities with improved quality.

Hundreds affected by water contamination in 3 states: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Incidents of drinking water contamination have been reported from Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, with hundreds of people falling ill, the Rajya Sabha was told on Monday.

In a written reply to a question, Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said in Uttar Pradesh, complaints of contaminated water were received from Sector Delta-1 and Sector Alpha-2 in Greater Noida, where leakages in water connections

were detected and rectified.

In Haryana's Gurugram, an incident was reported in a private colony in Sector 70-70A in December last year, he said, adding that an enquiry later found the water storage tanks of individual house owners were unclean. The tanks were cleaned and the issue was resolved.

According to the Madhya Pradesh Government, incidents of vomiting and diarrhoea were reported on December 28 last year in the Bhagirathpura area in Indore, Sahu said.

He said 22 deaths were reported due to acute diar-



Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu

rhoeal disease in the locality, while a total of 459 people were hospitalised.

In Andhra Pradesh, cases of gastroenteritis and diarrhoea were reported in early

measures in coordination with the district administration and the health department.

According to the minister, a total of 224 people were hospitalised and two deaths were reported. In Gujarat, a localised typhoid outbreak in Gandhinagar affected 258 people who were hospitalised. No deaths were reported. In Balasore, 506 people have been hospitalised since October 2025 due to leakages in ageing drinking water pipelines and drainage networks, while 436 people fell ill in Vadodra due to water contamination from 2025.

Passenger booked for smoking Beedi on mid-air in Akasa flight

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A passenger from Delhi has been detained by Goa police after allegedly smoking a BEEDI inside the aircraft lavatory during an Akasa Air flight from Delhi to Goa, triggering safety concerns among the crew and passengers.

The incident occurred on Saturday, March 7, aboard Akasa Air flight QP1625, which was travelling from Delhi to Goa. According to officials, the passenger—identified as Ashish—was found smoking inside the aircraft's lavatory and was also



discovered carrying a lighter, a restricted item on board commercial flights.

Cabin crew reportedly became aware of the situation after smoke was detected in the lavatory area. Aircraft lavatories are equipped with smoke detectors designed to alert the crew immediately if someone attempts to smoke during a flight.

Rahul faces defamation charges on 12 March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sultanpur

A special MP/MLA court here on Monday scheduled March 12 for hearing arguments in a 2018 defamation case against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rae Bareilly MP Rahul Gandhi related to his remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Advocate Santosh Kumar Pandey, counsel for the complainant, informed that



Special Judge Shubham Verma had scheduled March 12 for further arguments in the matter. The case was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra.

FROM PAGE - 1

TMC, ECI clash over West Bengal polls

Bengal minister and TMC leader Chandrima Bhattacharya alleged that the CEC behaved rudely with her during the meeting. According to Bhattacharya, the CEC asked her not to shout when she raised concerns.

"I am a woman, and I was told 'don't shout'. Why should I not raise my voice when we are speaking about people's rights?" Bhattacharya told reporters after the meeting. She said whenever the party attempted to raise concerns over the SIR process, the commission responded by saying the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court (SC). "If that is the case, why did they call us to the meeting? When they have invited us, they must listen to what we have to say," she said. Defending the party's move to approach the SC, Bhattacharya said it was the responsibility of the ruling party to protect the rights of citizens. During the meeting with the poll body, the political parties have urged the Commission to conduct assembly polls in one or two phases here. The BJP delegation, however, raised a different set of issues during its separate meeting with the commission, focusing on the security environment and the conduct of the polls.

"We demanded a one, two or three-phase election, but not more," BJP leader Jagannath Chattopadhyay said after the meeting. The CPI(M), which also met the poll panel separately, demanded that the elections be conducted in a single phase, arguing that multi-phase polls allow anti-social elements to move from one dis-

trict to another and influence the process.

Earlier, after a full bench of the commission, led by CEC Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, held meetings with political parties at a hotel in New Town on the eastern fringes of Kolkata, to review election preparations and hear their concerns.

According to ECI officials, parties also raised concerns about poll violence, the use of crude bombs and illegal firearms, and the need for adequate deployment of Central Armed Police Forces.

Opposition stalls its motion against Birla...

With the Speaker's no-confidence motion now expected to be taken up on Tuesday, Opposition MPs indicated they may shift focus to rising LPG prices during the day's proceedings.

The House was adjourned three times before a fourth and final adjournment after it reconvened at 3 pm, as Opposition members continued raising slogans. After Jaishankar's statement, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju accused the Opposition of violating parliamentary norms. He said the notice to remove Birla had already been accepted and the Government was ready for a discussion, but the Opposition was obstructing proceedings. Outside Parliament, Opposition leaders including Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav staged a protest demanding a debate on the West Asia conflict and criticising the Government for its "silence".

The Opposition has accused Birla of acting in a "blatantly partisan" manner while conducting

proceedings during the first leg of the Budget Session. While the Constitution allows the Speaker to defend himself in the House, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to reply to the debate on the resolution against Birla.

Leadership change in Iran escalates West...

Trump also argued that the United States wanted to avoid future confrontations with Iran, particularly over nuclear weapons. Iran's powerful clerical body, the Assembly of Experts, announced that Mojtaba Khamenei had been chosen by a decisive vote to become the third supreme leader of the Islamic Republic. The position is the most powerful office in Iran, giving the holder final authority over State institutions, the armed forces and key foreign policy decisions.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday expressed "unwavering support" for Iran's newly appointed supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who assumed the country's top leadership position after his father Ali Khamenei was killed in recent US-Israeli strikes. In a message to Tehran, Putin reaffirmed Moscow's backing for Iran, saying Russia would remain "a reliable partner" to the Islamic Republic during a period of heightened regional tensions. "I would like to reaffirm our unwavering support for Tehran and solidarity with our Iranian friends," Putin said, adding that leading the country at a time of armed confrontation would require "great courage and dedication."

Mojtaba Khamenei has long been considered an influential figure within Iran's political system despite rarely holding a formal public office. Born in 1969, he briefly served as a teenager during the Iran-Iraq War. Over the years he built strong ties with Iran's security institutions, particularly the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

EAM briefs Parliament on West Asia conflict

"In view of the implications of this conflict for our energy security, I also seek to address that particular concern. The Government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account the availability, costs and risks of the energy markets," Jaishankar added.

"For us, the interest of the Indian consumer has and will always be the overriding priority. Where required, Indian diplomacy has supported the endeavours of our energy enterprises in this volatile situation," he said.

The external affairs minister also presented details of the advisories issued by Indian embassies in Israel, Iran, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia between February 28 and March 8 in view of the situation in West Asia. The EAM noted that one crore Indian citizens live and work in the Gulf nations. "In Iran too, there are a few thousand Indians who are there for study and employment. The region is key to our energy security and includes many important suppliers of oil and gas," he said.

Large defaulters list: Big corporates, banks...

During hearings related to the Anil Ambani's loan fraud cases, Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant remarked that the insolvency process had "become a mockery." The case was filed by former Government Secretary EAS Sarma and argued by advocate Prashant Bhushan.

SBI sanctioned the largest number of loans to Ambani-linked firms, often splitting them into smaller amounts and sometimes through banking consortia. The bank extended 16 loans totaling ₹13,633 crore to companies including Reliance Communications, Reliance Naval, Reliance Telecom and Reliance Infratel. Union Bank of India granted 11 loans worth ₹6,724 crore to Reliance Communications, Reliance Telecom and Reliance Naval. Federal Bank extended seven loans totaling ₹1,976 crore to Anil Ambani's US-based film production firm Reliance Big Entertainment (US) Inc.

Other lenders included IFCI, UCO Bank, Axis Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Karur Vysya Bank. NABARD also filed a civil suit against Reliance Commercial and Finance Limited for defaulting on a ₹1,106 crore loan.

According to officials from the Enforcement Directorate, the agency has already attached assets worth over ₹20,000 crore belonging to Ambani and his companies. After filing charge sheets — which may increase following intervention by the Supreme Court of India — the 13 banks may approach courts to claim their dues of ₹48,282 crore from the attached assets.

PM calls for linking education sector to real world economy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for accelerating the process of linking the country's education sector to the real world economy, while sharpening focus on subjects like artificial intelligence and automation.

Addressing a post-Budget webinar, he also said that fulfilling aspirations of the people is the resolve of his Government and education, skill development, health, tourism, sports and culture are some of the sectors that act as a medium to fulfill them.

"Fulfilling the aspirations of the people is not just a subject, but it is the core objective and the resolution of this Government," he said at the webinar which was attended by stakeholders from different Government ministries, departments and experts from private sectors.

The PM said education, skill, health, tourism, sports, culture are fundamental sectors and major means of fulfilling these public aspirations. "In the country, continuous efforts are being made to link education with employment and enterprise. The new National Education Policy (NEP) provides the foundation for a curriculum that must stay aligned with market demands and the real-world economy, specifically in fields like AI, automation and the digital economy. We will have to accelerate the process of linking our education system with the real world economy," he said.

Discussing the nexus between education, employment, and enterprise, the prime minister highlighted the promotion of the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector.

Asserting that India is moving towards an innovation-driven economy, he called upon academic



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

He said the health sector has been strengthened, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Arogya Mandirs have led to greater penetration of health services in rural areas. Referring to the 'care economy', through which trained caregivers help senior citizens, Modi said as the senior citizen population increases, the demand for caregivers will also rise. "I request that new training models should be developed," he said.

The prime minister said India is working on a vision of preventive and holistic health today and in the past few years, the country's health infrastructure has been strengthened. He said new medical colleges have opened in hundreds of districts and through the Ayushman Bharat scheme, access to health services has been extended to villages via wellness centres.

Modi also talked about the "youth power" of the country and said it becomes "national power" only when it is healthy, disciplined, and brimming with self-confidence. "That is why, in the past few years, sports have been viewed as an important stream of national development," he said.

The Prime Minister said initiatives like Khelo India have infused a new energy into the country's sports ecosystem and sports infrastructure is being strengthened across the country.

On the potential of tourism and culture to drive employment, he noted that developing new destinations beyond traditional spots boosts a city's branding and overall development.

"Trained guides, hospitality skills, digital connectivity, and community participation are becoming the pillars of our tourism sector. Alongside these, cleanliness and sustainable practices are essential. Your suggestions on tourism and related areas will be of immense importance as we work together to strengthen India's position as a global destination," he said.

Nadda slams Opposition walkout during Jaishankar's statement



Union Minister JP Nadda

Mallikarjun Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Union Minister JP Nadda on Monday accused the Opposition of indulging in petty politics and creating anarchy after the Congress and other Opposition parties sought to disrupt Rajya Sabha proceedings and staged a walkout when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar made a suo motu statement on the situation in West Asia.

Soon after, the House met for the day, Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan read out the obituary references and allowed the laying of listed papers. He then asked Jaishankar to make the statement on West Asia. However, Congress President and Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge opposed this and demanded that there should be a full-fledged discussion on the situation in West Asia before such a statement is made by the minister.

After being permitted by the Chair, Kharge said the escalation in the West Asia conflict will affect the country's economic stability and endanger the security and livelihood of Indian citizens working there. "I request a short-duration discussion on emerging challenges for energy security and the fast-changing geopolitical situation in West Asia affecting India's energy security," Kharge said. The Chairman told Kharge he would come back to him, and again asked Jaishankar to continue with his statement. As the minister started making the state-

ment, MPs belonging to the Congress and other Opposition parties were on their feet and insisted that Kharge be allowed to complete his remarks.

They also raised slogans and demanded that a short discussion be allowed to which the minister should reply. Later, the entire Opposition staged a walkout from the House while the minister was making his statement. After Jaishankar's statement, Leader of the House JP Nadda termed the Opposition's behaviour as "irresponsible and hooliganism".

"It is with great regret that I must say that the opposition's behaviour is highly irresponsible and reprehensible. They have absolutely no interest in the country or in debates in Parliament. Their sole aim is to create chaos. In Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition is giving speeches on issues other than the main topic," Nadda said.

The minister reminded the House that Opposition parties staged walkouts during Government replies on important discussions like SIR, Viksit Bharat, Operation Sindoor, the Waqf Bill, as well as on the Union Budget.

"The Opposition's interest lies in advancing their petty politics, but under the respected leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this will never be possible. They will keep diminishing while sitting in the Opposition and eventually come to an end," Nadda said.

Raghav Chadha urges Govt to open more Udan Yatri Cafes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party MP Raghav Chadha on Monday urged the Government to ensure that more Udan Yatri Cafes are opened at airports across the country to provide affordable eating options to passengers.

Raising the issue in the special mentions in Rajya Sabha, he lauded the Udan Yatri Cafes, a Government-backed initiative providing affordable, high-quality snacks and beverages at major Indian airports.



Raghav Chadha

Chadha, however, said that the "ground reality" is that these cafes are only there at a few airports. "Usually, passengers eat in the waiting area before boarding, but the Udan Yatri cafes are before check-in and security, so passengers are not able to use them," he said.

"Due to limited counters, there are long queues, especially during peak traffic hours. Further, the limited menu options and capacity constraints restrict accessibility," he added.

Govt not allowing discussion on West Asia fearing it would expose PM: Rahul



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, left, with party MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during the second part of Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that the Government was not allowing discussion on the West Asia situation in Parliament, fearing it would expose how Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been "blackmailed" and is "compromised". Gandhi also alleged that the prime minister has "fled from Parliament" and will not be able to enter the House.

The leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha said all opposition parties want a discussion on West Asia as it involves the issues of rising fuel prices and economic devastation. "These are people's issues we consider important, and therefore we want to discuss that," Gandhi told reporters outside the Parliament House complex after the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day.

"There is a fight for a paradigm shift that is going on which will harm our economy big time. You have seen what has happened in stock markets. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi has signed the US deal. The country is going to suffer a severe blow," he said. "So,

what is the problem in discussing these issues?" he asked. Gandhi said the no-confidence motion moved against Speaker Om Birla can be taken up after a discussion on the West Asia situation.

"We are demanding that, and then we will discuss other issues. What do you think, the West Asia issue is not important? Fuel price, economic devastation, are they not important? These are people's issues we consider important, and therefore we want to discuss that," Gandhi said.

"They (the Government) don't want to discuss that, as other things will come up, questions will be raised about Narendra Modi having been blackmailed, is compromised, that's why he has fled from Parliament. Now he won't be able to enter the House," the former Congress president claimed. The Lok Sabha on Monday could not take up a resolution seeking the removal of Birla amid repeated adjournments, as opposition members demanded a debate on the West Asia situation. The Government and the Chair accused the opposition of holding the House proceedings "hostage" to its demands.

AI plane crash probe report will be out very soon: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu on Monday informed the Rajya Sabha that the AAIB probe into the fatal crash of the Air India aircraft in June last year is progressing at a very good pace, and the investigation report will be out "very soon".

Replying to a supplementary query during the Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Naidu said the ministry is doing its best to ensure flight operations and to bring back Indians stranded due to the West Asia conflict.

The minister, responding to various queries, told the House that the probe report



into the Air India plane crash would be out soon.

Air India's Boeing 787-8 plane operating the flight AI171 enroute to London-Gatwick crashed soon after take off from Ahmedabad on June 12, 2025, killing 260

people, including 241 persons onboard, and the crash is being probed by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

"Regarding the AI171 crash that happened in June last year, the investigation is

going at a very good pace, and all the resources that are required for AAIB, the primary agency which is looking into the investigation, the ministry is providing.

"And I would say that very soon, within the completion of the year, the report should be out," Naidu said.

On the West Asia situation and the safety of flight operations, Naidu said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) immediately engaged with the airlines and issued circulars.

"... You can say that they (DGCA officials) have had multiple meetings with them (airline executives) so that they can only operate when they ensure that 100 per cent safety is there when they are

operating to these airports in West Asia," the minister said.

Travel advisories have also been issued to passengers to ensure that there is no confusion, he added.

"From the Ministry side, I can tell the house that whatever best we can do in terms of having safe operations and making people travel from those destinations back to India, we can do with the help of the airlines. They (airlines) have also been very considerate," Naidu said.

While noting that airlines have been thoroughly looking at slots for operating the services amid the West Asia crisis, the minister said that around 90,000 people have been able to travel to India in the last week itself.

Troops of India, Seychelles to take part in joint exercise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A tri-service contingent of the Indian armed forces is taking part in a joint military exercise with troops of Seychelles from March 9-20, aiming to enhance synergy and interoperability between the two sides, the Defence Ministry said on Monday. Exercise Lamitiye will be conducted at the Seychelles Defence Academy.

"This edition marks a significant milestone with the participation of all three services of the Indian armed forces. The contingent comprises personnel from the Assam Regiment, and participation from the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force, including INS Trikand and a C-130 aircraft," the ministry said in



a statement. The Indian contingent have arrived in Seychelles to participate in the 11th edition of the joint exercise with Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF).

The word 'lamitiye' means 'friendship' in Creole language.

Exercise Lamitiye is a biennial training event and has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001.

"The exercise will strive to enhance synergy in the domains of sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environment and cooperation and

interoperability between both the sides during peacekeeping operations," it said. It will also build and promote bilateral military relations in addition to exchanging skills, experiences and good practices between both the militaries.

"Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in semi-urban environment, while exploiting and showcasing new generation equipment and technology," the statement said.

The 12-day exercise will include field training exercises, combat discussions, case studies, lectures and demonstrations, culminating with a validation exercise spread over two days.

GST Bachat Utsav ads: Govt spent ₹88.74 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Government has spent ₹88.74 crore on advertising for GST Bachat Utsav, under which tax rates on a host of goods were reduced effective September 22, 2025, Parliament was informed on Monday.

To a question on details of total expenditure on advertising GST Bachat Utsav, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said "the total expenditure done by Government on advertising for GST Bachat Utsav is ₹88.74 crore".



BJP leader and MoS Pankaj Chaudhary

to automobiles were reduced from September 22 — which was termed by the Government as GST bachat utsav (GST savings festival). Chaudhary in a written reply said the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) is monitoring the prices of important commodities, including packaged food items and medi-

publicity campaigns were undertaken to spread awareness about GST rate rationalisation through print media and social media," Chaudhary said.

Besides, Frequently Asked Questions were also prepared and uploaded on CBIC website to guide consumers to call National Consumer Helpline or register queries/complaints on the Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM) portal in case they have queries/complaints regarding not receiving benefits of GST rate changes.

"Based on inputs received from the field formations under CBIC, it is observed that these benefits have largely been passed on to the end-consumers post GST rate reduction," Chaudhary said.

Need to tackle political pollution: Ghanshyam Tiwari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

BJP Rajya Sabha member Ghanshyam Tiwari on Monday said there is a need to tackle 'political pollution' besides tackling environmental pollution, taking a dig at the Opposition parties.

Initiating a discussion on the working of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the Upper House, Tiwari listed a series of steps taken up by the NDA Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to highlight how it has stepped up efforts to tackle environmental pollution, intensify forest conservation work and increase the number of tigers in India. "We want to improve the environment, we want to improve air and water quality, but the unfortunate thing is that besides environmental pollution, there is political pollution..." he said.

The "environmental pollution that is happening politically" is happening repeatedly in the House, Tiwari lamented. "Political pollution also needs to be



BJP MP Ghanshyam Tiwari speaking in Rajya Sabha during the second part of Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi on Monday

tackled," he said, supporting Leader of the House JP Nadda, who had earlier in the day accused the Opposition of indulging in petty politics and creating anarchy.

Nadda made the remarks after the Congress and other Opposition parties sought to disrupt Rajya Sabha proceedings and staged a walkout when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar made a suo motu statement on the sit-

uation in West Asia. Noting that one of the biggest causes of environmental pollution is waste, Tiwari took a dig at the Opposition, saying that while the wastes that spread all over cities need to be managed first, the 'waste of corruption' and then the 'waste in politics' also need to be managed.

"Waste is increasing in every sector. We have to tackle this waste through proper management," he said, adding that Prime Minister Modi is very astute in 'managing waste'.

Participating in the discussion, Ayodhya Rami Reddy Alla (YSRCP) called for a "structural transformation and restructuring" of the ministry, saying it "operates in thematic silos — forest versus wildlife versus pollution versus climate change".

"The ministry was last conceptually restructured in 2014 when climate change was added to its name, but no comprehensive strategic review of its mandate, structure or capabilities has been conducted. This also needs to be completely re-looked," he said.



States Focus



BIHAR: BEGUSARAI CIVIL COURT GETS BOMB THREAT

The civil court in Bihar's Begusarai district received a bomb threat on Monday, police said. The threat created panic within and outside the court premises. "A bomb threat was received through an email by the court authorities in the morning," SP Maneesh said. "The sanitisation of the premises has been completed. Nothing has been found yet. We are still checking the court compound thoroughly," he said. Meanwhile, police conducted a safety drill at the civil court in Khagaria district.

"There is no bomb threat in the Khagaria civil court. But in light of threats elsewhere, we are conducting a safety drill and inspection here," a police officer said.



NISHANT KUMAR PLANS TOUR OF ALL 38 BIHAR DISTRICTS

A day after formally joining the JD(U), Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's son Nishant Kumar on Monday said he will embark on a statewide tour of all 38 districts of the State in the coming days. Speaking to reporters after garlanding the statue of his mother Manju Sinha, at a park named after her here, Nishant said he would soon decide on the proposed tour. "I am planning to tour across the 38 districts of Bihar and will soon take a decision on this front," he said. Nishant was inducted into the party on Sunday, days after Nitish Kumar filed his nomination papers for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections. Asked about Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav wishing him after his induction into the party, Nishant said, "That is a good thing. I accept that." Reacting to Nishant's entry into active politics, Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor told reporters in Bhabhua, "JD(U) is the party of his father, and if he is beginning his political career, he has our best wishes. The decision to enter politics is his personal choice." "Leaders in Bihar have prepared the throne of power for their own children, while for the children of ordinary people, they have created a system of illiteracy, unemployment, and migration," Kishor said.

Uttarakhand CM presents State Budget

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Dehradun

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, on Monday, presented the Budget of ₹1.11 lakh crore for the financial year 2026-27. The chief minister said that the State Government is committed to advancing the overall development of Uttarakhand through the GYAN model.

Under the Budget, the poor, youth, farmers (*annadata*), and women's empowerment have been identified as the four key pillars of development.

The Chief Minister stated that the Government's

objective is to connect every section of society with the mainstream of development and build a prosperous, empowered, and self-reliant Uttarakhand. Keeping this vision in mind, significant budgetary provisions have been made for various welfare schemes.

To improve the living standards of the economically weaker sections, allocations have been increased for several schemes. A provision of ₹1,300 crore has been made for the Annapurthi Scheme, ₹298.35 crore for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural), and ₹56.12 crore for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the Budget session of the State Assembly in Chamoli on Monday

In addition, ₹25 crore has been allocated for housing for economically weaker sec-

tioners, ₹42 crore for providing free travel facilities to designated categories of passen-

gers in Transport Corporation buses, and ₹43.03 crore as a subsidy on cooking gas.

To strengthen employment and self-employment opportunities for the youth of the State, several schemes have been reinforced. The Budget allocates ₹60 crore for the Chief Minister Self-Employment Scheme, ₹10 crore for the Migration Prevention Scheme, and ₹62.29 crore for the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Rural Skill Development Scheme.

Additionally, ₹155.38 crore has been provided as assistance to non-Government colleges, ₹10 crore for the honorarium of Shiksha Mitras, and ₹10 crore for the

Chief Minister Yuva Bhavishya Nirman Scheme.

To enhance the income of farmers and livestock owners, several initiatives have been included in the Budget. These include ₹39.90 crore for the Trout Promotion Scheme, ₹42 crore for Mission Apple, ₹32 crore to incentivize milk producers, and ₹42.50 crore for the Deendayal Upadhyay Cooperative Farmers Welfare Scheme.

Further allocations include ₹160.13 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, ₹12 crore for the Millet Mission, and ₹12.06 crore for the Farmers' Pension Scheme.

HC sets aside Vijaypur poll result, declares Rawat elected MLA

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In a major political development in Madhya Pradesh, the High Court on Monday set aside the result of the Vijaypur Assembly by-election and declared former state forest minister Ramniwas Rawat as the elected MLA. The court held that the election of Congress candidate Mukesh Malhotra was invalid due to incorrect and incomplete information provided in his nomination papers and election affidavit.

The verdict has brought a major shift in the political scenario of the Vijaypur constituency, as Mukesh Malhotra's membership of the Assembly now stands cancelled. The court observed that the inaccuracies and omissions in the nomination documents amounted to a violation of the Election Commission's rules and compromised the fairness and transparency of the electoral process.

The case stemmed from an election petition filed by Ramniwas Rawat nearly 11 months ago. In his petition, Rawat had challenged the validity of the by-election and alleged that the Congress candidate had concealed important details in his election affidavit, including information related to his criminal background and other



Former MP forest minister Ramniwas Rawat

mandatory disclosures required during the nomination process.

After hearing arguments from both parties and examining the records, the court completed the final hearing earlier and reserved its judgment. Delivering the verdict on Monday, the court concluded that the irregularities in the nomination papers made the election legally invalid and therefore declared Rawat as the rightful winner.

In the Vijaypur by-election, Mukesh Malhotra had earlier defeated Ramniwas Rawat, who was serving as the state's forest minister at that time. However, with the High Court's decision, Rawat has now been recognised as the elected representative of the constituency. The High Court has, however, stayed the implementation of its order for 15

days, allowing Mukesh Malhotra an opportunity to challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court. The order will come into effect only after the completion of this period if the apex court does not grant any interim relief.

Leader of the Opposition in Madhya Pradesh Assembly Umag Singh said, "We respect the decision of the court. The Congress party will consult legal experts and review all legal aspects of the judgment. After this process, we will challenge the decision by filing an appeal before the Supreme Court."

The people of Vijaypur had given their mandate to the Congress party, and the public continues to stand with us. We are hopeful that justice will be delivered by the Supreme Court, Singhasr added.

The ruling has triggered

strong political reactions in the region. Congress leaders have expressed disappointment over the judgment, while supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party have welcomed the decision.

Ramniwas Rawat described the judgment as a victory of justice and said that truth had ultimately prevailed. On the other hand, Mukesh Malhotra said he would approach the Supreme Court against the High Court's decision and expressed confidence that he would get relief.

The development has intensified political activity in the Vijaypur constituency, with the High Court's ruling drawing attention to the importance of transparency and accuracy in the electoral process and the legal consequences of discrepancies in nomination documents.

West Bengal submits report on President protocol breach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

The West Bengal Government has submitted a report to the Centre, explaining the circumstances surrounding the alleged breach of protocol during President Droupadi Murmu's recent visit to Siliguri, officials said on Monday.

State Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty sent the report to Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, along with supporting documents detailing the sequence of events related to the incident, they said.

"The report explaining the entire sequence of events has been sent to the Union home ministry along with relevant documents," a senior West Bengal Government officer said.

"We have placed on record the administrative decisions taken at every

stage," he said.

The report also explains why Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was not present at the programme, he said.

In addition, the State Government has informed the Centre about the reasons behind the decision to change the venue of the International Indigenous and Santhal Conference during Murmu's visit.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs had sought a report from the West Bengal Government, following allegations of a protocol breach during the President's visit to the State on March 7.

Highly placed sources had said on Sunday the communique sent to the West Bengal chief secretary sought response on the absence of the chief minister, the chief secretary and the DGP when the President arrived in the State, saying it is a serious violation of the 'Blue Book' rules.



Bengal Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty



Assam BJP's Jana Ashirwad Yatra led by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma reaches Nalbari

KAMAL TALUKDAR

PM to launch NDA's Assembly poll campaign in Kochi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kochi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the NDA's massive election campaign convention, to be attended by around 50,000 people, here on March 11, senior BJP leaders said on Monday.

Modi will participate in the convention to be held at the Jawaharlal International Stadium in Kaloor, they said.

Addressing reporters, BJP state general secretary S Suresh said the NDA has adopted the slogan "Let change begin, Viksit Kerala with Modi" for the campaign for the upcoming Assembly polls.

He said the Prime Minister is expected to reach the international

airport here by 11.30 am on Wednesday. From there, he will travel by helicopter to Marine Drive to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations of the Akhila Kerala Dheevara Sabha.

Later, he will attend the Union Government's official programmes to be held on a stage inside the Kaloor stadium and launch various Government initiatives there, Suresh said.

"From there, he is expected to arrive at the NDA convention between 1.00 pm and 1.30 pm. When he proceeds to attend the official function, a rousing reception will be accorded to the Prime Minister, and there will be a roadshow," the leader said.

The roadshow, to be attended by over 10,000



party workers, will begin from the entrance of the stadium and extend up to the venue of the Government function, he added.

Claiming that PM Modi's event in Kochi would be a game-changer in State politics, he said all prominent NDA leaders, including BJP State chief Rajeev

Chandrasekhar, Twenty20 chairman Sabu M Jacob, and BJS supremo Thushar Vellappally, among others, would be present at the venue. Senior BJP leader AN Radhakrishnan, who also attended the press conference, said this would be the first NDA convention after the alliance was expanded, marking a new step in its history.

Around 12 prominent parties are now part of the NDA, he added.

Replying to a question, Suresh criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging that his statements reflected acknowledgements of failures. He also said the prime minister's speech at the event may include special announcements related to the State.

Sharad Pawar, Athawale among 26 elected unopposed to RS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and Union minister Ramdas Athawale were among 26 candidates who were elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

After the last date of withdrawal of candidature, elections to 11 seats of the Upper House - five in Bihar, four in Odisha and two in Haryana - would be held on March 16.

Bihar's longest serving Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BJP president Nitin Nabin are likely to be elected to the Rajya Sabha in the biennial elections.

As many as 40 candidates had filed their papers for 37 seats that fell vacant in 10 states, leading to a keen contest for one seat each in Bihar, Odisha and Haryana.

Fourteen candidates now remain in the fray for 11 seats. BJP president Nabin on Monday appointed central observers for Rajya Sabha polls in Bihar, Haryana and Odisha.

Union minister Harsh Malhotra and Chhattisgarh deputy chief minister Vijay Sharma have been appointed as central observers for the polls in Bihar.

Gujarat deputy chief minister Harsh Sanghavi has been made observer for Haryana,

while Maharashtra minister Chandrasekhar Bawankule will be central observer for Odisha, a notification stated.

Bihar will witness a keen contest for one seat as RJD MP Amarendra Dhari Singh, a businessman turned politician, has been renominated. Other NDA candidates from Bihar are Union minister Ram



Union Minister JP Nadda, right front, speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the second part of Budget session of Parliament

PTI

Nath Thakur seeking a hat-trick, RLM president Upendra Kushwaha aiming for a second consecutive term, and BJP state general secretary Shivesh Kumar making his parliamentary debut.

Nitish Kumar announced his decision to enter the Rajya Sabha last week, bringing the curtains down on his 20-year tenure as the state's longest-serving CM.

The RJD has 25 MLAs along

with 10 others of the Mahagathbandhan, including the Congress and Left, and hopes to make up for the deficit of six votes with the help of the AIMIM and the BSP.

According to Bihar Vidhan Sabha secretary Khyati Singh, none of the six candidates withdrew their nomination papers, "necessitating voting for the first time in the state in more than a decade".

Odisha too shall have a contest for one seat, as two candidates each of ruling BJP - state unit president Manmohan Samal and sitting Rajya Sabha MP Sujeet Kumar and opposition BJD's Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dr Dattaswar Hota, are in the fray while Dilip Ray filed as an independent with BJP's support, sparking possibility of cross-voting.

Cheetah population crosses 50; MP CM hails it as conservation milestone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday said India's cheetah population crossing the 50 mark is a proud achievement for wildlife conservation and highlights the success of the country's cheetah reintroduction efforts.

Namibian cheetah Jwala on Monday gave birth to five cubs at MP's Kuno National Park (KNP), taking the country's total cheetah population to 53, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced.

The development comes days after cheetah Gamini gave birth to four cubs at KNP. "With this birth, the number of Indian-born thriving cubs has risen to 33, marking the 10th successful cheetah litter on Indian soil - another important milestone in India's cheetah conservation journey," Bhupender Yadav said in a post on X.

MP CM Mohan Yadav also hailed it as a proud moment for wildlife conservation. "Good News from Kuno National Park



Cheetah Jwala resting with her cubs after giving birth at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh

PTI

again... Cheetah Jwala has given birth to 5 cubs, marking another major milestone for Project Cheetah," he posted on X.

With this, India's cheetah population has crossed the half-century mark, reaching 53, he noted. It is a strong testament to the success of India's cheetah reintroduction efforts, the CM added.



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Delhi riots case: Sharjeel Imam gets 10-day interim bail



A Delhi court on Monday granted 10-day interim bail on several conditions to activist Sharjeel Imam, an accused in the 2020 Delhi riots case, to attend a family event. Imam has been asked not to meet anyone except his friends, relatives or family members, or visit places except those mentioned in his plea. He has also been prohibited from using social media.

Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai of Karkardooma Court was hearing the interim bail application filed by Imam, seeking relief for six weeks – to attend his brother's wedding scheduled this month and spend time with family during the Eid festival. "Considering the facts mentioned by the learned counsel and verified by the prosecution, the court deems it appropriate to grant the desired relief to the applicant (Imam)," the judge noted in his order, while allowing for the 10-day relief.

Imam sought the interim bail to attend his brother's wedding, scheduled on March 25. The court also directed Imam to furnish a personal bond of ₹50,000 along with two sureties in the like amount. Among other conditions, the judge asked Imam not to contact any of the witnesses or persons connected to the case in any manner. He was also directed to furnish his cellphone number to the investigating officer in the case.

Delhi HC upholds permanent injunction favouring Lacoste

A Division Bench of the Delhi High Court on Monday upheld a permanent injunction restraining Hong Kong-based Crocodile International from using a crocodile device mark found to infringe the trademark and copyright of French luxury sportswear brand Lacoste.



A Bench of Justices Hari Shankar and Om Prakash Shukla held that Lacoste had successfully established infringement of its registered crocodile trademark as well as copyright in the artwork of the logo.

The Court, therefore, affirmed the permanent injunction granted in favour of Lacoste, restraining Crocodile from reproducing or using the mark. Both companies were engaged in the legal battle for more than a decade.

Supreme Court bins five 'frivolous' PILs filed by lawyer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday trashed five "frivolous" Public Interest Litigations filed by a single lawyer, including one seeking a scientific study on whether onion and garlic contain "tamasic" (negative) energy, and asked if he drafted them in the middle of the night.



"Aadhi raat ko yeh sab petition draft karte ho kya? (Do you draft all these petitions in the middle of the night?)" Chief Justice Surya Kant reprimanded Advocate Sachin Gupta, terming the PILs "vague, frivolous and baseless". The bench, also comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, pulled up the lawyer for filing a series of PILs.

One of the petitions sought directions to constitute a committee to research what constitutes "tamasic" or negative content in onion and garlic. The petition referred to dietary practices of the Jain community, which traditionally avoids onion, garlic and root vegetables, considering them "tamasic" food. "Why do you want to hurt

the sentiments of the Jain community?" the CJ asked Gupta, who appeared in person. The petitioner replied, saying that it is a common issue and claimed that a divorce allegedly took place in Gujarat over the use of onions in food.

Expressing strong displeasure, the CJ said, "Next time you come up with this kind of frivolous petition, you will see what we will do."

The bench also dismissed four other PILs filed by Gupta: one sought directions to regulate allegedly harmful content in alcohol and tobacco products, another sought directions to ensure mandatory registration of properties, while yet another sought guidelines on the declaration of classical languages.



SC nod to extension for tribunal members

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday approved a proposal of the Centre extending the term of chairpersons and members of various tribunals in the country and are due to retire soon, till September 8.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi approved the proposal after Attorney General R Venkataramani said that the Union Government was mulling bringing in a new tribunal bill related to their functioning and appointments of their members either in the ongoing Budget session or the Monsoon session of Parliament.

He submitted that currently, deliberations are going on at various levels of the Government. To avoid any confusion or problem in the functioning of tribunals, it has been decided to give an extension of tenure to all members who are set to retire in the interregnum till September 8 of this year. "The Government is working on a proposal. A bill is being contemplated. We don't want any interruption in the meantime."

"Everybody who was appointed under the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021 will continue. By next September, either this Budget session or the Monsoon session, a new law is likely to be enacted," the



AG said, adding that about 21 members are due to retire in the meantime. In November 2025, the top court had struck down the provisions of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 on appointment and tenure of tribunal members, for being violative of its earlier judgments on the issue.

Venkataramani said that the new bill will be in accordance with last year's verdict and smoothen the functioning and appointments of members in various tribunals.

CJ Kant once again flagged the lack of accountability of tribunals and said they should be responsible to some authority.

"They are not accountable to the Government and they are not accountable to us. Who is going to evaluate their integrity and performance? Instead of granting extension alone by a sweeping order, we have to consider their accountability. To whom are they accountable? There should be some mechanism. If their work is not upto the mark, why should their tenure be at all extended?" the CJ said.

Senior advocate Sanjay Jain, appearing for the CAT Bar Association, said that the Madras Bar Association judgment of last year mandated a minimum tenure of five years for the members and around

31 members are set to superannuate soon. He said that another concern is that administrative members are allowed to act as acting chairperson of the tribunal when the judicial members superannuate.

CJ Kant said this concern was shared by the bench earlier in another matter related to the functioning of tribunals.

"There should be a comprehensive law which fixes accountability of members of tribunals. You can't keep tribunals under Government control, since there will be criticism. You can't keep them under judicial control also. Then where?" CJ said. Jain submitted that the issue of whether administrative members can at all preside over the bench was also arising in some cases before the court.

The CJ said, "Why not every bench of the tribunal, when they reserve the judgment, confidentially inform the president or the chairperson that this matter has been reserved and judgment has been entrusted to so and so members. Somebody should know who is going to write the judgment and how much time will be taken."

The top court said it will post the matter of hearing in May to review the progress.

On February 26, expressing serious displeasure over the functioning of tribunals in the country, the top

court said they have become a "liability" and "mess" without any "accountability" and flagged that technical members of a financial tribunal were even "outsourcing writing of judgement".

It had been observed that tribunals are "creations of the Government" and are functioning like "no-man's land" without any accountability to anyone.

The top court was hearing a plea for the extension of tenure of tribunal members, including chairpersons, in the wake of last year's verdict which struck down the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021.

Asking the Attorney General to make some arrangement for urgent filling of vacancies, the bench had flagged that according to the present regime, a technical member of the TDSAT tribunal becomes an acting chairperson of the quasi-judicial body upon superannuation of the incumbent chairperson.

The top court asked the AG to ensure that there are no functional crises in such important tribunals as it frowned upon the regime where a technical member will occupy the post of chairperson.

In November 2025, the top court had struck down the provisions of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 on appointment and tenure of tribunal members, for being violative of its earlier judgments on the issue.

Journalist murder case: Prosecution was unable to prove case against Gurmeet Ram Rahim, says HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chandigarh

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has observed that the prosecution was not able to prove its case against Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in the 2002 murder of a journalist, and questioned the CBI probe.

The court on Saturday acquitted Ram Rahim Singh of the charge of murdering journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati.

In a 113-page judgement which came out on Monday, the court said no reliance could be placed upon a witness who "kept on tossing from one side to the other like a ping pong ball."

A division bench headed by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu acquitted the 58-year-old Dera chief more than seven years after he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The bench, however, upheld the conviction of three others in the case.

"In the considered opinion of this court, the prosecution was not able to prove its case against A1 (Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh) beyond reasonable doubt, whereas it was able to do so in the case of A2 to A4 (three other accused)."

"It is a settled principle of law that where two possibilities, one of commission of crime and the other of innocence, are reasonably possible, the accused is entitled to the benefit of doubt," said the court.

The High Court bench also expressed concern over the manner in which the CBI handled the testimony of the prosecution's key witness, Khatta Singh.

"In the considered opinion of this court, absolutely no reliance can be placed on a witness like Khatta Singh. He chose to remain silent for a number of years and then kept on tossing from one side to the other like a ping pong



ball," it said. "Even on December 26, 2006, when he opened up for the first time, he did not implicate A1 in the present case and talked only about Ranjit Singh murder case. If he was under threat, it is not understood as to why he was under threat only in this case and not in Ranjit Singh case in which he stated that a conspiracy had been hatched by A1," the court said, dismissing Khatta Singh's deposition that he was under threat from Ram Rahim.

The court said it appeared that Khatta Singh was coerced by the CBI into making a statement, as the probe agency was under pressure to conclude the investigation.

In May 2024, in another case, the same High Court acquitted Ram Rahim and four others in the 2002 murder of the sect's former manager, Ranjit Singh, citing "tainted and sketchy" investigations into the matter.

Ram Rahim was earlier sentenced by

a special CBI court to a life term in that case.

The Dera chief is currently lodged in Rohtak's Sunaria jail. Since 2017, he has been serving a 20-year jail term for raping two of his disciples.

In January 2019, Ram Rahim and three others were convicted by a special CBI court in Panchkula for the murder of a scribe, Ram Chander Chhatrapati, in Haryana's Sirsa.

Chhatrapati was shot outside his house in October 2002 after his newspaper 'Poora Sach' published an anonymous letter narrating sexual exploitation of women followers at the Dera headquarters in Sirsa.

The journalist succumbed to injuries, and Ram Rahim was booked in a case as a conspirator.

The case was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2006. Ram Rahim challenged the conviction before the High Court.

Do not file PILs for media publicity, CJI advises young lawyers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

While dismissing a plea seeking directions to prevent deaths caused by alleged civic negligence, the Supreme Court on Monday cautioned young advocates from filing PILs merely to seek media publicity. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi advised a young lawyer to focus on

wide averments, seeking directions which are unmanageable. No reason to entertain the PIL."

At the outset, while going through the PIL which sought directions to curb incidents of foreseeable deaths caused by failures in maintaining public infrastructure, the bench asked the petitioner's counsel why a complaint had not been filed against the concerned authorities in the



profession in the initial years of practice and learn law and drafting skills.

"So you better concentrate on the profession, this coming in the National Media – that should be stopped for those who want to be serious in the profession, and I am very conservative and very strong in these things. Instead of working in offices, learning law, you are drafting baseless petitions, only because you will come on social media," the CJ remarked.

The top court dismissed the plea saying that it was "vague, evasive and with

specific instance instead of approaching the court through a PIL.

The counsel replied that the issue had become a "national issue" and was not confined to a single incident.

The Chief Justice questioned the counsel as to how long she had been in legal practice.

To which the counsel replied that she had been practising for four years.

The CJ then advised young lawyers to spend time learning the profession under seniors instead of filing petitions merely for publicity.

SC allows Unnao rape survivor to be party in CBI plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday permitted Unnao rape survivor to be a party in the petition filed by the CBI challenging suspension of life imprisonment of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, saying that the victim has a right to be heard in the proceedings. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi permitted the survivor to be made a party to the case, saying that victims are entitled to participate in proceedings affecting their interests, in line with the apex court's earlier judgement in the Lakhimpur Khari



Kuldeep Singh Sengar

case. "We are of the view that the victim has the right to be heard," the CJ said and granted two weeks to file her affidavit against the suspension of life sentence of the convict. The bench, however, rejected an intervention application filed by a relative of the rape survivor alleging threat to his life and liberty. The CJ said he can pursue an independent remedy instead of intervening in the CBI's petition and move the High Court for protection. The bench then disposed of his application.

The bench did not take up the CBI's petition against the suspension of sentence as Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the probe

agency, was unavailable on Monday. Senior advocate N Hariharan, representing Sengar, requested that the matter be listed for hearing at the earliest, arguing that the liberty granted to his client by the Delhi High Court had been curtailed. The CJ said a date for the hearing would be fixed soon.

On December 29 last year, the top court stayed the Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case and said he shall not be released from custody. The bench, while hearing the CBI's plea challenging the High Court order, had said that substantial questions of law have arisen in the matter that require consideration.

SC to hear plea challenging FIR in bar council polls issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court will on Tuesday hear a plea challenging registration of an FIR against the apex court-appointed 'High-Powered Election Supervisory Committee' set up to oversee state bar council elections.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was on Monday told by senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra, who also heads the Bar Council of India, that a lawyer has lodged an FIR against the panel.

Mishra said, "This is very urgent. An FIR has been lodged against the high powered committee overseeing the bar council elections by a lawyer. This is serious. It's just



because his appeal was not considered. This is with regard to Maharashtra and Goa State bar

council elections." "We will list it on Tuesday," the CJ said. The top court had constituted the panel, headed

by former apex court judge Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, to oversee the state bar council elections. The committee also comprises Justice Ravi Shankar Jha (former chief justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court), and senior advocate V Giri.

On February 18, the top court directed its registry to not list any petition relating to state bar council elections and asked aggrieved parties to approach the apex court-appointed committee with their grievances.

Aiming to ensure timely, transparent and fair elections, the top court had earlier ordered that all state bar council elections across India be conducted under the supervision of retired High Court judges with a final deadline of January 31, 2026.

SC asks HCs to fix timelines for concluding hearing in acid attack cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday asked all the High Courts to fix timelines for trial courts to ensure expeditious conclusion of acid attack cases in the country.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of the status reports filed by several High Courts on pendency and the present status of acid attack cases, and said a more proactive approach was needed. The CJ asked the High Courts to entrust the task of monitoring the trials in acid attack cases to the High Court judges who are the administrative in-charge of the trial courts.

The top court granted last opportunity to all the states to follow its directions issued from time to time on a PIL filed by Haryana-based Shaheen Malik, who herself is an acid attack survivor.

The CJ asked the States to urgently deal with the aspect of payment of adequate compensation to the victims of acid attacks.



Editor's TAKE

T20 World Cup: Men in Blue Do India Proud

India's emphatic triumph in the T20 World Cup shows the country's enduring passion for cricket and the remarkable depth of talent within its ranks

Team India has done it once again and in style. The T20 World Cup trophy is safely at home as the 'men in blue' beat New Zealand in the finals by 96 runs to lift the trophy. India were always the favourite, but as they say, cricket is the game of glorious uncertainties; nothing could be said till the last over is bowled. India also broke the jinx that no country lifts it twice in a row. India's spectacular triumph in the T20 World Cup will be remembered for some memorable performances.

Jasprit Bumrah, the architect of the final victory, got the well-deserved 'Man of the Match' award while Sanju Samson earned the 'Player of the Tournament' (Man of the Series) title. He scored 321 runs in five innings at an average of 80.25 and a strike rate of 199.37, including key knocks that helped India win the tough matches. Cricket fans were elated and celebrated it with fireworks and danced on the streets. Cricket in India is not just a sport, it is a religion, and world cup its biggest festival. Indians across the country are united when it comes to cheering for the country, a shared emotion that brings together people across regions, languages and backgrounds. This victory also reaffirmed India's dominating stature in world cricket in the T20 format, thanks to the extraordinary talent and determination that define its players.

The Indian team's campaign throughout the tournament was marked by consistency, discipline and remarkable composure under pressure. The final showcased the best of Indian cricket-aggressive batting, sharp fielding and disciplined bowling. Firebrand batting at the top, coupled with the middle order calmness, made a formidable lineup. On the bowling front, India's pace and spin attack combined effectively to keep the opposition under constant pressure. Beyond the joy of lifting the trophy, the victory carries a deeper significance for India's youth. Sporting success is inspiring and fills one with new vigor and adds to positivity. When young people watch their sporting heroes triumph on the global stage, they are reminded of the possibilities that dedication and hard work can create.

Though it is not the time to mention the downsides, all wins must be followed by introspection. That keeps the momentum going and feet on the ground. Cricket is considered to be a gentleman's game, and it should stay that way. The traditional handshake between teams is a long-standing tradition of mutual respect for the opponent in cricket. Any gesture that smacks of aversion hurts the game. Sport at its best is about character. Winning hearts is as important as winning a trophy. Victory should be celebrated with humility, and defeat should be accepted with grace. That is what makes a cricket a game of gentlemen that people want to see and cherish. Ultimately, India's T20 World Cup victory stands as a testament to skill, resilience and teamwork. Yet its lasting lesson may lie beyond the scoreboard. True greatness in sport is measured not only by trophies but also by the values it upholds-fair play, respect and sportsmanship. If this triumph inspires young Indians not only to chase victory but also to embrace these ideals, then the achievement will resonate far beyond the cricket field.

Nepal: A Strategic Opportunity for India

The dramatic rise of the reformist Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), led by 35-year-old Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah, marks a decisive break from the decades-long dominance of Nepal's traditional political parties



SHISHIR PRIYADARSHI

Nepal's 2026 parliamentary elections have produced one of the most dramatic political upheavals in the country's democratic history. The reformist Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), led by the 35-year-old Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah, has surged past Nepal's traditional political establishment and emerged as the central force in the country's new parliament.

The result represents far more than a routine change of government. It reflects a generational political revolt driven by young voters frustrated with corruption, stagnation, and decades of unstable coalition politics. The election follows the youth-led protests of 2025 that forced the resignation of the previous government and exposed deep dissatisfaction with Nepal's political elite. For India, Nepal's political upheaval raises a critical strategic question: is this a moment of uncertainty - or a rare opportunity? The answer may depend less on events in Kathmandu than on how New Delhi chooses to respond.

A generational revolt against the old order

The scale of the political shift in Nepal is striking. Established parties that dominated the country's politics for decades, including the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), have suffered major setbacks.

Perhaps the most symbolic moment of the election was Balendra Shah's defeat of former Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, a towering figure of Nepal's political establishment. The result captures a broader mood among voters: a rejection of entrenched elites and a demand for a new political culture centred on accountability and governance. The rise of leaders like Shah reflects the growing influence of urban voters, diaspora networks, and digitally connected youth. Campaigns were organised through social media and grassroots mobilisation rather than traditional party machinery.

For India, this shift carries an important implication. New Delhi has historically relied on long-standing relationships with established political leaders in Nepal. Those networks may now matter far less in shaping Kathmandu's political direction.

Why Nepal matters strategically for India

Nepal occupies a uniquely important place in



IF INDIA RESPONDS WITH STRATEGIC IMAGINATION AND HUMILITY, NEPAL'S POLITICAL TRANSITION COULD MARK THE BEGINNING OF A STRONGER AND MORE MODERN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

India's foreign policy landscape. The two countries share an open border stretching nearly 1,800 kilometres, extensive cultural and religious ties, and deeply integrated economies. Millions of Nepali citizens live and work in India, and bilateral trade forms a central pillar of Nepal's economy.

At the same time, Nepal sits at the heart of a sensitive geopolitical triangle between India and China. Over the past decade, Beijing has steadily expanded its presence in Nepal through infrastructure investments and connectivity initiatives.

Nepali governments have traditionally sought to balance relations with both neighbours, a strategy that is likely to continue under any leadership. However, the nature of that balance can vary significantly depending on political circumstances in Kathmandu. The emergence of a new political leadership therefore comes at a particularly important moment for India's neighbourhood diplomacy.

A new leadership focused on governance

One of the most striking features of Nepal's new political wave is its pragmatic orientation. Unlike earlier political movements shaped by ideological rivalries, the current generation of leaders appears focused primarily on governance reform and economic development. Their legitimacy rests on delivering tangible improvements in everyday life-better infrastructure, jobs, and economic opportunity.

This focus aligns closely with areas where India can play a decisive role. India remains

Nepal's largest trading partner and its principal transit route to global markets. Cross-border energy trade, particularly hydropower exports from Nepal to India, holds enormous potential for both economies. Connectivity projects-from rail links to integrated check posts-could further deepen economic integration. If the new government prioritizes development, India is uniquely positioned to become its most natural partner.

The opportunity for a reset

Paradoxically, Nepal's political upheaval may offer India an opportunity to reset its engagement with Kathmandu. In recent years, bilateral relations have occasionally been strained by political controversies, border disputes, and lingering suspicions within Nepal about Indian influence.

A new political leadership creates space to move beyond those tensions. Rather than framing the relationship primarily through a geopolitical lens, India could emphasise practical cooperation in areas that directly benefit Nepal's citizens: infrastructure, energy, tourism, digital connectivity, and cross-border trade. Such an approach would resonate with the priorities of Nepal's younger political generation.

India's next move matters

For India, the challenge is not to shape Nepal's political choices but to adapt to them.

Nepal's democracy is entering a new phase driven by younger voters and new political actors. Attempts to influence domestic politics would likely provoke backlash and undermine goodwill. Instead, India's engagement should be guided by patience, respect for Nepal's sovereignty, and a clear focus on mutually beneficial economic cooperation. The most effective strategy for India is simple: become the partner that helps Nepal succeed. For policymakers in New Delhi, the lesson from Nepal's election is straightforward.

A new political generation has emerged in Kathmandu-one that is less tied to the political networks of the past and more focused on governance, development, and opportunity. India cannot assume that historical ties alone will sustain the relationship. This moment calls for early engagement, faster delivery of economic projects, and a diplomatic tone that emphasises partnership rather than influence.

If India responds with strategic imagination and humility, Nepal's political transition could mark the beginning of a stronger and more modern partnership between the two countries. The message from Kathmandu is clear: Nepal's politics are changing. India must ensure its approach changes with them.



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PICTALK



Cricket fans celebrate after India defeated New Zealand to win the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final near India Gate, in New Delhi

PHOTO: PTI

The next chapter of women leadership in India



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

2ND OPINION

Every year, the arrival of International Women's Day brings with it a wave of admiration, gratitude, and well-deserved recognition for women across sectors. Offices celebrate their women employees, social media is filled with inspiring tributes, and conversations around empowerment dominate public discourse. Yet, once the day passes, a deeper question quietly lingers: how far have we truly travelled from celebration to representation?

India has made undeniable progress over the past few decades. Women today are visible in boardrooms, startups, scientific research, politics, and the armed forces. They are entrepreneurs, innovators, and decision-makers shaping the country's economic and social future. But despite these strides, leadership spaces across institutions still reflect a noticeable imbalance.

Representation is not simply about numbers; it is about influence. True empowerment begins when women are not just participants in systems but architects of them. When women occupy positions where policies are drafted, strategies are defined, and organisations are led, their perspectives reshape priorities in meaningful ways.

Women leaders often bring a unique blend of emotional intelligence, resilience, and collaborative thinking to leadership roles. These qualities are not merely personality traits; they are leadership strengths in an increasingly complex world. In environments marked by rapid change and uncertainty, the ability to build trust, foster inclusive teams, and navigate human dynamics has become as valuable as technical expertise.

However, the journey toward equal representation is not without its challenges. Structural barriers, unconscious biases, and societal expectations continue to influence professional trajectories. Many talented women step away from leadership pipelines due to the difficulty of balancing professional aspirations with caregiving responsibilities. Others find themselves navigating workplaces where mentorship and sponsorship opportunities remain limited.

Addressing these challenges requires a shift in mindset as much as policy. Organisations must move beyond symbolic gestures toward systemic change. Flexible work environments, equitable hiring practices, and leadership development programmes tailored

for women can create pathways that allow talent to flourish. Equally important is the role of visibility. When young professionals see women leading organisations, managing large teams, or shaping national conversations, it expands their imagination of what is possible. Representation becomes inspiration.

India stands at an interesting crossroads. The country is home to one of the youngest workforces in the world and an increasingly dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If this energy is channelled through inclusive leadership structures, the benefits could be transformative. Companies with diverse leadership teams often demonstrate stronger innovation, better decision-making, and improved long-term performance.

The next chapter of women's empowerment in India therefore lies not in annual celebrations but in sustained representation. It lies in creating environments where leadership is defined by capability rather than convention. As the conversations sparked by Women's Day fade into routine workdays, perhaps the real measure of progress is simple: when women's leadership becomes so natural, so visible, and so integral that it no longer requires a special day to acknowledge it. That is when celebration will truly evolve into representation.



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INDIA'S TRIUMPH AT T20 SIGNALS FEARLESS CRICKET

Apropos to "Champions, yet again," published on 9 March, I wish to respond to Team India's remarkable achievement in world cricket. India has become the first side to win consecutive ICC T20 World Cups, including a triumphant campaign at home. The victory ended several lingering jinxes: it marked India's first T20 World Cup win against New Zealand and their first ICC white-ball tournament triumph in Ahmedabad.

The team displayed composure under pressure and ruthless intent when it mattered most. The earlier defeat against South Africa proved a turning point, sharpening their resolve and clarity of purpose. Two totals above 250 in knockout matches reflected the fearless approach of the batting unit. The management persisted

with Abhishek Sharma despite criticism, and he responded magnificently, racing to a breathtaking fifty from eighteen balls. Axar's sharp catches, Bumrah's brilliance, Samson's elegance, Ishan's attacking strokes, and Dube's valuable cameo showed collective strength.

Every player contributed meaningfully throughout the tournament. Perhaps this victory will finally soothe the lingering pain of the 2023 ODI World Cup final. Samson and Kishan also remind us that perseverance during difficult phases often precedes unexpected redemption and hope. At the end of the day it is a sport and someone is bound to lose but that is not the end of it. One must strive harder and win, as India did.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Banking reality beyond falling NPA

The report, "Large defaulters leave PSU banks chasing Rs 29 lakh crore" (March 9, 2026), provides an important reality check on the narrative of a significantly "cleaned-up" banking sector. While the Union Government and the Reserve Bank of India have highlighted that gross NPAs of scheduled commercial banks declined to about 2.15 per cent of total advances by September 2025, the staggering 29 lakh crore linked to large defaulters under litigation indicates that stress in corporate lending has not entirely disappeared. NPAs are defined by repayment delays of over ninety days and are often addressed through restructuring, technical write-offs, or proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. However, large defaulters - borrowers with dues exceeding 1 crore facing civil recovery proceedings - represent a high-value and high-risk segment where recovery remains slow and uncertain. The concentration of such dues in a few large banks, particularly after mergers that absorbed legacy stressed assets, underlines the scale of inherited risk within public sector banks. Equally worrying are the transparency gaps surrounding borrower-level NPA data. Restoring public confidence requires stronger transparency, stricter credit discipline, and demonstrably effective recovery from large borrowers.

VIDYASAGAR REDDY KETHI | TELANGANA

More women should be in the judiciary

Apropos "Consider female lawyers of SC for judgeship: CJI" (The Pioneer, March 9), the issue of women's representation in the Indian judiciary deserves urgent attention. The representation of women judges remains strikingly low even as the International Day for Women Judges is observed on March 10. In High Courts, women constitute barely 14.5 per cent of the total strength. To be precise, there are only 116 women judges out of a working strength of 781. Although High Courts such as Punjab and Haryana, Madras, and Bombay have comparatively better representation, the overall picture remains disappointing. In the Supreme Court, Justice B.V. Nagarathna is currently the only woman among the thirty-three judges. Notably, no woman has been appointed to the apex court since 2021.

Justice Nagarathna has consistently advocated greater representation of women in both the entry-level judiciary and higher courts. As Chief Justice Surya Kant rightly observed, High Court collegiums should identify more competent women lawyers for elevation to the Bench. Women judges bring diverse perspectives, sensitivity to social issues, and a strong commitment to dialogue and justice. Both the Government and the judiciary must therefore ensure better representation of women across all levels of the judicial system.

GANPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Global tensions may push India fuel prices

Despite assurances from the Government, petrol and diesel prices in India may rise in the near future following the sharp surge in global crude oil prices triggered by escalating tensions in the Middle East. For the moment, the Government is expected to ask state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) to absorb the impact of higher international prices. This approach may temporarily keep retail fuel prices stable, though it is likely to reduce the profit margins of these companies.

The rally in crude prices has been driven by intensifying hostilities in the Middle East and growing concerns about possible disruptions to key supply routes. Of particular importance is the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital energy shipping corridors through which a large share of global oil supplies passes. Historically, although domestic fuel prices usually move in line with international crude trends, the Government has sometimes asked oil companies to absorb price fluctuations during periods of exceptional volatility. In recent years, the country has increased purchases from suppliers outside the Strait of Hormuz route. Meanwhile, United States President Donald Trump defended the rise in oil prices, describing it as a temporary cost linked to efforts aimed at countering Iran's nuclear ambitions.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI



Communication ethics in an age of conflict

Communication can inflame tensions and amplify fear. The emerging communication order around war, therefore, demands more than technological sophistication. It requires moral imagination. The ability to broadcast instantly must be matched by the wisdom to decide what should be broadcast, and how it should be presented.

FIRST Column



CHAITANYA K PRASAD



In today's media environment, wars rarely remain confined to battlefields. They unfold just as vividly on television screens, digital platforms, and social media timelines. Every strike, every explosion, every movement of troops travels across the world within seconds. Technology has made it possible for audiences thousands of miles away to witness conflict almost as it happens. Yet this unprecedented access has created a strange paradox: the more we see of war, the less we often understand it.

What we are witnessing is the emergence of a new communication order around conflict. Information moves at extraordinary speed, but reflection rarely keeps pace with it. Images circulate faster than context. Algorithms amplify the most dramatic footage, and broadcasters compete for attention in an increasingly crowded media landscape. In such a setting, communication itself becomes part of the battlefield. While military operations determine the physical outcomes of war, the information environment shapes how societies interpret those events, how they emotionally respond to them, and sometimes even how they participate in them.

War reporting has not always looked like this. For most of the twentieth century, there was a distance between the battlefield and the newsroom. Journalists filed reports after verifying what had happened, often hours or even days later. That delay, though frustrating at times, created space for editorial judgment and context. Stories were written with the benefit of reflection rather than immediate reaction. Today, that distance has almost disappeared. Twenty-four-hour news cycles and real-time satellite feeds have transformed war into something that resembles a continuous broadcast event. The shift is subtle but important: we are no longer only reporting war, we are broadcasting it.

Television studios increasingly resemble control rooms for a global spectacle. Large digital screens display animated maps, missile trajectories, and radar simulations. Footage of explosions is replayed repeatedly from multiple angles. Anchors narrate unfolding events with urgency and drama. Graphics and sound design sometimes mirror the visual lan-

JOURNALISM MUST RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO TURN CONFLICT INTO SPECTACLE. ITS TASK IS NOT TO AMPLIFY THE NOISE OF WAR, BUT TO ILLUMINATE ITS MEANING.

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guage of cinema or sports broadcasting. In this environment, visual intensity often replaces informational depth. The purpose quietly shifts from explaining events to capturing attention. Ratings, viewership metrics, and digital engagement begin to shape editorial decisions. War becomes a form of content.

This raises an uncomfortable but necessary question: when conflict is presented as spectacle, does the audience gradually become a spectator rather than an informed citizen?

Images, of course, have always played an important role in communication. Powerful visuals can humanise distant suffering and generate empathy across borders. They can make the consequences of war visible in ways that statistics never could. But images also have the power to distort reality when they are presented without context.

In contemporary conflict coverage, viewers often encounter an endless loop of explosions, missile launches, and night-vision footage. Cameras gravitate toward the most dramatic scenes, fireballs lighting up the sky, buildings collapsing under airstrikes, or tracer rounds cutting through darkness. What receives far less attention are the quieter and slower dimensions of war: displaced families, fragile diplomatic negotiations, economic disruptions, or the long and complicated process of rebuilding societies after violence.

The result is a kind of visual hierarchy of

war. The most spectacular moment dominates the narrative, while the structural realities that explain conflict remain largely invisible. Audiences are exposed to bursts of violence but rarely to the deeper political, historical, and economic contexts that led to the conflict in the first place.

Over time, this can produce something even more troubling: normalisation. When viewers encounter dramatic imagery of violence day after day, war can begin to resemble a form of high-stakes entertainment rather than what it truly is, a catastrophic breakdown of political order.

A newer challenge is now intensifying this dynamic: the growing use of artificial intelligence in visualising conflict. Some broadcasters have begun using AI-generated imagery or digital simulations to reconstruct how an attack might have unfolded, how missiles may have travelled, or how military planners might have executed a particular operation. These visualisations are often presented as explanatory tools, but they occupy a complicated space between journalism and dramatisation. Even when clearly labelled as simulations, the realism of AI-generated imagery can blur the boundary between fact and speculation. For many viewers, the difference between a verified image and a reconstructed scene may not always be obvious.

More importantly, such simulations often

prioritise visual drama over analytical clarity. Stylised animations of military operations risk turning strategic violence into something resembling a cinematic sequence. What is presented as explanation can easily slip into oversimplification, or worse, a kind of theatrical staging of conflict. In an era already struggling with misinformation and manipulated media, the casual use of such imagery deserves far more scrutiny than it currently receives.

At its core, the issue is not technological but ethical. Media institutions across the world have developed elaborate codes of conduct for elections, political reporting, and even public health crises. Yet when it comes to the communication of war, reflection often gives way to speed.

Several uncomfortable questions, therefore, remain insufficiently discussed. Should broadcasters repeatedly display the mechanics of weapons used in attacks? Does visualising military capabilities inadvertently glorify violence or reveal sensitive information? How much speculative reconstruction should be permitted in news coverage? And perhaps most importantly, at what point does reporting cross the line into dramatisation?

These are not minor editorial dilemmas. They point to a deeper problem within the global communication environment: communication itself rarely undergoes introspection during conflict. The urgency of reporting tends to overshadow the responsibility of representation.

Perhaps it is time to think about a clearer ethical boundary. In sports, certain violations are so serious that they trigger an immediate red card. It is a simple but powerful signal that a line has been crossed. Everyone understands the rule, and everyone understands the consequence.

Conflict communication might benefit from something similar, a conceptual "red card" for media ethics. Such a framework would not exist to censor reporting but to establish limits that protect the integrity of journalism. Certain practices could clearly fall into this category: presenting speculative military scenarios as factual visuals, repeatedly looping violent imagery purely for dramatic effect, revealing tactical details that may escalate tensions, using AI-generated visuals without clear disclosure, or framing conflict in ways that trivialise human suffering. The goal would not be to silence journalism but to recalibrate it. Because the media ecosystem today is

global, such questions cannot be addressed by individual broadcasters alone. A broader conversation is needed among international journalism bodies, academic institutions, and organisations concerned with information ethics. Together, they could help articulate a set of shared principles for responsible conflict communication.

Such principles might begin with a simple but important idea: context should always come before spectacle. Historical background, diplomatic developments, and humanitarian consequences should accompany battlefield imagery. Audiences deserve to understand not just what is happening, but why it is happening.

Transparency should also guide the use of digital reconstructions and AI simulations. If such visuals are used, they must be clearly labelled and treated as illustrations rather than evidence. At the same time, the human cost of war must be represented with the same prominence as military developments. Civilian suffering, displacement, and long-term societal damage are not side stories; they are central to the reality of conflict. Editors should also be mindful of how visual repetition shapes perception. Endless loops of violent imagery may attract attention, but they can also desensitise audiences and distort understanding. And in the relentless race to break news first, verification must never become secondary to speed.

Ultimately, the question is not whether wars will continue to be reported in real time. That is inevitable. The more important question is how societies choose to communicate war.

Media institutions hold immense power in shaping public perception. Their narratives influence how people interpret global events, how governments respond to crises, and how societies emotionally process conflict. Communication can inflame tensions and amplify fear, but it can also foster understanding and restraint.

The emerging communication order around war therefore, demands more than technological sophistication. It requires moral imagination. The ability to broadcast instantly must be matched by the wisdom to decide what should be broadcast, and how it should be presented.

In a world where war can be watched live from living rooms across continents, communication carries an enormous responsibility. Journalism must resist the temptation to turn conflict into spectacle. Its task is not to amplify the noise of war, but to illuminate its meaning.

Agriculture: From traditional farming to global opportunities



HIMANSHU VERMA

Agriculture has been the backbone of human civilisation since the earliest settlements. From ancient subsistence farming to modern precision agriculture, the sector has continuously evolved to meet the changing needs of society. Despite rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and technological advancement, the scope of agriculture cannot be halted or diminished. Instead, it continues to expand and diversify, playing a vital role in ensuring food security, economic development, environmental sustainability, and rural livelihood across the globe. In the coming decades, agriculture will remain one of the most essential and promising sectors for human survival and progress.

The primary and most fundamental importance of agriculture lies in its role in food production. With the global population projected to exceed 9 billion by 2050, the demand for food grains, fruits, vegetables, and livestock products will increase significantly. Agriculture remains the only sector capable of meeting this growing demand. Advances in crop breeding, improved irrigation methods, and climate-resilient farming practices are continuously enhancing productivity. Modern techniques such as precision farming, protected cultivation, and integrated nutrient management have further strengthened the capacity of agriculture to supply food to an ever-growing population.

Therefore, the need for agricultural production will always exist, ensuring that the scope of agriculture remains permanent and indispensable. Apart from food production, agriculture is a major contributor to employment generation. In many developing countries, including India, a significant portion of the population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihood. Farmers, agricultural labourers, input suppliers, transporters, food processors, and marketers all form part of the agricultural value chain. As new technologies and innovations emerge, new employment opportunities are also being created in areas such as agri-tech startups, digital agriculture services, farm mechanisation, agricultural consultancy, and rural entrepreneurship. Consequently, agriculture not only sustains traditional occupations but also opens new career pathways for educated youth. Agriculture also plays a critical role in supporting various allied sectors. Industries such as food

processing, textile manufacturing, dairy production, poultry farming, fisheries, and biofuel production depend heavily on agricultural raw materials. For example, cotton supports the textile industry, sugarcane feeds the sugar industry, and oilseeds supply edible oil processing units. The development of agro-based industries strengthens rural economies and contributes significantly to national economic growth.

As the demand for processed food and value-added agricultural products increases, the inter-connection between agriculture and industry will become even stronger. Another significant reason why the scope of agriculture cannot be stopped is its growing role in environmental sustainability. Agriculture is closely linked with natural resource management, including soil, water, and biodiversity conservation. Modern sustainable farming practices, such as organic farming, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated farming systems, help maintain ecological balance while ensuring productivity. These approaches reduce chemical dependency, improve soil health, and promote climate resilience. In the era of climate change, agriculture is not only a sector affected by environmental challenges but also a key solution provider through carbon sequestration, sustainable land management, and climate-smart agricultural practices. Technological advancements have further expanded the scope of agriculture in recent decades.

Innovations such as remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), artificial intelligence, drones, and nanotechnology are transforming traditional farming methods into more efficient and data-driven systems. Precision agriculture allows farmers to apply water, fertilisers, and pesticides in a targeted manner, reducing wastage and improving crop yields. Similarly, biotechnology and genetic improvement techniques have enabled the development of high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-tolerant crop varieties. These technological integrations demonstrate that agriculture is not a stagnant sector but one that continuously evolves with scientific progress.

Agriculture also has an important role in ensuring nutritional security. Modern societies are not only concerned about producing sufficient food but also about producing nutritious food. The diversification of agriculture towards horticulture, pulses, oilseeds, millets, medicinal plants, and functional foods contributes to a balanced and healthy diet. Increasing awareness about organic food, natural farming, and farm-to-table concepts has further strengthened the connection between agriculture and human health. As people become more health-conscious, the demand for safe, fresh, and nutritious agricultural products will continue to grow. Furthermore, agriculture contributes significantly to rural development. Rural areas are the primary

centers of agricultural activities, and improvements in agricultural productivity directly influence the socio-economic conditions of rural communities. Infrastructure development, such as irrigation systems, rural roads, storage facilities, and market access improves farmers' income and overall quality of life. Government initiatives promoting farmer producer organizations, crop insurance schemes, and digital agriculture platforms are further strengthening the agricultural sector.

By improving rural livelihoods and reducing poverty, agriculture plays a central role in inclusive development. Global trade is another factor that expands the scope of agriculture. Many countries earn substantial foreign exchange through the export of agricultural commodities such as rice, spices, tea, coffee, fruits, vegetables, and processed foods.

International demand for agricultural products continues to rise due to globalisation and changing dietary preferences. As a result, agricultural exports contribute to economic stability and international trade relations. Developing countries have immense potential to strengthen their position in global markets by improving quality standards, supply chains, and value addition. Education and research in agriculture are also continuously broadening the sector's prospects.

Agricultural universities, research institutes, and extension services are working to develop innovative technologies and disseminate knowledge to farmers. Young professionals are increasingly entering fields such as agronomy, horticulture, agricultural engineering, soil science, agribusiness management, and agricultural biotechnology. These academic and research opportunities ensure that agriculture remains a dynamic and progressive discipline capable of addressing emerging challenges.

In conclusion, the scope of agriculture can never be stopped because it is fundamentally linked with human survival, economic stability, and environmental sustainability. The sector continues to adapt to new technologies, societal demands, and global challenges. From providing food and employment to supporting industries and protecting natural resources, agriculture remains an essential pillar of development. As the world faces challenges such as population growth, climate change, and resource scarcity, the importance of agriculture will only increase. Therefore, rather than declining, the scope of agriculture will continue to expand, offering new opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.

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Protecting Indian medical students in Iran



MOMIN KHAN

I am writing on behalf of Indian medical students currently studying in the Islamic Republic of Iran, many of whom have been facing an extremely challenging and uncertain situation over the past months. As representatives and well-wishers, we feel it is our responsibility to bring their concerns, fears, and resilience to light.

Earlier in January, the situation in Iran became tense, leading to a complete internet shutdown in several regions. Communication lines were severely disrupted. For Indian students living far from home, this sudden digital blackout created panic and isolation. Families in India were unable to reach their children, and students struggled to connect with their parents and representatives. During that period, some of our Indian medical students took extraordinary steps to ensure communication could be re-established.

A group of students travelled toward the Iraq border in an attempt to access connectivity and inform us about their safety. Similarly, students from the Urmia region went toward the Turkey border so they could get internet access and contact us at AIMSA. These were not acts of recklessness but acts of desperation — young students trying to reassure their families and seek guidance in a rapidly deteriorating environment. Despite the chaos, we maintained direct telephonic communication with many students whenever possible. In certain areas such as Urmia, internet connectivity was partially functional, which helped us coordinate and verify their safety.

The psychological toll on students was immense. Being in a foreign land during uncertainty, without stable communication, is an experience no student should have to endure. Now, as of March 3, the situation has again become tense. Reports of renewed conflict and explosions in and around certain regions have deeply frightened students, particularly those in Tehran. Many described hearing loud explosions, which understandably triggered fear and anxiety.

The memories of January's communication blackout and instability are still fresh in their minds. However, this time, coordination has been more structured and proactive. We have remained connected with students through direct phone calls. Representatives on the ground have been actively gathering information and sharing real-time updates. Importantly, internet connectivity in regions like Urmia has remained functional,

allowing smoother communication compared to the earlier shutdown. On March 3, Indian students in Tehran began relocation to safer locations under the guidance of the Embassy of India. The Embassy has taken precautionary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of our students. They have been provided with proper transportation arrangements, and the relocation process has been carried out in an organized manner.

We are thankful to the Embassy officials for their timely response and support. In times of crisis, diplomatic coordination becomes a lifeline for citizens abroad. The swift decision to move students to safer areas demonstrates sensitivity to the ground situation and the concerns of parents back home. It is important to understand that these students are primarily pursuing medical education. They left India with dreams of becoming doctors, serving humanity, and contributing to society.

Instead, they have found themselves navigating war-like uncertainty, internet shutdowns, and the emotional strain of being away from family during crisis. Parents in India have been understandably anxious. Many have been in constant touch, seeking updates and reassurance.

As representatives, we urge parents to remain calm and united. Panic can spread quickly in such circumstances, but verified information and coordinated action are crucial. This situation highlights the broader need for robust emergency preparedness mechanisms for Indian students studying abroad. Clear communication channels, verified regional coordinators, and rapid embassy response systems are essential.

Despite the fear and uncertainty, one thing stands out: the resilience of our students. Even amid explosions and instability, they have shown discipline, unity, and maturity. They have followed instructions, stayed in touch, and cooperated fully with relocation efforts. Their courage deserves recognition.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely. Further updates, including visual documentation, will be shared as soon as possible to maintain transparency and reassure families. Our primary demand remains clear: the safety and security of every Indian student in Iran must be ensured.

Their lives and mental well-being are paramount. We remain committed to standing with them, raising their concerns responsibly, and coordinating with authorities until complete stability is restored. In these difficult times, unity, patience, and coordinated effort are our strongest tools. We pray for peace, safety, and swift normalisation of the situation so that our students can return to their academic pursuits without fear.

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What is the output generated by housewives, who manage the households, bring up children, act as caregivers to the family's elders, and help increase the productivity of the male members? According to the policy-makers and statisticians, zero, zilch, nothing. But there are other ways to crack open this black box, and figure out how the so-called non-productive housewives contribute to the economy. India's Time-Use Survey, 2024, found that women spend just under five hours on daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and organising. Vidhu Shekhar, a professor in finance and economics, claims to have spent months trying to figure this out. In a recent piece, Shekhar adds the time spent on caregiving (children and elders), and adjusts it for participation rates across age-groups, and reaches a total of just under six hours a day. In a year, it amounts to more than 2,000 hours, without holidays, and matches the man-hours for a full-time salaried job.

The author uses three calculations, opportunity costs, generalist replacement, and specialist replacement to compute the so-called 'Housewife GDP of India'. As per the opportunity costs, the real question is to compute the monthly or annual income one can earn in a real job if one spends the same hours, and performs the same work. Using conservative wage benchmarks, the number that emerges is ₹22.81 lakh crore, or more than six per cent of the country's current GDP. Of course, this is an understated assessment as it is based on the subjective analysis of what the housewife can earn in the organised labour market. However, the analysis suffers from a simple problem. In a country like India, especially in large parts of North India, even educated and skilled women do not wish to participate in the labour market. Indeed, they are excluded from the jobless data.

Under the generalist approach, the author asks a different question. What will be a household spend if the same work, or chores, is outsourced to a domestic house help? "Using the prevailing full-time domestic worker wages drawn from organised placement agencies and state-level minimum wage schedules, we arrive at ₹22.51 lakh crore, or 6.3 per cent of the GDP. Obviously, the figure is understated because a woman of the house spends more time to cook because of emotional and social reasons, as well as puts in more effort to take care of the children and elders. Unlike a babysitter, for example, a mother stays with the children for longer periods, and accompanies them to several places for tuition, play, entertainment, and school. On the flip side, a housewife can take a break whenever she wants, unlike a house help, and go slow in case she wishes to. The pressures are internal.

If one chooses the specialist method, which is the most pertinent, the calculations are different. In this, it is assumed that there is no uniformity to household chores. Different works require different skills and, hence, command different market prices. Some are cheap because of supplies, and some are expensive because the skills are difficult to get. Instead of a flat rate, therefore, the method inculcates and "constructs weighted hourly rates based on task-specific market rates, and the time shares reported. The result lifts the estimate to ₹38.12 lakh crore, or 10.67 per cent of the GDP. This represents a more comprehensive 'full replacement' ceiling among the time-based methods." When the actual figures are extrapolated over a range, the figures come to ₹28-42 lakh crore under opportunity costs, ₹24-36 lakh crore under generalists, and ₹36-53 lakh crore under specialists.

Thus, in GDP terms, the range is 5-11 per cent, which is as much or more than the contribution of the IT sector (5-6 per cent). Obviously, the problems of counting the housewives' contribution as zero in the national accounts has economic, social, and moral connotations. In the article, Shekhar talks about the "identity crisis" of the women who seek "validation elsewhere," and "perceive their bargaining power within households" differently. Demographic dividends that India talks about are not implicit and automatic. "They depend on children who grow up healthy, educated, and emotionally secure. Behind most of those outcomes stands someone who invested years of attention and labour in making them possible." If nations devalue this contribution, the realisation may come too late, as is the case with nations such as Japan, South Korea, and Italy. According to the author, "If the work of nurturing the next generation becomes invisible, financially unrewarded, and socially diminished, the incentives to do it weaken over time. And an economy without people is not an economy at all." Demographic dividends work because of the work at homes.

Of course, one can look at the same issue in a counterintuitive, politically-unpalatable manner. It is because the household work is not monetised, or not seen in terms of income, output, GDP, and productivity that it is selfless, serious, committed, and obsessive. It is because the imperative to perform the non-paid tasks come largely from within, and not entirely imposed from outside that their value and worth is appreciated more by the performers and onlookers. Managing a house cannot be treated, and should not be treated like a job. It is much more than that and, hence, its worth cannot be computed.



Oil boils, throws GDP in cauldron

Nothing is safe, not equities, currencies, commodities, GDPs

OUR TAKE

It was a 'Black Monday' of the blackest nature. The dark slick turned into huge fires that hungrily licked at every asset base, be it stocks, currencies, commodities, real estate, and GDPs. The looming flames turned everything dark as the smoke made it difficult to see, or even imagine, and the temperatures numbed the minds and hearts. Even the boisterous never-ending celebrations of India's unprecedented victory in the T20 World Cup were muted, even silenced. Oil is on the boil, economies are in turmoil, and the various assets are roiling in recoil. No one wants to go near it, no one can walk away from it.

Every morning, when the Sensex, the Bombay Stock Market Index, opens, it is more than 2,000 points down, sometimes more. Investors expect a beating, rather a battering, over the next six-plus hours. But miraculously, on several days, the index jumps, dumps the negative sentiments, and pumps up optimism. The dance, energy, efforts, and emotions lie in tatters by the end of the session. The Sensex is still down by 1,000 points, and more, with another shattering day on the horizon. It is more of a tango between the bulls and bears, maybe the bulls are the bears, and bears bulls. The bears are initially overbearing. The bulls pull up their socks. The bears crash the party.

At the end of each day, the experts, analysts, and brokerages justify the free falls. Three, four, or five reasons why the indices crashed, stocks were smashed, and investors dashed out after fire sales. The more you read the analyses, the more you want to knock yourself against the wall, or knock the writer's hand with your fist.

Escalating Middle East tensions, now you think I am a dumb. Surge in crude oil prices, of course, you think I am joker and naïve. FIIs outflows continue, well, are you a buyer despite your advice to buy low, and sell high.

Rupee, does it matter? Each morning, or on many mornings, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) sells dollars to support the rupee. But there are more buyers of dollars, and they include importers desperate to protect their financials, and investors who do not care about the rupee, or any other currency, except the greenback. Not too long ago, experts predicted the decline, even demise of the dollar. Today, they hide their faces, as the dollar is the only Emperor standing. Yes, we know the dynamics. Higher crude prices, higher imports, higher trade deficit, weaker rupee, even higher imports, and deficits.

What if this theory does not work in practice. Higher crude may translate into lower imports due to lower energy use. Lower rupee may lead to higher exports because of the pricing advantage. Maybe, a lower rupee against other currencies in nations where Indians migrate, and send money home, can result in higher remittances, which may imply more foreign exchange reserves. Of course, in this scenario, GDP growth suffers. But GDP growth suffers in every scenario, even the most optimistic one. A weak rupee, as many official loyalists claimed until last year, was a boon, and showed that the economy was in top gear.

Finally, it is about oil which, like a super-coiled

spring, is about to strike anyone and everyone, without warning, without reason, and without a word. It does not matter who you are, where you are, and what you do. You are in the grasp of at least one of the tentacles of this 1,001-headed octopus. He is here, there, everywhere, waiting to lunge. It is not up to you. There is no place to hide. It is not even up to the octopus, who slips in the slick oil, and does not know his next victim, the next capture. It is over \$100 a barrel. It can be \$200, who knows.

A few days ago, Qatar's energy minister predicted crude @ \$150. The prediction is already stale, ready to be thrown in the dustbin of history. But what he added is important. A prolonged war can force major producers to stop production, as Qatar had to do with LNG. Normal flows will further be impacted due to the bombings of the energy infrastructure in the Middle East. Forget Venezuelan oil, even Saudi oil may vanish. Or possibly, it is the other way around. Forget Saudi, Iraqi, Qatari, and Iranian oil for the moment, focus on Venezuela.

According to a bland media report, and most have become like that, "Brokerages have begun modelling similar extreme scenarios. Analysts at DBS Bank recently said crude prices could climb into the \$100-150 per barrel range if shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is significantly disrupted. For oil importing nations like India, such a sur would be particularly damaging. According to analysts at ING, even a 10 per cent increase in oil prices can worsen the external balances of emerging economies by 40-60 basis points, placing pressures on currencies and capital flows." Tell us something new, please. We know this, and more. More importantly, are you sure as oil is already \$120+.

Enough of the bad news, the blah, blah, blah. What good can come out of this? As we mentioned earlier, India's foreign exchange reserves, trade deficits, and imports can improve even if the GDP suffers. Inflation will surely be high. Which may secretly please the finance minister, although she will never admit it publicly, or even privately, because it will push up nominal growth, and correct the crucial fiscal numbers that seem to be going awry. Of course, inflation will hurt consumers, and have political implications. But then inflation can positively impact the fortunes of a few sectors and firms.

Inflation will give excuses to the private and state-owned players to hike prices. Most of them, possibly all of them, except a few, were forced to lower prices due to the GST tax cuts in September 2025. Even if the input prices did not justify it, even if the withdrawal of refunds due to input tax credit were withdrawn, and even if bottled-up demand demanded a rise in selling prices. Now, with inflation up, the firms can up the prices, and consumers will have no option but to pay more.

A slack in demand will be welcome due to lower available energy, which is more expensive, and lead to lower production in any case. It is a matter of what is preferable to a firm, buyer, and policy-maker.



Kathmandu (Nepal): Nepal's civil aviation continues to be a victim of oversight, negligence, and corruption. According to an article by the non-profit Nepal Economic Forum (NEF), a mix of blunders related to policy execution, and unfavourable international perception added to the mess. Since 2013, the European Union (EU) blacklisted the nation's civil aviation, a scenario that was made worse due to repeated air crashes that claimed several lives, and persistent inefficiencies at major airports. The result, according to NEF, is that these perceptions severely tarnished the country's aviation reputation. At present, more than a third of the airports in Nepal lie defunct.

In October 2024, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli set up a five-member high-level study and recommendation committee to examine the development of a safe, reliable, and trustworthy civil aviation system in Nepal. It was chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge, Anil Kumar Sinha. Coincidentally, Sinha emerged at the political forefront, when he was appointed as a minister with multiple portfolios,

including civil aviation, in an interim government, which was formed after Oli's ouster due to students' protests. Now, with a new regime ready to take over after the national elections, Sinha reminisces about how he wanted to revive the country's civil aviation sector.

But first, one needs to remember that Nepal's aviation industry has a rich history, and significant potential, despite the numerous challenges that hinder growth and reputation. The journey began in 1949 with the first flight landing in Kathmandu, followed by the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in 1955. After two more airports were set up in Lumbini and Pokhara, more than 50 have cropped up. According to IATA data, tourism supported by aviation contributed \$542.2 million to the GDP in 2023, and employed 260,900 people. International tourists contributed \$633.7 million annually to the economy.

"Soon after my retirement, I was approached to head a high-level committee to suggest reforms. There were safety issues with many crashes. I refused as I did not have technical knowledge, but the government urged me to suggest remedies," said Justice-Minister Sinha. However, he was told that he

Nepal's planes struggle to take off

Since 2013, the nation's aviation is blacklisted by the EU



would be helped by experts, and they included a pilot with over two decades of flying experience, and a former civil aviation secretary. "I accepted the challenge. They gave three months, but logistics were missing, and there was not enough budget. We sought an extension," Sinha added.

Sinha met Oli, who was unhappy about the situation. The latter assured the former that the finance department would release the funds. The committee's scope was expanded to probe the affairs at Pokhara and Bhairahawa airports, and find out the reasons why Nepal Airlines performed abysmally. An article by ORF highlighted issues related to systemic corruption, procurement irregularities, and geopolitical constraints at Pokhara. Media reports indicated that Bhairahawa largely operated under temporary operating permits, as full global operations and route approvals remained incomplete. This limited the airlines' commitments and scheduled services.

According to the NEF, the unviability of the two airports is only a tip of the iceberg as only 18 of the more than 50 airports operate profitably. The Bhairahawa airport, which was built with an investment of \$76 million gen-

erated a revenue of (Indian) ₹132.12 million in 2023. Given these trends, it may take it more than 50 years to cover the cost of construction. Even if the traffic doubled, it can take more than 25 years for the airport to reach the break-even mark.

In the case of Pokhara, there were no commercial flights since its inception. Its revenues are minimal, and it may take at least 75 years to repay the high-interest bearing debt if commercial operations do not commence. China is in the thick of things, as it aids several projects in Nepal, partially thanks to the Oli government. As with other economic issues, Nepal's borders with two geopolitical powerhouses affects the aviation industry, according to the NEF. For example, Kathmandu uses the Indian airspace for air commute, and flights.

"Both the recently-built international airports (mentioned above) were built by the Chinese companies. The funds for Pokhara came via Chinese loans, and the project was declared as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal. As a response to this increasing Chinese involvement, India has not provided an air route to Nepal despite mul-

iple requests. Thus, the unavailability of shorter air routes has increased the flight time for the airlines, and made operation costs higher, making new airports unattractive. This flaw in aviation diplomacy has kept the two international airports under-utilised," pointed out the recent NEF article.

According to Sinha, the committee was aware of the problem areas. There were no doubts in his mind that civil aviation was vital to enhance connectivity, especially in remote areas. But the logistics and funds issues continued. The committee members were not even able to visit the two contentious airports, Pokhara and Bhairahawa. "We decided that it was not possible to continue, and we needed to submit a report based on whatever inputs we had. But as we were about to print the report the situation happened (or changed due to the Gen Z uprising that led to the ouster of Oli's regime)," explained Sinha.

"Coincidentally, the report did come out when I became the civil aviation minister (in the subsequent interim government). The interim prime minister felt that since we had spent time to identify the issues, and provide remedies, the report should be implemented. It was placed in the cabinet, which passed it," revealed Sinha. "I initiated discussions with the EU on the 'blacklisting' issue, and today 6-7 (global) aviation experts are helping the airlines companies. They are from the EU, India, and have portable simulator machines to help helicopter pilots." Sinha feels that the problem is not with the engineers and pilots, but with oversights, investigations, and implementation of the recommendations.

As talks continue with the EU, Sinha expects Nepal to be out of the blacklist, or at least the safety concern list. He met this reporter a few days before the election results were to be announced, but he was still optimistic. "When I hand over the charge to the new government, I expect to do it with constructive suggestions and perhaps, some good news," he said hopefully. Yet one is sure that this is not the end but the beginning of a new chapter. The next regime needs to show serious interest, and skilled piloting to help the sector to take off.

(The author has more than three decades of experience across print, TV, and digital media)

Crude price rise not to have major impact on inflation: Sitharaman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The impact of global crude price rise on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point as India's inflation is near the lower bound, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday.

In reply to a written question in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the price of both global crude oil and the Indian basket has been on a declining trajectory for the past one year, till the geo-political clashes commenced in West Asia on February 28, 2026.

"Between the end of

February and until March 2, 2026, the Crude Oil FOB Price (Indian Basket) rose from \$69.01/barrel to \$80.16/barrel.

Given that India's inflation is near the lower bound, the impact on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point," Sitharaman said.

She was replying to a question on whether the Government has reviewed the impact of rising global crude oil prices on inflation in the country.

Global crude prices have been rising since February 28 when the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran who retaliated with attacks on US posi-

tions in the region, as well as Israel.

Replying to the question, the minister said that RBI's Monetary Policy Report in October 2025, had estimated that if crude oil prices are higher by 10 per cent than the baseline assumptions, and assuming full pass-through to domestic prices, inflation could turn out to be higher by 30 basis points.

However, the medium-term impact of the global crude oil price rise on inflation depends on several factors, including exchange rate movements, global demand and supply situation, monetary policy



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

transmission, the State of general inflation, and the extent of the indirect pass-through.

The average retail inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index declined from 5.4 per cent in 2023-24 to 4.6 per cent in 2024-25 and further to 1.8 per cent in 2025-26 (April-January).

The headline inflation for January 2026 stood at 2.75 per cent and is near the lower bound of the RBI's inflation tolerance band of 4 per cent to 2 per cent.

As part of inflation management, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has

reduced the policy rate by 125 basis points cumulatively since February 2025, Sitharaman said.

Further, the Government has also undertaken a series of administrative measures, including fiscal and trade policy, to control inflation and mitigate its impact on the common citizen.

These include, inter alia, augmentation of buffer stocks for essential food items, strategic sales of procured grains in the open market, facilitation of imports and export curbs during periods of short supply, implementation of stock limits to push more supplies

of select commodities into the market, retail sales of select food items under the Bharat brand at subsidised rates, market intervention for perishable horticultural and agricultural commodities, reduction in fuel taxes, creation of scientific storage capacity.

Also, the Government has increased the disposable income of individuals by exempting annual incomes up to ₹12 lakh (and ₹12.75 lakh for salaried individuals with standard deduction) from income tax and the recent rationalisation of Good and Services Tax (GST) rates.

Iran conflict could increase challenges for emerging market sovereigns: Fitch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the Iran conflict could raise additional challenges for some emerging market sovereigns in areas like energy imports, remittances and exchange rates.

On February 28, the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran who retaliated with attacks on US positions in the region, as well as Israel.

In a report titled 'Iran conflict raises new credit risks for emerging market sovereigns', Fitch said more sustained disruption to global energy supplies from the Gulf than envisaged under its baseline could significantly damage global investor sentiment.

"We expect this would result in a stronger US dollar and weaken the market for debt issuance, particularly for highly speculative-grade issuers. Higher energy prices could put upward pressure



on inflation, affecting monetary policy decisions globally," the report said.

Fitch said oil and gas imports are the most direct channel for contagion from the conflict, given its effect on global energy prices. For larger economies, like India, net fossil fuel imports are equivalent to 3 per cent or more of GDP.

"The Iran conflict could raise additional challenges for some emerging market

sovereigns, through such channels as energy imports, remittances, fiscal subsidies, exchange rates and access to international finance," Fitch Ratings said.

In the report, Fitch said the risks to emerging market ratings should be contained if the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz lasts less than a month and major damage to the region's oil production infrastructure is avoided.

Paint stocks tumble amid sharp spike in oil prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Shares of oil marketing companies and paint manufacturers tumbled on Monday morning trade amid sharp jump in crude oil prices due to the deepening conflict in West Asia.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd tanked 8.67 per cent, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd dropped 8.43 per cent and Indian Oil Corporation declined 7.29 per cent on the BSE.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, surged 24.71 per cent to \$112.51 per barrel. Asian Paints fell by 5.12 per cent, Indigo Paints dropped 4.83 per cent, Berger Paints lost 4.80 per cent and Kansai Nerolac Paints declined 4.72 per cent.

The 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 2,494.35 points or 3.16 per cent to 76,424.55. The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 752.65 points or 3



per cent to 23,697.80. "Near-term sentiment remains pressured by escalating tensions in the Middle East, which have kept crude oil prices elevated and intensified concerns over inflation risks and India's rising import bill.

"The sustained surge in energy prices is also reviving fears of macroeconomic strain, adding another layer of caution to market positioning," Ponmudi R, CEO of

Enrich Money, a line trading and wealth tech firm said.

The US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran on February 28, killing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader.

Following the military offensive, Iran has carried out a wave of attacks mainly targeting Israeli and American military bases in several Gulf countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

Crude oil futures zoom over 26% to hit record high of ₹10,549/barrel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Crude oil prices surged more than 26 per cent on Monday to hit a lifetime high of ₹10,549 per barrel in futures trade amid disruptions in global energy supply due to intensified West Asia crisis.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), crude oil for March delivery soared by ₹2,186, or 26.13 per cent, to touch a fresh high of ₹10,549 per barrel from Friday's close of ₹8,363 per barrel.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures for April delivery gained \$28.58, or 31.44 per cent, to \$119.48 per barrel, while Brent Crude for the May contract climbed \$26.71, or 28.82 per cent, to hit an intraday high of \$119.40 per barrel in New York.

Crude oil prices in the overseas markets surged after oil tankers were blocked from the Strait of Hormuz, prompting several Middle Eastern producers to curb crude output, Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research



The price for April contract also appreciated by ₹2,158, or 26.91 per cent, to a new peak of ₹10,177 per barrel against ₹8,019 per barrel in the previous session. During the session, both contracts hit their respective upper circuit limit on the MCX.

MCX Crude oil March contract has already touched upper circuit. On the other hand, this level will accelerate upside momentum in the crude oil price towards ₹11,300 per barrel in the upcoming sessions, Amir Makda, Commodity & Currency Analyst, Choice Broking, said.

In the international markets, crude oil prices surged above \$100 per barrel for the first time since 2022 as the war involving the US, Israel and Iran entered its second week, fuelling concerns over global inflationary

Analyst at IndusInd Securities, said.

The conflict has already halted roughly a fifth of global crude and natural gas supply as Iran targets ships in the vital shipping route, he added.

Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research, Kotak Securities, said investors should also monitor the escalation ladder in the West Asian conflict.

"The first stage is the current disruption in transit through the Strait of Hormuz. The second, more serious risk, would be direct attacks on oil and gas infrastructure across the region. The third and least probable but most severe scenario would involve damage to critical water infrastructure, which would have a major humanitarian dimension," Banerjee added.

Customs issues norms for handling return of export cargo amid disruptions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Customs department has come out with norms for dealing with export cargo returning to Indian ports due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions in maritime routes amid the West Asia crisis.

The norms, issued by the CBIC on March 8 and to be valid for 15 days, stipulate that in all such cases the vessel shall be permitted to berth only at the same Indian port from which it departed, except in the case of transhipment.

The field offices under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) will recover all export incentives, including IGST, drawback, etc., manually from such cargo, if they have

already been disbursed, said the CBIC circular.

The CBIC said it has received representations from field formations indicating that, due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the consequent disruption in maritime routes, certain vessels carrying export cargo from India are unable to reach their destination ports and are returning to Indian ports. It has been requested to prescribe a simplified procedure for handling such cargo.

Stating that the present circumstances constitute an exceptional situation affecting international shipping routes and export logistics, the CBIC prescribed procedures to facilitate trade and ensure expeditious handling of such cargo, where export cargo is brought back to



Indian ports due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz or similar disruptions.

Roughly, a fifth of global seaborne crude transits Hormuz daily. The Strait of Hormuz is a vital artery for seaborne oil transportation, with limited alternative routes. The crisis in West Asia has led to spiralling

prices of global oil and natural gas. The Strait is a narrow 33-kilometre passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.

On February 28, the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran, which retaliated with attacks on American bases in the region, as well as Israel. The crisis in West Asia has escalated since

then, with trade being affected. The CBIC prescribed procedure for handling cargo in three situations.

In case the cargo is loaded on a vessel, and the vessel is within Indian territorial waters, and an Export General Manifest (EGM) and a Sea Departure Manifest (SDM) are not filed, the master of the vessel/captain shall submit an undertaking stating that the vessel has not crossed the territorial waters of India.

The containers may be offloaded at the port terminal without filing a Bill of Entry, subject to verification of related shipping documents. Where requested by the exporter, the Back to Town facility may be permitted by the proper officer.

In case a vessel is within Indian territorial waters, and an EGM or SDM was filed, or

the vessel is beyond Indian territorial waters and is in international waters and returning without calling any foreign ports, the master of the vessel/captain shall submit an undertaking.

The containers may be offloaded at the port terminal without filing a Bill of Entry, subject to verification of SDM and related shipping documents. Details of such cancelled Shipping Bills shall be shared with the RBI, DGFT and other concerned agencies by ICEGATE.

In the third situation, where a vessel is beyond Indian territorial waters and is in international waters and returning to India after calling any foreign port without discharge of any container, the CBIC said such consignments shall be treated as exported out of India.

MeitY awaiting plan for data protection compliance: Krishnan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is awaiting industry inputs on its plans to slash the timeline for data protection compliance before taking a final call on the issue, a top Government official said on Monday.

The official also said the central Government had not seen the Karnataka Government's proposal to ban social media use for children below 16 but added that issues like social media or online gaming fall within national jurisdiction and will have to be addressed separately.

"We have been consulting with industry on this (shortening timeline) aspect. We have had some consultations. We are awaiting their inputs and once we get the input, we will take a final call," S Krishnan, Secretary in the MeitY, told reporters here on the sidelines of the 85th Public Meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) here.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is said to have proposed to curtail the compliance window under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) rules to 12 months from 18 months for significant data fiduciaries.

Big tech firms and many large companies already abide by stringent data protection standards in many other markets, among them the General Data Protection Regulation (European Union's data privacy and security law) and this argument has prompted discussions about faster implementation of the new rules in India.

"Social media or online gaming, all these are matters which fall within national jurisdiction and which we will have to address



Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) S Krishnan

separately. We have not yet seen what the legislation is. We will have to see whether it falls within the competence of the respective state Government and we will have to see how exactly the legislative competence works," Krishnan said. Responding to a question on the concerns in certain quarters over certain entire domains (websites) being blocked and whether there was any regulation, he said, "we are acting under existing laws and regulation. If there is any specific case that comes, we will act on that basis."

Stating that it is very important that India gets very involved in internet governance, he said the number of internet users in India has grown significantly and "currently we have more than a billion internet users in India".

Hosting events like ICANN85, gives the country very good opportunity to discuss with global stakeholders because Internet governance is on the basis of a multi-stakeholder approach, he said, adding, "in addition to governance, we have international organisations, we have civil society organisations, academia, technical groups, technical bodies, all of them (at one platform).

Sensex, Nifty sink nearly 2% on surging crude oil prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty nosedived nearly 2 per cent on Monday as soaring crude oil prices and weak global trends due to the worsening situation in West Asia triggered a sharp sell-off in the stock market.

Besides, unabated foreign fund exodus and the weakness in the rupee against the US dollar weighed heavily on investors' sentiment, traders said.

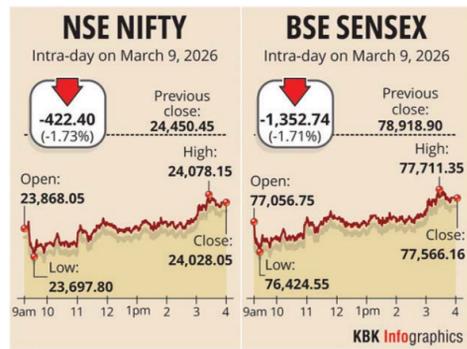
The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,352.74 points, or 1.71 per cent, to settle at 77,566.16, registering its

second day of decline. During the day, the benchmark crashed 2,494.35 points, or 3.16 per cent, to 76,424.55.

On similar lines, the 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 752.65 points, or 1.73 per cent, to end at 24,028.05. Intra-day, it tumbled 752.65 points, or 3.07 per cent, to 23,697.80.

UltraTech Cement was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, following 5.23 per cent, followed by Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, InterGlobe Aviation, and Adani Ports were among the major laggards.

In contrast, Reliance



Industries, Sun Pharma, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 12.34 per cent to \$104.1 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets ended the session sharply lower after opening with a steep gap-down of nearly 3 per cent, as weak global cues and the deepening conflict in the Middle East weighed heavily on investor sentiment.

"The escalation in geopolitical risks pushed crude oil prices above the \$100 per barrel mark and drove the Indian rupee to a record low against the US dollar, amplifying concerns around inflation and external balances," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Rupee falls 53 paise to close at all-time low of 92.35 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

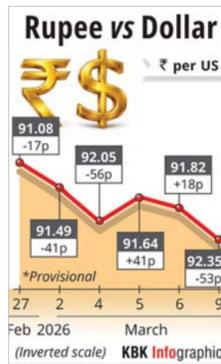
The rupee crashed to its all-time closing low of 92.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, losing 53 paise during the session, as global crude oil prices saw a sharp spike, and the greenback strengthened amid worsening conflict in the Middle East.

Withdrawal of foreign funds amid intense selling in domestic equity markets further pressured the rupee, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 92.22 and rose briefly to 92.15 but kept losing ground through the session before eventually settling at its all-time low of 92.35 (provisional), down 53 paise from its previous close.

The rupee depreciated 18 paise against the US dollar on Friday to close at 91.82 against the American currency.

"The rupee opened sharply lower, hitting a fresh record low of 92.35 on weak global markets and an



overnight surge in crude oil prices. Oil prices surged around 25 per cent in the Asian session.

Strong dollar and FII outflows also pressured the rupee," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on weak global market sentiments and a strong dollar amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

However, any intervention by the central bank may support the rupee at

lower levels," he said, adding that the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in the range of 92-92.80.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 15.18 per cent at \$106.8 per barrel in futures trade as the war between US-Israel and Iran intensified.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.35 per cent higher at 99.33.

Europe rallies around Cyprus as conflict expands

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Paphos

French President Emmanuel Macron travelled to Cyprus on Monday, days after dispatching a warship to the eastern Mediterranean island nation, where a Shahed drone struck a British air base on its southern coast last week during the Iran war.

Macron ordered the French frigate Languedoc to waters off Cyprus, a fellow European Union member, to bolster its anti-drone and anti-missile defences. The French president also decided to send ground-based anti-drone and anti-missile defences to the island, which sustained the first drone attack of the Iran

war on European territory. The French president will also go aboard the Charles de Gaulle nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that's currently sailing in the eastern Mediterranean near Cyprus. The vessel's presence "reinforces the military means already in the region to ensure the security of France, its citizens and its bases, as well as that of its allies in the region," Macron's office said.

Macron is meeting with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at Cyprus' main air base on its southwestern edge, where four Greek air force F-16s have been deployed. "Together with our European partners,



the aim will be to strengthen security around Cyprus and in the Eastern Mediterranean," a statement from Macron's office said.

Christodoulides echoed those remarks, telling reporters ahead of the meeting that the leaders' presence in Cyprus underscores how the island's security is the collective responsibility of the European Union, which must act to defend its own borders.

"It's the first time we've seen such a response, and I consider this to be of partic-

ular importance," Christodoulides said.

Macron has been deeply involved in diplomatic talks in recent days to try to avoid further escalation in the Middle East. On Sunday, he spoke to Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian and urged him to stop strikes.

Cypriot government spokesman Constantinos Letymbiotis on Sunday said that the three leaders would assess regional developments and the close coordination on preemptive measures that have been taken.

Letymbiotis repeated Cyprus' gratitude for the leaders' quick response to the island's call for assistance. Last week, Macron ordered the De Gaulle to

move from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean to help protect allied assets, citing the drone strike on Cyprus. Cyprus and France signed a new strategic partnership in December.

Greece's state-of-the-art Kimon and Psara frigates are already patrolling off Cyprus' southern coast. Warships from Italy, the Netherlands and Spain are expected in the coming days, while the UK destroyer HMS Dragon will arrive next week.

Despite the military buildup, the three leaders have urged against any expansion of the conflict. Christodoulides repeatedly has underscored that Cyprus won't take part in any military operation.

Starmer talks to Trump amid west Asia crisis



ADITI KHANNA
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has spoken to Donald Trump to discuss the situation in West Asia after the US President had been extremely critical of the UK's response to the strikes on Iran. Trump took to social media to dismiss Starmer's plan to send aircraft carriers to the region as an attempt to join wars "already won".

Downing Street released a readout of the Trump-Starmer call on Sunday, seen as an effort to smooth over the so-called UK-US "special relationship".

"The leaders began by discussing the latest situation in the Middle East and the military cooperation between the UK and US through the use of RAF (Royal Air Force) bases in support of the collec-

ive self defence of partners in the region," a 10 Downing Street spokesperson said.

"The Prime Minister also shared his heartfelt condolences with President Trump and the American people following the deaths of six US soldiers. They looked forward to speaking again soon," the spokesperson said.

It came after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) confirmed that one of the UK's two aircraft carriers has been placed on advanced readiness, with the crew of HMS Prince of Wales docked in Portsmouth told they must be ready to leave within days.

"The United Kingdom, our once Great Ally, maybe the Greatest of them all, is finally giving serious thought to sending two aircraft carriers to the Middle East," Trump wrote on Truth Social soon after.

Urged India to buy Russian oil: US Energy Secretary

YOSHITA SINGH
New York/Washington

The US has urged India to buy Russian oil already floating at sea and redirect it to Indian refineries to "tamp down" fears of supply shortages and price spikes amid the ongoing

West Asia conflict, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has said.

However, the move, he said is a short-term, pragmatic effort to stabilise the market and did not signal any change in Washington's policy towards Russia.

In an interview to CNN on Sunday, Wright said he, along with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, had spoken to Indian authorities about buying Russian crude cargoes currently waiting to be unloaded at Chinese refineries.

"India has been a great partner through this. I did call up the Indians, as did Treasury Secretary (Scott)



Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent

Bessent, and said there's a whole bunch of oil floating waiting to unload at Chinese refineries. "Instead of having it wait six weeks to unload there, let's just pull that oil forward, have it land in Indian refineries and tamp this fear of shortage of oil, tamp the price spikes and the concerns we see in the marketplace," he said. However, the US policy towards Russia has

not changed at all, Wright said, adding that "India is very clear on that".

Responding to a question on whether the Treasury Department's 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil amid the US-Israel war against Iran undermined the Trump administration's goal of isolating Moscow, he said, "It is not." (PTT)

Public Notice

I, Linson M. Dominic, partner of M/s MP Dominic & Co, holding Registration Certificate No. B0285/KER/PART/1000/5/8266/2008 issued under the Emigration Act, 1983 by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, valid up to 21 Dec. 2028, hereby inform the general public that our Delhi Branch Office situated at the following address has been closed-92, 3rd Floor, A Wing Nambardar Estate, Taimur Nagar, New Delhi - 110065

Any person having claims, complaints or grievances against the above branch office may submit the same within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Complaints, if any, may be addressed to: The Joint Secretary (OE & PGE), Min. of External Affairs, Room No. 3308B, 3rd Floor, Kartavya Bhawan - 3, Central Vista, Janpath Road, New Delhi - 110001 India

Linson M. Dominic (partner)
M/s MP Dominic & Co
92, 3rd Floor, A Wing Nambardar Estate,
Taimur Nagar, New Delhi - 110065

Date: 09/03/2026
Place: New Delhi

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, No.10136842H LNK Tarun, R/o- VPO- Balsmand, Distt-Hisar, Haryana- 125001, have changed my daughter's name from Aarvi to Aarvi Rani, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(419)C

I, No.10136842H LNK Tarun, R/o- VPO- Balsmand, Distt-Hisar, Haryana- 125001, have changed my Son's name from Divyanshu to Divyanshu Chahal, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(420)C

I, Ram Prakash, Father of No.15792743Y Hav Anil Rajput, R/o- Vill- Nagla Beech, PO- Sakwai, Teh & Dist- Farrukhabad, U.P. - 209651 have changed my name from Ram Prakash to Ram Prakash Rajput, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(421)C

I, No.14506810A Ex-Nk Eknath Funde, R/o- VPO- Vihamandwa, Tehsil- Paithan, Dist- Aurangabad, Maharashtra- 431137, have changed my name from Eknath Funde to Eknath Ranganath Funde, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before SDM Delhi Cantt. PD(422)C

I, Parveen Kumar alias Praveen Kumar alias Parveen Kumar Verma S/o- Atma Ram, R/o- RZ-325/396, Shiv Puri, Gali No. 6, West Sagar pur, South West Delhi, Delhi- 110046, have changed my name from Parveen Kumar alias Praveen Kumar alias Parveen Kumar Verma to Parveen Verma for all purposes. PD(423)C

I, Mukesh Gupta alias Mukesh Kumar S/o- Chhelu Mal, R/o- WZ- 1318, Gali Lokveer, Nangal Raya, South West Delhi, Delhi- 110046, have changed my name from Mukesh Kumar to Mukesh Kumar Gupta for all purposes. PD(424)C

I, Shruti D/o- Mukesh Kumar Gupta, R/o- WZ- 300 A, 2nd Floor, Street No. 11, Lajwanti Garden, South West Delhi, Delhi- 110046, have changed my name from Shruti to Shruti Gupta for all purposes. PD(425)C

I, Sh Govindappan, F/o- JC-780359Y Sub/Dtmn(Tech) Venkatraman G, R/o- Door No. 1/529, Vill- Murthy Kottai, Post- Sundekuppam, Teh & Dist- Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu- 635101, have changed my name from Sh Govindappan to Govindappan, & my correct DOB is 21/04/1957, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(426)C

I, Laxmi, M/o- JC-780359Y Sub/ Dtmn (Tech) Venkatraman G, R/o- Door No. 1/529, Vill- Murthy Kottai, Post- Sundekuppam, Teh & Dist- Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu- 635101, have changed my name from Laxmi to Lakshmi, & my correct DOB is 28/03/1963, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(427)C

I, Aladi Murmu W/o No.4288378P L/Nk Baristar Murmu, R/o- VTC- Khukundia, PO- Digar Astia, Dist- Mayurbhanj, Odisha- 757030, have changed my name from Aladi Murmu to Alladi Murmu, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(428)C

I, G Venkat Sathyavani, W/o- JC-780359Y Sub/Dtmn(Tech) Venkatraman G, R/o- Door No. 1/529, Vill- Murthy Kottai, Post- Sundekuppam, Teh & Dist- Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu- 635101, have changed my name from G Venkat Sathyavani to Sathyavani Venkatraman, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(429)C

I, Rajesh Goyal S/o Parshotam Goyal, R/o 129, Second Floor, Sandesh Vihar, Delhi-110034, hereby declare that the names "Samath" and "Samarth Goyal" refer to the same person. The correct and full name of my son is "Samarth Goyal". PD(430)C

I, Annu Mattoo Raina, daughter of Piaryla Lal Mattoo, wife of Sunil Raina, resident of A-31/S-2, Block-A, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110095. My first name before marriage was Annu Mattoo, but after marrying Sunil Raina, I have added the surname Raina. I will now be known as Annu Mattoo Raina for all future purposes.. PD(431)C

(ADDITIONAL BENCH) THROUGH REGD AD/DASTI/ E-MAIL/WHATSAPP/ PROCESS SERVER

THE STATE CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION UNION TERRITORY, CHANDIGARH

Plot No. 5-B, Sector 19B, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh 160019
Phone No. : 0172-2700183
Fax No. : 0172-2784225
Email id - (i) stcomm-chd@nic.in
(ii) scdrcchandigarh19@gmail.com

Appeal No. 296 of 2025
(Narinder Verma Vs The Cortiza Holiday (P) Ltd & Ors.)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDUSTRIES & COMMERCE, ASSAM
UDYOG BHAWAN, BAMUNIMAIMAM, GUWAHATI - 21
PUBLIC NOTICE
No.-482140-499

It is hereby informed for the general information of all concerned that UNNATI (Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme), 2024 is a Government of India scheme applicable to the North Eastern Region, providing financial incentives to eligible industrial units established in the State of Assam.

The timeline for submission of applications under the UNNATI scheme has been extended for a further period of six months, up to **30th September 2026**, or till the projected financial liability of the scheme reaches 115% of the total approved financial outlay, whichever is earlier. All eligible industrial units intending to avail benefits under the scheme are advised to take necessary steps to register and submit their applications within the extended period. Detailed guidelines and application procedures are available on the official portal: <https://unnati.dpiit.gov.in/>

Sd/-
Commissioner of Industries & Commerce, Assam
Udyog Bhawan, Bamunimaidam, Guwahati - 21

DIPR/D/PIO/953/10-Mar-26

ARIAS SOCIETY
(An Autonomous Body of the Govt. of Assam)

Project Management Unit of the Asian Development Bank Financed Assam Sustainable Wetland and Integrated Fisheries Transformation (SWIFT) Project
Agriculture Complex, Khanapara, G.S. Road, Guwahati-781022 (Assam, India)

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Government of Assam through the Government of India has applied for a loan from the Asian Development Bank for the proposed Assam SWIFT project. The ARIAS Society now intends to apply a portion of the loan for the Conservation, Restoration and Rejuvenation works for the following IFB Nos. for beels in Dhemajji, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and Sivasagar districts

Name of Beel	IFB No.	Name of Beel	IFB No.
1. Bera Na	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-62	8. Gudha	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-55
2. Bhatikhali	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-53	9. Hatihuria	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-81
3. Borakata	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-82	10. Khoribari Borbilla	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-40
4. Sara	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-54	11. Nayachara	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-57
5. Borai Pani Khowa	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-58	12. Panikheti	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-80
6. Ghringerkuti	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-65	13. Singra	ARIAS/ADB-SWIFT/CW10-63
7. Goka	ARIAS /ADB-SWIFT/CW10-64		

Interested bidders may download and submit their bids electronically using the e-Procurement portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in/>.

Sd/-
State Project Director,
ARIAS Society

DIPR/CF/PIO/4451/10-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PW (HEALTH & EDUCATION) DEPARTMENT: CHANDMARI, GUYVAHATI-3

No. Tech-I(H&E)/14/2026/2

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer (Health & Education), P.W.D. (H&E), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids from the eligible contractors having experience in similar nature of work for the following work:

Sl. No.	Name of work	Bid Value (including GST @18%)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1.	Construction of Boundary wall 1. New Girls Hostel 2. Boys Hostel No. 1 3. From JIST side gate to Rain Forest Research Institute Boundary Wall 4. JIST Classroom and office at JIST under SOPD-G during the year 2025-26.	Rs. 2,48,19,868.00	12 (Twelve) months	2% of Bid Value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs. 4,970.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtender.gov.in. The bidders must be enrolled with the tendering web-portal www.assamtenders.gov.in. All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents. The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Health & Education),
PW(H&E) Deptt.
Chandmari, Guwahati-3
Dated Guwahati the 09th March, 2026

DIPR/C/PIO/951/10-Mar-26

No Indian fatality in Saudi projectile incident: Embassy



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Dubai

There was no Indian fatality in the projectile incident that struck a residential compound in Saudi Arabia, the Indian Embassy in Riyadh said on Monday.

It added that an Indian national injured in the incident on Sunday is undergoing treatment at a Government hospital.

"It is a matter of relief that there has been no Indian fatality in the unfortunate incident at Al Kharij yesterday evening," the mission said in a social media post.

The embassy said it has been in touch with the concerned Saudi authorities regarding the matter.

Counselor (Community Welfare) Y Sabir visited Al-Kharj on Sunday night and met the injured Indian national involved in the incident, it said.

"He is currently receiving treatment at a Government hospital in Al Kharij," the mission said.

The Saudi authorities on Sunday said an Indian national was among two killed as the military projectile struck a residential compound belonging to a maintenance and cleaning company in Al-Kharj. However, the authorities had not released the identity of the victims.

In a social media post on Monday, the Saudi Civil Defence said, "...after completing all final procedures, it has been determined that the two fatalities are of Bangladeshi nationality, (11) injured persons of Bangladeshi nationality, and (1) injured person of Indian nationality."

Starting February 28, the US and Israel launched a joint attack on Iran, which came after days of build-up with US President Donald Trump ramping up the pressure on Tehran to agree to a new deal on its nuclear programme. Iran's retaliation escalated the war to the entire Gulf region.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client Syed Ghulam Rabbani, Senior Citizen, aged about 73 years, S/o Mr. Syed Mohammed Saqeer, R/O E-11/18-A, Hauj Rani, Malviya Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi 110017, has revoked/cancelled all the related documents executed in favour of youngest brother named Syed Mohammed Kazim S/o Mr. Syed Mohammed Saqeer, of Third Floor property/in the said property wherein his youngest brother is residing with my client. If anyone involved in sale purchase of this property, my client will not be responsible for any loss.

Sarfraz Hussain (Advocate) Consultation Room, Lawyers Chamber Block-1 Delhi High Court New Delhi-110003

दि बाजपुर को-आपरेटिव शुगर फैक्ट्री लि,
आसबनी बाजपुर, जिला-उधमसिंह नगर (उत्तराखण्ड)

पत्रांक: कासगढी/2025-26/4561 दिनांक: 09.03.2026

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

आसबनी बाजपुर में विभिन्न सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति तथा कार्यों हेतु उनकी निविदा लिखित रूप में निर्माताओं, अनुभवी, जीएनएसटी व श्रम विभाग में पंजीकृत आपूर्तिकर्ताओं/उद्देश्यों से दिनांक 11.03.2026 सायं 4.00 बजे से दिनांक 18.03.2026 सायं 4.00 बजे तक ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। आवश्यकता होने पर निर्माण/संभलन न्यूनतम दरवाता (एल-1) से किया जायेगा। न्यूनतम दरवाता (एल-1) से दरों के समन्वय में संशुद्धि न होने पर अन्य निविदादाताओं से वार्ता की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा सूचना www.bazpursugar.com तथा विस्तृत निविदा प्रपत्र www.uktenders.gov.in से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है। प्रदान प्रबन्धक



US begins large military drill with South Korea

KIM TONG-HYUNG
Seoul

The United States began a large military exercise with South Korea involving thousands of troops on Monday while also waging an escalating war in the Middle East. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff has said about 18,000 Korean troops will take part in Freedom Shield, which runs through March 19. US Forces Korea has not confirmed the number of American troops participating in the training in South Korea. The allies' combined exercise comes amid South Korean media speculation that Washington is relocating some assets from South

Korea to support fighting against Iran. US Forces Korea said last week it would not comment on specific movements of military assets for security reasons. South Korean officials also declined to comment on the reports that some US Patriot anti-missile systems and other equipment were being moved to the Middle East, but they said there would be no meaningful impact on the allies' combined defence posture. Freedom Shield may trigger an irritated response from North Korea, which has long described the allies' joint exercises as invasion rehearsals and used them as a pretext to ramp up its own



Protesters holding signs to oppose the joint military exercise between the US and South Korea

military demonstrations and weapons tests. The allies say the drills are defensive in nature. North Korea has suspended all meaningful dialogue with Washington and Seoul following the 2019 collapse of a summit between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump during his first term. Tensions rose in recent years as Kim used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a window to accelerate the

development of his nuclear arsenal and increase his leverage by aligning militarily with Moscow, which has received thousands of North Korean troops and large weapons shipments to help fuel its warfighting. The allies' drills follow a major political conference in Pyongyang last month, where Kim confirmed his hard-line view of "enemy" Seoul but left the door open to talks with Washington, calling on the United States to drop its demand for North Korea's denuclearisation as a precondition for dialogue. Freedom Shield is one of two annual "command post" exercises conducted by the allies; the other is Ulchi Freedom Shield, held in

August. The drills are largely computer-simulated and designed to test the allies' joint operational capabilities while incorporating evolving war scenarios and security challenges. As usual, the March drill will be accompanied by a field-training programme, called Warrior Shield, but the number of field exercises during the Freedom Shield period has declined to 22 compared to last year's 51. While US and South Korean militaries say field exercises are often spread out throughout the year, there is speculation that the allies are seeking to tone down the spring drills to create conditions for dialogue with North Korea. (AP)

Three Australians sentenced for fatal Bali shooting



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Denpasar

A court in Indonesia's resort island of Bali sentenced three Australian citizens on Monday for the fatal shooting of a fellow Australian national in June after they claimed to have been paid by a man they would not identify. Mevlut Coskun, Paea I Middlemore Tupou and Darcy Jensen were convicted of the shooting death of Zivan Radmanovic, a 32-year-old from Melbourne. A second man, 34-year-old Sanar Ghanim, was shot and beaten but survived the attack. Coskun, 22, and Tupou, 27, were sentenced at Denpasar District Court to 16 years in prison and Jensen, 24, was sentenced to 12 years. Coskun and Tupou argued the shooting death was not intentional and occurred during the chaos of the night. Radmanovic was in Bali to celebrate the birthday of his

wife, Jazmyn Gourdeas, along with her sister and Ghanim, who was her sister's partner. A coroner found Radmanovic suffered three gunshot wounds and blunt force trauma. Prosecutors said Jensen organised the attack while the other two carried it out. Jensen was caught at Jakarta's Soekarno Hatta airport in June as he attempted to leave the country. Coskun and Tupou were arrested in Singapore and Cambodia with the help of Interpol. During the trial that began in October, the three men said they were offered money to travel to Bali and frighten Ghanim into repaying a debt. They said the offer came from an Australian man they refused to identify because they feared for the safety of their families. Investigators testified that the group received instructions from a "Mr X" whose identity was never determined.

Indonesia landfill collapse kills five, several missing



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jakarta

A massive avalanche of garbage at Indonesia's largest landfill killed at least five people and left several others missing after heavy overnight rain triggered a rubbish dump collapse, officials said on Monday. More than 300 search-and-rescue personnel, using heavy machinery and sniffer dogs, were deployed to the sprawling dump site late Sunday at the Bantargebang Integrated Waste Treatment Facility in Bekasi, a city just outside the capital of Jakarta. Rescuers worked cautiously amid unstable heaps of waste, said Desiana Kartika Bahari, who heads Jakarta's Search and Rescue Office. She said the victims included two garbage truck drivers and two food stall sellers who had been working or resting near the landfill, while four people managed to escape the disaster. Rescuers, including police, soldiers and volunteers, were still searching for at least three people reported

missing, Bahari said. "We had not ruled out the possibility of more victims," she said, "We are still gathering data to confirm how many vehicles and workers were caught beneath the debris." Photos and videos released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed excavators digging through the collapsed mound, where several garbage trucks and small food stalls were buried. The National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson, Abdul Muhari, urged strict safety protocols during the ongoing search, noting that weather forecasts for the next two days indicate potential rain across Jakarta and its nearby satellite cities. He warned that the unstable collapsed material could trigger additional ground movement, putting rescue teams at further risk. Sunday's deadly collapse renewed scrutiny of Bantargebang, a critical but overwhelmed landfill that receives most of Greater Jakarta's daily household waste.

Japan deploys its first long-range missile

MARI YAMAGUCHI
Tokyo

Japan is preparing to deploy its first batch of domestically developed long-range missiles, with their launchers arriving at an army camp on Monday as the country accelerates its offensive capability in response to rising challenges in the region. The upgraded Type-12 land-to-ship missiles will be deployed at Camp Kengun in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Kumamoto by the end of March, completing the process of deployment, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said. Army vehicles carrying their launchers and other equipment arrived early in the morning in a highly secretive mission criticised by local residents who protested outside the camp. Opponents have complained about the lack of transparency and said the



deployment would instead escalate tension and make the missiles the target of attacks.

The Defence Ministry last year moved up the schedule of the missiles' deployment by one year as Japan accelerates a military buildup in the southwestern region as China esca-

lates tension around Taiwan, the self-governing island Beijing claims as its own. The upgraded Type-12 missile, developed and produced by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, has a range of about 1,000 km and can reach mainland China, a significant extension from the 200-km range of the original. It will be deployed next at Camp Fuji in Shizuoka, west of Tokyo, later this year. Japan considers China a growing security threat and has pushed a military buildup on southwestern islands near the East China Sea. It has deployed PAC-3 interceptors and midrange surface-to-air missiles on many of the islands, including Okinawa, Ishigaki and Miyako. Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi last month said Japan will deploy the midrange SAMs on Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni, just east of Taiwan, by March 2031. (AP)

14 women win Nepal parliamentary election

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
Kathmandu

Fourteen women have been elected to Nepal's parliament in the recently concluded general elections, accounting for just over eight per cent of the total seats. While the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) won 13 of the 14 seats, the Nepali Congress (NC) bagged one. The representation of women in the lower house has improved compared to the previous parliamentary elections in 2022, when only nine women candidates were elected, accounting for 5.45 per cent of the House. Nepal's Constitution mandates that women should have at least 33 per cent rep-



Construction work on the new federal parliament building inside Singha Durbar, in Kathmandu, Nepal

resentation in Parliament, but political parties have so far failed to meet the provision. With 14 women winning under the direct voting system, their representation stands at around 8.48 per cent so far. The House of Representatives (HoR) in Nepal has a total of

275 seats. While 165 members are elected through direct voting, 110 are elected through proportional representation. The highest number of 30 women parliamentarians were elected during the first constituent assembly election held in 2008, when

the CPN-Maoist emerged as the largest party soon after joining mainstream politics through the peace process that ended a decade-long armed insurgency. Most of the women elected at that time were Maoist guerrillas. Among the prominent victories this time, former Deputy Speaker Indira Ranamagar of the RSP defeated Dev Raj Ghimire, Speaker of the dissolved HoR from the CPN-UML, by a margin of 48,742 votes. Ranamagar secured 60,110 votes against Ghimire's 11,368. Rubina Acharya of the RSP defeated senior Nepali Congress leader Shekhar Koirala by a wide margin, polling 55,513 votes against his 12,850. (PTI)

Glasgow building fire closes Scotland's busiest train station



ASSOCIATED PRESS London

The fire broke out on Sunday in a vape shop on Union Street, next to the station. It burned through the night, and part of the building that dates back to 1851 collapsed. Overnight footage of the blaze showed the building and its dome-like roofing structure completely engulfed in flames. That section of roofing later appears to have collapsed. There were no reported casualties, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said.

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Lebanese parliament extends term for two years due to war in west Asia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Beirut

The Lebanese parliament has extended its term for two years on Monday due to the US-Israel war with Iran, and Israel steps up its attacks on Lebanon. The country's state news agency said 76 legislators voted in favour, 41 voted against, and four abstained. Hezbollah's 13-member bloc in parliament voted in favour of the extension. On Monday, the Israeli military said it was targeting Hezbollah's financial arm, al-Qard Al-Hasan, while its ground forces in Lebanon's south launched "focused



raids" against what it called the group's infrastructure. The ongoing war with Israel that began last week has displaced over half a million people and made it difficult to hold a vote in large parts of the country. The parliamentary elections were scheduled for May. Meanwhile, the human rights group Human Rights Watch said in a report Monday that the Israeli military "unlawfully" hit a village in southern Lebanon with shells containing white phosphorus, a controversial incendiary munition. Through geolocating and verifying

seven images, Human Rights Watch said Israel fired white phosphorus using artillery at residential areas in the southern Lebanese village of Yohmor. It happened hours after the Israeli military warned the residents of the village and dozens of others in southern Lebanon to evacuate. Human Rights Watch said it couldn't independently identify if any residents were still in the area or if anyone was harmed. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In the past, it has been maintained that it uses white phosphorus as a smoke screen and not to target civilians.

Indian mission in Houston celebrate 150 years of national song

SEEMA HAKHU KACHRU
Houston

The Consulate General of India in Houston has hosted an event commemorating 150 years of the national song, "Vande Mataram". The cultural gala held on Sunday was attended by over 800 members of the Indian diaspora and friends of India. It featured a pan-Indian musical journey, representing the diverse traditions of India, and served as a grand musical homage to the iconic anthem composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875. The celebration highlighted the song's enduring role as the "heartbeat of India" and a symbol of national unity during the year-long global commemoration of this milestone, the mission said. In his remarks, Consul General D C Manjunath said "Vande Mataram" remains a "message of unity, devotion, and love for the motherland that



continues to inspire generations", He said the 150-year legacy reflects an "unwavering connection to the motherland" shared by the global Indian community. The event was organised in collaboration with the Centre for Indian Classical Music (CICMH) and Vallabh Priti Seva Samaj Haveli. The evening opened with a high-energy performance by Moraya Dhol Tasha Pathak, setting a vibrant tone for the festivities. (PTI)

Istanbul's mayor goes on trial with 400 defendants in corruption case



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Istanbul

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu is standing trial on Monday with more than 400 other defendants accused of widespread corruption in a case critics see as a politically motivated move against Turkiye's opposition. Imamoglu, who has been behind bars for nearly a year, is the main challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 23-year rule. He was elected as the main opposition party's candidate for an election due in 2028, just days after he was detained. Most of the 402 defendants worked for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, headed by Imamoglu since 2019. Many are elected officials from the Republican People's Party, or CHP, while journalists are also among the accused. Imamoglu's arrest on March 19 last year sparked weeks of street protests, the largest seen in Turkiye for more than a decade.

Bangladesh shuts universities early to conserve power amid middle east crisis

ASHOKE RAJ
New Delhi

The Government of Bangladesh has ordered all universities across the country to shut down on Monday, advancing the upcoming Eid al-Fitr holidays as part of emergency measures aimed at conserving electricity and fuel during a deepening energy crisis. Officials said the directive applies to both public and private universities and is intended to cut electricity consumption while also reducing traffic congestion, which contributes to fuel use. Authorities explained that university campuses consume substantial amounts of electricity due to residential halls, classrooms, laboratories and cooling

systems. Temporarily closing these institutions is expected to ease pressure on the country's strained power grid. The decision comes as Bangladesh grapples with growing uncertainty over fuel and gas supplies linked to disruptions in global energy markets following the ongoing Middle East conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran. Government and private schools in Bangladesh had already been closed earlier for the holy month of Ramadan. With universities now included, most educational institutions across the country will remain shut during this period. The energy situation has worsened in recent days as authorities imposed daily limits on fuel sales



Long queues seen at several fuel stations across Dhaka

after panic buying and stockpiling were reported in several areas. Bangladesh relies heavily on imported energy, with nearly 95 per cent of its fuel requirements coming from abroad. Officials believe the temporary closure of universities will not only save electricity but also lower traffic movement in major cities such as Dhaka, helping reduce fuel consumption. As part of broader energy-saving measures, the Government has also instructed foreign-curriculum schools and private coaching centres to suspend operations temporarily to curb electricity usage. Meanwhile, severe gas shortages have forced authorities to halt operations at four of the country's five state-run fertiliser plants. Available gas supplies are

being redirected to power generation facilities to prevent widespread electricity outages. To address the supply gap, Bangladesh has been purchasing liquefied natural gas from the spot market at significantly higher prices while exploring additional cargoes. A senior official from the energy ministry said the Government is working to manage the crisis through multiple measures. "We are doing everything possible to reduce consumption and maintain stability in power, fuel and import supplies," the official said. The developments highlight the vulnerability of energy-import-dependent economies like Bangladesh to fluctuations in global energy markets, especially during periods of geopolitical tension.



PROSPECT

Autonomous bodies must use scorecard for financial prudence: CAG



Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) K Sanjay Murthy on Monday said autonomous institutions should leverage tools like risk-control maturity scorecard (RCMS) to see whether financial prudence is being followed. Addressing a workshop, organised with central and state universities for improving control and governance, Murthy said tools like RCMS for higher education institutions are not an additional audit but a self-monitoring tool. He further said that there are around 1,400 autonomous institutions. "The number of autonomous bodies will further grow, and the amount of investments will also continuously increase. It was therefore imperative that tools like RCMS are leveraged to identify areas requiring attention," Murthy said.

The workshop forms part of the consultative process for the roll-out of RCMS across autonomous bodies, beginning with 66 higher education institutions in the first phase of engagement with institutional leadership, aiming to build a shared understanding of the framework, its methodology and the expectations from institutions during the audit cycle. In their addresses, Secretary, Higher Education Vineet Joshi and Additional Secretary, Department of Higher Education Anand Rao V Patil emphasised that the RCMS initiative represents a shift from reactive compliance to proactive risk management. They encouraged universities to actively engage with the framework and ensure to facilitate wider learning and support a continuous process of improvement in governance and internal controls of the HEIs. In his remarks, Deputy CAG A M Bajaj said that the primary responsibility for identifying risks and managing controls rests with institutional management. RCMS seeks to provide a structured framework to support and strengthen that responsibility.

Dabur Vatika Launches #VatikaIamMore Campaign to Challenge Language Bias

Dabur Vatika, a leading natural hair care brand, has partnered with Havas Creative India to launch #VatikaIamMore, a campaign that challenges subtle linguistic biases that often diminish women's achievements. The initiative highlights how words like "and" and gendered prefixes such as "female" or "woman" can shift focus from merit to gender. Across industries, women are frequently introduced as "female cricketer" or "woman CEO," while their success is minimized with phrases like "just lucky" or "just emotional." The #VatikaIamMore campaign aims to remove these qualifiers and celebrate women's ambition, courage, and multifaceted identities. "At Vatika, we believe a woman's identity is deep and multidimensional. This campaign encourages society to move beyond the word 'just,'" said Ankur Kumar, Marketing Head - Hair Care, Dabur India Limited. The campaign also features a powerful film highlighting how language shapes perception and invites women worldwide to share their stories on social media using #VatikaIamMore.

No minimum balance penalty on Jan Dhan: FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

About 72 crore Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA), including those under the PM Jan Dhan scheme, are not subject to any penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, she said banks offer zero-balance savings accounts facility in Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDAs), including the accounts opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

(PMJDY), to ensure universal access to banking facilities, particularly for unbanked, vulnerable and small depositors, and to promote financial inclusion.

These accounts do not require maintenance of any minimum balance, and the account holders are provided basic banking services such as deposits, withdrawals and ATM access free of charge, without levy of any penal charges.

"Approximately 72 crore BSBDA, including PMJDY accounts, are not subject to any penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance," Sitharaman said.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

For other accounts, banks may levy charges for non-maintenance of Minimum Monthly Average Balance (MAB) in accordance with

their board-approved policies and the extant instructions of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which require that such charges be reason-

able, transparent and broadly aligned with the cost of providing the services.

During FY 2022-23 to FY 2024-25, Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have collected ₹8,092.83 crore from current account and savings account holders on account of non-maintenance of MAB.

"The amount of ₹8,092.83 crore collected over the last three financial years constitutes approximately 0.23 per cent of the total income of Public Sector Banks during the same period, indicating that such charges form only a very small proportion of banks' income and are pri-

marily aligned with the cost of providing banking services rather than revenue generation through penalties," Sitharaman said.

To further enhance customer centricity and promote inclusive banking, PSBs have reviewed their service charge structures. In accordance with board-approved policies and commercial considerations, SBI had completely waived off penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum MAB in savings accounts since March 2020. In 2025, nine PSBs have waived off such charges and two rationalised minimum balance charges.

Technology Can Raise Farmers' Income by 10-15%: Syngenta's Alexandra Brand

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
New Delhi

"When farmers use the right technology at the right time, they can reduce inputs and increase their income by 10 to 15 per cent," says Alexandra Brand, Executive Vice President for Sustainability, Corporate Affairs and Transformation at Syngenta Group, highlighting how technology-driven agriculture can transform rural livelihoods.

In an interaction, Brand said modern agricultural technologies, ranging from improved seeds to artificial intelligence-based advisory tools, are helping farmers boost yields while lowering environmental impact. She emphasised that sustainable agriculture is central to tackling global challenges such as climate change, food security, and declining farm incomes. "Sustainability for us means improving farmers' livelihoods, helping them deal with climate change, and running our own operations with a lower carbon footprint," she said.

Headquartered in Switzerland, Syngenta is an agricultural technology company with roots going back more than 250 years. The company develops seeds, crop protection products, and digital tools that help farmers manage crops more efficiently.

Brand explained that farmers are the company's primary customers. The firm provides seeds for crops such as corn, rice, and soybeans, along with vegetable seeds including tomatoes and watermelons. Once crops are planted, farmers also require solutions to protect them from pests and diseases. "We provide what you can call medicine for crops," she said. "If a crop suffers from fungal infection or pest attacks, farmers can use crop protection products to protect their harvest." However, she said the company's work increasingly goes beyond traditional farm inputs. Digital technologies are now playing a crucial role in agricultural decision-making.



Alexandra Brand

Through mobile applications and AI tools, farmers can take photographs of diseased plants and instantly receive recommendations on treatment. The platforms also provide hyper-local weather forecasts and advice on the best time to sow seeds or apply crop protection products.

India has emerged as one of the key markets for these digital tools. According to Brand, around 2.4 million farmers in the country are already using Syngenta's agricultural advisory app. "Farmers can interact with the platform in their local language," she said. "Even if someone cannot read or write, they can speak to a chatbot and get guidance."

The company aims to expand the platform's reach to about 10 million farmers in India in the coming years. Brand said the use of technology can significantly improve farm productivity. Data collected from crops such as

tomato, potato, and rice show that farmers who adopt modern techniques at the right time can reduce the use of fertilisers and pesticides while increasing yields.

At the global level, agriculture faces multiple challenges. Rising populations are increasing demand for food, while climate change is affecting crop productivity. According to Brand, different regions require different solutions. Smallholder farmers in countries like India, Indonesia, and parts of Africa have significant potential to increase productivity with better technology and knowledge. In contrast, large-scale agricultural economies such as Brazil and the United States face challenges related to financing, trade disruptions, and degraded soil.

Syngenta has also been working on sustainable farming practices. Its earlier initiative, known as The Good Growth Plan, focused on reducing environmental impact while improving agricultural productivity. Today, the company is working on projects such as reducing water consumption in rice cultivation. In northern Indian states like Haryana and Punjab, pilot programmes aim to cut water use in basmati rice farming by up to 50 per cent while maintaining yields.

Despite technological progress, Brand acknowledged that affordability remains a concern for many farmers. She said adoption often happens gradually as farmers balance financial risks with productivity gains. "Farmers usually adopt these technologies step by step," she said. Brand also urged greater attention to agriculture in public discourse. "Farmers deserve recognition for their work," she said. "The more people understand agriculture, the more they will support policies that strengthen the sector."

SEBI examining Calcutta Stock Exchange's voluntary exit bid



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Capital market regulator Sebi is examining the application seeking voluntary exit of the Calcutta Stock Exchange (CSE) from its business, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said Sebi has constituted a Working Group on the matter and appointed a valuation agency for verification and valuation of CSE's assets and liabilities. Certain information sought by Sebi from CSE is awaited, he said.

"Sebi would be passing a speaking order giving an exit to CSE from stock exchange business after taking a view on exclusively listed companies of CSE, its assets and liabilities, and relaxation from any regulations in order to facilitate exit," he said.

The Calcutta Stock Exchange (CSE), in its

February 18, 2025, letter to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), sought voluntary exit as a Stock Exchange under the Sebi Exit Policy for stock exchanges. "The proposal is at the stage of examination before SEBI," Chaudhary said.

Trading on the CSE platform stopped in April 2013.

The Calcutta High Court, in its orders dated February 19, 2024 and August 19, 2024, granted time to CSE to comply with the requirements relating to clearing corporation arrangements and net worth under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) (Stock Exchanges and Clearing Corporations) Regulations, 2018.

The said requirements were not achieved within the stipulated period by CSE. Subsequently, CSE submitted an application on February 18, 2025, seeking exit from the stock exchange business.

ACA unveils trophy for Corporate Cricket Tournament

TONY DAS
Guwahati

The Assam Cricket Association (ACA) on Monday hosted the curtain-raiser ceremony for the ACA Corporate Cricket Tournament 2026 at the 91 Yards Club Auditorium, situated within the ACA Stadium Complex in Barsapara. The event featured the official unveiling of the tournament trophy and the team jerseys for the upcoming competition.

The ceremony was attended by the Honorary Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Devajit Saikia, who served as the Chief Guest. Other prominent dignitaries included ACA Vice President Romen Dutta, Joint Secretary Rajendra Singh, Apex Council Member Mukutananda Bhattacharjya, and former ACA Secretary Tridib Konwar.

Delivering the welcome address, Romen Dutta highlighted the tournament's objective of promoting



cricket beyond the professional sphere. He noted that the initiative is designed to foster sporting spirit, teamwork, and healthy competition among various corporate and institutional bodies.

Commending the ACA's efforts, BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia emphasised the importance of providing

a platform for professionals who remain passionate about the sport. "We are thinking about budding cricketers working in different organisations who still have the passion to play and compete.

This tournament will create a competitive environment and provide a good

platform for players to showcase their talent," Saikia remarked.

The T20 format tournament is scheduled to commence on 10 March, with the grand finale set for 22 March at the historic Judges' Field in Guwahati. Matches will be spread across three primary venues: the ACA Stadium

Annexe Ground, the ACA Cricket Academy Ground in Fulung, and Judges' Field.

A total of 36 teams representing a diverse range of sectors — including Government departments, PSUs, and private establishments — are set to participate. Notable contenders include the NF Railway Cricket Team, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), the Gauhati High Court, Infosys Guwahati, and the Reserve Bank Staff Recreation Club.

Other participating institutions range from the Indian Institute of Architects and the Income Tax Department to the Assam Secretariat Cricket Club and various educational bodies like Tezpur University and Assam Agricultural University.

The organisers expressed confidence that the event would strengthen the bond between the professional community and the sporting world, further popularising cricket across the State of Assam.

IP University celebrates Phoolon Ki Holi at Dwarka campus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (IGGI) recently celebrated 'Phoolon Ki Holi' at its Dwarka campus, bringing together faculty and staff in an event that mirrored the spirit of togetherness and positivity within the academic community.

Addressing the gathering, Vice Chancellor Professor (Dr) Mahesh Verma emphasised that festivals within university settings play a crucial role in nurturing shared values. He remarked that such occasions serve as a poignant reminder of the timeless Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" — the belief that the world is one family.

"Encouraging students to understand the cultural and social significance of our traditions can significantly enrich their educational



experience," Professor Verma stated.

Reflecting on the deeper meaning of the festival, the Vice Chancellor shared that for him, Holi transcends the traditional celebration of colours. "It is a reminder of our responsibility and shared humanity," he noted.

Highlighting a personal initiative undertaken during the festivities, Professor Verma shared the privilege of distributing educational kits to young children. Expressing

the joy of witnessing their enthusiasm, he added, "Celebrations become truly significant when they create opportunities. If even one child walks into a classroom with greater confidence because of this small effort, the purpose stands fulfilled."

"The event underscored the university's commitment to fostering a holistic environment where cultural traditions and social responsibility go hand in hand with academic excellence.

Aviation regulator DGCA enhances monitoring of airlines to ensure compliance with norms: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Civil Aviation Ministry on Monday said the DGCA has increased monitoring on a weekly and fortnightly basis for critical operations of airlines along with bi-monthly visits by the watchdog's inspector at the airlines' offices to ensure their compliance with regulations.

Responding to a query in the Rajya Sabha on the reasons for the large scale disruptions at IndiGo in December 2025 and action taken to prevent recurrence of a similar situation in the

future, Union minister Murlidhar Mohol said the primary causes for the disruption were over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory preparedness along with deficiencies in system software support and shortcomings in management structure and operational control on the part of the airline.

"DGCA has introduced more robust measures to ensure compliance by airlines with regulations which include -- increased monitoring on weekly and fortnightly basis for critical operations along with bi-monthly

visits to the operator by DGCA's principal point-of contact inspector -- to closely monitor the airline's operations, with particular emphasis on roster integrity, crew availability, buffer adequacy, system robustness and adherence to FDTL requirements," he said in a written reply.

The Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms are implemented by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

In December 2025, the country's largest airline, IndiGo, faced massive operational disruptions that resulted in hun-



dreds of flight cancellations and impacted thousands of passengers. DGCA had also taken various regulatory actions against the airline.

Mohol, the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, in a separate written reply, said a total of 550 operator and organisation-wise Level II repetitive findings were noticed by the DGCA from 2023-25, and 29 enforcement actions were taken.

As of December 31, 2025, no Level-I deficiencies are pending for closure, he said.

Level-I finding requires immediate attention and rectifica-

tion, and the timeline for closure of such a finding is seven days, whereas Level-II finding must be resolved within 30 days.

"Continued operations are not allowed with a level-I finding without its rectification. In rare cases, operations are allowed under control/ restricted environment. In case of violations, DGCA initiates enforcement actions against the airline/organisation/personnel which may include warning, suspension or cancellation of approval/certificate/licence, including imposition of financial penalty," the minister said.



BRIEFLY

Villarreal beats struggling Elche 2-1 in La Liga



Villarreal beat struggling Elche 2-1 to stay level on points with third-place Atletico Madrid in La Liga. First-half goals from Canada striker Tajon Buchanan and Uruguayan defender Santiago Mourino put Villarreal in control, before former AC Milan striker Andre Silva pulled a late goal back for Elche. Villarreal has 54 points but Atletico is ahead on goal difference. However, the victory moved Villarreal 11 points clear of fifth-place Real Betis, which lost 2-0 at Getafe. Defending champion Barcelona leads the Spanish league by four points from Real Madrid. Elche's defeat left it in 17th place.

Satriano scores again: Midtable Getafe is finding form, beating Betis at home after winning 1-0 at cross-city giant Real Madrid last Monday. Uruguayan forward Martin Satriano followed up his superb strike against Madrid with another goal. That came after veteran midfielder Kiko Femenia had given Getafe the lead against Betis.

Sindhu skips Swiss Open to recover from Dubai ordeal



Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu will give the Swiss Open a miss as she recovers from the three-day ordeal in Dubai while HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth will spearhead the Indian challenge at the \$250,000 tournament starting here on Tuesday. Sindhu had to withdraw from the All England Championships after being stranded in Dubai for three days due to Gulf airspace restrictions following the US and Israeli bombing of Iran and the subsequent retaliation by Tehran. She was to travel to Birmingham via Dubai but could not do so. "She is not playing at the Swiss Open. We all know what she went through in Dubai, she couldn't travel to Birmingham. So she has sought some time to recover from it," Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary Sanjay Mishra said. After returning home, Sindhu had confessed that she struggled to remain calm during the ordeal in Dubai, wishing it to be the first and last such experience in her life. "There was a lot of stress. And it was scary. I think the only thing maybe was to stay calm. I know that's not the ideal situation where you say we are calm, but we're not inside," Sindhu had said. "Actually, it is very stressful. But I think it is an experience, I must say. And I hope it's the first and the last experience like this way." Sindhu is likely to return to action at the Badminton Asia Championships in April.

Cricket fraternity hails India's T20 WC triumph

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar hailed India as "totally deserving and rightful winners", while former England captain Michael Vaughan labelled them the "best white-ball team by a good distance" as the cricketers world lauded the Men in Blue for clinching a historic third T20 World Cup title.

Continuing their ruthless show with the bat, India handed New Zealand a crushing 96-run defeat at the Narendra Modi Stadium to become the only team to win the T20 World Cup three times and the first to defend the title successfully.

Tendulkar hailed the team's performance and shared a glimpse of celebrations outside his Mumbai home.

"Winning the World Cup twice in a row, the first time any team has done so in the T20 format. Totally deserving and rightful winners of the trophy. What a fantastic performance by our team and a special brand of cricket on display. Well done, Team India. Jai Hind!

"Not in Mumbai to witness the celebration happening outside my house and all over the country. What an evening it has been. Incredible work, Team India."

Former India captain Virat Kohli, who retired from



format after India's 2024 triumph, hailed the team's character and dominance. "Phenomenal win for Team India in Ahmedabad.

Absolutely no match for the explosive cricket played by us throughout the tournament. Brilliant character shown by the boys to keep

fighting in tough situations and become world champions once again. Congratulations to all the players and all the members of the management for achieving this feat," Kohli wrote on social media.

ICC chairman Jay Shah also congratulated the team for creating history while acknowledging New Zealand's run to the final.

"What an incredible finale to the most global and accessible @ICC event ever! Congrats to India, who became the first team to win back-to-back #T20WorldCup titles. Well done to Suryakumar Yadav and the whole squad and staff. Congrats also to @BLACK-

CAPS for their great campaign," Shah wrote.

Former captain and ex-BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said the victory reflected the strength of Indian cricket across levels.

"Congratulations India for winning the T20 World Cup... Very powerful side... Got better in the bigger games... Indian cricket in great place. Women's champion, under-19 champion and now the men's T20 champions," Ganguly posted.

Former West Indies captain and current coach Daren Sammy said India had been the team to beat throughout the tournament and stuck to his words.

Thank you Rahul and VVS for keeping Indian cricket in good shape: Gambhir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ahmedabad

India head coach Gautam Gambhir dedicated the team's third T20 World Cup title to his predecessor Rahul Dravid and BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE) chief VVS Laxman, acknowledging their role in shaping the national side.

India defeated New Zealand by 96 runs in the final on Sunday night. Gambhir said he is also immensely grateful to ICC Chairman Jay Shah for offering support when things got difficult for him, especially in the Test format.

"Look, first of all, I think I



should dedicate this trophy to Rahul (Dravid) bhai and then to Laxman. Because what Rahul bhai has done to keep Indian cricket in such a good shape, I have to thank him for everything, what he's done during his tenure,"

Gambhir said in the post-match press conference. "And then VVS Laxman for unconditionally doing so much for Indian cricket, especially behind (closed) doors, because COE remains the pipeline for Indian cricket."

Dravid was the head coach when India won the 2024 T20 World Cup under Rohit Sharma while Laxman has drawn widespread praise for grooming the next line of players at the COE. Chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar's influence in team building was also praised by Gambhir.

"...He does take a lot of flak and the amount of honesty he's worked with," he said, eluding to some tough calls by Agarkar, including the decision to hand over ODI captaincy to Shubman Gill last year despite Rohit leading the team to the Champions Trophy triumph.

We were outplayed by a great team: Santner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ahmedabad

New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner said his underdog team was outplayed by a great side in the T20 World Cup final after India notched a massive 96-run win to defend the trophy on Sunday. India became the first team to win three world titles in the shortest format after securing the trophy earlier in 2007 and 2024.

"Obviously, tonight, we were outplayed by a great team in front of a great crowd," Santner said in the post-match presentation. Santner won the toss and put India in to bat. The home side raced to a record 255/5 in their 20 overs before bowling out the Black Caps for 159. "It was a pretty good wicket throughout. Had we got a couple of wickets in the powerplay and kept India's total to 220, it could have been a good chase," Santner rued. "Losing a series of finals



isn't ideal. India is always a challenge. We were underdogs," he added. Santner, who walked in to a rousing applause from the large crowd here, congratulated India for a domineering campaign.

"...Credit to India to win a title at home, it always comes with a lot of pressure. And I think, SKY (India captain Suryakumar Yadav) and the boys should be pretty.. Very, very proud of their work," he said.



Individual milestones won't be celebrated says Gambhir

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ Ahmedabad

Gautam Gambhir can never get tired of stating this one belief. In fact, he repeats it at every opportunity for anyone who hasn't taken note — individual milestones won't be celebrated in his tenure as head coach.

The latest reminder of this staunchly-held principle came from him after India picked up their third T20 World Cup trophy here on Sunday, hammering New Zealand by 96 runs in the final with a near-perfect all-round performance.

"I think my simple philosophy with Surya (India T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav) has always been that milestones don't matter. It's the trophies that matter. For too long in Indian cricket, we've spoken about milestones. And I hope, till I'm there, we're not going to talk about milestones," Gambhir, a two-time top scorer for his team in ICC global finals, said it forcefully.

The former BJP MP then urged the cricket media to celebrate "trophies" not "milestones".

"Stop celebrating milestones, celebrate trophies.

That is going to be important, because the bigger purpose of a team sport is to be winning trophies, not scoring individual runs. It has never mattered to me, and it will never matter to me," he reiterated.

"...I have been very fortunate that Surya and me were on the same page, especially on this front," said Gambhir. No names were taken but it is not too difficult to understand who are the "milestone men" he was referring to. In Indian cricket, it is an open secret that Gambhir has always found his game-changing 97 in the 2011 World Cup final or his 75 in the 2007 T20 World Cup summit clash being under-appreciated.

In both cases, it was Mahendra Singh Dhoni's match-winning six (2011) and his master-stroke of giving Joginder Sharma the last over (2007) that became part of Indian cricket's folklore.

Gambhir gave the example of Sanju Samson's knocks in the "virtual quarter-final" against the West Indies and the ones he played in the semi-final and final as finest example of how to play a team sport. (PTI)

Lens moves A point behind PSG in French title race

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Paris

Lens capped a fine week by beating Metz 3-0 to move one point behind Ligue 1 leader Paris Saint-Germain in a tense title race. PSG's 3-1 home defeat to Monaco on Friday opened the door for rival Lens, which reached the French Cup semi-finals on Thursday after beating Lyon on penalties following a 2-2 draw.

There are nine rounds of games left in Ligue 1 and Lens hosts PSG on April 11.

Rock-bottom Metz rode its luck until Saudi Arabian defender Saud Abdulhamid put Lens ahead just before halftime with a powerful half-volley following good work from striker Abdallah Sima, who had twice gone close to scoring.

Abdulhamid then combined with Adrien Thomasson to set up France winger Florian Thauvin for a neat finish from the edge of the penalty area just after the break.

Midfielder Amadou Haidara made it 3-0 in the 52nd minute after playing a one-two with former Metz captain Matthieu Udol as Lens took control. Udol was born in Metz and made 185 appearances at left back before forcing a move this summer.

Lyon stumbles: After its 13-game winning streak in all competitions ended last month, fourth-place Lyon needed a stoppage-time penalty from captain Corentin Tolisso to scrape a 1-1 home draw with Paris FC and is now winless in four



games overall.

Paris FC almost secured a second consecutive win under new coach Antoine Kombouare. Having scored against Nice

in Kombouare's first game, Zimbabwe midfielder Marshall Munetsi netted in the 62nd. But Lyon got a penalty for handball following a video review.

Lyon trails third-place Marseille on goal difference.

Rennes wins again: Hiring Franck Haise as coach has proved a good decision so far for Rennes, which won 4-0 at Nice to move into fifth place.

It was a third straight win for Haise without conceding a goal and came against the club he left earlier this season amid high tensions between players and supporters. Nice fans gave Haise a hostile welcome.

After striker Esteban Lepaul grabbed his 13th league goal, midfielder Sebastian Szymanski made it 2-0 midway through the first half. Rennes showed its strength in depth with Ludovic Blas and Nordan Mukiele coming on to score second-half goals.

Werder Bremen beats Union Berlin

CIARAN FAHEY ■ Berlin

Berlin-born teenager Patrice Covic scored his first Bundesliga goal as Werder Bremen beat 10-man Union Berlin 4-1 away to escape the relegation zone.

The 18-year-old Covic, who progressed through Hertha Berlin's youth setup, entered in stoppage time with the game already won, and he scored with an easy finish two minutes later.

The goal will likely have been cheered by Hertha fans. Covic's father, Ante Covic, coached him through youth teams and he also coached the senior team during a tumultuous period in 2019 before he was replaced by Jurgen Klinsmann. Hertha is now in



the second division.

Bremen won its second straight match for the first time this season after new coach Daniel Thioune started with three defeats. "We as a team had to endure a lot. The fans had

to endure a lot too," Thioune said. The win lifted his team three places to 13th, just three points behind Union, which has just one win in 2026 and is among a host of clubs in danger of relegation. (AP)

AC Milan wins Derby della Madonnina 1-0 to cut Inter's lead in Serie A to 7 points

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Milan

AC Milan isn't ready to yield to city rival Inter Milan in the Serie A title race.

Pervis Estupinan scored the winner as Milan beat Inter 1-0 again in the Derby della Madonnina on Sunday.

The Rossoneri cut their city rival's lead to seven points with 10 rounds of the season remaining, setting off joyous celebrations in the San Siro while Inter's players questioned the referee for ruling out what would have been a very late equalizer.

Inter had the ball in the net in stoppage time after a quickly taken corner, but it



was too quick for the referee, who hadn't given the go-ahead for it to be taken and blew his whistle before the ball crossed the line. Inter had won its last eight

Serie A games since a 2-2 draw with Napoli on January 11, and was 15 games unbeaten in the league since the last derby, also won 1-0 by Milan, in November.

Port Vale, Southampton stun opponents in FA Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

This season's FA Cup just keeps on delivering shocks. Third-tier Port Vale pulled off a massive upset on Sunday by beating Premier League Sunderland 1-0 to advance to the quarterfinals of the historic competition. That was after Championship side Southampton knocked out another top-flight team with a 1-0 win against Fulham.

Port Vale is bottom of League One and 57 places below Sunderland. But the West Midlands team booked its place alongside giants Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester City and Chelsea in the last eight courtesy of Ben Waine's



looping first half header.

It was the latest giant-killing in a season that already saw sixth-tier Macclesfield eliminate title-holder Crystal Palace in what was officially the biggest

upset in FA Cup history.

Port Vale — the lowest ranked team left in the competition — is situated less than 20 miles from Macclesfield and proved every bit as inhospitable for

Premier League opposition.

"It probably hasn't sunk in really. I'm in a little bit of shock about that result today," Port Vale manager Jon Brady told TNT Sports. "Not that I didn't believe we could do it, but you need a lot of things going your way."

Brady and his players only secured their place in the fifth round by beating Championship side Bristol City five days earlier, with Waine scoring the winner in that match as well.

"I know it wasn't pretty to watch, probably not the best game to watch, but we dug in so hard and I think we deserved it," said Waine, who headed in from close range in the 28th minute.

"We stuck to the game plan — as simple as that."

The draw for the quarter-finals is on Monday. **Late drama for Southampton:** Ross Stewart's 91st-minute penalty sealed victory for Southampton at Craven Cottage.

The game was heading to extra time when Joachim Andersen brought down Finn Azaz in the box late on. Stewart stepped up and blasted past Fulham goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte.

Fulham coach Marco Silva paid the price for making nine changes to his starting lineup and leaving out star players like Raul Jimenez, Antonee Robinson and Alex Iwobi.



My accountability is to the 30 people in change room: Gambhir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

India head coach Gautam Gambhir stated on Sunday that he is only accountable to the people in the dressing room, and dedicated India's successful T20 World Cup title defence to stalwarts Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.

With their 96-run shellacking of New Zealand in the summit showdown here, India became the first team to win three T20 World Cups (2007, 2024, 2026), the first to defend their title and also the first to do so at home.

"My accountability is not for people on Social Media. My accountability is to those 30 people in that change room," Gambhir said during

the post-match press conference.

"A coach is as good as his team. Players made me the coach I am," Gambhir added.

But even in the hour of his glory, Gambhir did not forget Dravid, who guided the team to triumph in 2024, and Laxman, the current head of the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

"I would dedicate this trophy to Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman. To Rahul bhai for putting Indian team in a place and Laxman for creating pipeline at CoE," he added.

The former India opener also thanked chief selector Ajit Agarkar and Jay Shah, the current ICC Chairman and the former BCCI secretary.

"Ajit Agarkar, who took a

lot of flak and worked with a lot of honesty. And to Jay bhai. During my lowest ebb in my tenure after losing to NZ and then SA (at home in Test series in 2024 and 2025), he called me," he noted.

India produced an explosive performance with the bat to post a massive 255 for five, and then bundled out New Zealand for 159 to emerge comfortable winners.

"We have to let go fear of losing. Rather than playing conservative cricket, getting out for 120 is okay. The hallmark has been bravery and showing courage to score 250 in semis and finals," Gambhir said.

The head coach praised captain Suryakumar Yadav for working in tandem with him.



"Surya made my job easier. He has been a leader who is a father figure. Bigger purpose is to celebrate trophies not milestone. For too many years we have celebrated milestones. I will urge you people to stop celebrating personal milestones," Gambhir reiterated.

Suryakumar backed Gambhir's words:

"I played 4 years under GG's captaincy (for Kolkata Knight Riders). We have never had arguments as common goal was how team can win. Our friendship was set. He walked 2 steps and I walked 2 steps," said Suryakumar, who said the team would now like to win gold in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

He added, "I can't say this

is India's white ball era. Had it been our white ball era, we wouldn't have lost last two of the last three ODI series.

"I have picked teams based on faith and trust. I have never ever picked a team based on hope."

Powered by a blazing 89 from Sanju Samson and explosive half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma (52) and Ishan Kishan (54), India's top order went on a six-hitting spree to leave the New Zealand bowlers shell-shocked in the title clash, posting an imposing total.

With the ball, Jasprit Bumrah (4/15 in four overs) was excellent as usual while Axar Patel (3/27) too left a mark as India packed of the Kiwis cheaply.

Bumrah is a national treasure: Suryakumar Yadav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

India's triumphant captain Suryakumar Yadav on Sunday called Jasprit Bumrah a "national treasure", coming up with the most appropriate superlative for the talismanic pacer after his incredible bowling in the T20 World Cup.

With their 96-run victory over New Zealand in the summit showdown here, Suryakumar's men became the first men's international team to win successive World T20 titles and also the first to claim the trophy on home turf.

"Bumrah is a once-in-a-generation bowler. I can call him a national treasure. He knows how it needs to be done, he is the best in the



business," Suryakumar said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

In the title clash, Bumrah ended with exceptional

figures of 4/15 in four overs to help India bowl out New Zealand for 159 after the home team batters fired in unison to post an imposing

255 for five. "I think it'll take a little bit of time but definitely very happy. Been a long journey. Started post the 2024 World Cup. Jay Shah, Rohit bhai, they all showed faith in me and gave me opportunity to lead. From there it's been a long journey and coming here and winning it," Surya said.

The skipper was full of praise for his players who rose to the occasion to help the team achieve unprecedented success.

"We have been playing good cricket in the last two years and we just wanted to follow the good cricketing habits that we had in the 2024 World Cup. Boys took it really well."

On keeping faith in players,

the Mumbai man said, "I think it's really important to understand what they are capable of. And I knew they had the match winners in them. The timing was perfect. Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma they are top players and we knew they would do something special, and they did it in the final."

Sanju Samson (89 off 46 balls) and Abhishek Sharma (52 off 21 balls) added 92 in Powerplay and 98 for the opening stand and then Ishan Kishan carried on the good work with his explosive half-century.

In front of 86,000 fans, the chase was out of question as New Zealand were bowled out cheaply.

If it was an era, we wouldn't lose series: Gambhir on white-ball status

KUSHAN SARKAR
Ahmedabad

The Indian T20I team is Gautam Gambhir's baby and it made quite a statement by becoming the first to defend the World Cup trophy.

Does it mean that India is in its era of dominance in white-ball cricket?

Not quite, according to the straight-talking head coach as he dropped elaborate hints that the 50-over side, which is the only national team that features senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, hasn't got the results to call it the age of white-ball domination by the country.

With three ICC trophies in

three successive years (2024 T20 World Cup, 2025 ICC Champions Trophy and 2026 T20 World Cup), it was inevitable that someone would ask whether India's white-ball domination was comparable to that of Australia between 1999 and 2007 (they won three successive ODI World Cups).

Gambhir came up with a rather loaded response.

"See, I won't talk about white-ball cricket, because in white-ball cricket, we've lost two out of the last three series in one-day format. If it was an era, we wouldn't have lost two series," said Gambhir with a wry smile. (PTI)



Life has come full circle for Samson: Gavaskar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Batting great Sunil Gavaskar said life has come full circle for Sanju Samson, who rose from being a fringe player to emerge as the player of the tournament with three defining knocks in India's knock-out games during their historic T20 World Cup campaign.

Samson delivered explosive knocks in the last three matches of the T20 World Cup, including the semifinal against England and the final against New Zealand.

"Life has come full circle for Sanju Samson. Before the 2026 T20 World Cup, he had a terrible series against New Zealand. He was dropped, then after the T20 World Cup started, he got a chance to play against Namibia, but his knock wasn't enough to keep his spot.

"He next played directly against Zimbabwe in the Super 8, but his real redemption began against West Indies in a virtual quarter-final," said Gavaskar of Samson's turnaround on Star Sports.

"He played a flamboyant

innings and looked in complete control. We know how skilled Sanju is. But to perform in a virtual quarter-final, in the semi-final against England and then in the all-important final against New Zealand is not easy."

Samson, who was the reserve wicketkeeper in the previous edition with Rishabh Pant preferred for a similar fate this time as well after a poor build-up series against New Zealand in which he managed just 46 runs from five T20Is at an average of 9.20.

He was dropped with Ishan Kishan preferred for the wicketkeeper's role, but the team had a rethink after India were on the brink of elimination following a group-stage loss to South Africa.

Given a chance in the must-win game against Zimbabwe, Samson delivered a blazing start with a 15-ball 24 that set the tone for India's imposing 256/4. That knock boosted his confidence as he followed it up with a superb 97 not out in a virtual quarterfinal against West Indies at Eden Gardens to take India into the semis.

Tale of the day was the two powerplays: Mitchell Santner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner admitted his side was always up against it after India's explosive start, conceding that the Black Caps entered the final as underdogs and needed everything to go their way while chasing a mammoth total.

The Black Caps, who have now featured in four World Cup finals, were completely outplayed by India, slumping to a 96-run defeat in the summit clash here on Sunday night as their search for a maiden white-ball title continued.

"I guess it's not ideal, losing semis and finals, but like I said the other day, you

get to this situation, you're coming up against teams that are also playing very good cricket," Santner said.

"India in a final in India is always going to be a challenge. We knew that definitely the underdogs going into the game. And they showed their class again tonight, with that batting performance."

Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma gave the defending champions a rollicking start, racing to 92 in the first six overs. In contrast, New Zealand were 52/3 in the powerplay while chasing a mammoth 256.

"I think credit to Sanju and Abhishek at the top to get 90 I think off the powerplay. It's pretty tough from there. "And then, everything kind



of has to go well when you're chasing 250. And losing the wickets in the powerplay is always a challenge. I think that was the tale of the day, was the two power plays. I think we were three for 40-

odd and they were 90-odd for none."

New Zealand had won the toss and opted to bowl but their bowlers struggled to contain the Indian top order.

"There wasn't a lot of seam

or swing to start so I think the bowlers are trying to do what they can to get out of the hitting arc.

"We know how good both Sanju, Abhishek, Kishan are at hitting all over the wicket. I think whichever way you look at it, there's no perfect plan when guys are going. I think it is hard to stop when guys are going like that. So whether it was a few more yorkers or closing out balls, I think we tried the wide stuff.

"And then we tried the two on the leg side. So we tried everything. But credit has to go to the way they set that power play up and then from there you can go pretty hard and to get a good score like they did."

Explaining the decision to

bring in seamer Jacob Duffy in place of off-spinner Cole McConchie, Santner said the Ahmedabad surface offered little help for spin.

"Ahmedabad, the wicket, the mixed soil usually there's not much spin. There's always a little bit of bounce. "Bowling my overs, Axar's and Chakravarty's, there wasn't really any spin at any stage. So whichever way you go, there was potentially a bit of bounce for the seamers."

Santner admitted his bowlers faltered in execution.

"At the end of the day it's an execution, whoever is bowling. I think when you bowl nice areas for a period of time, you could get an out of overs. I think that was the main thing.

Coach Sahab, smile looks good on you: Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

India's history-making T20 World Cup triumph here reactivated the enigmatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni on social media after nearly two years and he took the opportunity to tell head coach Gautam Gambhir how good a smile looks on his intense face.

Dhoni's last Instagram post was back in 2024.

"History gets created at Ahmedabad, big congratulations to the team and support staff and to all the fans of Indian Cricket Team worldwide. Such a pleasure to see all of u play," he posted after attending the final in which India thrashed New Zealand by 96 runs to



win the trophy for an unprecedented third time.

"Coach Sahab smile looks great on u, intensity with smile is a killer combo, very well done. Enjoy guys... BUMRAH ke baare mein kuch na likhooon tou hi acha hai. CHAMPION BOWLER (It's better if I don't write anything on Bumrah)," he

quipped, referring to Gambhir's mostly serious demeanour.

Gambhir responded to Dhoni, saying he felt nice to see the former skipper at the stadium. "And what a reason to smile, great seeing you," commented the former opener, who played a stellar role in India's title

wins in the 2007 T20 World Cup and the 2011 ODI World Cup under Dhoni's leadership. It was a display of all-round brilliance by the Suryakumar Yadav-led India on Sunday night as top-order batters Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan and Abhishek Sharma went on a rampage to help the team score a record 255/5 after being invited to bat by the Kiwis.

Bumrah then produced a master-class to snare four wickets for a mere 15 runs in his quota of overs.

Dhoni was India's first T20 World Cup-winning captain when he led the team to the trophy in the 2007 inaugural edition before a Rohit Sharma-led side added a second title in 2024.



Arshdeep gives peek into India's celebrations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

The Indian cricket team's resident social media star Arshdeep Singh was at it again after the T20 World Cup triumph, teasing head coach Gautam Gambhir to smile some more, asking Sanju Samson whether justice has finally been done to him and reasserting the collective belief in "Jassi bhai's" magic!

The young pacer, who gives fans a peek into the fun side of the dressing room and his teammates' lives through his reels, posted a roughly 40-second clip featuring Gambhir, Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Axar Patel, and captain Suryakumar Yadav. It starts with Arshdeep asking an already smiling Gambhir to laugh a bit more. "Paaji, kade

has wi leya karo (brother, you should laugh sometimes)," he quipped quoting from a famous Bollywood comedy film. "Singh is King," responds Gambhir. The next frame has opener Abhishek, asked a light-hearted question about what happened to him in the tournament before camera shifts focus to Samson, who scored three consecutive and blazing half centuries to end a period of self doubt.

"Paaji, justice mil gaya? (Have you got justice)," asks Arshdeep to the Kerala man. Samson answered with a delirious, "Yeah."

Next up was Kishan, who also smashed a half century in the 96-run final win over New Zealand on Sunday.

"Ek Bihari (One Bihari)," said Arshdeep.

"Sab pe bhaari (aces everyone)," added Kishan.

World Cup jeetayega? asked Surya; Bharosa karoge? answered Ishan

KUSHAN SARKAR
Ahmedabad

When Suryakumar Yadav called Ishan Kishan to confirm his place in India's T20 World Cup squad, the captain had just one question to ask the swashbuckling batter — "World Cup jeetayega?"

Never the one to shy away from making a statement, Kishan answered Suryakumar with a question of his own, "Bharosa karoge? (Will you have faith in me?)"

The brief conversation ended with Suryakumar replying in affirmative and Kishan delivered with 241 runs in the tournament, including a blazing half century in the all-important final here on Sunday.

"Surya bhai called me when the team was about to meet. I even took a screenshot because I had a feeling he had called about the World Cup team. He asked me directly, 'World Cup jeetayega?'"



"I asked him, 'Bharosa karoge?' He said 'yes' and that was it," a beaming

Kishan recalled after India's title triumph that was sealed with a 96-run thrashing of

New Zealand in the summit clash here on Sunday night.

However, the night before the final was far from easy for the Bihar-man, who plays for Jharkhand. He was dealing with a deeply personal loss.

Kishan revealed that he had learnt about the death of his cousin sister in an accident just days earlier. It was a piece of news that weighed heavily on his mind heading into the biggest game of the tournament.

Speaking about the emotional turmoil, Kishan said he decided to channel his turbulent feelings into focussed batting.

"To be very honest, before the game I was not planning to say this, but I'll say it. My cousin sister passed away in a car accident and I got to know about it a few days back.

She always wanted me to score big runs," one could gauge the pain in his voice.