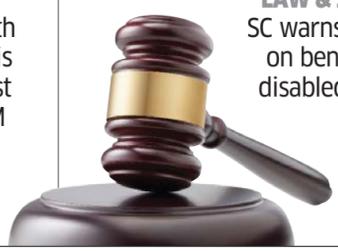




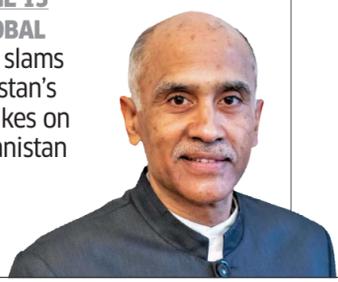
PAGE 5 NATION
 India's youth aspiration is our greatest capital: PM



PAGE 7 LAW & JUSTICE
 SC warns officials on benefits to disabled cadets



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 Hit on tech billionaires' wealth?



PAGE 13 GLOBAL
 India slams Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan



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 GT appoint Hayden as batting coach

PIONEER IN SHORT

NOIDA AIRPORT NEARS OPERATIONAL LAUNCH

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a revised capital cost of ₹3,630.77 crore for a 31.42 km greenfield connectivity corridor linking South Delhi, Faridabad, and Gurugram to Jewar International Airport via the Delhi-Faridabad-Ballabhgarh-Sohna Spur of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. The corridor, 11 km of which will be elevated, intersects the Eastern Peripheral Expressway, Yamuna Expressway, and Dedicated Freight Corridor, facilitating multimodal transport. The elevated segment costs an additional ₹689.24 crore, with Haryana contributing ₹450 crore. The connectivity project supports economic growth and logistics efficiency in the National Capital Region as Noida International Airport moves closer to operational launch after receiving an aerodrome licence from DGCA and security clearance from BCAS. The airport's first phase covers 1,300 hectares with one runway and terminal, handling 1.2 crore passengers annually. Operational readiness under ORAT is ongoing, with commercial flights and formal inauguration expected after final approvals.

Govt denies LPG crisis, enhances production

RAJESH KUMAR
 ■ New Delhi

The Union Government on Tuesday assured that there is no LPG crisis. Sources said cooking gas production has increased by 10 per cent across oil refineries, and all refineries are currently operating at 100 per cent capacity. The statement came a day after the minimum waiting period for booking a domestic LPG refill was raised from 21 days to 25 days following a surge in demand triggered by fears of supply disruption.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has also constituted a committee to examine the shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, after restaurant associations warned that eateries could shut down within days if supplies are not restored.

As the conflict in West Asia continues to disrupt fuel supplies globally, the Government has prioritised LPG supplies to households,



Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri chairing a meeting with officials in New Delhi

leading to a supply crunch for hotels and restaurants.

Hotel and restaurant associations in several states — including West Bengal, Maharashtra, Odisha, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pune, Delhi and Telangana — have raised alarm and sought intervention from the petroleum ministry. Earlier on Tuesday, the Union Government invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to regulate the availability, supply and equitable distribution of natural gas for priority sectors.

Meanwhile, the ministry said a panel of oil company executives will review complaints regarding shortages of commercial LPG and make fuel available to meet the needs of hotels and restaurants. "For LPG supply to other non-domestic sectors, a committee of three Executive Directors of Oil Marketing Companies has been constituted to review representations for LPG supply to restaurants, hotels and other industries," the ministry said in a post on X.

SC flags need for Uniform Civil Code

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court of India on Tuesday observed that the time may have come for a Uniform Civil Code while hearing a plea challenging provisions of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 as discriminatory to Muslim women. A Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and R Mahadevan said that while the petition raised "a very good case" on discrimination, reforms of this nature are better addressed by the legislature.

The court cautioned that striking down the 1937 law governing Muslim inheritance could create a legal vacuum as there is no statutory law currently regulating Muslim inheritance. "In our over-anxiety for reforms, we may end up depriving them," the Chief Justice told senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioners. "If the Shariat Act goes away, will it not create an unnecessary void?"

Justice Bagchi said that although the plea raised serious issues of discrimination, it may be appropriate to



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

leave the matter to Parliament, which has the mandate to enact a Uniform Civil Code under the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Chief Justice remarked that "the answer is Uniform Civil Code."

Referring to broader personal law issues, Justice Bagchi noted that the principle of one wife for one man is not uniformly applied across communities, but that does not automatically empower the court to declare all bigamous marriages unconstitutional. Such matters, he said,

The Bystander



Trump says West Asia conflict may end soon

ASHOKE RAJ
 ■ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump said the ongoing conflict in West Asia could end soon, though not within the coming week, as tensions continue to escalate across the region and diplomatic prospects remain uncertain.

Speaking at a press conference, Trump indicated that dialogue with Tehran is still possible, but stressed that any talks would depend on the terms offered by Iran. Even as military conflict continues, Trump suggested that negoti-



US President Donald Trump speaking at the Republican Members Issues Conference

ations were not ruled out.

The US President also commented on Iran's leadership dynamics, saying he did not believe Mojtaba Khamenei — widely reported to have assumed the role of Supreme Leader and the son of Ali Khamenei — would be able to "live in peace" amid the current tensions.

Meanwhile, Iran's powerful military wing, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), dismissed US claims that its missile capabilities had been severely damaged during the conflict.

Lok Sabha clashes over motion against Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

A fresh political confrontation unfolded in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday after Opposition parties moved a no-confidence motion against Speaker Om Birla, triggering sharp exchanges between the treasury and Opposition benches.

Opposition members said the motion was aimed at ensuring that the Speaker conducts House proceedings "fairly" and without "pressure" from the Government. The ruling NDA



Union Minister Kiren Rijiju speaking in Lok Sabha on Tuesday

strongly defended Birla, asserting that he had been impartial and treated both sides equally. The debate will continue on Wednesday, with a reply expected from

ruling party, amid a heated debate over who should preside while the motion is considered.

Mohammad Jawad read out the notice to move the resolution. The motion was also backed by MPs K. Suresh and Mallu Ravi.

Soon after, Asaduddin Owaisi raised a point of order questioning the decision to allow Jagdambika Pal to chair the proceedings, arguing that Pal had been appointed to the panel of chairpersons by Birla himself.

IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers resigns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers has resigned, more than three months after the country's largest airline experienced its worst-ever operational meltdown. The resignation will be effective immediately.

Managing Director Rahul Bhatia has assumed management of the airline on an interim basis. "We wish to inform you that the Board of Directors of the Company, at its meeting held today, i.e., March 10, 2026, inter-alia, took note of the resignation tendered by Mr. Pieter Elbers,



Chief Executive Officer. He will be relieved from the service of the Company effective close of business hours on March 10, 2026," the airline said in the statement.

"With immediate effect, Pieter Elbers will be stepping down as InterGlobe Aviation Limited's (IndiGo) CEO," the company added.

CEC assures fair polls in West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ Kolkata/New Delhi

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday sought to quell the row over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, assuring that no eligible voter's name would be removed and pledging free, fair and violence-free elections.

His remarks came amid escalating tensions between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) over alleged large-scale voter deletions, which have sparked political protests



CEC Gyanesh Kumar, Commissioners SS Sandhu and Vivek Joshi interacting with the press on the outskirts of Kolkata on Tuesday

across the State led by CM Mamata Banerjee.

Addressing a press conference after meetings with political parties and senior officials, the CEC said the SIR's sole purpose was to ensure "pure electoral rolls," safeguarding the right to vote while preventing ineligible inclusions. He noted

SC tightens oversight on West Bengal SIR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court of India on Tuesday ordered the setting up of independent appellate tribunals, headed by former High Court judges, to hear appeals against exclusions from voter lists during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

The court also warned against attempts to undermine the integrity of judicial officers deployed to deal with claims and objections in the SIR process. Describing such moves as an affront to the judiciary, a three-judge bench



TMC MP and senior lawyer Kalyan Banerjee speaking to the media after SC proceedings in the West Bengal SIR case

headed by Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant said, "How did you dare file such applications? It shows as if you don't have trust... No one should dare question the judicial officers."

SBI's Large Defaulter List shows split loans, guarantor complexities

J GOPIKRISHNAN
 ■ New Delhi

The relationship between banks and large corporate borrowers in India often raises questions, especially when it comes to granting huge loans and recovering them after default. Data about cases filed by the State Bank of India (SBI) against large defaulters shows patterns that appear complex and sometimes puzzling.

For instance, SBI has filed two civil cases against fugitive C Sivasankaran's company Dishnet Wireless Limited. Sivasankaran gained

notoriety in the Aircel-Maxis case, where P Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram were involved in a quid-pro-quo in granting Foreign Investment Promotion Board clearance to Maxis Communications to acquire 74 per cent of Aircel.

According to data from TransUnion CIBIL, SBI filed two cases against Dishnet for defaulted loans of ₹4,856 crore each, totaling ₹9,712 crore. However, different guarantors are listed in the two suits. One case names Sivasankaran's partner Suneeta Reddy, a director of

LARGE DEFAULTERS OF SBI

- Anil Ambani's Reliance Group
- Dishnet Wireless Limited
- KSK Mahanadi Power Company
- Bhushan Power and Steel Limited
- Aircel Mobile
- Aban Holdings Pte Ltd
- Videocon Telecommunications
- Gitanjali Gems
- Lavasa Corporation
- ILFS Transportation
- Shakti Bhog Foods
- ABG Shipyard
- Punj Lloyd

SBI has filed more than 700 cases against around 150 companies to recover ₹5.79 lakh crore

Apollo Hospitals, while the other lists Anand Swarup Pathak as guarantor.

A similar pattern appears in cases involving Anil Ambani and his companies. Although SBI lists Alok Industries Limited with ₹6,299 crore dues as the biggest defaulter, a closer analysis suggests companies linked to Ambani owe about ₹13,633 crore. SBI split these loans into 16 accounts, resulting in 16 civil cases. The loans were given to several now-defunct Reliance group companies, including Reliance Communications, Reliance Naval and Engineering

Limited, Reliance Telecom, and Reliance Infratel.

Another major case involves KSK Mahanadi Power Company Limited, which owes SBI ₹11,445 crore in three cases. The company

and Bankruptcy Code in 2025. Similarly, SBI lists four defaults totaling ₹15,244 crore against Bhushan Power & Steel Limited, which also went through the insolvency process.

Some cases involve companies based abroad. For example, Aban Holdings Pte Limited borrowed ₹5,476 crore from SBI's Chennai office. Although run by individuals of Indian origin and registered in Singapore, questions remain about how such loans will be recovered if they were issued without strong collateral.



was named in the 2012 Coal Allocation Scam and was later taken over by JSW Energy, headed by Sajjan Jindal, under the Insolvency

7 killed as mound collapses at Gurugram construction site

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

Seven labourers were killed and four others, including three Nepalese, were injured when a mound of soil collapsed on them at a construction site, police said on Tuesday, adding that an FIR has been registered. The district administration set up an inquiry committee to investigate the matter.

The family of the deceased has alleged that the labourers were not provided with adequate safety measures at the construction site. The incident occurred on Monday evening at the Signature Global Society in Gurugram's Sidhrawali area, they added.

DSP Bhiwadi, Rajasthan, Yogesh, told reporters that construction work of a Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) was ongoing when a



Rescue personnel carry out an operation after an under-construction wall collapsed on Monday in Gurugram

mound of soil suddenly collapsed, and some labourers (around 12-15) got trapped under the debris.

Upon receiving information, a police team from the Bilaspur Police Station, Gurugram, along with State

Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel reached the site and rescued the labourers.

They rushed them to a nearby hospital at Bhiwadi in

Rajasthan, where seven of them were declared dead, the officials said.

Postmortem examination of the deceased will be conducted in Gurugram, the DSP said. It appears that they died due to asphyxiation, officials said.

A Gurugram police spokesperson said that an FIR in connection with the incident has been registered under BNS sections 105 (deals with punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others).

Talking to the media in Rajasthan's Bhiwadi, a kin of one of the deceased workers said the labourers were working several feet below when the mound of soil collapsed on them.

A kin of the deceased has also demanded ₹50 lakh as compensation.

Govt priority is women's health, empowerment: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said her government is committed to ensuring every woman has access to quality healthcare through improved services, awareness and the expansion of medical facilities.

The Chief Minister, while attending a conference on "Women in the Medical Profession," said the Delhi government places the highest priority on women's health and empowerment.

The meet, at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, brought together women doctors and specialists to deliberate on medical concerns across different stages of a woman's life and raise awareness about their health, according to an official statement.

During the event, scientific sessions led by experts discussed topics including adnexal masses across age groups, genetic advancements, cardiovascular health in women, breast cancer



Our nurses are the backbone of the hospital, and women here enjoy all possible privileges and safeguards

— REKHA GUPTA, CHIEF MINISTER

screening and vulvar dermatoses, it said.

The chief minister noted that women are contributing across the medical field, as doctors, surgeons, researchers, nurses and health specialists.

The experts highlighted the importance of preventive healthcare, timely diagnosis and a multidisciplinary approach in managing

women's health conditions, the statement said.

The chairman of the hospital's Board of Management, Dr Ajay Swaroop, said the hospital has women professionals occupying key positions across clinical departments, laboratories and administration.

"At Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, every day is Women's Day. We have a plethora of talent-

ed women occupying the highest positions across departments," he said in the statement.

"Our nurses are the backbone of the hospital, and women here enjoy all possible privileges and safeguards," he added.

The chairman of the hospital's Board of Trustees, Dr DS Rana, said access to education has played a key role in the progress of women in society.

"In the 1950s and 1960s, especially in rural areas, women had very limited opportunities for schooling and higher education. Today, education has opened doors to public life, government services, entrepreneurship and leadership roles," Rana said.

The statement also highlighted the legacy of the hospital's founder, Sir Ganga Ram, noting that he supported women's empowerment through initiatives such as educational institutions and welfare programmes for women.

Delhi's to add 200 electric buses this month: Pankaj Kumar Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi will add 200 new electric buses to its public transport fleet this month, taking another step toward expanding clean mobility in the national Capital, said Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh. The Minister made the statement after reviewing the operations of the Delhi Transport Corporation and the Transport Department on Tuesday.

Officials informed the minister during the review meeting that Delhi currently operates more than 4,000 electric buses. With the addition of the new buses this month and further procurement planned during the year, the city's EV bus fleet is

expected to reach around 7,500 by the end of the year.

The meeting focused on the expansion of the electric bus fleet, the development of EV charging infrastructure, and the progress of key transport infrastructure projects across the city. During the meeting, Singh emphasised that strengthening Delhi's electric bus fleet remains a major priority for the Delhi Government. He said the Government aims to build a cleaner, stronger, and more efficient public transport system while promoting environmentally sustainable mobility solutions.

Officials also briefed the minister about the readiness of the infrastructure needed to support the growing EV fleet. According to the



Transport Department, electric charging infrastructure has already been installed at 44 bus depots across Delhi. These facilities support the charging requirements of electric buses currently operating in the city.

In addition, EV charging networks are being developed at 36 more depots

improving connectivity and passenger facilities. Officials informed the minister that the Delhi Government is planning to build a new inter-state bus terminal in Bhalswa on around 20 acres of land reclaimed from the landfill site. The proposed terminal is expected to significantly improve inter-state bus connectivity and passenger facilities, particularly in the northern part of the city.

The minister also directed officials to conduct a feasibility study for developing a new DTC depot along the Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) corridor.

The assessment will consider the rapid urban expansion in the region and the increasing demand for public transport services.

Locals block road in Patparganj after missing man found dead

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
■ New Delhi

The body of a 31-year-old man was found on a vacant land near Telco T-Point in East Delhi's Patparganj Industrial Area. The incident triggered tension in the locality and protests by family members who alleged police inaction after they had reported him missing.

Police later identified the deceased as Pushpendra alias Akash, a resident of School Block in Mandawali. According to officials, the body was discovered on March 8 on land belonging to the Delhi Development Authority within the jurisdic-



tion of the Patparganj Industrial Area police station.

A police team reached the spot soon after receiving information about the body. Officials from the crime branch and a forensic team also inspected the site and collected evidence as part of the investigation. During the preliminary inquiry, police said no immediate signs of suspicious activity or foul

play were found at the scene. However, officials said the exact cause of death will be known only after the post-mortem examination. The body has been sent for autopsy, and further investigation is underway. Police said all angles are being examined.

Pushpendra was known locally as a garment shopkeeper and lived with his family in the Mandawali area of East Delhi. His death has sparked anger among relatives and local residents. Family members claimed that Pushpendra had been missing since March 7 and that they had filed a missing person complaint with the police.

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as ANISHA alias AMISHA D/o LAXMI DEVI R/o Village-Asalatpur, Loni, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201102 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AMISHA.

PD(432)C
I, Raj Kumar S/o Harbans Lal R/o 216 Raja Garden Delhi-110015 have changed my name to Raj Kumar Vinayak.

PD(433)C
I, Mahesh Singh, Father of No.15792751X L/Hav Jitendra Singh, R/o- Vill- Nagla Sabla, PO- Sonkh, Teh- Govardhan, Dist- Mathura, U.P.- 281123 have changed my name from Mahesh Singh to Mahesh, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(434)C
I, Kashmiri Devi, Mother of No.15792751X L/Hav Jitendra Singh, R/o- Vill- Nagla Sabla, PO- Sonkh, Teh- Govardhan, Dist- Mathura, U.P.- 281123 have changed my name from Kashmiri Devi to Kshmiri, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(435)C
I, Sarita Devi, W/o- JC-340721L Sub Maj Samod Singh, R/o- Vill & PO- Usnidha, Teh & Dist- Mainpuri, U.P., have changed my name from Sarita Devi to Sarita Chauhan, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(436)C
I, No.14867076K SEP/MT Amit Rajbhar, R/o- Vill- Sisauda, PO- Saurnam, PS- Nandganj, Dist- Ghazipur, U.P.- 233302, have changed my Daughter's name from Vaishnavi Rajbhar to Vaishnavi Rajbhar, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(437)C
I, Lada Kanwar, Mother of- No.16013544W Hav Gajraj Singh Bhati, R/o- H.No.66 Baikunthpuri Colony, Vill- Rajnagar, PO- Nayapura, Teh- Ladpura, Kota, Rajasthan - 324001, have changed my name from Lada Kanwar to Lad Kanwar, vide affidavit dated 10/03/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(438)C

Traffic curbs in Civil Lines till March 25 due to sewer line work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Traffic restrictions will remain in place on several roads in North Delhi's Civil Lines area till March 25 due to sewer line installation work being carried out by the Delhi Jal Board, according to an advisory issued by the Delhi Traffic Police. Officials said the work involves laying a 300 mm diameter sewer line on Rajpur Road between 31 Rajpur Road and 19 Rajpur Road. The project, which will begin on March 10, covers the



carriageway stretch from Civil Lines police station to MCD Chowk.

Because of the construction work, traffic movement will be affected on several key roads in the Civil Lines area.

Authorities warned that congestion and diversions are likely on Rajpur Road, Mall Road, Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Chaurbaja Marg, Bhiku Ram Jain Marg, Shammath Marg, and Lok Niwas Marg.

As part of the traffic management plan, one major stretch of Rajpur Road has been closed to vehicles. Police said the carriageway from Rajpur Authority Cut to MCD Chowk on Rajpur Road will remain completely closed to all vehicles during the period of the construction work.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concern that Air Commodore K.K. Murthy S/o Late K. Chandra Mouli & Smt. K. Jayalakshmi W/o Air Commodore K.K. Murthy both R/o B-5/24, Yamuna Vihar, Delhi-110053 they are the original allottee of property / Flat No. F-83, Sector-21, Noida (U.P.) have sold the said property on General Power of Attorney basis to the following person.
General Power of Attorney executed in favour of Shri Prem Kumar Sehgal S/o Shiv Narain R/o F-83, Sector-21, Noida, (UP), GPA registered at SR IV- Seelampur, North East I, Delhi, Regtn. No. 11257, Book No. 4, Volume No. 8908, Page No. 7-10 dated 28.02.2004.
So it is informed to all concern that the said Property No. F-83, Sector-21, Noida, (UP) is going to be transferred in favour of Smt. Nisha Sehgal W/o Shri Prem Kumar Sehgal R/o F-83, Sector-21, Noida, UP.
If any one has/have any objection he/she may submit his/her objection along with the sufficient proofs in the Group Housing Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.
(Prem Kumar Sehgal)

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of BABLI NAAGAR who are owned of PROPERTY TOTAL ADMEASURING 242 SQ YDS BEARING MUNICIPAL NO-RZ-3147 (PART), MEASURING 77 SQ YDS (33 FEET X 21 FEET) AND PROPERTY BEARING MUNICIPAL NO-RZ-3148-A MEASURING 165 SQ YDS (33FEET X 45 FEET) KHARSA NO-410, SITUATED AT JAGDAMBA ROAD TUGHLAKABAD EXTN NEW DELHI-110017 having acquired the same vide Sale Deed dated 14.10.2024, duly registered in the office of SRO-V Mehrauli as Registration No. 2024/10017/306, Addl. Book No. 1, Page Nos. 107-126, Volume No. 19203, Dated 14.10.2024 (SRO-V Mehrauli) now Babli Nagar intend to mortgage the subject property for the financial assistance from Axis Finance Limited ("AFL") that Original GPA dated 12/06/1998 executed by Smt. Harmel Kaur in favour of Shri Aman Arora Property No. RZ-148-A), Original ATS and Will dated 12/06/1998 executed by Shri Kashmeri Singh in favour of Smt. Harmet Kaur RZ-3147 part) and Original ATS and Will dated 12/06/1998 executed by Shri Kashmeri Singh in favour of Smt. Harmet Kaur RZ-3147 part) and Original ATS and Will dated 12/06/1998 executed by Smt. Harmet Kaur in favour of M/s. MARMO HOME PRIVATE LIMITED (RZ-3147 part) has been lost/used/invalidated available. FIR already lodged vide LR No: 143733/2026 dated 05/03/2026 to comply the requirements of BANK/NCF, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 10 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.
Lucern Legal LLP
N-161, Ground Floor, Saira Tower, Gautam Nagar Near Yusuf Sarai Community Centre New Delhi-110048
Contact: 011-40045316 & 41657327

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that Sh. Ajay Kumar is the owner of Entire Second Floor, without roof "Said floor", area measuring 25.90 Sq. Mtrs., built on Property Bearing No. 38, in Block F, Pocket No. 4, situated at Sector No. 16, Rohini Residential Scheme, New Delhi-110089 through Sale Deed dated 25.05.2017, do. no. 4207 executed by Sh. Nitin Kumar in favour of Sh. Ajay Kumar in respect of Said Floor. The owner has misplaced the (1) Original Sale Deed dated 07.04.2017 as doc. No. 2559 executed by smt. Mitlesh in favour of Mr. Nitin Kumar (F/439, 2nd floor with roof) in respect of his unindivided share in the said property for which complaint is regd. vide Application No. 154402/2026, registered at P.S. K.N. KATJU MARG, Rohini (Crime Branch, Delhi on 10.03.2025. Anyone who finds the above-mentioned documents, kindly handover the same to the Manager of ICICI Bank Ltd./ ICICI Home Finance Co. Ltd., Rohini, Delhi. Ajay Kumar intends to transfer the ownership of above-mentioned floor by way of Sale Deed to Sh. Deepak Mishra. Subsequently, Sh. Deepak Mishra is in the process of mortgage of the said floor with ICICI Bank Ltd./ ICICI Home Finance Co. Ltd. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 14 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 14-days period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.
If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 14-days period by contacting Law Sectors: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301. Landline(s): +910120-4499711, e-mail: accounts@vsnl.in

Juveniles held for stabbing two men

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Two young men suffered stab injuries after they were allegedly attacked with knives by two juveniles near a metro station in north Delhi, police said on Tuesday. The two juveniles have been apprehended, the police said, adding that the knives used in the crime were bought online by the boys.

According to the police, the boys said that they were being bullied by the victim, Akash Tomer (18), and his friends for some time and wanted to teach



him a lesson. On March 6, Tomar approached the police and reported that he and his friend were attacked with knives a day ago, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Akansha Yadav said. The police said that around 5 pm on March 5, Tomer and some of his

friends were eating at a street food cart near the GTB Nagar metro station when an argument broke out after he accidentally brushed against another boy.

During the altercation, Tomer's friend Arshil allegedly slapped the boy and grabbed his bag, after which the group of boys attacked Tomer and Arshil with knives before fleeing the spot, they said. Tomer sustained two to three stab injuries while Arshil received four to five injuries in the attack, she said.

A case was registered and an investigation

launched. During the probe, the team examined the complainant and developed local intelligence, which led to the apprehension of one of the juveniles. At his instance, the knife was recovered from open ground in the Bhalswa area. He had allegedly buried it near his maternal uncle's house, the police said.

Subsequently, the second juvenile was also apprehended even as he kept changing locations to evade arrest. Another knife used in the crime was recovered from his house, they said.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PUBLIC WORKS
ROADS DEPARTMENT, ASSAM, GUWAHATI-03
No. CE/DEV/TB/120/2025-26/597
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER(Re-Bid)
The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites re-bid on behalf of Governor of Assam for 1 (one) no. of package for Construction/Improvement of roads under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26 in Dibrugarh District of Assam amounting to **Rs. 816.37 Lakhs** (approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.
Details may be seen from **10.03.2026** at website **www.assamtenders.gov.in**. Amendment/Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website **www.assamtenders.gov.in**.
Note: NIT Value is inclusive of GST (12%), Labour Cess (1%), etc.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Roads) /PWRD
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

NOIDA COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION
Approved by NCTE & Under Section 2(i) & 2(B) of the UGC Act, Affiliated to Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut, U.P.
Required faculty of the following department for the session 2026-27
Education (B.A.) - Assistant Professor
Geography - 01, History - 01, Pol. Sci. - 01, Sociology - 01, Physical Education - 01, Hindi - 01, English - 01, Sanskrit - 01, Economics - 01, Education - 02, Art & Craft - 01
Driver
Four (4) - 10 Year Driving Experience with Heavy License, Age 30 to 55 Years
Receptionist (Female)
Two (2), Language Hindi and English with Computer knowledge.
Note : 1. Educational qualification as per N.C.T.E., A.I.C.T.E., U.G.C. and U.P. Govt. norms.
2. Salary as per U.P. Govt. and UGC Norms
Interview Date 16-03-2026 for the above mentioned address with original documents and 2 set self attached photo copy on 10.00 AM
College Campus : Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Road, Village Dhoom Manikpur, Near Dadri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P., Contact: 7838601999, 9919972027
Administrative Office : Main Road, I-Block Market, Sector-22, Noida-201301, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P., Contact: 9990197765/ 0120-2413081/82
E-mail : ncpnoida@yahoo.com

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Ph: 01639-256232, 256236
Adv. No. BFU-26/06
VACANCIES
Online applications are invited w.e.f 13-03-2026 to 02-04-2026 from eligible candidates through University website i.e. **www.bfuhsc.ac.in** for the recruitment to the posts of **Staff Nurse-672** under Department of Health and Family Welfare, Punjab.
For Application form, fee, specialty wise detail of posts, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: **www.bfuhsc.ac.in**.
Sd/-
REGISTRAR
3108/12/2025-26/9239 Dated CHD - 10/03/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDERING NOTICE
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)
The Divisional Engineer/Track, Northern Railway, Delhi Division for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender on prescribed form for the following work

Sl. No.	Name of work with its location	Approx. Cost of work	Earnest Money	Starting time for filling e-tender is Date-for filing e-tender & tender opening time	Website particulars, published e-tender, location etc. complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded
1.	Reconditioning of tamping tools for track machines in DLJ Division under DEN/Track. (Cost is inclusive of GST).	(1) Rs. 85,31,650/-	(1) Rs. 1,71,000/-	17/03/2026 at 15:00 hrs. & Tender opening time is Date- 02/04/2026 at 15:00 hrs.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

No: 128-W/Sr.DEN-C/NIT-16-25-26-WC Dated: 10.03.2026
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 802/26

West Asia conflict triggers LPG crisis for Delhi hotels

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

From creative menu tweaks to electrical appliances, Delhi restaurants and caterers are exploring ways to keep the city's culinary buzz alive as a possible LPG crisis due to the West Asia conflict puts them to the test. Industry representatives have said the restaurant sector is already witnessing declining supplies and uncertainty over the future availability of commercial LPG cylinders.

Manpreet Singh, Honorary Treasurer of the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), said the supply of gas to the restaurant sector has started drying up as the availability of commercial LPG cylinders declines.

"If the shortage continues for a few more days and prices increase or supply tightens further, it will become very difficult for restaurants to function," Singh said, adding restaurants may even be forced to modify their menus if the crisis deepens.

With the widening West Asia conflict disrupting energy supplies, the government has revised the priority order for allocating domestically produced natural gas, placing



LPG production alongside CNG and piped cooking gas at the top. Under the revised allocation, requirements of these sectors will be fully met first before gas is supplied to other sectors, according to a gazette notification.

Amit Gupta, joint secretary of the New Delhi Traders' Association, said restaurants may have to increasingly rely on electrical appliances if the shortage continues.

"If the situation continues like this, then we will have to buy electrical appliances to cope and serve food. But the cost of meals might increase as electricity costs in Connaught Place are already high," he said.

Gupta added that restaurants may also have to remove certain dishes from their menus, as not all cuisines can be prepared using electrical appliances.

Sumit, who runs 'My Yellow' cafe in Malviya Nagar, said he recently started the outlet and runs it entirely on LPG cylinders. "My stock is coming to an end, and my booking orders are not getting confirmed. This will affect many restaurants and business owners," he said.

Joy Singh, co-founder of restaurant chain Raasta, said that even though the situation in Delhi appears relatively more stable compared with some other major cities,

some establishments have already begun exploring alternatives to reduce dependence on LPG. "We have started making arrangements and are buying electrical appliances for cooking. We may also make a few changes in the menu so that we can save as much gas as possible," he said.

"Restaurants may have to temporarily adapt by relying more on electric equipment wherever possible. However, that transition is not always seamless, as some cooking techniques and menu items are specifically designed for gas-based cooking," said Arjun Sagar Gupta, Founder of The Piano Man.

Panic booking triggers LPG rush, long queues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

With the widening West Asia conflict disrupting energy supplies, panic booking of LPG cylinders amid fears of shortage has triggered long queues and a rush at distribution centres across parts of Delhi.

Several distributors say the sudden spike in demand has created a temporary crisis in the local market. Many distributors said the demand for cylinders has risen sharply in the past few days, forcing them to ask customers to wait as their available stock is unable to match the sudden surge in bookings. A representative of Kiran Gas Services in Khan Market said the demand has increased by nearly 50 per cent over the past few days.

"We are receiving so many calls that we are afraid to take any more. People are also coming to the agency in person, but due to the increased demand and limited stock, we are asking customers to wait for two days or so," he said.

Another distributor at Gole Market, Kayson Enterprise, said even customers who had received a cylinder a week or 10 to 12 days earlier were approaching the agency again for fresh bookings. "There are customers who already have two cylin-



ders but are still approaching us. In such cases, we as distributors are also facing a crisis because we receive stock depending on the demand we project," he said. The distributor added that to get gas cylinder stock at his agency, he has to write to the companies, and they take time to supply it. Now with the sudden spike in demand, the agency is facing a crisis of limited stock and is also trying to ensure that its regular customers do not go to other distributors.

The Government has revised the priority order for allocating domestically produced natural gas, placing LPG production alongside CNG and piped cooking gas at the top.

At Jhandewalan, customers were seen standing in queues outside an agency with empty cylinders. In Malviya Nagar, a large crowd

gathered when a cylinder delivery van arrived at a distribution point.

PN Seth, president of the All India LPG Distributors' Association, said the rush was largely driven by panic among consumers.

"Customers are worried that they may not get a cylinder amid the situation in the market and are ordering in panic. Consumers can get cylinders in a gap of 25 days after they get one, but now they are booking in 10 days. However, there is no shortage of LPG in the country as of now," Seth said. Kamlesh, a resident of Vikaspuri who was waiting outside a distribution agency with an empty cylinder, alleged that booking requests were not being accepted.

"It has been more than two weeks now. We have been coming every day, and they keep saying we will

get it tomorrow. Now they are also taking empty cylinders. From where should we pay ₹100 as fare every day? And who has so much time to come in the heat and stand in the crowd only to be told to come tomorrow? What should we do? Where should the poor go?" she said. Another customer, Rajkali, said she had been waiting since morning but had not received a cylinder. "I came at 10 am and now it is 1 pm, but I still have not received a cylinder. How will we cook now?"

"There is no alternative for us. We cannot afford electric appliances and cannot cook on wood. How many days can we survive on outside food?" she said.

Following US-Israeli strikes inside Iran and Tehran's sweeping retaliation across the region, maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has sharply declined, insurance premiums have surged and energy markets have responded with immediate volatility. Roughly one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil and nearly a third of global LNG shipments pass through this narrow channel linking the Gulf to global markets.

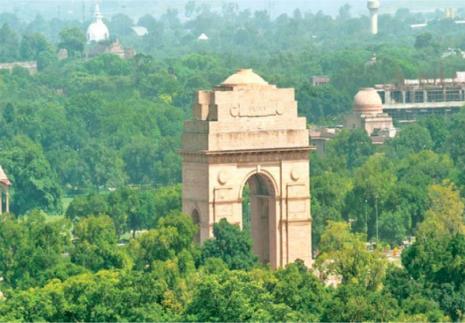
A distributor in Vikaspuri said part of the problem along with technical issues was confusion among customers regarding booking cycles.

Govt plans Green Budget to protect city's environment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government is examining the introduction of a Green Budget aimed at balancing economic development with environmental protection. The Delhi Government is planning to launch the initiative in a situation where the national capital faces growing challenges from pollution, climate change, and rapid urbanisation.

According to government sources, the proposed Green Budget would ensure that a significant portion of government spending and development programmes is directed towards environmental priorities such as pollution control, clean energy, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable urban development. Officials said the initiative is being considered as part of a broader strategy to make environmental sustainabil-



ty a core component of policymaking and public expenditure in the city.

Sources said the primary objective of the Green Budget is to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into government planning and spending. It would also allow authorities to clearly track how much funding is allocated to environment-related programmes and assess the impact of these investments. Such a framework is

expected to improve transparency and help the Government evaluate the effectiveness of its environmental initiatives.

The Government is studying models from several countries and Indian states that have already adopted climate or green budgeting frameworks. These systems help classify environment-related schemes within government budgets and allow policymakers to monitor spending on sustainability

initiatives more effectively. Officials said these global and domestic models are being analysed to determine how a similar approach could be adapted to the specific needs and challenges of the national Capital. Sources added that the Green Budget concept goes beyond environmental protection alone and could also create new economic opportunities.

Higher investment in sectors such as clean energy, green mobility, waste management, water conservation, and green infrastructure is expected to encourage technological innovation while generating new employment opportunities. Government officials believe that these investments could help build a sustainable economy while also addressing environmental concerns.

Delhi has already taken several steps in recent years to tackle pollution and strengthen environmental management. One of the key initiatives has been the

promotion of cleaner transportation through the city's Electric Vehicle policy, which aims to reduce vehicular emissions and encourage the adoption of electric mobility.

The Government has also been working to expand solar energy generation, promote rooftop solar installations, and increase the city's green cover.

In addition, authorities have been focusing on improving waste management systems and implementing water conservation measures to address environmental challenges.

Officials said the proposed Green Budget would bring these initiatives under a more structured and measurable framework. Sources indicated that the Government has begun detailed consultations with experts, environmentalists, policymakers, and various departments to explore how the Green Budget can be implemented effectively.

Biker death case: Court sends main contractor to one day judicial custody

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A Delhi court on Tuesday remanded the contractor to one day's judicial custody, who was arrested in connection with the bank employee's death after his bike fell into a pit in Janakpuri. The contractor, Himanshu Gupta, had been evading arrest and was held in Rajasthan's Udaipur on Tuesday morning after a rigorous manhunt by the police, officials said. The Delhi Police produced Gupta before Duty Magistrate Anuradha Sonkar, who sent him to one day's judicial custody. The contractor, Himanshu Gupta, had been evading arrest.

After a month-long search, he was tracked down to Rajasthan's Udaipur and was apprehended on Tuesday morning, the official said, adding that Gupta is being brought to Delhi for further interrogation. Police will



produce him before the court and seek his remand, he added.

The case pertains to the death of Kamal Dhyani on the night of February 5 after his motorcycle fell into a 15-foot-deep sewage pit allegedly left open during work being carried out by the Delhi Jal Board in Janakpuri.

Police had registered a case in connection with the incident and launched a search for those responsible for leaving the pit unsecured.

Reacting to Gupta's arrest, the family members of Kamal Dhyani said they hoped that the accused would face strict punishment. Mayank, a friend of Kamal, said he came to know about the arrest on

Tuesday morning and hoped that justice would be delivered. "We want justice. We completely trust the judiciary, that it would give strict punishment to every single accused behind Kamal's death," he said.

Kamal's father Naresh Dhyani said the family was informed about the contractor's arrest. He reiterated their demand for strict action against all those responsible for the incident.

"I got to know about his arrest. We believe in the court. Strict action is what we are demanding against all the accused," he said.

Naresh added that the arrest came nearly a month after his son's death and expressed hope that the investigation would ensure accountability.

"The accused got arrested after one month of my son's death. We hope all those responsible will be brought to justice," he said.

Residents oppose proposal to upgrade GK-II to Category 'A'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Residents of Greater Kailash-II on Tuesday opposed a proposal to upgrade the colony from Category 'B' to Category 'A', saying the move could lead to higher property taxes without corresponding improvements in civic infrastructure.

A delegation of resident welfare associations under the banner of the United Residents of Delhi (URD) met Greater Kailash MLA Shikha Rai and submitted a memorandum registering their protest against the proposed change in categorisation. According to the RWA, civic amenities and infrastructure in the colony still require improvement, and the reclassification should be considered only after these issues are addressed.

They said the proposed upgrade would result in an increase in circle rates and property tax, thereby placing an additional financial burden on residents without any guaranteed improvement in public services or facilities.

The delegation was led by URD South co-convenor Bhavna Gupta and included Federation of GK-II Complex RWAs chairman Chetan Sharma, along with members Manveen, Ashok Bagga and Ashwani Nijhawan. The representatives handed over a memorandum to the MLA urging that the concerns of residents be considered before any decision is taken on changing the colony's category.

JNU: Students hold referendum on whether VC should be removed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) conducted a student referendum on Tuesday on whether "the university's vice chancellor should be removed." The voting that was held throughout the day in 16 booths was overseen by former members of the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA).

According to instructions for the referendum released by JNUSU, students were required to vote "yes" or "no" on the ballot paper on the removal of VC Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit.

"Students were given an opportunity to express their opinion on whether the VC should continue in her position or be removed, and the high turnout proved that



students want to be heard. Around 3,000 students came to vote," former JNUSU president Nitish Kumar said.

The campus has witnessed continued protests since early February after the university suspended four JNUSU office-bearers, along with former JNUSU president Nitish Kumar, for two semesters.

The suspensions were issued for "extensive damage to university property" during a November 21, 2025, protest at the Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library. The incident was fol-

lowed by further protests demanding the revocation of the suspension order, clashes between left- and right-wing student groups, and remarks by the JNU vice chancellor on the UGC equity rules that drew backlash from a section of the students' as well as teachers' bodies.

JNUSU members said the final results of the referendum will be released on Wednesday.

A student from the School of International Studies (SIS), requesting anonymity, said, "The recent incidents, including the VC's remarks that sparked a row, were indeed unfortunate. JNU is known as a democratic space for students, and this referendum reflected that. Whatever the results suggest, at least the students' voice will be heard."

Govt planning to set up ISBT at Bhalswa landfill site

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government is planning to set up an inter-state bus terminus (ISBT) over 20 acres of land at the Bhalswa landfill site, being reclaimed after removing the garbage dumped there.

After chairing a review meeting of his department on Tuesday, Transport Minister Pankaj Singh also announced that 200 new e-buses will join the existing transport fleet this month.

Singh, who reviewed the progress of key transport projects at the meeting, was briefed by officials that the government is planning to construct an inter-state bus terminal (ISBT) at Bhalswa across about 20 acres of land, which is being reclaimed from the landfill site.

The proposed terminal is expected to significantly improve inter-state bus connectivity and passenger facil-



ities in the northern part of the city, a transport department statement said.

The Bhalswa landfill is one of three garbage dumping sites that the Delhi government has targeted to remove by 2027, along with Ghazipur and Okhla.

The officials informed Singh that Delhi presently operates a fleet of more than 4,000 e-buses, and 200 additional electric buses will be inducted into the fleet during the current month.

The electric bus fleet is pro-



jected to reach 7,500 by the end of this year, marking a significant milestone in Delhi's transition towards sustainable public transportation, the officials said.

The transport minister emphasised that strengthening Delhi's electric vehicle (EV) fleet remains a key priority of the government under Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

"Our government is committed to modernising Delhi's public transport system with a strong focus on electric mobility, better infrastruc-

ture and improved commuter facilities," Singh said.

Electric charging infrastructure has already been established at 44 bus depots across Delhi, the statement said.

Additionally, under the PM e-Drive Phase I and II initiatives, EV charging networks are currently being developed at 36 depots, which will further support the expansion of Delhi's electric bus fleet in the coming months, it said.

The transport minister also directed the officials for feasibility assessment to develop a new DTC depot along the Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) corridor, considering the rapid urban expansion and growing demand for transport in the region.

In addition, Singh also instructed the concerned officials to undertake the upgradation of the existing bus depot in Burari to enhance operational efficiency and support the expanding electric bus fleet.

Mercury shoots to 35.5 degrees Celsius while haze hangs over city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Capital witnessed yet another warm day as the mercury touched 35.5 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, 7.1 degrees above normal, while a persistent daytime haze hung over the city, possibly triggered due to westerly winds carrying dust particles from desert regions.

Mahesh Palawat from Skymet Weather said westerly winds have picked up speed, blowing at 20-30 kmph

over the city — bringing dust from the deserts of Balochistan and Rajasthan to northwestern India.

"This dust has likely contributed to the recent spike in the AQI and the hazy conditions, as the particles remained suspended in the lower atmosphere after wind speeds drop," Palawat said.

He also said temperatures this year are expected to remain on the higher side, with hotter summers.

"Around March 14 and 15, there may be some relief

from light pre-monsoon showers due to increased humidity in parts of Delhi. Pre-monsoon rains generally begin towards March-end or early April, but the current weather pattern may bring these showers earlier," Palawat said.

According to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the maximum temperature at Safdarjung stood at 35.5 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, while the minimum was recorded at 18.8 degrees



Celsius, 4.8 degrees above normal. Station-wise data showed the maximum at 34.4 degrees Celsius at Palam Observatory, 35.6 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road, 35.6 degrees Celsius at Ridge and 35.8 degrees Celsius at Ayanagar.

The minimum temperature was recorded at 18.8 degrees Celsius at Palam and Lodhi Road, 19.6 degrees Celsius at Ridge and 18.4 degrees Celsius at Ayanagar. The weather office has forecast a partly cloudy sky for

Wednesday with the maximum and minimum temperatures likely to settle around 37 degrees Celsius and 18 degrees Celsius, respectively. Meanwhile, the city's air quality remained in the 'poor' category, with the AQI recorded at 265, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi has forecast 'poor' air quality for Wednesday, which may improve to the 'moderate' category on March 12-13.

IN FOCUS



People riding on a newly launched KSRTC open double-decker electric city bus during its inaugural run in Kozhikode

Those who criticise Nehru praising him today: Priyanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday took a swipe at Union minister Kiren Rijiju for quoting Jawaharlal Nehru during a debate on the resolution seeking Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's removal, saying those who criticise India's first prime minister day and night are now citing his remarks.

Intervening in the debate, Rijiju cited Nehru's remarks during the debate in 1954 on the resolution to remove then speaker GV Mavalankar.

"I would beg of hon. members sitting opposite, those who have signed it and those who, in duty



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra speaking in Lok Sabha during the second part of Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi

bound, have supported it, to read that thing which they have signed. It is a vicious thing they have signed.

I doubt whether the persons have read it before they signed it. If they had read it, they would have

mance would have been better.

"Priyanka Gandhi is sitting there and is laughing. If they had made her the LoP, the performance would have been better. At least she sits in the House, listens, and also smiles," he said.

After Rijiju's remarks, Priyanka Gandhi said, "He (Rijiju) mentioned that I was laughing. I wanted to clear that I was laughing because of whom they keep criticising day and night, that Nehru ji, they used a quote of Nehru ji for their own argument." "They have suddenly started respecting Nehruji and that he strengthened democracy and gave such a speech," she said.

Air India to levy fuel surcharge on tickets

ASHOKE RAJ
■ New Delhi



Air India on Tuesday announced that it will introduce a phased fuel surcharge on both domestic and international routes, citing a steep rise in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices triggered by the ongoing tensions between Iran and the United States in the Middle East.

The airline said the increase will be implemented in three stages and acknowledged that the move could push up ticket prices. However, it described the step as unavoidable, attributing the decision to factors beyond its control.

According to the Air India, without revising fuel surcharges some routes could become commercially unsustainable. "Absent such fuel surcharges, it is likely that

some flights would be unable to cover operating costs and would have to be cancelled," the airline said in a statement.

Under the revised structure, flights to West Asia or the Middle East will attract a fuel surcharge of \$10. On African routes, the surcharge will rise by \$30 to reach \$90, while flights to Southeast Asia will see the surcharge increase by \$20, taking it to \$60. The airline said the revised rates are part of a broader plan to manage operational costs amid surging fuel prices.

CCEA approves revised cost for connectivity corridor to Noida Airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually flag off two Amrit Bharat trains, two express trains and one passenger train from Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu along with another passenger train from Ernakulam in Kerala on Wednesday, the Railway Ministry said on Tuesday. The inaugural run of these trains is scheduled from their respective originating stations — Nagercoil, Podanur, Rameswaram, Tirunelveli, Mayiladuthurai in Tamil Nadu and Palakkad Junction in Kerala.

"The new train services will collectively benefit millions of passengers across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Jharkhand. The occasion will also see the inauguration of three redeveloped Amrit stations in Kerala and the dedication of the Shoranur-Nilambur railway line electrification project to the nation," a press statement from the Ministry said.

The Southern Railway zone said the inaugural run of the Palakkad-Pollachi train service, flagged off by Modi, will start at 1.15 pm from Palakkad, strengthening rail connectivity between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The other trains — two Amrit Bharat, two Express and one passenger train — will tentatively depart for their inaugural run at 5.30 pm from their respective sta-



tions. The Railway Ministry has yet to notify dates for the regular run of these trains.

The Ministry said the Podanur-Dhanbad Amrit Bharat Express — a weekly, non-air-conditioned and affordably-priced train — will depart from Podanur Junction every Saturday morning and arrive at Dhanbad by Monday early morning during its regular run. The return service will run every Monday from Dhanbad. Officials said that travelling through Salem, Renigunta, Vijayawada, Jharsuguda and Ranchi, it will touch every major node of the corridor that connects South India's industrial spine to the East's energy belt.

Regarding the second Amrit Bharat Express, the Ministry said the Nagercoil-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express is this region's first direct Amrit Bharat link to Telangana, passing through over 20 districts across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. "It is a train that will carry students from Kanyakumari to colleges in Hyderabad, workers from the Kerala-Tamil Nadu coast to the job markets of the Deccan and families separated by the geography of opportunity back to each other.

Fuel availability in India monitored as 5,000 tonnes of diesel sent to Bangladesh

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Fuel availability in India is being closely monitored as the country begins supplying diesel to Bangladesh through the cross-border India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, Government sources said on Tuesday.

India has started by sending 5,000 tonnes of diesel to Bangladesh via the pipeline, marking the first consignment under a broader annual agreement in which India is committed to supplying 180,000 tonnes of diesel each year. Before the pipeline's inauguration, fuel transfer relied on



railway tankers, making the current arrangement faster and more cost-efficient.

"We have an agreement with India, and according to

that agreement, India will supply 180,000 tons of diesel to Bangladesh via the pipeline each year. The 5,000 tons of diesel that is

arriving now is part of that agreement," said

Muhammad Rezanur.

"...We hope that within the next two months, we will bring in the total diesel amount for the entire six months," Rahman said, describing the shipments as part of a structured import plan aimed at stabilising fuel availability in Bangladesh. The pipeline, inaugurated in March 2023 by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has become a strategic asset for both countries by cutting transportation costs and delivery

times compared with tanker shipments.

"The pumping started at 3:20 pm on Monday. It takes about 44 hours to bring in about 5,000 metric tonnes of diesel. We are pumping about 113 tonnes of oil every hour. Accordingly, the supply is expected to be completed by Wednesday evening," said Muhammad Morshed Hossain Azad, General Manager of the Commerce and Operations Department at BPC, speaking to media. The diesel transfer comes amid volatility in global energy markets due to tensions in West Asia involving the United States, Israel, and

Iran. Officials emphasized that India's domestic fuel supply remains stable even as these international shipments are underway.

Energy cooperation between the two nations had been under strain following political changes in Bangladesh after the exit of Sheikh Hasina's Government in August 2024. Despite earlier disruptions to electricity and fuel agreements, the ongoing diesel supply through the Friendship Pipeline reflects continued practical collaboration and strategic alignment between India and Bangladesh in the energy sector.

India relaxes FDI rules for China and neighbouring countries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government on Tuesday eased foreign direct investment (FDI) norms for China and other countries sharing land borders with India by allowing overseas firms having up to 10 per cent shareholder from these nations to invest in the country without mandatory approval. Earlier, overseas firms with shareholders from these nations owning even a single share had to seek mandatory approval to invest in India in any sector.

However, other conditions of FDI norms, including sectoral caps and entry routes, will be applicable to these investments.

Also, these investments will be subjected to prior reporting of information to the DPIIT (department for



promotion of industry and internal trade). The Government has amended the press note 3 of 2020 in this regard. The decision was taken in a meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired

by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The amendment in the press note provides for a definition and criteria for the determination of 'Beneficial Ownership' that is widely used by the invest-

ing community, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Rules, 2003.

The beneficial ownership test will be applied at the level of the investor entity. "Investors with non-control-

ling land border countries (LBC), beneficial ownership of up to 10 per cent shall be permitted under the automatic route as per the applicable sectoral caps, entry routes, attendant conditions," the Government said in a statement.

The Government has also decided on expeditious clearance of investment proposals from LBCs in specific sectors. Under this, proposals for LBC investments in specified sectors/activities of manufacturing in capital goods, electronic capital goods, electronic components, polysilicon and ingot-wafer or any other sector/activity added by the committee of secretaries headed by the Cabinet Secretary will be processed and decided within 60 days. In these cases, the majority shareholding and control of

the investee entity will be with resident Indian citizen and/or resident Indian entity owned and controlled by resident Indian citizen at all times.

Following that, an entity of a country which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only after getting permission from the Government.

Additionally, any transfer of ownership of any existing or future FDI in an entity in India resulting in the beneficial ownership falling within these jurisdictions also requires Government approval. This rule was seen as adversely affecting investment flows from investors, including global funds such as private equity/venture capital funds.

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Govt denies LPG crisis, enhances production

Officials said anyone requiring commercial LPG can approach the committee, whose details have been posted online. The panel will review each case and try to meet genuine demand. However, since non-domestic LPG supply depends on imported products, not all requests may be fulfilled. Applications will be considered based on merit and product availability.

A Government notification also stated that natural gas supply to the domestic piped natural gas network, CNG for transport and LPG production will be treated as priority allocation. These sectors will receive 100 per cent of their average gas consumption over the past six months.

CNG and piped gas used in household kitchens were earlier in the "no-cut" category, meaning their supply would not be reduced even if overall availability declined. LPG has now been added to this category, ensuring that these sectors are supplied first before gas is allocated to other industries.

SC flags need for Uniform Civil Code

Bhushan cited the court's 2017 ruling in Shayara Bano v. Union of India, arguing that Muslim women cannot be denied equal rights in matters of divorce and inheritance.

The Bench allowed amendment of the petition filed by Poulomi Pavnini Shukla and others and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks, calling it an "important issue." It asked the petitioners to present further legal citations and possible alternatives, adding that judicial intervention may be appropriate if affected Muslim women seek relief from the 1937 law.

Trump says West Asia conflict may end soon

In a statement, the force said Iran's missile programme remains operational and that it is

deploying projectiles in increasing numbers, including missiles carrying warheads weighing more than one tonne.

"It is we who will determine the end of the war," the IRGC said in a statement responding to Trump's remarks. "The equations and future status of the region are now in the hands of our armed forces; American forces will not end the war," it added, underscoring Iran's defiant stance as the conflict continues to intensify.

Meanwhile, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said Washington would continue military operations until "the enemy is totally and decisively defeated." He emphasised that the campaign would proceed according to the US' strategic timeline. Hegseth's remarks came shortly after Trump made comments suggesting the conflict could end soon, reflecting differing tones within the US administration about the potential trajectory of the war.

The exchange comes as the world's leading oil exporter has warned that prolonged hostilities could have "catastrophic consequences" for global markets if the conflict disrupts access to the critical maritime route of the Strait of Hormuz. As military tensions persist and diplomatic efforts remain uncertain, analysts warn that the unfolding crisis could reshape the geopolitical balance in West Asia while carrying far-reaching economic and security implications worldwide.

Lok Sabha clashes over motion against Birla

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey countered the claim, citing constitutional provisions and House rules. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Owaisi's objection was irrelevant as Pal was competent to preside when the motion was taken up. Saugata Roy suggested that the Government move a separate motion to appoint a presiding officer specifically for the debate.

Rejecting the objections, Pal put the notice to vote and asked at least 50 MPs to stand in support. Once the required number rose, the notice was accepted and the resolution admitted for discussion.

Gaurav Gogoi opened the debate, for which 10 hours have been allotted, again raising the question of who should preside during discussion of the Speaker's removal.

Opposition MPs, including DMK leader T. R. Baalu, praised Birla personally but criticised what they described as "harsh" action against Opposition members. Baalu said he respected the Speaker but urged corrective steps.

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh said the motion was an attempt to keep the Speaker under pressure, accusing the Opposition of frequent disruptions.

Shrikant Shinde also targeted Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of promoting an "anti-India" agenda and skipping important parliamentary debates.

CEC assures fair polls in West Bengal

The CEC also announced 100 per cent webcasting of polling stations across the State. He highlighted that West Bengal has historically high voter turnout and that elections are widely respected, coining the EC slogan: "Chunao porbo, Paschim Bangor gorbo" (Election festival is the pride of West Bengal).

According to the ECI, around 63.66 lakh names-8.3 per cent of the electorate were deleted since November 2025, reducing the voter base from 7.66 crore to 7.04 crore. Of the state's voters, over 6,000 are centenarians, 5.23 lakh are new voters aged 18-19, and 1.31 crore are between 20-30 years old. About 3.78 lakh voters over 85 will have home voting options. West Bengal has 294 assembly constituencies, including 68 reserved for Scheduled Castes and 16 for Scheduled Tribes, with over 80,000 polling stations-61,000 in rural areas.

Kumar clarified that "Logical Discrepancy" cases flagged during SIR are standard across 12 states, not unique to West Bengal, and arose due to mismatches with the 2002 voter rolls. He said the revision ensures that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible person is included, underlining that maintaining accurate electoral rolls is "a bedrock of democracy."

SC tightens oversight on West Bengal SIR

As Chief Justice of India, I will not tolerate this." The bench, also comprising Justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi, was responding to submissions in a fresh petition seeking that judicial officers should not handle claims and objections from those facing deletion from voter lists.

Earlier, the SC had allowed deployment of district judges and civil judges of West Bengal in the ongoing SIR process. It had also asked the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court to requisition judicial officers from Jharkhand and Odisha to handle about 80 lakh claims and objections in the revision exercise.

On Tuesday, the bench reviewed a fresh report from the Calcutta High Court (HC) Chief Justice and issued several additional directions. It noted that judicial officers had examined 10.16 lakh claims and objections by the evening of March 9.

The court directed that the Election Commission of India (ECI) must not introduce any mandatory requirement that could disrupt the process without approval from the HC. It also said technical issues affecting the online portal must be resolved promptly. The court also said the Calcutta HC Chief Justice may request some former HC judges, preferably from the Calcutta High Court or neighbouring states, to serve on the appellate tribunals. Once recommended, the ECI will notify them as appellate tribunals to hear such appeals. The number of members on each bench will be decided by the Calcutta High Court Chief Justice. According to the report, 500 judicial officers from West Bengal and about 200 from Odisha and Jharkhand have been deployed for the exercise and are working round the clock. Around 700 login IDs had been created by March 8, 2026 to facilitate mobilisation and redeployment in sensitive districts.

SBI's Large Defaulter List shows split loans...

SBI also extended large loans to companies facing corruption or fraud allegations. For

example, Videocon Telecommunications Limited, part of the Videocon Group led by Venugopal Dhoot, received ₹1,944 crore through four accounts from the same SBI branch in New Delhi. The group was later implicated in a bribery case involving former ICICI bank head Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar. Other examples include two cases against Mehul Choksi's company Gitanjali Gems for ₹713 crore, and eight loans totaling ₹999 crore given to Lavasa Corporation Limited headed by Ajit Gulabchand. Splitting loans into multiple accounts from the same branch often leads to several separate court cases.

Similarly, SBI filed nine cases against IL&FS Transportation Networks Limited for ₹1,140 crore, two against Shakti Bhog Foods Limited for ₹3,843 crore, and four each against ABG Shipyard Limited and Punj Lloyd Limited for ₹6,927 crore and ₹6,619 crore respectively. Notably, these firms took multiple loans from the same SBI branch. Overall, SBI has filed more than 700 recovery cases against about 150 companies with dues above ₹500 crore. In some instances, shell companies obtained large loans, sometimes sharing addresses with major firms or listing them as guarantors.

When loans become Non-Performing Assets (NPA) and cannot be resolved through settlements or insolvency proceedings, banks file civil cases and report defaulters to TransUnion CIBIL. Two lists are maintained: the "Large Defaulters" list (dues above ₹1 crore) and the "Willful Defaulters" list (dues above ₹25 lakh).

Interestingly, the latest willful defaulter list from SBI includes two small accounts of Kingfisher Airlines, each with dues of ₹28.34 lakh. The guarantors listed are fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya and his company United Breweries. Earlier, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told Parliament that banks had recovered ₹14,000 crore from Mallya. Mallya later challenged this in the Karnataka High Court, arguing that his total dues were only about ₹8,000 crore. Overall, these cases highlight the complexity of large corporate lending in India and raise questions about how such massive loans are granted, monitored, and eventually recovered.

India's youth aspiration is our greatest capital: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the aspirations of India's youth are the country's "greatest capital", stressing that their drive to innovate and contribute is a key strength for the nation's future.

Speaking at a post-Budget webinar on Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana, Modi said the new tradition of such consultations reflects the powerful example of "jan bhagidari (public participation)". They bring together experts, stakeholders and beneficiaries to offer practical ideas for effective implementation of the Union Budget, he said.

"India's greatest strength today lies in the aspirations of its youth — from villages, towns and cities — who seek to innovate and contribute meaningfully to the nation's future," Modi said.

According to an official statement, the prime minister said that as India moves towards an innovation-driven economy, the country must continuously modernise its education



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

system to unlock this potential.

Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar said the announcement of Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana in the Union Budget aims to strengthen employment-linked skill development for persons with disabilities, adding that partnerships among Government, industry and civil society will be key to ensuring dignified employment opportunities.

Experts at the webinar emphasised that market-linked skills for persons with disabilities should align community aspirations with industry demand and integrate them into mainstream education, STEM learning and employment ecosystems.

The discussion highlighted the importance of inclusive hiring, accessible training tools, entrepreneurship, digital platforms and AI-enabled remote work opportunities, the statement said.

Concluding the session, Additional Secretary in the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Manmeet Kaur Nanda, said the deliberations underscored the need for killing initiatives that are demand-driven, accessible and closely linked to employment outcomes.

The webinar was held on March 9 at Dr Ambedkar International Centre and focused on building a demand-driven, industry-linked skilling ecosystem, with special attention to rural areas and specialised vocational training through centres of excellence.

FSI stalls AI-based alerts on deforestation to States

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Forest Survey of India (FSI), which is responsible for the assessment and monitoring of the country's forest cover, has not issued fortnightly alerts to States on deforestation activities since October last year, according to official data.

The last alert was issued in October 2025 and no data has been updated since then, according to the Anavarar-Deforestation Alert System portal.

Since January 2024, the portal has been functioning by combining satellite imagery and machine-learning techniques to help FSI detect changes in forest cover.

FSI is an organisation under the Ministry of Environment and Forests. It used to send location-specific alerts to State authorities every 15 days about areas where forest cover may have declined, allowing officials to conduct focused on-ground inspections in those locations.



Nation Focus



OVER 8 CR WOMEN SCREENED FOR CERVICAL CANCER AS OF FEB 17

The nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign targeting eligible girls aged 14 is underway at designated Government facilities, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

According to the National Non-Communicable Diseases Portal, 8.73 crore women have been screened for cervical cancer as of February 17, 2026, Jadhav said in a written reply. "The nationwide HPV vaccination campaign is running, targeting eligible girls aged 14 at designated Government facilities such as Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM), primary health centres (PHCs), community health centres (CHCs), sub-district hospitals (SDHs), district hospitals (DHs) and Government medical colleges and hospitals (GMCHs)," the minister added.



GOVT SEEKS PARLIAMENT NOD FOR ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE IN FY26

The Government on Tuesday sought Parliament's approval to spend net additional ₹2.01 lakh crore in the current financial year ending March 31, with a hefty chunk of the expenditure going towards food and fertiliser subsidy.

As per the second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants tabled in the Lok Sabha by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Government has sought permission for gross additional spending of ₹2.81 lakh crore.

Cabinet approves extension of Jal Jeevan Mission till December 2028

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the extension of Jal Jeevan Mission up to December 2028 with an enhanced outlay of ₹8.7 lakh crore for the rural drinking water supply project, which will now shift focus from infrastructure creation to service delivery.

The project was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 to provide safe and adequate drinking water through tap connec-

tions to all households in rural India. The Cabinet decision shifts the focus from only infrastructure creation to citizen-centric service delivery supported by strong local governance and digital monitoring, PM Modi said on social media.

"The move will strengthen water security, improve health outcomes and empower rural communities, especially our Nari Shakti," he said. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the decision at the Cabinet briefing.

"The Cabinet approved the



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw addresses a press briefing on Cabinet decisions in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ministry of Jal Shakti's proposal to restructure and reorient the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission

(JJM) from infrastructure creation to service delivery, supported by drinking water governance and institutional ecosystem for sustainable rural piped potable water supply," he said. For restructuring JJM, focusing on structural reforms, the Cabinet has approved an enhancement of the total outlay to ₹8.69 lakh crore, with a total central assistance of ₹3.59 lakh crore as against ₹2.08 lakh crore approved in 2019-20.

A uniform national digital frame-

work called "Sujalam Bharat" shall be instituted, under which every village shall be assigned a unique Sujal Gaon or Service Area ID, digitally mapping the complete drinking water supply system from source to tap.

According to an official statement, a Gram Panchayat shall certify completion of works and declare itself "Har Ghar Jal" only upon confirmation that adequate in-village operation and maintenance mechanisms have been established by the State Government.

Rajnath unveils vision document to boost Indian military's capabilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

An ambitious vision document broadly outlining a series of strategic reforms, capability enhancements and organisational changes required to bolster the Indian military was unveiled by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday.

The document, prepared by the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), is a strategic blueprint to transform the Indian armed forces into a modern, multi-domain, and integrated force by the centenary of India's Independence.

The release of the 'Defence Forces Vision 2047: A Roadmap for a Future-Ready Indian Military' came eight months after the military conflict between India and Pakistan. Following the May 7 to 10 conflict, all the three forces were asked to work on the lessons learnt from it.

The vision document envisages the transformation of the military into an integrated, multi-domain and agile force capable of deterring adversaries and to effectively respond to any conflict.

A central pillar of the vision is the emphasis on jointness and synergy among the services, promoting greater coordination in planning, operations and capability development, according to the defence ministry. It said the blueprint has been articulated by



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff to transform the defence forces into a modern, integrated and technologically-advanced military capable of supporting India's aspiration to become 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047.

"The vision document outlines the strategic reforms, capability enhancements and organisational changes required within the defence forces to effectively address the evolving geostrategic, technological and security environment," the ministry said.

"It envisages the transformation of the military into an integrated, multi-domain and agile force capable of deterring adversaries, responding across the full spectrum of conflict and protecting expanding strategic interests, amid the rapidly changing global and regional dynamics," it said.

The document also highlights the importance of innovation, advanced tech-

nologies and modern training framework to build a force that is adaptable to future warfare challenges.

Another key focus area is to promote self-reliance in defence to encourage the development and adoption of indigenous technologies and solutions tailored to the country's unique security requirements.

Strengthening domestic defence manufacturing and technological capabilities is expected to enhance operational readiness while contributing to national growth, the ministry said.

The vision document adopts a calibrated roadmap with clearly prioritised capability goals across short-term, mid-term and long-term timelines, it said.

"This structured approach will guide the development of critical military capabilities, institutional reforms and strategic partnerships required to build a world class defence force," the ministry noted.

2 multi-tracking railway projects approved connecting Bengal, Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Tuesday approved two multitracking projects of the Railway Ministry connecting West Bengal and Jharkhand with a total cost of ₹4,474 crore. These projects are the construction of the 4th railway line between Sainthia-Pakur and Santragachi- Kharagpur.

"Boosting rail connectivity and capacity in eastern India... These projects will enhance efficiency, reduce congestion and strengthen connectivity across these States. They will also improve freight movement, support economic activity and advance sustainable, low-carbon transport," PM Modi said on X.

The two projects covering 5 districts across the States of West Bengal

and Jharkhand will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 192 km, according to the Government.

It said these projects are in line with Prime Minister Modi's Vision of a New India and will make the people of the region "Atmanirbhar" by way of comprehensive development, enhancing employment as well as self-employment opportunities.

Outlining the project details, it said that these initiatives are planned on the PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan with a focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity and logistic efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations.

"These projects will provide seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods, and services," a Government statement said.

Highlighting the expansion of the rail network in the country with



these developments, the Government said that the approved multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approximately 5,652 villages, which have a population of about 147 lakh.

The Government also emphasised the benefits to the tourism sector, saying that the proposed capacity enhancement will improve rail connectivity to several prominent tourist destinations across the

country, including Bolpur-Shantiniketan, Nandikeshwari Temple (Shaktipeeth), Tarapith (Shaktipeeth), Patachitra Gram, Dhadika Forest, Bhimbandh Wildlife Sanctuary and Rameshwara Kund.

"The approved projects are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as coal, stone, dolomite, cement, slag, gypsum, iron and steel, foodgrains, POL, containers, etc. The capacity augmentation works will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 31 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum)," the statement said.

"The Railways, being an environment-friendly and energy-efficient mode of transportation, will help both in achieving climate goals and minimising logistics cost of the country. It will reduce oil import (6 crore litres) and lower CO2 emissions (28 crore Kg) which is equivalent to plantation of 1 (One) Crore trees," it added.

UPSC discloses final marks; Anuj Agnihotri scores 52.88%

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Anuj Agnihotri, a graduate from AIIMS Jodhpur who topped UPSC's civil services examination 2025, secured 1,071 marks with a percentage of 52.88, according to the details of marks disclosed by the commission on Tuesday. A total of 958 candidates — 659 men and 299 women — qualified the examination, results of which were declared on Friday.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages — preliminary, main and personality test (or interview) — to select officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.



Anuj Agnihotri

Topper Agnihotri got a total of 1,071 marks — 867 in the main written exam and 204 in the personality test, according to the details.

The merit is determined out of the total of 2,025 marks — the written or main exam is of 1,750 marks and the

interview is of 275 marks. Agnihotri (26 years) has done MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Second-rank holder Rajeshwari Suve M has got 52.69 per cent. She scored 1,067 marks — 865 in written part and 202 in interview.

Rajeshwari (28), who has a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Anna University, Chennai, got the second rank with sociology as her optional subject in her fifth attempt.

Akansh Dhull, who secured third rank, scored 52.19 per cent. He got a total of 1,057 marks — 864 in written and 193 in interview. Fourth and fifth rank achievers — Raghav Jhunjhunwala and Ishan Bhatnagar —

have got 51.45 per cent and 51.25 per cent respectively.

Jhunjhunwala, who has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Economics from University of Delhi, got 1,042 marks (847 in written and 195 in interview).

Bhatnagar, who holds BA LLB (Hons) from National Law University, Delhi, scored 1,038 (823 in main exam and 215 in interview). The civil services (preliminary) examination, 2025 was conducted on May 25, last year. A total of 9,37,876 candidates applied for this examination, out of which 5,76,793 actually appeared in the test.

As many as 14,161 candidates qualified for appearance in the written (main) examination which was held in August, 2025. Of these, 2,736 candidates qualified for the personality test (interview) of the examination.

India made significant strides in climate protection under Modi: Bhupender Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India has made significant strides in climate protection with a "whole-of-Government" approach adopted by the Narendra Modi-led Government, Union minister Bhupender Yadav said, asserting that the number of protected areas and wildlife reserves has increased substantially since 2014.

Replying to a debate on the working of his ministry in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said that the number of protected areas in the country has increased from 757 in 2014 to 1,134 in 2026. The total protected area has expanded from 1,68,838.37 sq km to 1,87,162.91 sq km, Yadav said.

Highlighting conservation efforts, he said the number of tiger reserves has increased from 47 in 2014 to 58 now, elephant reserves from 26 to 33, and the



Union minister Bhupender Yadav

Asiatic lion population has risen from 523 to 891. "Around 70 per cent of the world's tigers in wild are in India," he said.

Yadav further said that India has enhanced its tree cover from 92,572 sq km to 1,12,014 sq km and created additional carbon sinks as part of its climate commitments.

The minister said that environmental governance has been strength-

ened through digital platforms such as the PARIVESH portal, which has reduced the time taken for environmental clearances from about 600 days to less than 90 days.

He said that the Government has also framed rules on construction and demolition waste, electronic waste, fly ash disposal and single-use plastics to tackle pollution.

Participating in the debate, Congress member Neeraj Dangi raised concerns over deforestation, air pollution and the impact of infrastructure projects on ecosystems and tribal communities.

"I want to express the pain of people who are suffering from air pollution. Jungles are being cut and the future is being threatened by climate change," he said.

Dangi referred to the degradation of the Aravalli mountain range and alleged that illegal mining has destroyed several hillocks.

India seeks boost in inbound tourism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

India's participation along with a country pavilion in the recently-held ITB Berlin — one of the world's leading travel trade show — provided a platform for strengthening existing partnerships, and establishing it as a premier 365-day global destination, the tourism ministry said on Tuesday.

The ministry participated in ITB Berlin 2026, held from March 3-5 at Messe Berlin exhibition centre in Germany.

As the world's leading travel trade show, ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin) is a key meeting point for the global tourism industry, providing an important platform for networking and exchange for the Indian travel stakeholders Union



Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat along with an Indian delegation took part in it, and he also engaged with a few leaders.

While addressing a press conference, the minister said, "Germany remains one of India's most important tourism partners". Germany ranks as the 8th largest tourist generating source market for India with 260,000 (provisional figure) Foreign

Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from Germany in 2025, according to a statement issued by India's tourism ministry.

Shekhawat also held "productive bilateral meetings" with Widiyanti Putri Wardhana, Minister of Tourism of Indonesia, and Christoph Ploß, Federal Government Commissioner for Tourism of Germany.

The discussions focused on enhancing tourism flows,

boosting sustainable travel, expanding air connectivity, and deepening people-to-people ties between the nations, it said.

The Union minister also engaged with Shaikha Al Nowais, Secretary General, UNWTO, and discussed about different ways to enhance sustainable tourism development and regenerative tourism. India's "strong presence" at the ITB, Berlin highlighted the country's strategic goal of further boosting inbound tourism and establishing the country as a premier 365-day global travel destination, the ministry said.

The key event "provided an important platform for strengthening existing partnerships, establishing new business relationships and promoting innovative travel routes and experiences".

States Focus

Security forces foil infiltration bids in J&K



AMIT SHAH GREETES CISF ON ITS RAISING DAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday greeted Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel on its raising day. In a post on X, Shah said, "Greetings to the CISF personnel on Raising Day. Whether safeguarding the nation's vital installations or shielding nation during crises, their dedication reflects true spirit of patriotism and professionalism. Tributes to martyrs who made supreme sacrifice for the country." The CISF was formed in 1968 through a law passed by the Parliament with 3,129 personnel. Establishing itself as a multi-faceted Central Armed Police Force, the force grew to a robust 2.20 lakh personnel, deployed across almost all States providing security to 361 critical installations of national importance, including 70 airports.



CM STALIN ASSESSES IMPACT OF WEST ASIA CONFLICT ON TN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday assessed the possible impact of the ongoing conflict in West Asia on the State. The meeting, attended by senior officials, focused on the safety of the Tamil diaspora in the Gulf countries and the stability of energy supply. "Held a review meeting today to assess the possible impact of the ongoing US-Iran conflict on Tamil Nadu and to chart the necessary response measures. I have written to the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), urging the Union Government to ensure the safety of Tamils living across the affected Gulf countries and to safeguard the welfare of Tamil Nadu fishermen who are currently stranded in the region," the CM said. Referring to the disruption of commercial LPG cylinder supply, Stalin said he has requested the Union Government to ensure that the shortage does not affect the public, commercial establishments or MSME industries. "I have also urged the Centre to make alternative arrangements for eateries affected by the shortage and secure additional power supplies to mitigate the fuel gap," he added. Restaurants across the state are staring at a bleak future with existing stocks expected to last only for one or two days due to the shortage of commercial LPG cylinders.

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Jammu

Ahead of the beginning of the peak tourist season in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan-based terrorist handlers have once again started pushing fresh groups of armed terrorists into the Indian territory.

On Tuesday, alert troops of the Indian Army eliminated one terrorist after foiling a fresh infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in the general area of Jhangar, Nowshera.

This is the first major infiltration bid reported close on the heels of the elimination of three Pakistani terrorists

belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist outfit in the Chhatroo area of Kishtwar on February 22.

The security forces have been carrying out relentless anti-terrorist operations and maintaining a tight vigil along the International border and the line of control to foil intrusion bids and ensure a conducive environment for hassle-free movement of tourists/pilgrims.

Kashmir Valley is awaiting the arrival of tourists with the opening of the world-famous Tulip garden on March 16.

Director of Floriculture, Kashmir, Mathoora Masoom,



An Indian Army personnel patrols in an almond blossom field in Pulwama district Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday

on Tuesday, said that with the tulips now in bloom, the department has decided to open the garden for the season on Monday (March

16). Located on the foothills of the Zabarwan Range overlooking Dal Lake, the garden is fully prepared to welcome tourists. This year, officials

said the garden will showcase around 1.8 million tulips of 70-75 varieties, with enhanced flower-bed density to create a more vibrant floral display.

The Jammu region, on the other hand, is gearing up to welcome Mata Vaishno Devi-bound pilgrims during the nine-day-long Navratri festival beginning March 19.

According to the Nagrota-based White Knight Corps of the Indian Army, one terrorist has been neutralised. Movement of two terrorists was detected in the general area of Jhangar, Nowshera,

along the Line of Control at around 3 pm on 10 Mar 2026.

"Responding with swift and calibrated combat

action, alert troops engaged swiftly, successfully foiling the infiltration attempt. In the ensuing engagement, one Pakistan Sponsored Terrorist was eliminated, effectively denying any breach of the LoC," it reads.

The post further stated that its own troops have been reoriented to search for the second terrorist and ensure relentless domination of the area, supported by integrated ground and aerial surveillance.

"A robust operational posture and heightened alert continue across the sector. The Wall Stands Vigilant — Every Infiltration Bid Will Fail," it added.

Kavinder Gupta sworn in as Himachal Pradesh governor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Shimla

Former Ladakh LG Kavinder Gupta was sworn in as the governor of Himachal Pradesh in a ceremony held at Lok Bhavan here on Tuesday, following which he said the position does not belong to any political party.

The governor works for the overall development of the State and society, he added. Gupta performed a traditional pooja with his family members before proceeding to the oath-taking ceremony. He took the oath in Hindi.

Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia administered the oath of office and secrecy to him. Earlier, Chief Secretary Sanjay Gupta read out the warrant of appointment issued by the President of India after which the governor's signature on the charge certificate was obtained.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania, Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur, several Cabinet ministers, senior civil and police officers and other prominent personalities were present on the occasion.

Haryana Governor Ashim Kumar Ghosh also attended the ceremony. For the first



From right: Himachal Pradesh High Court Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia and Governor Kavinder Gupta during the swearing-in ceremony in Shimla on Tuesday

time at the Lok Bhavan, the ceremony began with the singing of Vande Mataram, followed by the national anthem. A statement issued here said the governor was presented with an impressive guard of honour on the occasion.

Later, interacting with media, Gupta expressed gratitude to the president for his appointment to the constitutional office. He said he would work strictly in accordance with the Constitution and maintain close coordination with the State Government.

"The office of the governor is a constitutional responsibility. The governor does not belong to any political party and works for the

overall development of the State and society," he said.

Gupta said he would strive to carry forward the initiatives started by previous governors and would seek the cooperation of the chief minister and the State Government to complete them on priority.

He noted that Himachal Pradesh is a leading state in education and said he would focus on improving the quality of education here. He also stressed the importance of quality education, skill development and the effective implementation of the National Education Policy by integrating Indian values with modern education.

West Asia crisis: Enough stock of gas, oil in MP, says Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Tuesday said the State Government has decided to form a three-member committee to monitor the gas and oil supply situation amid concerns over the ongoing West Asia crisis.

He, however, said people need not worry about the supply of gas and oil as there was adequate stock of these essential commodities in the State. CM Yadav held a review meeting here to take stock of the situation.

"There is no need for anyone to worry or panic about food, gas or oil supplies. Officials have been asked to ensure the best possible management in the state," Yadav was quoted as saying in a statement.

The Central Government is closely monitoring the situation. Under its guidance, no supply-related problems are being faced anywhere in the country, including

Madhya Pradesh, he said. Better management will be ensured in Madhya Pradesh to address the current situation in view of the challenges being faced by the world and the country.

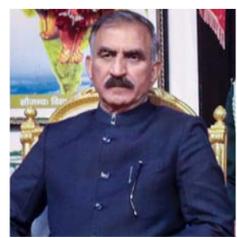
"A three-member committee of ministers and officials will monitor the state's supply system and take all steps to maintain it," Yadav said. The MP Government has been in constant touch with the Central Government for the safe return of Indian citizens, especially natives of Madhya Pradesh either living in the Gulf countries or who went there on work visa or for tourism, according to him.

So far, 255 people have contacted the State Government through the helpline, and efforts are being intensified for their safe return, he said.

Deputy CM Rajendra Shukla along with ministers, Chief Secretary in-charge Dr Rajesh Rajora, Director General of Police Kailash Makwana and other senior officials attended the meeting.



CM LAUNCHES PREPAID TAXI SERVICE FROM ISBT TUTIKANDI IN SHIMLA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Shimla

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday launched a prepaid taxi service for about 26 locations from the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Shimla's Tutikandi.

Under this facility, customers will book taxis at the prepaid taxi counter at ISBT Tutikandi. After payment at the counter, they will receive a receipt which will be given to the taxi driver, according to a statement issued here. After returning to the station, the driver will submit the slip at the counter to receive payment for the journey.

The prepaid taxi service will cover 26 locations within Shimla city, besides two additional destinations — Chandigarh International Airport and Chandigarh City. A total of 115 vehicles will be part of this service and will be operated by the Taxi Union.

Govt's responsibility to secure future of every Agniveer: CM Dharami

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dehradun

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dharami on Tuesday said it was the government's responsibility to "secure the future of Agniveers" after they retire from the military, pointing out that a 10 per cent horizontal reservation for them is in place in the state's uniformed posts.

The chief minister was interacting with cadets enlisting as Agniveers at Government Inter College Bhararaisain in Gairsain, the State's summer capital. A cadet, OP Kandari, asked Dharami regarding the Government's plans on employment opportunities for Agniveers after they complete their service.

Dharami explained that the State Government has 10 per cent horizontal reservation for Agniveers in uniformed positions (state-level forces), while the central government was also providing opportunities to



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dharami speaking during a meeting with Agniveers in Gairsain, Chamoli district on Tuesday

Agniveers in various fields.

"It is the Government's responsibility to secure the future of every Agniveer," he said. During the interaction, Agniveer cadets asked the chief minister questions on several topics. When asked if he ever considered joining the Army as the son of a soldier, Dharami said he has seen the discipline and dedication of the Army up close. "With the same commitment and dedication with which our soldiers perform their duties, I strive to serve the people of Uttarakhand as the chief servant of the State."

Responding to another question, Dharami said public representatives should be polite in their interactions with people but sometimes "tough and bold decisions" have to be taken in the interest of the State.

The CM said Uttarakhand became the first State in the country to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), and pass strict laws against cheating in exams as well as riots.

Banerjee meets ex-Bengal Guv Ananda Bose, calls his removal injustice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday met former governor CV Ananda Bose at a state guest house and said his removal from the Lok Bhavan before completing his tenure was "an injustice" and "politically motivated".

It was the first meeting between Banerjee and Bose after he tendered his resignation suddenly on March 5, ahead of the Assembly elections likely to be held in April. He is scheduled to leave the State on Wednesday.

"Since he will be leaving tomorrow and also because I have worked with him for a considerable time, we have



had a very good relationship. I have come here to meet him. I know his family. I wish him good health," Banerjee told reporters after meeting the former governor. The CM, who reached the State Government-run guest house in the southern part of the city's Alipore area shortly after calling off her

five-day dharna against the "flawed SIR". "I still believe that his removal from the chair of the Governor before he could complete his 5-year term is an injustice to him and politically motivated. His removal happened just before the elections when he still had 1.5 years left to complete his term as Governor," she said.

The CM said she asked Bose to return to the state in future. "I have requested him to come back to Bengal as he understands the State better," Banerjee said.

Asked about Bose's reported plan to go to Darjeeling during President Droupadi Murmu's visit on March 7 and 8, Banerjee said he could not travel as he had been removed from the governor's post.

Action stepped up against tourists harassing foreigners on Goa beaches, says Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Panaji

Goa Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte on Tuesday said the department has started taking action against tourists found harassing foreign visitors for selfies and engaging in unruly behaviour on the State's beaches.

Khaunte informed the State Assembly that while Goa welcomes tourists from across the country and the world, irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated.

He noted that in recent times, authorities have observed instances of young tourists visiting beaches, where they approached foreign visitors for selfies and engaged in behaviour that disrupts the peaceful environment.

"I have discussed the matter with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, and steps are being taken to strengthen enforcement, including deploying additional police personnel on beaches through the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) in coordination with the respective police stations. Arrests are being made wherever necessary," he said.

Emphasising that the State's image as a



Goa Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte

responsible and welcoming tourism destination must be preserved, Khaunte said, "Goa welcomes every visitor with warmth and hospitality, but this cannot be mistaken for a lack of discipline." Any behaviour that disrespects fellow tourists, inconveniences visitors, or disrupts public order will invite strict action, he said.

"We are committed to ensuring that our beaches remain safe, respectful, and enjoyable spaces for everyone," the minister said.

New Amrit Bharat train to boost connectivity in Odisha: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday said the newly approved Amrit Bharat train between Podanur in Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand's Dhanbad will boost connectivity in Odisha.

The East Coast Railway (ECOR) also said that another Amrit Bharat Express between Kamakhya in Assam and Charlapalli in Andhra Pradesh will also benefit the residents of Odisha.

Majhi thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the Centre approved Amrit Bharat trains passing through Odisha.

"The newly approved Amrit Bharat train service between Podanur (Coimbatore) and Dhanbad

will boost connectivity in Odisha," Majhi said in an X post.

The CM said the train's stoppages at Rayagada, Muniguda, Kesinga, Titlagarh, Bolangir, Bargarh Road, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Rourkela in Odisha will benefit seven districts across southern and western parts, including the impoverished KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region.

The new train will also provide a direct rail link from Odisha to key cities in Tamil Nadu, such as Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Salem, and important industrial centres in Jharkhand, including Ranchi, Bokaro and Dhanbad, strengthening economic and social linkages, he said.

Majhi said this initiative reflects the central govern-



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi

ment's continued commitment to strengthening railway infrastructure and accelerating development in Odisha, bringing greater convenience and new opportunities for the people.

Earlier, in a letter to Majhi, Vaishnaw said, "Kindly refer to our discus-

sion regarding the introduction of a new train service connecting various parts of Odisha with Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand for public convenience. You would be pleased to know that the introduction of a new Amrit Bharat train service between Podanur

(Coimbatore) and Dhanbad via Rayagada, Muniguda, Kesinga, Titlagarh, Balangir, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda & Rourkela has been approved."

Meanwhile, ECoR, in a statement, said the Kamakhya-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express will pass through several districts in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, with stoppages in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Khordha, Ganjam, all in Odisha, and Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, both in the southern State.

The train will benefit passengers from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and adjoining regions by offering improved connectivity to both Northeast and South India.

The train will leave from Kamakhya every Sunday and from Charlapalli every Wednesday.



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Order Order

Comments on social media: SC grants anticipatory bail to folk singer Neha Singh Rathore



The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted anticipatory bail to folk singer Neha Singh Rathore in a case filed against her over a social media post on last year's Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed. A bench of justices JK Maheshwari and AS Chandurkar granted the relief to her after noting that she had appeared before the authorities and recorded her statements in connection with the case. The top court asked her to continue cooperating in the investigation.

Rathore has challenged Allahabad High Court order of last year rejecting her plea for anticipatory bail in the case. On January 7, the SC granted interim protection from arrest to Rathore in a case filed against her over the social media post.

The said comments allegedly targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP in connection with the killing of 26 tourists in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir. The top court had issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh Government and the complainant in the case, and said no coercive steps shall be taken against her. It had directed Rathore to appear before the investigating officer and cooperate in the probe.

Excise policy case: Delhi HC seeks Kejriwal, Sisodia response on ED plea



The Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others who were accused in the excise policy case to respond to a plea by the Enforcement Directorate to expunge "unwarranted" remarks made against it by the trial court.

The case is listed for further hearing on March 19. Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said the observations in the trial court order, which discharged all the 23 accused in the CBI case, appeared to be general in nature. In the petition, ED said the trial court's remarks were wholly extraneous to the CBI's case. It said the ED was neither a party in those proceedings nor afforded any opportunity to be heard.

Delhi HC seeks Mahua Moitra's stand on lawyer's plea over custody of pet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the stand of Mahua Moitra on a plea by lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai seeking rejection of the TMC MP's lawsuit for shared custody of the pet Rottweiler named Henry.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri issued notice on Dehadrai's revision petition against a district court's order which dismissed his plea on the issue but refused to stay the proceedings at this stage.

Dehadrai, Moitra's former partner, submitted that her lawsuit was barred by law and sought a stay on the district court proceedings.

He said his petition goes to the root of the matter and should be heard before Moitra's plea for interim relief, which is also pending and coming up for hearing in April.

The court issued notice on his plea seeking a stay, stating it would not pass such an order without the opposing party present.

"Not in their absence," the court said, and listed the matter for further hearing on May 14.

Moitra filed a lawsuit against Dehadrai in the district court seeking specific performance of an oral agreement between them for shared custody of the pet dog.

In his petition, Dehadrai said the district court dismissed his plea to reject the lawsuit by passing a legally unsustainable order in November 2025.

The petition stated that the dismissal order reflected a clear non-application of mind as it permitted a suit to proceed in the absence of any legally cognizable cause of action and the existence of express statutory bars.



Mahua Moitra with dog Henry

"The plaintiff attempts to elevate informal personal communications arising from a prior personal relationship into a binding legal contract. However, the Respondent does not plead any concluded agreement, definite terms, lawful consideration, or intention to create legal relations," the petition said.

"The plaintiff is therefore founded on an illusory and speculative cause of action. Animals are recognised in law as property, and there exists no statutory regime permitting adjudication of 'custody' rights in respect of property," it added.

Moitra's plea challenging the district court order which refused to pass an interim order on shared custody of the pet is also pending in the High Court.

NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 11, 2026



SC warns officials on benefits to disabled cadets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday warned that it could summon the defence and the finance secretaries if their concerned ministries fail to take a decision on extending monetary benefits to military cadets who became unfit due to disability suffered during their training period.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing a suo moto case related to the difficulties faced by cadets who were boarded out due to injury or disablement during training.

"Having regard to the fact that sufficient time has already been granted to the concerned ministries by us, we are constrained to observe that in case no progress is made in the matter, we would be constrained to direct the presence of the defence secretary and the finance secretary before this court," the court said.

The bench said that six weeks were granted by the court to the authorities to decide on the issue, but no response was given by the defence or the finance ministry.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati urged the bench to



grant some more time to the ministries for taking a decision on the issue, and submitted that she had tried her best to resolve the matter.

She informed the court that all three chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force had made recommendations on measures to improve the condition of the cadets, but the concerned ministries have not taken any decision in the matter.

Justice Nagarathna said the issue needs coordination between both the defence ministry and the finance

ministry, and suggested that a joint meeting could help resolve the matter.

"The monetary allocation required should have been part of the Budget. The Finance Act has not yet been passed, so there is time," she said.

The court noted that the Finance Act, 2026, is under consideration and makes this the best time to analyse the funds required to meet the monetary needs of these cadets.

It also asked Bhati to seek instruction on enhancing the current lumpsum amount, which stands at

₹40,000 for cadets disabled during the training programme, to meet their medical needs.

The top court was informed that a file relating to granting them Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) cover had been cleared by the ministry, but not implemented.

The top court also asked the Centre to explore a scheme for the rehabilitation of the disabled candidates into desk jobs or any other work related to defence services, after their treatment was over.

On August 12 last year, the top court had taken suo motu cognisance of a media report, which flagged the issue of these cadets.

They were stated to be once a part of training at the nation's top military institutes, such as the National Defence Academy (NDA) and the Indian Military Academy (IMA).

According to a report, there were around 500 officer cadets who were medically discharged from these military institutes since 1985, due to varying degrees of disability incurred during training, and are now staring at mounting medical bills with an ex-gratia monthly payment that's far short of what they need.

SC upholds Bharti Telecom's share capital reduction



Sunil Mittal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a batch of appeals filed by minority shareholders of Bharti Telecom Limited (BTL), upholding the company's decision to reduce its share capital and ease out individual investors.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and K Vinod Chandran said that the valuation of shares is an expert exercise and that the company had followed the due process of law under the Companies Act provision.

The matter pertains to a 2018 decision by Bharti Telecom, a closely-held company and promoter of Bharti Airtel Limited (BAL), to reduce its share capital by cancelling shares held by minority investors (representing about 1.09 per cent of the total shareholding).

The company initially offered ₹163.25 per share. While the National Company

Law Tribunal (NCLT) later increased this to ₹196.80 per share by removing a tax deduction, a group of 35 shareholders moved the apex court.

They alleged that the valuation was a "sham", the price was "arbitrarily low", and the notice for the meeting was "tricky".

"We cannot but reiterate that the appellants herein are not wary investors, cautious retirees or mere speculators, but seasoned retail investors who blend in equal measure prudence with quite calculation," the bench said rejecting the appeals.

"Far from the bullish and bearish trends that regulate the flexible share value of listed companies in a volatile market, the appellants held on to the shares of BTL; with zero listing, zero marketability, zero dividend payment, zero exit options also declining purchase offers, with the stoic resolve of a feline waiting patiently for its prey," the bench added.

Uttam Nagar Holi murder: Delhi HC halts demolition of houses of accused

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) not to undertake any demolition till tomorrow against the homes of persons accused of murder of a 26-year-old in Uttam Nagar during holi celebrations. Justice Amit Bansal said that no action should be taken by the civic authority till the High Court hears the petitions filed by mothers of accused persons tomorrow (Thursday).

"Nothing should happen between today and tomorrow. Nothing should happen between 4 pm now and tomorrow 10.30 am tomorrow," Justice Bansal said. The Court passed the direction after counsel appearing for the respondents requested the Bench to hear the matter tomorrow.

The MCD had on March 8 demolished certain "illegal portions" of a house linked to one of the accused in the murder 26-year-old Tarun Bhutolia during Holi celebrations on March 4. The accused persons belong to Muslim community while the victim is a Hindu and the incident has assumed commu-



nal colour. Justice Bansal was hearing petitions filed by Shahnaz and Jarina seeking protection against the demolition of their homes. While Shahnaz is the mother of Sohail and Ayan (who have been interrogated by the police in the case), Jarina is the mother of co-accused Imran alias Banti.

The petitioners said that the MCD carried out the arbitrary demolition activity immediately after the FIR was

registered. They apprehend that their homes may also be demolished as a punitive measure merely because they have been implicated in the criminal case.

"It is pertinent to note that the house in question [which has been demolished] was not built upon any public road or encroached Government land, and several other houses exist in the same vicinity.

Gyanvapi wazukhana: Allahabad HC to hear ASI survey plea on April 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday adjourned till April 15 hearing on a plea seeking an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) survey of the ablation area of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi.

Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal was hearing the civil revision petition filed



by Rakhi Singh, one of the plaintiffs before a Varanasi court.

The petition challenges the October 21, 2023 order

of the Varanasi district judge rejecting a plea seeking directions to the ASI to conduct a survey of the wazukhana or ablation area, excluding the structure claimed by the Hindu side to be a 'Shivlinga' and by the Muslim side as a fountain.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
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Name of the Work: "Providing Secretarial and other assistance for official works of Administrative Department". Estimated cost put to tender ₹4,53,08,220.00 (excluding GST @18% & Contractor's Commission). The last date & time of submission of bid is 20.03.2026 upto 1700 Hrs. for details please refer our website: www.paradipport.gov.in/ <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
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Sr. No.	Reference No.	Item	Quantity	Closing Date & Time
1	GNDU/Gen/07/2026	Food Court Unit -2 (Indian Cuisine Outlet)	01	20-03-2026 at 5:00 P.M.
2	GNDU/Gen/08/2026	Food Court Unit -4 (Fast Food Outlet)	01	20-03-2026 at 5:00 P.M.

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1. Tender Enquiry No. 132/GATP/MI/SPARES/20018019 dated 10-03-2026
"Procurement of 100 NB and 80 NB ERW Pipes at 2X270 MW Guru Amardas Thermal Plant (GATP), Goindwal Sahib, Distt. Tarn Taran, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications.
For detailed NIT & tender specification, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 10-03-2026 from 17:00 hrs onwards.
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SC to watch videos of Wangchuk's speeches, reserves order

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would watch videos of Sonam Wangchuk's speeches this week and reserved its order on March 17 on a plea filed by the jailed climate activist's wife Gitanjali J Angmo challenging his detention under the National Security Act (NSA). A bench of justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale said the judges would watch the videos this Thursday and they have requested the registrar to make arrangements for the screening.

"The judges will be watching the videos on Thursday. First we will watch the videos independently and then both the judges will watch the videos together," Justice Kumar said. Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, appearing for the Centre and Union Territory of Ladakh administration, said Solicitor General Tushar Mehta was unwell and had requested for adjournment of the hearing in the matter.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Angmo, said that frequent adjournments in the matter was



Sonam Wangchuk

sending a "wrong signal" in the country.

The bench said it is posting the matter for final hearing on next Tuesday (March 17) and made it clear that whatever happens on that day, the court will be reserving its decision.

"We are making it absolutely clear that no matter what we will be reserving our decision on next Tuesday after the final hearing. We will not allow any new points to be argued and the Solicitor General can only argue the new points raised by Mr. Sibal in his rejoinder arguments," Justice Kumar said.

Earlier, Mehta had sought to address the issue raised by the bench regarding the translations of Wangchuk's speeches. During rejoinder arguments, Sibal had

pointed out that the alleged inciteful statements attributed to Wangchuk in the detention order did not find mention in the chart of translated speeches produced by the Centre.

Sibal had argued that the detention order was based on non-existent material, and Wangchuk had never stated that he wanted to "overthrow" the Government.

The top court had earlier asked the Centre if there was any possibility for the Government to have a relook at the detention of Wangchuk, considering his health condition.

Nataraj had submitted that Wangchuk was responsible for violence in Leh on September 24 last year, in which four people died, and 161 were injured.



Editor's TAKE

A generational shift in Nepal's democracy

As a new leadership emerges in Kathmandu, New Delhi faces a critical moment to rethink its engagement with its Himalayan neighbour

It was a landmark election in Nepal, not one which just changes the regime but one that decimates the old order and heralds a new era. Though it is premature to assume that a death blow has been handed to the traditional political parties and that KP Sharma Oli has given way to the new generation, it is certain that Nepal has given a chance to its new generation. Unlike Bangladesh, where Gen Z could not consolidate its position despite its huge appeal during the uprising, Nepal's youth or Gen Z has moved with caution. Nepal has indeed given wholehearted support to Balendra Shah and the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP). His decisive victory over former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli in his own parliamentary constituency is a strong signal - the old guard must go and give way to the new generation to decide the destiny of the nation. The rise of Shah, a rapper and a civil engineer who first gained national prominence after winning the Kathmandu mayoral election in 2022, built his reputation as an outsider willing to challenge the status quo. His decision to align with the Rastriya Swatantra Party, led by Rabi Lamichhane, helped convert personal popularity into a broader political movement focused on governance reform, anti-corruption measures, and administrative transparency. Shah carries on his shoulders the hope of millions of young voters whose expectations he must fulfil. He must provide political stability, economic turnaround, and steer the nation clear of outside pressure while balancing India and China without caving in to their pressure. The old leaders played a vital role in ushering in democracy in the country - overseeing the end of the monarchy and the drafting of a new constitution - but went wayward and increasingly faced criticism for governance failures, corruption allegations, and political instability. One early test for Shah would be the handling of the Gauri Bahadur Karki Commission report, which investigated the use of force against protesters. Whether the new government pursues accountability while maintaining political stability will be closely watched.

One of the biggest challenges before Shah will be to address and remove the longstanding irritants in Nepal's relationship with its neighbour, India. For India, the developments in Nepal are significant. New Delhi will have to tread a cautious path, not getting overzealous and aspirational in weaning Nepal away from Chinese influence. The emergence of a new generation of leaders means that India must now recalibrate its diplomatic engagement. One plus point for India is that, unlike Bangladesh, the election campaign in Nepal was notably free of anti-India rhetoric, though New Delhi is still seen as a big brother by many. Another noteworthy signal was Shah's decision not to emphasise the China-backed industrial park linked to the Belt and Road Initiative in his election manifesto.

Given the project's proximity to India's sensitive Siliguri Corridor, this omission may indicate a cautious balancing of geopolitical sensitivities. For India and Nepal, if managed wisely, this transition could usher in a more pragmatic and forward-looking phase in bilateral relations.

IRIS Dena: The fragile order of the Indian Ocean

The sinking of Iranian freight IRIS Dena underscores a troubling reality: the world's oceans - arteries of global trade and security - remain dangerously vulnerable without a strong, universally respected rule-based order



SANTHOSH MATHEW

"Whoever rules the waves rules the world" - Alfred Thayer Mahan

The sinking of the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena near Sri Lanka has sent ripples far beyond the Indian Ocean. It is not merely a military incident; it is a stark reminder that the world's oceans urgently require a stronger rule-based order. When warships clash near busy maritime corridors, the stakes extend beyond geopolitics to global trade, maritime security and international law.

On 4 March 2026, the Iranian warship was torpedoed by a US submarine in waters close to Sri Lanka while returning from naval exercises hosted by India. The vessel had recently participated in a multinational naval event and was sailing back when the attack occurred roughly 40 nautical miles off the Sri Lankan coast. Rescue operations by Sri Lanka recovered dozens of bodies and saved several survivors, while many sailors remained missing.

Strategically, the incident is historic. It is the first time since the Second World War that an American submarine has sunk an enemy warship in combat. The Indian Ocean, long seen as a theatre of strategic competition among global powers, has suddenly become a site of direct naval confrontation. But beyond the tragedy and geopolitics lies a deeper question: who governs the oceans?

For centuries, the seas were treated as open highways of commerce and power. In the early twentieth century, US President Woodrow Wilson articulated the idea that the seas should belong to all humanity, not just to naval powers. The principle of freedom of the seas became a cornerstone of international diplomacy. However, freedom without rules often leads to confrontation.

The modern attempt to create a legal framework for maritime governance is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), adopted in 1982. The convention establishes the legal order of the oceans, defining maritime zones such as territorial waters, exclusive economic zones, and the high seas. It sets rules for navigation, resource use, environmental protection, and dispute settlement. In essence, UNCLOS functions as a constitution for the world's oceans. It provides the backbone for maritime governance and establishes the rights and responsibilities of states in ocean space.

Yet the irony is glaring: the very country that often champions a "rules-based international order," the United States, has never ratified UNCLOS. Although Washington generally follows many of its provisions, it remains outside the



THE TRAGEDY NEAR SRI LANKA SHOULD THEREFORE SERVE AS A WAKE-UP CALL. WHEN WARSHIPS SINK WITHIN SIGHT OF BUSY SEA LANES, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR: WITHOUT ROBUST GLOBAL RULES, THE OCEANS COULD ONCE AGAIN BECOME THEATRES OF UNRESTRAINED POWER POLITICS

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treaty framework. This contradiction weakens the global maritime legal architecture and complicates enforcement.

The sinking of IRIS Dena illustrates precisely why global maritime rules matter. The waters around Sri Lanka and India are among the most strategic sea lanes in the world. Nearly one-third of global shipping passes through the Indian Ocean. Energy flows from the Persian Gulf to East Asia, container traffic moves between Europe and Asia, and naval forces from multiple powers operate in the region.

When armed confrontation occurs in such waters, it creates legal and diplomatic ambiguities. Was the strike carried out in international waters? Did it violate the exclusive economic zone of a coastal state? What rights do neutral countries have when military actions take place close to their shores?

UNCLOS attempts to answer these questions through clear legal frameworks. It distinguishes between territorial seas, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and the high seas. Within these zones, states have specific rights and responsibilities regarding navigation, security, and resource exploitation. Without such a framework, maritime power risks reverting to what scholars once described as "gunboat diplomacy."

The relevance of maritime law is even more apparent when we consider recent developments in the Indian Ocean. Reports have surfaced about American vessels approaching sensitive zones near India's Lakshadweep region in earlier episodes, raising questions about maritime jurisdiction and freedom of navigation. These incidents demonstrate how fragile maritime stability can be in a region where multiple naval powers operate simultaneously. History offers an important lesson. Maritime dominance has long shaped global power.

Mahan famously argued that sea power determines the fate of nations. Control of sea lanes once defined the rise of empires from Britain to the United States. Today, the same principle continues to shape the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. Yet in the twenty-first century, sea power must coexist with sea governance.

The oceans are not merely arenas for naval competition; they are lifelines of global civilisation. Nearly 90 per cent of world trade travels by sea. Fisheries feed billions. Undersea cables carry the internet that connects our digital world. Maritime conflict therefore threatens not just states but the functioning of the global economy.

This is why strengthening UNCLOS and the broader rule-based maritime order has become essential. The treaty provides mechanisms for dispute resolution through institutions such as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. It also promotes peaceful navigation and cooperation among states. In a world where strategic rivalry is intensifying from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean-legal norms must act as stabilising anchors.

The tragedy near Sri Lanka should therefore serve as a wake-up call. When warships sink within sight of busy sea lanes, the message is clear: without robust global rules, the oceans could once again become theatres of unrestrained power politics.

And if the twenty-first century is indeed the century of the Indo-Pacific, then the future of international stability may well depend on whether humanity can transform the oceans from arenas of rivalry into spaces governed by law. As Mahan reminded the world more than a century ago, those who control the seas shape history. In our time, however, the greater challenge is not merely controlling the seas - but governing them.



PICTALK



A squirrel rests on a silk cotton tree, also known as Bombax ceiba tree. PHOTO: PTI

When 'likes' replace real happiness



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

According to the World Health Organisation, around 280-330 million people worldwide live with depression, affecting roughly 4-5 per cent of the global population, and it remains one of the leading causes of disability globally.

As per the American Psychiatric Association (APA), major depressive disorder (MDD) is a condition characterised by episodes of pervasive low mood accompanied by low self-esteem and a loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities. Nowadays most people use social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to share their thoughts and opinions with their contacts. As such, social media provides a means of capturing behavioural attributes that are relevant to an individual's thinking, mood, communication, activities and socialisation. The emotions and language used in social media postings may indicate

feelings of worthlessness, guilt, helplessness and self-hatred that characterise major depression. This happens with many of us who regularly use social media on a daily basis. Few people would deny that they have experienced feelings of envy when they see the fun their friends appear to be having online. This might especially be the case if you are sitting at home feeling bored while others seem to be partying or enjoying a comfortable holiday in the sun. For most of us, it may appear obvious and natural to feel like that. However, the question arises: could these feelings be the beginning of something more serious, such as depression? Does it make sense that social media use might actually contribute to depressive feelings?

A recent study sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), USA, identified a strong and significant association between social media use and depression. The study found that levels of depression among youth increased with the total amount of time they spent using social media and the number of visits they made to social media sites each week. There are likely to be many complex reasons why social media use might be associated with depression. For instance, people who are already feeling depressed may rely more on social media rather than face-to-face interactions, meaning that increased social media use could be a symptom rather than a cause of depression. We also know that 'likes' have become a kind of currency on social media. People with

low self-esteem may seek validation through likes and comments as a way of boosting their confidence, turning social media into a form of popularity contest. According to psychiatrists, social networking relationships can sometimes have positive emotional effects. Several studies indicate that social media can benefit people who struggle with social anxiety or depression by helping them stay connected with others. However, it is important to understand our own reasons for using these platforms and to adjust our expectations accordingly. If we often feel left out, inadequate or jealous after viewing others' posts, it may indicate that online interactions are not fulfilling our emotional needs. Maintaining a balanced perspective and realistic expectations about social

media can help prevent feelings of jealousy, inadequacy and unhealthy comparisons. It is also important to assess the quality of our real-life relationships and the time we spend with people who truly matter, as genuine human connections cannot be replaced by virtual interactions. The Bhagavad Gita reminds us that a person can be his own best friend or his own worst enemy. To become our own best friend, we must spend time understanding ourselves and observing our thoughts. Positive thinking and letting go of negativity help guide the mind in the right direction, but it requires regular effort and practice.

The writer is a spiritual teacher and a popular columnist



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WEST ASIAN SHOCKWAVES THROUGH GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

The United States-Israel military campaign against Iran has done what most regional conflicts eventually do: it has moved beyond the battlefield and into the global economy. Oil prices have risen sharply since hostilities escalated, with Brent crude climbing as shipping through the Strait of Hormuz faces growing uncertainty. This narrow waterway carries roughly one-fifth of the world's traded oil, and any disruption is quickly felt across global markets. For India, the timing is particularly difficult. The country imports nearly ninety per cent of its crude oil requirements, and higher energy costs quickly translate into rising inflation, transportation charges and manufacturing expenses. Liquefied petroleum gas prices have already increased, and

petrol and diesel may follow. Meanwhile, Indian stock markets have reacted with predictable nervousness, as rate-sensitive and energy-dependent sectors bear the brunt of the self-off. Compounding matters is uncertainty surrounding Donald Trump's shifting tariff stance. Indian exporters, especially in textiles, pharmaceuticals and electronics, find it increasingly difficult to plan when trade rules appear subject to sudden change. There is no reason for panic, but there is a clear need for preparation. Diversifying energy sources, expanding strategic petroleum reserves and accelerating trade agreements with stable partners would help cushion future shocks.

A MYLSAMI | COIMBATORE

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Silence weakens India's strategic voice

There is an important difference between strategic neutrality and strategic silence, and India appears increasingly inclined toward the latter. While both positions may appear similar on the surface, they carry very different implications for a nation that has long projected itself as an independent voice in global affairs. India's relationship with Iran is rooted in tangible national interests.

The Chabahar port project, connectivity to Central Asia, and critical energy supply routes all underline the strategic depth of this partnership.

When a United States submarine reportedly sank an Iranian naval vessel in waters not far from India's maritime neighbourhood, the absence of a clear response from New Delhi inevitably drew attention. This is not about choosing sides in a volatile geopolitical confrontation. Rather, it concerns maintaining consistency in foreign policy principles. India rightly spoke out when its commercial vessels faced threats in the Red Sea.

India's relations with Washington, Tehran, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi give it a unique diplomatic advantage to promote de-escalation, but continued silence risks weakening its credibility and influence.

SM JEEVA | CHENNAI

India navigates complex oil diplomacy

Recent developments surrounding global oil supplies highlight the delicate balance India must maintain in its energy diplomacy. The ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has disrupted shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a route that carries nearly forty per cent of India's crude oil imports. In response to the emerging supply risks, the U.S. Treasury Department has permitted India to continue purchasing Russian oil, though only for a limited thirty-day period.

Earlier this year, US President Donald Trump announced that an eighteen per cent tariff on Indian goods would remain linked to India's commitment to reduce or halt Russian oil imports. The proposed trade framework also encouraged India to expand energy purchases from the United States and potentially from Venezuela.

This situation illustrates the growing influence of geopolitical pressures on India's energy choices. Venezuelan oil imports were suspended in 2019 following US sanctions, briefly resumed in 2023, and again halted after renewed restrictions in early 2024. Similarly, India had earlier ended crude imports from Iran under American pressure.

HARIDASAN RAJAN | KERALA

Banks must answer NPA discrepancies

The report titled "Big Corporates and Banks Conniving to Leak Public Money" highlights a disturbing attempt to conceal the growing crisis of non-performing assets (NPAs) in India's banking sector. While the Government and the Reserve Bank of India claim that NPAs have fallen to a decade-low of 2.15 per cent, the figures regarding large defaulters tell a very different story. Borrowers owing more than ₹1 crore and facing civil proceedings together account for nearly ₹29 lakh crore. Such a wide discrepancy between official claims and ground realities raises serious questions about transparency and accountability.

The situation also exposes the troubling nexus that appears to exist between powerful borrowers, bank officials, and political influence. Credit appraisal processes that should protect public money seem to have been weakened or bypassed. The one-time settlement (OTS) mechanism allows influential defaulters to repay only a fraction of their dues, with banks often writing off the remaining loans due to flawed or fraudulent collateral valuations. Such concessions rarely apply to ordinary borrowers, highlighting the urgent need to end political interference and ensure accountability beyond junior officials.

V JAYARAMAN | CHENNAI



RSS centenary: Service, influence and the road ahead

As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) marks its centenary, the organisation stands at a historic moment — an occasion not only to reflect on its vast contributions across social service, education, culture and politics, but also to reassess its role in meeting the aspirations of a rapidly changing India

FIRST Column



VK BAHUGUNA



The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), established in 1925 by Dr Keshab Baliram Hedgewar, is now celebrating its centenary, and in the process the RSS Chief, Shri Mohan Bhagwat, during the last two months has visited different parts of the country and is engaged in reaching out to different sections of society. This outreach is essential considering the fact that the RSS today stands at a historic vantage point, because what began in 1925 as a small gathering of volunteers has evolved into a vast canopy of social, political and cultural influence spread over more than 73,000 shakhas across the country and still growing in numbers. The RSS Chief's dialogues with cross-sections of people attract public attention because it has become the world's largest non-governmental organisation and a fountainhead of Indian cultural nationalism. Its influence stretches across India's social, cultural, educational and political landscapes and hence in modern India the organisation remains in intense debate. While it is frequently viewed through a political lens due to its ideological proximity to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), its primary contribution to Indian society lies in its sprawling network of social service, education, and disaster relief. However, the RSS Sarsanghchalak on more than one occasion has reiterated that his organisation's primary motto is to build the character of people in an apolitical manner and that RSS volunteers are free to join any political party. Let us discuss what the RSS has contributed to our country and the world and what changes it needs.

The core philosophy of the RSS is Manav Nirman (making the man). Through the daily shakha, it emphasises discipline, physical fitness, and a sense of duty towards the nation rather than the self. One of the most significant contributions of the RSS is in the field of education, specifically through its educational wing, Vidya Bharti. Vidya Bharti operates one of the largest private school networks in India, known as Saraswati Shishu Mandirs. These schools aim to blend the modern curriculum with Indian values. They work to reach the fringe forest villages

RSS, IN A NUTSHELL, ACTS AS A MASSIVE SOCIAL SAFETY NET AND A CULTURAL NATIONALIST CATALYST

The writer is former IFS officer and Chairman of Centre for Resource Management and Environment

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in tribal areas where state infrastructure often falters; the RSS runs Ekal Vidyalayas. These schools provide basic literacy and healthcare awareness to millions of children in forest-dwelling communities through its Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram. The RSS is often the first responder in natural calamities regardless of one's political stance; the organisation is widely recognised for its efficiency during national crises. When natural disasters strike, swayamsevaks are often the first on the ground, sometimes arriving before government agencies. A few examples are the Orissa cyclone, the Bhuj earthquake of 2001, the Uttarakhand floods of 2013, Seva Bharti during the 2025 Kashmir floods, and during the COVID-19 pandemic it distributed millions of food packets, managed oxygen helplines, and assisted in cremation services when systems were overwhelmed.

The Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), founded in 1952, is one of the most successful yet quietest wings of the RSS. Its primary objective is to bridge the gap between "mainstream" urban India and the forest dwellers through educational

empowerment as they operate thousands of hostels for tribal children, allowing them to gain formal education while staying connected to their roots. Further, in areas where government doctors are scarce, VKA volunteers run mobile dispensaries. They focus heavily on tackling sickle-cell anaemia and malaria, which are prevalent in tribal belts. A core work of VKA is the protection of tribal faith and traditions, as tribal identity is an integral part of the broader Hindu cultural fabric, and they work to prevent what they term "predatory proselytisation" by offering social support systems. This writer has been associated with them informally on government affairs, observing their work style. Long before Atmanirbhar Bharat became a government programme, the RSS had been promoting campaigns for the consumption of local goods. Seva Bharti runs over 150,000 service projects across India, ranging from free hospitals and blood banks to vocational training centres for women in urban slums. Many years

before yoga became a global phenomenon, the RSS was promoting it through its daily physical drills. It continues to advocate the integration of traditional Indian medicine with modern practices.

Through the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, the RSS promotes sustainable, cow-based organic farming techniques to reduce farmers' dependence on expensive chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The Bharat Vikas Parishad organises national-level patriotic competitions for students, promotes Indian culture, supports the differently abled, provides health check-ups, and executes rural development projects. The contribution of the RSS to Indian society is thus multifaceted. Its definition of "Hindu" is cultural and geographical-encompassing everyone who lives in India and respects its heritage-rather than strictly religious. Its outreach to Muslims is through its Muslim Rashtriya Manch.

The RSS, in a nutshell, acts as a massive social safety net and a cultural nationalist catalyst. While its ideological goals remain a point of discussion in the larger

context of India's democratic discourse, its on-the-ground impact-from building schools in tribal areas to providing relief in the wake of natural disasters-is an undeniable part of India's modern history. For the RSS, the goal is not just to change the government, but to change the "national character" through grassroots service. This is what is needed today in Indian society.

However, no organisation can live on its laurels alone and must reflect the aspirations of a changing society. The leadership of the RSS could implement, on priority, more stringent scrutiny for new volunteers. Currently, like any other social outfit, the organisation risks an influx of opportunistic individuals who join solely for personal gain or political leverage rather than a genuine commitment to the Sangh's core values.

This trend is particularly damaging as it fosters a culture that marginalises the dedicated workers who have long served as the backbone of the movement. To preserve the ideological sanctity of the organisation, it is vital to distinguish between those seeking a platform for their own ambitions and those truly dedicated to selfless service.

Secondly, frequent dialogues should continue with cross-sections of society, and the all-pervasive culture of crony capitalism among the powers that be needs to be banished from India's political and bureaucratic sphere, for which the RSS can do a lot as part of its character-building core value. Notwithstanding the fact of its significant impact on the social and cultural discourse in India, as a constructive reform it could consider broadening its outlook on leadership and merit.

At times, social organisations and political leaders appear to place disproportionate admiration on elite positions such as Administrative Service officers and members of the judiciary of India, which may unintentionally leave sizeable sections of talent overlooked. A more progressive outlook, at least in the RSS, could recognise and promote talent, innovation and excellence across diverse fields. By valuing multiple talents in nation-building rather than primarily focusing on elite roles, the RSS could do a great service in managing the changing aspirations of a dynamic and diverse modern India. Whatever people perceive, the RSS's raison d'être continues to be the preservation of the cultural identity of Bharat.



Experiential learning reshaping villages



N MANIKANDAN | T SENTHIL SIVA SUBRAMANIAN

India is marching towards becoming the skill and innovation capital of the globe, thereby enabling our nation to achieve self-reliant and inclusive growth. India remembers and realises the powerful and vibrant mantra of Bharat Ratna and former Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee: "I have a vision of India: an India free of hunger and fear, an India free of illiteracy and want."

The launch of the National Education Policy 2020, Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan, Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL), and the Skill Mission are slowly, strongly, steadily, and swiftly transforming the youth of India to achieve the highest excellence. The spectrum of students' hackathons is making a paradigm shift among the youth to explore experiential learning and frugal innovations for a variety of problem ideas existing in our nation. Indian education systems integrated with community-based learning such as RuTAG, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and MY Bharat are addressing several challenges in both rural and urban communities across the nation. These form the epicentres for the growth of local communities across PAN India. The Government of India, especially the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, has initiated several schemes which meet the objectives of transforming rural and urban areas into a Smart India.

The best and classical examples of community-based learning and innovation are the initiatives by the Office of the Principal Scientific Officer, Government of India, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports such as RuTAG (Rural Technology Action Group), Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat).

India acknowledges the vision and vibrant mantra of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi - "Gram Swaraj" and "Atmanirbhar Village", thereby empowering rural villages to function as hubs and centres leading to making villages strong and self-reliant.

RuTAG realises this vision by strengthening rural communities through science and technology intervention systems. It connects academic institutions, Self-Help Groups, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), the Government of India,

local societies, innovators, analytical people, start-ups, incubators, and accelerators on a single platform. It has primary thematic areas such as bridging emerging technology gaps, thereby developing prototype, sustainable and scalable solutions; implementing technologies to address various issues in rural societies; and capacity building to meet national and regional priorities. The key areas of national and regional importance under this programme are agriculture, handicrafts and pottery, animal husbandry, post-harvest management, clean energy, and water purification.

The RuTAG centres are spread across PAN India such as IIT Guwahati, SKUAST-Kashmir, IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Roorkee, ICAR-NAARM Hyderabad, and IIT Madras, which work closely in partnership with local communities, government, and industries. It also facilitates and promotes rural entrepreneurship across different segments.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Government of India in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, aims to transform rural villages into technologically advanced and developed regions. It helps academic institutions connect with local district administrations and gram panchayats, enabling students and faculty members to undertake grassroots field research while empowering marginal farmers, artisans and Women Self-Help Groups.

UBA realises Mahatma Gandhi's vision of self-sufficient "village republics" by utilising public infrastructure and locally available resources and promoting sustainable, eco-friendly digital technologies for rural communities.

The programme also enables higher educational institutions to adopt nearby village clusters and implement sustainable and advanced technologies addressing local needs. Its key focus areas include sustainable agriculture, water resource management, renewable energy, weather monitoring, healthcare, sanitation and digital infrastructure, while also supporting the livelihood and upliftment of rural artisans.

UBA holistically enhances the growth of rural villages and communities through an in-depth knowledge base and harnessing the potential of digital transformation technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for the benefit of communities and societies. UBA forms an icon of India by providing simple, easy-to-use and advanced technologies for the growth of villages and creating enormous employment opportunities for the youth of India. It also encourages and motivates academic institutions to participate in Gram Sabha programmes conducted by the local administration.

The Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University), Dayalbagh, Agra has designed and developed a MOOC online course on "Community Engagement and Social Responsibility", which is recognised by Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and available on the SWAYAM / NPTEL platform for young

minds and learners. The course enables youth and learners across different streams to fetch two credits, which consist of one credit for theory and one credit for fieldwork. The theory covers ethics and best practices of community engagement. It is mandatory for learners to perform fieldwork for 30 hours either in rural or urban areas by connecting with gram panchayats and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) respectively to earn one credit. Students can connect with NSS and NCC of their respective institutions, thereby performing community-based fieldwork and providing hand-holding support for illiterates, orphanages, elderly citizens, and Self-Help Groups, among others. UBA also addresses issues of environment and climate resilience through technology-driven systems.

The implementation of UBA by higher educational institutions is a mandatory requirement and mandate of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Ministry of Education, Government of India, for extension approval of all undergraduate programmes.

Mera Yuva Bharat is an academic experiential learning platform that empowers youth through practical framework models. It gives enriching real-world experience by engaging them with local communities through district administrations across PAN India. It not only connects the dots between theoretical knowledge and practical execution but also gives enormous importance to an in-depth understanding and knowledge of society and community. This helps young students develop curiosity-based learning and problem-solving skills. Additionally, it provides hands-on exposure for learners. It develops holistic personality enhancement, thereby leading to thoughtful leaders of the nation. The programme is eligible for undergraduate students across different streams like engineering, science and technology, education, arts, commerce, social science, and many more. The activities have academic credits added to the Academic Bank of Credits, thereby earning academic scores for their regular graduation programme. It leverages the skills of youth to build a vibrant India leading to achieving the Amrit Kaal and Viksit Bharat@2047.

The Government of India initiatives such as RuTAG, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and MY Bharat are the need of the hour for the youth and make them socially responsible to drive and transform rural and local communities through various impactful activities, thereby transforming India into a New Vibrant Bharat.

Additionally, India has emerged as a universal responsible nation to guide global communities as a Vishwa Guru, Vishwa Sewak, Vishwa Suraksha, Vishwa Rakshak and Vishwa Mitra.

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Bringing the North East onto India's Buddhist Map



LALKHOLEN KIPGEN | URVASHI PRASAD

The North East holds one of India's most compelling untold stories in Buddhist tourism — if only pilgrims could reach it. Every year, nearly three lakh Indian pilgrims travel to Lumbini in Nepal — to walk in the footsteps of the Buddha, to light incense, to sit in silence. They cross a border to do something India has not yet made easy to do at home. Meanwhile, a few hours' flight away, in the hills of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, ancient monasteries sit above the clouds, their prayer flags snapping in the wind, largely unseen by the world.

This is the paradox at the heart of India's Buddhist tourism story. The country that gave Buddhism to the world — where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya, delivered his first sermon at Sarnath, and passed away at Kushinagar — has not yet connected its eastern Himalayan inheritance to that sacred map. The Finance Minister's announcement in the Union Budget this February, proposing a Buddhist Circuit for the North East spanning six states, is a chance to finally do that — but only if it is done right. The North East is not a footnote to India's Buddhist heritage. It is a living chapter. Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in Asia, has been a centre of Mahayana learning for centuries. The Golden Pagoda near the Myanmar border is among the most striking religious structures in the country. Pemayangtse in Sikkim and Mahamuni Pagoda in Tripura — these are not ruins or museum pieces. They have ritual calendars, resident monks, and festivals that draw local communities across generations. Tourism here would not just be sightseeing; it would be participation in something still alive.

Nepal's experience is instructive — and cautionary. After it launched a national policy to develop Lumbini as a world-class pilgrimage destination in 2020, visitor numbers climbed steadily, recovering from the pandemic and surpassing earlier records by 2024. Of the 3.9 lakh visitors to Lumbini that year, the vast majority were Indian. Chinese visitors rose nearly five-fold over the same period. The lesson is clear: faith-based travel from Asia is a large and growing market. But Nepal's experience also shows that footfall alone does not create local prosperity. Keeping visitors

longer, spreading them beyond a single site, and translating arrivals into jobs remain hard problems. The North East would do well to study Nepal's stumbles, not just its successes.

The proposed circuit also has genuine strategic logic. India's Act East policy has long sought deeper ties with Southeast Asian nations — countries where Buddhism is not a historical curiosity but a living faith. Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, and Sri Lanka are precisely the markets that the Kushinagar international airport is being built to attract. A North East circuit, connected to the existing pilgrim trail across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, would extend India's spiritual geography eastward — and open a culturally resonant conversation with neighbours that no trade agreement alone can achieve. None of this will happen by announcing the circuit alone. Three obstacles have historically hobbled tourism in this region, and the scheme must confront them directly. First, distances between sites are large and roads are often poor — a pilgrim cannot easily travel from Tawang to Tripura in any reasonable time. Second, many of the most significant sites sit near international borders, where travel permits for foreign visitors can be cumbersome and unclear. A Japanese Buddhist scholar who wants to spend a month in Arunachal Pradesh should not have to navigate a labyrinth of overlapping regulations. Third, air and rail links are limited. Without reliable connections, the "circuit" risks becoming a scattered collection of hard-to-reach points rather than a coherent journey.

A well-designed circuit would do three things. It would build the physical connections — roads, regional air routes, and rest stops — that turn a map into a walkable path. It would simplify travel rules for pilgrims on defined routes, in coordination with the Home Ministry and state governments. And it would anchor development in local communities, ensuring that the monasteries themselves, and the villages around them, are stewards of the experience rather than backdrops to it. Tourism that does not benefit local people does not last.

India still lacks a unified national policy linking Buddhist tourism circuits in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar with those in Odisha, Maharashtra and the North East. A single coordinating framework could integrate preservation, visitor experience and market development nationwide. Other pilgrim economies, from Saudi Arabia to Japan, already follow such models. With serious investment, easier access and community-centred planning, the North East can become one of the most memorable chapters of India's Buddhist trail. Pilgrims are already travelling; the real question is whether India is ready to welcome them.



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BLASÉ CAPITAL

OIL AS A FOIL



No one knows how it happens. Indeed, no one wanted to, as almost everyone, including the ones who would be hurt by it, heaved a huge sigh of relief. Global crude oil prices first jumped by 40-50 per cent within 48 hours to \$120, and then crashed unexpectedly to \$90 within the next 24 hours. When the prices rocketed, like the Iranian missiles that hit oil wells, refineries, inventories, and gas supplies, the reason was the huge premiums due to the closure of the crucial Strait of Hormuz, which accounts for a third of the crude oil flows. When the price plummeted, although it remained quite high, an opposite explanation was forthcoming. The markets overreacted, and the dangers were not as severe as the traders believed. What changed in a day that crude lost most of the gains? What changed the minds of the traders? What is the mystery behind the oil-on-the-boil narrative?

Vladimir Putin of Russia, Donald Trump of the US, and the G-7 leaders can take credit for the calmness, although they need to be held responsible for the war mess in the first place. In televised comments, Putin magnanimously said that Russia was ready to supply oil and gas to Europe, which curtailed its dependence to a mere 13 per cent in 2025. At a meeting, which included the top local oil producers, Putin said, "If European companies and European buyers suddenly decide to reorient themselves, and provide us with long-term, sustainable cooperation, free from political pressures, then yes, we have never refused it. We are ready to work with the Europeans too." The man who created the oil mess in 2022 offers to correct the one generated by the US in 2026. Putin the warrior is Putin the saviour. It is an irony that defies explanations. Well, in some ways, it does not need to be explained.

Even before Putin's generous offer, albeit attached to larger diplomatic gains, the leaders of the G-7 nations met at an emergency meeting. They tried to calm the user nations, warring ones, and investors and oil traders that they would take the "necessary measures" to enhance the global supplies. They could resort to the last-possible 'emergency' step, and release crude oil from the strategic reserves. Despite the words, which sound more like verbal rhetoric, the finance ministers of the G-7 failed to reach a concrete agreement with the International Energy Agency. A few days ago, the US President Trump said that he would not need to touch the American reserves as there was enough oil in the world. Apart from the US, and partly Canada, the five other members are oil consumers, and not oil producers. Hence, there is a distinct possibility that they open the tap, but only if everything else fails.

Indeed, Trump offers the best possibility that the emergency taps and valves remain unopened. He gave several optimistic verbal bytes in the past few days. He allowed some consumers like India a 30-day period to buy Russian oil, as a huge favour. Then, he grandly announced that he may lift sanctions against oil producers such as Russia, Iran, and Venezuela. "So, we have sanctions on some countries. We are going to take those sanctions off until this straightens out. Then, who knows, maybe we will not have to put them on, there will be so much peace," he said at a news conference. This coming from a man who perpetrated the Iran war. The offer from one who blamed Russia for the Ukraine war, and abducted the Venezuelan president and his wife. More important, this from a president who flip-flops like, well, only the way Trump can.

Trump indicated that the Iran war will be a short one, and may last a few days. But one is not sure. He keeps changing his stance. Earlier, he maintained that he will not stop the war unless Iran is finished, or down on its knees. There are sections within the White House who wish to wipe out Iran, and not let the story be left incomplete as the US did with Iraq and Afghanistan earlier. Israel wants the same. It does not wish to live in the fear of a future resurgence in Iran. Most of the Middle East, after the way Iran destroyed their oil assets, and other infrastructure do not want any chances of a strong Iran later. Yet, as Iran remains defiant and resistant, although the number of its missile attacks have dropped from several hundreds on the first day to a few dozens a day now, it may not be easy to end the war fast.

Remember, this is the first time in a thousand years that the Sunnis and Shias have got together to condemn the death of Iran's Shia religious leader. This has happened across the world, even in the Middle East, although the national leaders stay opposed to the religious leader, and sections in Iran's society celebrate his death. It seems like poetic justice that Iran which, for decades, wanted to bring the Shia and Sunni radicals together in a united and combined fight against the West (and America) may find it easier to do so once the ongoing war ends. Just like an individual did after Russia invaded Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Hit on tech billionaires' wealth?

Oil swings help some, it decimates the fortunes of others

In financial markets, the valuation of tech billionaires sometimes hinges on forces distanced from Silicon Valley. The war in the Gulf offers a grim and stark reminder. Oil prices swung sharply over the past 72 hours, with a shocking 40-50 per cent rise in a day or two, and an equally stunning fall by a quarter in 24 hours. As nations get ready for huge hits on GDPs, despite the slicky respite, some of the tech billionaires across the world took huge hits on their wealth.

Since the air strikes on Iran, and the Iranian response, tech stocks moved unevenly, rather than completely collapsing. At the end of the first week of the war, the tech-driven Nasdaq in the US was tad higher since the conflict began. While the Tesla shares fell 2.7 per cent in early-March trading, the semiconductor sector experienced sharp swings. Indeed, many jumped up as investors rotated back to the AI and AI-related firms. Nvidia rose 2.7 per cent, Broadcom gained 4.6 per cent, and AMD and Intel bumped by five per cent each.

For the tech billionaires, the impact is volatile, not destruction. Elon Musk is still the world's richest person (\$840-\$850 billion), and Google co-founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, are worth \$250 billion and \$231 billion, respectively. The distinctions between the current Middle East crisis, and the earlier wars, the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, and the First Gulf Crisis (Iraq) in 1990, are stark. The second mattered little to the fledgling tech firms, whose valuations were puny. The third decimated tech within no time. Despite oil being on a boil now, investors crashed most stocks, but did not dash out of tech.

During the First Gulf War, crude prices doubled from \$17 to more than \$35 a barrel within months. But tech firms represented a small share of global equity markets, and the wealth of the world's richest was dominated by brick-and-mortar giants, and energy magnates. During the 2022

energy shock triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, tech stocks bore the brunt of the market corrections. Brent crude surged above \$120 a barrel, and approached the \$130 mark. The Nasdaq Composite index fell by more than 30 per cent from its 2021 peak as the investors reassessed the tech firms' multiples.

At the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, Tesla's share dropped over 60 per cent from its highs. Amazon declined by roughly half from its peak level, and Meta Platforms lost more than two-thirds of market cap. For the billionaires, the shift translated into enormous swings in personal wealth. Elon Musk's worth fluctuated by over \$100 billion, as did the wealth of Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. Over time, things stabilised. Ukraine did not capitulate, and Russian oil found its way to new and bigger consumers like India and China via legal and semi-legal routes. The wealth juggernaut accelerated.

What makes the current episode more complicated is that the market response has not yet followed the clean pattern seen in 2022, or as expected and estimated by the experts. Oil prices reacted quickly to the tensions in the Gulf, as Brent crude climbed up to \$120, and then came down to \$90 within no time. The reaction in tech stocks was far less one-directional. On several trading days, the Nasdaq held up. This reflected the growing dominance of large tech firms in global equity indexes, and continued investor enthusiasm around AI.

Yet, if the Iran war continues and escalates, the changes in global interest rates, bond yields, inflation, and GDP growths will finally impact the tech stocks. Another crucial area relates to the semiconductor supply chain. The global chip industry depends on a network of special materials and industrial gases, some of which originate in

the Middle East. Analysts warn that prolonged conflict can disrupt supplies of helium and other gases. Helium is used in the cooling and leak detection processes in chip fabrication. Any disruption will add another layer of pressure to the sensitive semiconductor ecosystem.

Overall supply chains represent another transmission channel. The tech industry relies on a complex network of components, fabrication, and logistics. Semiconductor wafers are produced in Asia, assembled into chips in other regions, and shipped to manufacturers. Each stage depends on transportation networks whose costs rise with fuel prices. The pandemic-era supply chain crisis provides a preview. Shipping container rates surged to unprecedented levels between 2020 and 2022 as logistics struggled with disruptions and fuel costs. Moving a container from Asia to Europe or North America became several times more expensive. Tech firms grappled with the higher costs.

The expansion of AI creates new industrial-scale computing facilities that consume enormous electricity. Data centres require continuous power. Estimates suggest that training a single large language model consumes several gigawatt-hours of electricity, and hyperscale data centres require power capacities comparable to small cities. Energy costs form an important component of the economics of AI. Tech firms need to factor electricity pricing into costs. Nvidia has seen its valuation surge due to higher demand for computing power. Yet, the profitability of AI workloads depends heavily on the costs of operating the data centres, which is influenced by the energy markets.

When oil prices rise, investors rotate capital toward sectors that benefit from energy inflation. Firms engaged in energy, mining, and industrials outperform tech stocks. The 2022 market cycle demonstrates this. Energy firms were the best-performing ones in the S&P 500. Tech sector experienced their deepest corrections since the pandemic. Capital markets respond through the venture capital ecosystem. This capital slows when borrowing costs increase, and liquidity is scarce. Start-ups face a more cautious environment. Data from funding trackers showed that global investment fell significantly in 2022 and 2023 compared to the record levels in the previous two years.

As we mentioned earlier, there is a paradox. High energy prices can create headwinds for tech valuations in the short term, and even strengthen the long-term case for some firms. Tesla's growth rests on the transition towards electric mobility. When gasoline prices rise, consumer interest in EVs increases. Governments accelerate incentives for clean energy. The result is an interaction between short-term macro pressures, and long-term tech trends. Oil shocks compress valuations, but the same can accelerate investments. An oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz may seem distant from the headquarters of tech firms in California or Shenzhen. Yet, the two worlds are connected.

OUR TAKE



A month before the March national elections in Nepal, even as the nation grappled with several political and economic crises, there was a spot of good news. Global tourists, who arrived by air in February 2026, exceeded the pre-pandemic levels for the first time. Justice AK Sinha, the tourism minister in the previous interim government, was ecstatic. "I do agree that it (arrivals) did not touch the pre-Covid numbers till about two months back. Then, there was a surge with arrivals recording the highest number in any month," he says proudly. Sinha was appointed the minister in December 2025.

According to Nepal's Tourism Board, the number of air-borne global visitors stood at 1,05,441 in February 2026, 8.8 per cent over the February 2025 number (96,880), and 2.9 per cent higher than in February 2019 (1,02,423; monthly pre-pandemic level). On an annual basis, Nepal received 11,97,191 tourists by air in 2019 (calendar year), compared to 11,58,459 tourists in 2025, and a lower 11,47,548 in

2024. Indians accounted for the highest percentage (21.6 per cent) of the foreign arrivals in February 2026, followed by China (10.3 per cent), the US (9.2 per cent), Sri Lanka (7.1 per cent), and Myanmar (5.7 per cent).

Tourism is a sensitive and crucial topic in Nepal, which thrives on foreigners to boost revenues, even in related segments such as transport, trade, hospitality, and food and beverages. Not surprisingly, in the runup to the national election that was held on March 5, 2026, the manifestos of most political parties focused on it. Attractive and ambitious plans were disclosed to boost foreign footfalls. There were claims to double the number of tourist arrivals, and increase their spendings via extended stays, and higher contribution to the GDP.

"Although the political parties included tourism, stakeholders say that the sector has historically received little priority. While manifestos mention (several measures) ... many believe these (will) remain ambitious plans on paper," stated a skeptical article on a local news website. "Nepal has been receiving just over one million tourists annually over the past three years, and... industry stakeholders cite recurring plane crashes, poor highway infrastructure, and weak international promotion as key deterrents."

A pre-election bonanza for Nepal?

In February 2026, global tourists exceeded pre-pandemic levels



claimed another report in a local newspaper. However, the latest figures from February 2026, if the trends continue, may offer a more optimistic picture.

In addition, global trends may have helped Nepal. According to UN Tourism, there were 1.52 billion foreign arrivals worldwide, across nations in 2025, which was driven by surges in Asia and Africa. The overall number was four per cent higher than in 2024, and Africa and Asia-and-the-Pacific recorded hikes of eight per cent, and six per cent, respectively. "Demand remained high throughout 2025, despite high inflation in tourism services and uncertainty from geopolitical tensions. We expect this positive trend to continue into 2026 as the global economy is expected to remain steady, and (as) destinations still lagging behind (the) pre-pandemic levels fully recover," said Shaikha Alnuwais, secretary general of the Madrid-based UN Tourism.

However, the challenges remain. At the global level, the Iran-Israel-US war, if it continues and escalates, may derail tourism, hospitality, and civil aviation, apart from other sectors and economies. In Nepal, the tourist influx in February 2026, which was accounted for by those who arrived by air, was pos-

sibly ignited by huge sections interested in the national elections, especially after exceptional students' protests, which captured the global headlines last year. In addition, Nepal still needs sweeping reforms in aviation safety, and diplomatic efforts to secure air entry routes with India, among other measures if it wishes to achieve the ambitious target to double arrivals within five years.

Hence, a common thread that ran through the manifesto pledges was a commitment to remove Nepal from the European Commission's civil aviation blacklist, and expand flights from the country's two new international airports. At present, talks are on between Nepal and the Europeans on the initiatives that will enable the former to be designated as a safe flying zone. But it is not going to be an easy task. The peaceful national elections are a good beginning. The quiet transition to a new regime may be next. But the new government

needs to deliver. The fact remains that Nepal is largely considered a pro-tourist and peaceful destination, despite the social protests last year. "During the movement, tourists were not harmed; the protestors came to their help. Travelers were assisted on the way to the airport, space

was made to allow vehicles to reach hotels," claimed former minister Sinha. But he agreed that there were instances of vandalism. "Few hotels were set on fire, possibly by miscreants. In the case of the Hyatt (burning), there was looting of currencies. The people knew the exact place where money was kept. It was found that they worked there," he asserted.

A day before the national elections were held, the usually bustling marketplaces in Kathmandu looked deserted. After the February deluge, the tourists had possibly vanished, or stayed in hotels due to fears of violence. This is indeed peak season, ideal for tourists and shoppers. "Even as the market picked up after Covid, there came the Gen Z uprising. Now, there are hardly any tourists for about a week before the elections. I estimate the losses to be 60-70 per cent," said a despondent Navraj, a shopkeeper who sells traditional wares.

His words echoed in cab-driver Roshan Shrestha's feelings, who added that "otherwise it is the time for tourists, most of whom are from India." According to an executive in a capital's leading hotel, occupancy was almost half this season. The Middle East conflict led to cancelled flights, and tourists postponing trips. Policy issues, mismanagement, and air accidents afflict the civil aviation sector, which impacts tourism. The slump in civil aviation is attributed to oversight, negligence, and corruption. Only 18 of Nepal's 52 airports are profitable.

Environmental issues led to strictures on mountaineers eager to conquer Mt Everest from its south side. In February 2026, the Nepal's National Assembly passed the Integrated Tourism Bill, "a wide-ranging piece of legislation that introduces stricter rules for mountaineering, tighter safety, and insurance provisions, and a permanent environment fund aimed at cleaning up the country's high mountains, including Mt Everest. Nepal's top court ordered the officials to seek sustainable solutions to keep the mountains clean, and prevent deaths. However, the bill's fate lies in the hands of the new House of Representatives, which was elected through the recent elections.

Govt rejigs gas allocation; LPG, CNG, piped gas get top priority

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Domestically produced natural gas will now be supplied on a priority basis to units that use it to produce LPG, a Government notification said amid disruptions of imports due to the West Asia conflict.

Until now, compressed natural gas (CNG) and piped cooking gas were the two priority sectors to receive domestic natural gas as their raw material. With the gazette notification passed late Monday night, LPG also has been put on the priority list of recipients of natural gas.

Liquefied petroleum gas or LPG is primarily produced from the processing of natural gas and is also a byproduct of crude oil refining. It is made by separating and purifying propane and butane gases, which are then pressurised into a liquid state

for easy transport and storage in steel cylinders typically seen in homes and restaurants for cooking.

Under the revised allocation, requirements of LPG, CNG and piped gas manufacturers will be fully met first before natural gas is supplied to other sectors.

The supply of natural gas to domestic piped natural gas grid, CNG for transport, and LPG production shall be treated as priority allocation. They would be supplied 100 per cent of their average past six month gas consumption, the notification said.

Behind these three sectors is the fertiliser sector at second place, with at least 70 per cent of its past six months demand being met.

At no. 3, gas supply to tea industries, manufacturing and other industrial consumers will be maintained at 80 per cent of their past six-month average gas consumption subject to opera-



Workers load LPG cylinders in a truck, in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka on Tuesday, March 10, 2026

tional availability, the notification said.

All city gas distribution (CGD) entities supplying gas to industrial and commercial

consumers have been placed at no. 4 on the priority list. They must ensure their customers receive 80 per cent of their past six month average

gas consumption subject to operational availability.

Domestic gas production, which meets about half the country's consumption of 191

million standard cubic metres per day, will be diverted to the priority sectors by curtailing supplies to petrochemical plants, power units and high-priced gas consumers.

Following US-Israeli strikes inside Iran and Tehran's sweeping retaliation across the region, maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has sharply declined, insurance premiums have surged, and energy markets have responded with immediate volatility.

Roughly one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil and nearly a third of global LNG shipments pass through this narrow channel linking the Gulf to global markets.

The artery is the conduit for supply of most of India's import of gas, in the form of LNG, as well as LPG.

With tanker movement being stalled, the Government has reworked domestically available gas

to keep the priority segments such as cooking needs of households and vehicular transport going.

Natural gas pumped out of ground or below sea bed is used to generate electricity, produce fertiliser, and is turned into CNG or LPG and piped to households kitchens for cooking.

"The Central Government has assessed that the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has resulted in the disruption of liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and suppliers have invoked force majeure clause," the notification said, adding that the supply cuts would entail diversion of natural gas to the priority sectors.

The allocation rejig has been done to maintain supplies and secure equitable distribution and availability of natural gas for priority sector.

Pipeline compressor fuel and other essential pipeline

operational requirements too have been put in this priority as without gas the pipelines cannot function.

"The supply of natural gas to the fertiliser plants shall ensure 70 per cent of their past six month average gas consumption, subject to operational availability," the notification said.

It added that the units shall not use the gas supply for any other purpose except in the production of fertilisers and the allocation to a particular unit cannot be diverted to any other unit.

Oil refining companies shall absorb the impact of LNG supply disruption to the extent feasible by reducing gas allocation to refineries to approximately 65 per cent of the past six month gas consumption, it said.

State-owned gas utility GAIL has been tasked to manage the supplies of natural gas to implement priority order.

India's employment outlook hits record high for April-June quarter: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Indian employers reported a strengthening of hiring intentions for the April-June quarter of this year, supported by surging business confidence and resilient domestic demand, a survey said on Tuesday. According to ManpowerGroup's latest Employment Outlook Survey, the Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q2 2026 hit a record high of 68 per cent, up 17 points from the previous quarter and rising 24 points year-over-year.

The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity. The Employment Outlook Survey was of more than 3,000 employers across India, conducted from January 1 to February 3, 2026.

As per the report, the combination of Goods and



Services Tax (GST) reforms and strong economic growth projections for 2026 provides a solid foundation for businesses.

Furthermore, improving trade prospects, such as India-EU agreements and easing global trade tensions, are set to support exports. Underpinned by these strengths, employer sentiment remains high, with widespread expectations for increased hiring.

"The India data from the Q2 MEOS & 2026 Global Talent Shortage Report presents a dual reality. Employment intent remains strong, reflect-

ing growing employer confidence, while talent scarcity continues to intensify, with 82 per cent of organisations reporting difficulty finding the skills they need," said Sandeep Gulati, Managing Director, ManpowerGroup India and Middle East.

"Looking ahead, hiring decisions will be increasingly influenced by AI adoption and broader digital transformation. The strong intent to hire, alongside the measured deployment of AI, signals a maturing labour market — one that is balancing ambition with accountability," Gulati said.

The most competitive sector in India is Finance & Insurance, with an outlook of 71, rising by 8 points from last quarter and 26 points since Q2 2025. Globally, India ranks first for its employment expectations in the Finance & Insurance sector, above the sector's global outlook by 36 points.

In absolute hiring volume terms, the Automotive sector anticipates the largest net additions to headcount, followed by Information and Tech & IT services.

Indian organisations in all four regions anticipate an increase in staffing levels in the upcoming quarter. The most competitive region is the North with a NEO of 70, rising by 12 points from last quarter and 26 points since Q2 2025.

Hospitality (31 per cent) signals the most cautious hiring intentions this quarter. Beyond hiring intentions, the survey examined how employers are deploying AI across workforce strategy.

Crude oil futures tank over 8% to ₹8,069/barrel over hopes on West Asia conflict de-escalation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Crude oil prices slumped over 8 per cent to ₹8,069 per barrel in futures trade on Tuesday following comments from US President Donald Trump that the conflict with Iran may be nearing its end, easing fears of prolonged supply disruptions.

Ending its three-day rally, crude oil for March delivery depreciated by ₹719, or 8.18 per cent, to ₹8,069 per barrel on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Similarly, the April contract on the MCX slumped by ₹531, or 6.21 per cent, to ₹8,017 per barrel in 6,359 lots.

The fall came after crude oil prices witnessed extreme volatility. On Monday, the March contract had surged more than 26 per cent to hit a record high of ₹10,549 per barrel.

However, prices later pared gains sharply and closed nearly 17 per cent lower at ₹8,788 per barrel, down by ₹1,761 from the peak level. Analysts said the oil prices plummeted as easing geopolitical tensions reduced the risk premium that had pushed the energy rates sharply higher in the previous session. Globally, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil for April delivery fell \$6.65, or 7.02 per cent, to \$88.12 per barrel, while Brent Crude for



May contract was trading 6.1 per cent lower at \$92.92 per barrel in New York.

WTI crude futures fell below \$90 per barrel after surging to nearly \$120 in the previous session, as US President signalled that the war with Iran may be nearing its end and that the military operation is progressing well ahead of its initial timetable. Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at IndusInd Securities, said.

On Monday, both WTI and Brent Crude jumped nearly 29 per cent to hit an intraday high of \$119.48 and \$119.50 per barrel, respectively, after disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, triggered

concerns over global supply of exports. However, the benchmarks later retreated sharply, dropping to 21 per cent to settle at \$94.77 and 98.96 per barrel, respectively.

Trump also said on Monday that he plans to waive oil-related sanctions and deploy the United States Navy to escort tankers through the Strait of Hormuz for the smooth passage of crude shipments and to keep the oil prices in check. Meanwhile, finance ministers of the G7 said the group "stands ready" to release oil from strategic reserves if necessary, although no action has been taken so far adding more downward pressure on the crude oil prices.

Shipping cos, operators told to refrain from predatory pricing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Shipping sector regulator Directorate General of Shipping has advised shipping companies, vessel operators and agents to refrain from "predatory, non-transparent and opportunistic pricing" practices in the wake of disruptions due to the West Asia conflict, according to sources.

In an advisory issued on Monday, the DGS also asked them to ensure that all applicable charges are communicated clearly and upfront to exporters, importers and other stakeholders. The DGS advisory came following the regulator receiving representations from various stakeholders in the EXIM trade



regarding the levy of multiple ancillary charges by shipping lines/carriers and their agents.

These charges are perceived to be "non-transparent and opportunistic in nature", resulting in an escalation in transaction costs in the logistics chain, DGS said.

Besides, it said, they appear taking undue advantage of the prevailing geopolitical tensions and war-like situation, it said. "In the interest of promoting transparency, fairness and predictability in the EXIM logistics ecosystem, all shipping lines, carriers and their agents are hereby advised to refrain from predatory, non-transparent and opportunistic pricing practices, including levy of exorbitant charges thereby taking undue advantage of prevailing geo-political issue," the advisory stated.

Rupee rebounds from all-time low to 91.85 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

The rupee staged a strong recovery from its record low against the US dollar on Tuesday, gaining 36 paise to settle at 91.85 (provisional), aided by a sharp fall in global crude oil prices over hopes of de-escalation of the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Sharp gains in the domestic equity markets, along with a weaker greenback, provided further support to the domestic unit, according

to forex traders. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.92 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 91.71-92.19 before settling at 91.85 (provisional), up 36 paise from its previous close.

The rupee crashed to its all-time closing low of 92.21 against the US dollar on Monday, down 39 paise, as global crude oil prices saw a sharp spike, and the greenback strengthened.

"The rupee recovered from all-time lows on easing risk-off sentiments in global



markets after US President Donald Trump suggested that the war with Iran could end soon as they have met their military objectives. Overnight decline in dollar index and a sharp fall in crude oil prices, too, favoured the rupee," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on positive domestic markets and weak dollar. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 91.60-92.20," he said.

Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 8.31 per cent at \$90.74 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 0.52 per cent lower at 98.65.

On the domestic equity market front, the Sensex jumped 639.82 points to settle at 78,205.98, while Nifty surged 233.55 points to 24,261.60.

Equity mutual funds inflow rises 8% to ₹25,978 crore in Feb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Equity mutual funds attracted net inflows of ₹25,978 crore in February, marking a 8 per cent rise from the previous month amid the India-US trade deal, according to data released by industry body Amfi on Tuesday.

This lifted the industry's Assets Under Management (AUM) to ₹82 lakh crore in February from ₹81 lakh crore in January.

This positive inflow in equities could be driven by the India-US trade deal, Venkat N Chalasani, CEO of

Amfi said. "There could be some volatility in this month due to escalating Middle East conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran but India's growth story will continue in the long-term," he added.

Going by the data, equity inflows rose to ₹25,978 crore in February, higher than the ₹24,028 crore seen in the preceding month.

Within equity schemes, flexi cap funds attracted the highest net inflow of ₹6,924.65 crore, followed by mid-cap funds at ₹4,003 crore and small-cap funds at ₹3,881 crore.



West Asia-bound containers stranded at JNPA to get rent charges waiver

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Container terminal operators at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port will provide 100 per cent waiver on ground rent/dwell time charges for Middle East-bound containers stranded at the facility for up to 15 days in the wake of disruptions due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, JNPA said on Tuesday.

In addition, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), in a notice to stakeholders, said these operators will also waive off 80 per cent of reefer plug-charges for up to 15 days.

The waiver on storage/dwell time charges and reefer plug-in charges for Middle East-bound export containers stranded in port area comes due to geopolitical disturbances in the Middle East and in order to mitigate the hardships faced by port users due to these developments, JNPA said.

The sops come days after the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways issued SOP for major port operators in the country amid the West



Asia crisis and also asked them to consider waivers on various charges at the ports to mitigate the impact of disruptions.

"All terminal operators will give 100 per cent waiver on ground rent/dwell time charges up to 15 days (from 0000 hours on February 28 up to 24 hours on March 14) for containers which were tying inside the terminals from February 28 or those which had gated in till 7 am March 8," JNPA said in the trade notice.

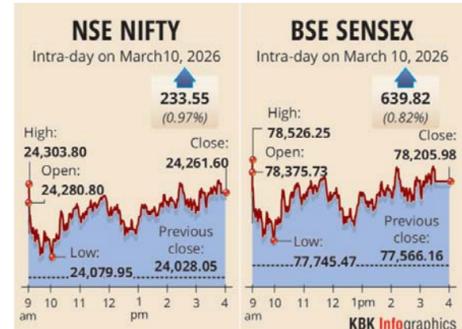
The port has five container terminals — Nhava Sheva Free Port Terminal (NSFT), Nhava Sheva International Container Terminal (NSICT),

Nhava Sheva India Gateway Terminal (NSIGT), Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal (BMCT), and GTI-APM Terminal (APM).

These terminals are operated by a mix of global port operators, including DP World, PSA International, APM Terminals, and JM Baxi.

The JNPA also said these operators will also waive 80 per cent of the reefer plugin charges up to 15 days (from 00.00 hours on February 28 till 24 hours on March 14) to those stranded reefer containers loaded with perishable goods, which were tying inside from February 28 or those which had gated in till 7 am on March 8.

Stock markets rebound tracking drop in crude oil prices



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended nearly 1 per cent higher on Tuesday after two days of massive decline, following a drop in crude oil prices and recovery in global peers amid hopes that the conflict in West Asia could end soon.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 639.82 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 78,205.98. During the day, it surged 960.09 points or 1.23 per cent to 78,526.25.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 233.55 points or 0.97 per cent to end at 24,261.60. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tumbled 9.03 per cent to \$90.26 per barrel.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints and UltraTech Cement were among the major gainers.

Eternal, Infosys, Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi rebounded sharply by 5.35 per cent, while Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 2.88 per cent.

Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also ended in positive territory.

Markets in Europe were trading sharply higher. The US market ended higher on Monday.

"The rebound came after signs of potential de-escalation in the Middle East conflict, as US President Donald Trump hinted at a possible early end to the Iran war. This development eased geopolitical concerns and triggered a sharp correction in global crude oil prices, helping risk sentiment stabilize," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹6,345.57 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however bought stocks worth ₹9,013.80 crore.

"Indian equity markets witnessed a strong rebound today as easing geopolitical concerns and a sharp reversal in crude oil prices helped restore investor confidence after recent volatility.

FROM THE WORLD

SRI LANKA

Fuel prices hiked amid Panic

Sri Lanka has increased retail fuel prices by over 8 per cent with effect from midnight Monday in a bid to curb hoarding and panic buying amid rising global crude oil prices, officials said on Tuesday. The price revision comes as global crude oil prices crossed \$100 per barrel for the first time in four years following escalating tensions in West Asia. Under the latest revision, the prices of widely used petrol and diesel varieties have been increased by LKR 22 per litre, the state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said. The move is aimed at curbing hoarding and panic buying, it said. "We have noticed heavy consumption since the news of the Middle East war situation," a CPC official said. Long queues have been seen outside fuel stations since February 28 after hostilities intensified following US-Iran strikes.

NEPAL

Govt to facilitate Saudi visas

Nepal will facilitate Saudi visas for its nationals stranded in conflict-hit Gulf countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. Nepali missions will facilitate Saudi visas for Nepali nationals in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE who wish to travel to Saudi Arabia before returning home, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement. MoFA said air services to Saudi Arabia and Oman are currently operational, allowing Nepali nationals to travel by air from these destinations. "Limited flights are operating from certain locations," said MoFA, adding that the discussions are underway about the operation of flights to Nepal. "Nepali citizens wishing to return may travel by air from places where flights are currently operating," it said.

Strikes are breaking Iran's bones, says PM Netanyahu

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Dubai

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed his country will keep striking the Islamic Republic, saying the aim of the campaign was the popular overthrow of its Government.

"Our aim is to bring the Iranian people to cast off the yoke of tyranny; ultimately, it depends on them," Netanyahu said during a meeting with Israel's hospital and health system leaders. "But there is no doubt that with the actions taken so far, we are breaking their bones." US President Donald Trump sent contradictory signals about how long the war could last, fueling uncertainty that is causing markets to swing.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf dismissed any suggestion that Tehran sought a ceasefire in the war and would keep fighting.

Trump late Monday told Republican lawmakers that the war was likely to be a "short excursion," but hours later threatened in a social media post that the US would dramatically increase attacks if Iran tried to close the Strait of Hormuz.

G7 nations mulling use of emergency oil stocks The group of industrial nations on Monday held off releasing oil stocks to bring down prices, but is picking up the issue again with more discussions between their energy



ministers on Tuesday, according to France.

France, which currently holds the G7's rotating presidency, wants "to advance on that question, with one objective, which is to bring down prices," Government spokeswoman Maud Bregeon told broadcaster France Television.

"France is working on that for a very simple reason: If you put volume back into the market, you can have an impact on the lowering of prices," Bregeon said.

French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said the G7 ministers will meet on Tuesday afternoon by video call. "It's a process, we are working on it," Lescure said. "All options are on the table."

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl says there is no need now to send his country's warships or other military hardware to Cyprus or the eastern Mediterranean. An Iranian Shahed drone struck a British air base on

Cyprus' southern coast last week. Wadhophul lauded Greece, France and Italy for dispatching warships to the region as a "pragmatic step," adding that Germany would augment a European force presence if needed.

Following talks with his Cypriot counterpart, Constantinos Kombos, Wadepuhl said he doesn't have intelligence indicating "a real current threat" to Cyprus or another European country from the Iran war. But he added, "You can never predict what will happen the next day" with groups like Hezbollah.

The Saudi oil giant Aramco says it will reach the capacity of its East-West pipeline "in a couple of days" to get its product out to the global market. Amin Nasser, Aramco's CEO and president, said the East-West pipeline has a daily capacity of 7 million barrels. "We should be reaching capacity in a couple of days. It's all been

going on with the repositioning of tankers from the East to the West," Nasser said. "You know, this crisis happened all of a sudden, and tankers need to reposition to the West coast for loading." He added: "The situation at the Strait of Hormuz is blocking sizable volumes of oil from the whole region."

The East-West pipeline sends oil to the Red Sea for transport. Saudi Aramco operates the pipeline from the Aqaiq oil processing centre near the Persian Gulf to the Yanbu port on the Red Sea, avoiding the chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz.

Amin Nasser, the president and CEO of Aramco, said the firm remained "focused on safety and meeting our commitments." "That situation continues to evolve, and the safety of our people and our operations remains our highest priority," Nasser said.

He did not immediately elaborate on any effects from the war on the company's output. Nasser hinted at global oil markets being squeezed the longer the Iran war goes on, and shipments from the Mideast being affected. "Given the current geopolitical situation, we may see inventories eroding and being drawn down faster as shipments are being curtailed from the region," he said. "This is at a time when current global spare capacity remains extremely low." That likely could push the price per barrel globally even higher, translating to higher costs for gasoline and jet fuel.

Will work with India to further strengthen bilateral ties, says Balendra

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
Kathmandu

Rastriya Swatantra Party's (RSP) prime ministerial candidate Balendra Shah on Tuesday expressed confidence in further deepening "historic" Nepal-India ties and making them more "outcome-oriented".

The 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician is all set to become Nepal's first Madhesi prime minister and also the Himalayan nation's youngest elected executive head. Shah made the remarks in a social media post while thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his wishes on the party's



electoral success. "Thank you for the good wishes honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji," he said in the post. "I express my confidence that we will work together to further strengthen, deepen and make more outcome-oriented the historic, close, and multi-

dimensional relations existing between Nepal and India in the coming days," he said.

The RSP, formed in 2022, has won 125 of the 165 seats under direct voting in Nepal's parliamentary (polls as vote counting under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system concluded on Tuesday, putting it in a position to form a majority Government.

Modi on Monday congratulated RSP chief Rabi Lamichhane and senior party leader Shah for their election victory, and conveyed India's commitment to work with them for the mutual prosperity, progress and well-being of the two countries. (PTI)

Trump says Vance was philosophically different on Iran while downplaying split

STEVEN SLOAN
Doral (US)

President Donald Trump said his vice president, JD Vance, was "philosophically a little bit different than me" at the outset of the war in Iran even as he dismissed the notion of a disagreement between the two.

Speaking to reporters at his golf club in Doral, Florida, the president said Vance was "maybe less enthusiastic about going" but insisted that his decision to launch airstrikes in Iran alongside Israel was necessary. "I felt it was something we had to do," Trump said. "I did not feel we had a choice."



Heading into a challenging election year, the war in Iran has stoked tension among Republicans, with some expressing reservations about how the operation fits into the "America First", isolationist-leaning movement the party has embraced during the Trump era.

Few have embodied that movement as prominently as Vance, who over the course of a decade rose from an author to US senator and ultimately vice president. He is now considered a top contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 2028, giving him the opportunity to carry Trump's movement into the future.

In a 2023 op-ed in The Wall Street Journal that has garnered renewed attention after the Iran strikes, Vance wrote that Trump has his support because "I know he won't recklessly send Americans to fight overseas". (AP)

WHO warns of health risks of black rain following strikes on Iran's oil facilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday warned that unusual "black rain" and toxic air pollution reported in parts of Iran could pose serious respiratory risks to the public following recent strikes on oil facilities.

According to the United Nations health agency, fires at damaged refineries and storage sites have released large amounts of hazardous chemicals into the atmosphere. In response, Iranian authorities have advised residents in affected areas to remain indoors as a precaution. Speaking at a press brief-



ing in Geneva, WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier said the agency had received several reports of oil-contaminated rainfall in recent days.

"The black rain and the acidic rain coming with it is indeed a danger for the population, mainly affecting the respiratory system," Lindmeier said.

Thick black smoke was seen over Tehran on Monday after a refinery was struck, part of escalating attacks on the country's domestic energy infrastructure linked to a broader campaign involving the United States and Israel, according to regional reports.

WHO officials said the

strikes triggered fires that released significant quantities of toxic substances into the air. These include hydrocarbons, sulfur oxides, and nitrogen compounds—chemicals known to degrade air quality and harm human health.

Health experts warn that exposure to smoke or contaminated particles may cause headaches, skin irritation, eye discomfort, and breathing difficulties. Prolonged exposure to some of the pollutants can also increase the risk of certain cancers. Lindmeier said the WHO supports the recommendation for people in affected areas to stay indoors. "Given the damage to oil storage facilities and refineries and the resulting air-quality concerns, staying inside is definitely a sensible precaution," he said.

Scientists say the unusual rainfall likely occurred when precipitation mixed with soot and other airborne particles produced by the refinery fires.

Akshay Deoras, a research scientist at the University of Reading, explained that a weather system moving through the region caused rain to combine with polluted air. "The rain was an eye-opener for many people," Deoras said, noting that it made the pollution visible as dark-colored droplets and residue. However, he stressed that the greater health concern may come from continued exposure to polluted air rather than a single rainfall event.

People can reduce risks by staying indoors when possible, wearing protective masks outdoors, and covering exposed skin, he said.

Comprehensive air-quality data from affected areas remains limited, making it difficult for scientists to assess the full scale of the pollution. Weather forecasts suggest the region may experience mostly dry conditions later this week, which could gradually help disperse pollutants.

GOVT. OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS), ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3.

No. CE/STBR/II/32/2025-26/04

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3, invites Bid on behalf of the Governor of Assam from eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) or registered in Central Govt./any State Government/ Semi Govt. Organization / Central or State Public Sector Undertakings for "Additional works for Construction of ROB over Rail Track at Level Crossing No.SK-24 at Barkura, Nalbari under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26" for an amount of **Rs.1119.03 Lakh (Rupees eleven crore nineteen lakh three hundred) only (Approx.)**.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in>. Amendment/Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWD, Assam website <http://assamtenders.gov.in>.

Note: NIT value is inclusive of all taxes

Sd/-

Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads)
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPR/C/PIO/959/11-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PWD JALUKBARI TERRITORIAL ROAD DIVISION, FANCY BAZAR, GUWAHATI-01

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 180 (One hundred eighty) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight and Paise Twenty Five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form (50 Fifty) Nos of group are hereby invited from the Assam, PWD (Roads) Registered contractors according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to **12.00 pm on 16.03.2026** and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorised agents.

SI No	Name of Works	Tender Value (Rs. In Lakh)	Time of Completion
1	2	3	4
1	Desiltation Of Drains Under Jalukbari Territorial Road Division For The Year 2025-26	346.08	31.10.2026

Rate to be quoted on item basis at annexure attached with the detailed N.I.T. Detailed particulars of the work may be seen at the office of the undersigned from **09.03.2026** to **16.03.2026** during office hours.

In case of the date of receiving of tenders papers to be Holiday the next working day will be treated as receiving / opening date of tender at the same time and same place.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, PWD
Jalukbari Territorial Road Division
Fancy Bazar, Guwahati - 01

DIPR/C/PIO/955/11-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D., NALBARI BUILDING CIRCLE NALBARI

PRESS NOTICE

The Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Nalbari Building Circle, Nalbari on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites tender in electronic tendering system for the work "Repairing/Renovation of Fire Hydrant Sprinkler with necessary Fire Fighting equipment etc including Construction of (1.5 Lakh) capacity Water Tank with Pump House for entire Hospital Building of FAAMCH, Barpeta" with an approximate value of work of **Rs.1,11,90,971.00** from APWD Building registered contractor of Class-I (A,B,C) having up to date registration and requisite experience in similar nature of work. Details of the bids may be seen at e-procurement portal website: www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in for participating in the bidding process.

Note:-

- Any modification of tender may be seen in the P.W.D. portal www.assamtenders.gov.in
- The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible.

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D.
Nalbari Building Circle,
Nalbari

DIPR/C/PIO/957/11-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PW (HEALTH & EDUCATION) DEPARTMENT: CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3

No. Tech-I(H&E)/06/2026/5

PRESS NOTICE(RETENDER)

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:

SI. No.	Name of work	Bid Value (including GST @18%)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1.	Construction of Boundary Walls at Govt. Model Degree College at Deithor, Karbi Anglong	Rs. 297.36000 L	8 (Eight) months	2% of Bid value for General category and 1% of Bid Value for reserved Category	Rs.6.000.00

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.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.

The Work will be allotted only after receiving Government approval.

Sd/-

Chief Engineer (Health & Education).
PW(H&E) Deptt
Chandmari, Guwahati-3

DIPR/C/PIO/956/11-Mar-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

DIRECTORATE CUM ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B), HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU.

No. ACEH/CS/PM-ABHIM/98/2025-26/03

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B), Hills Assam, Diphu on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids in EPC-I mode of Contract from approved and eligible Contractors registered under APWD (Building) for "PM-ABHIM" pertaining to E.E., P.W.D., Karbi Anglong District Territorial Building Division, Diphu for a total bid amount of **Rs.20,67,90,828.00 (Rupees Twenty Crore Sixty Seven Lakhs Ninety Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Eight) only (approx)**. The details may be seen at the website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-

Director cum Additional Chief Engineer
DIPR/C/PIO/958/11-Mar-26 PWD (R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

NEW OKHLA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar, (U.P)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://tender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

- 20/GM/AO/Sr. M.(E&M)-II/2025-26/ET, AMC and Servicing of 380 KVA 500 KVA 750 KVA DG Set for Noida Stadium Sector-21A Noida, Cost Rs. 30.47 Lacs.
- 17/GM (E&M)/S.M./E/M-III/25-26, M/o Authority Building (Annual Operation and Maint. of 33/11 KV Sub Station in Sector-96, Noida, Cost Rs. 49.32 Lacs.

Which can be uploaded by date:- **24.03.2026 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date:- **25.03.2026 at 11.00 AM**.

Office: Sector-5, Noida General Manager (E&M) Noida

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Russia, Ukraine both claim frontline progress

HANNA ARHIROVA
Kyiv

Russian and Ukrainian officials are making contradictory claims of battlefield successes in their 4-year-old war, with Ukraine saying it has pushed Moscow's forces back in some places on the front line but the Kremlin insisting that Russia's invasion of its neighbour is making progress.

At the same time, Russia's almost daily aerial attacks on civilian areas of Ukraine continue, with overnight drone strikes on two cities injuring at least 14 people, including two children, emergency services said Tuesday.

Ukraine's air force said that it shot down 122 out of

137 drones that Russia launched during the night.

US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine are on hold as Washington's attention is gripped by the Iran war, which has drawn the international spotlight from Ukraine's plight as it strives to hold back Russia's bigger army.

Despite being short of soldiers, Ukrainian forces have recently retaken nearly all the territory of the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk industrial region during a counteroffensive, driving Russian troops out of more than 400 square kilometres (150 square miles), Major General Oleksandr Komareko said in an interview published Tuesday by local media



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Government meeting focused on the situation on the global energy market at the Kremlin in Moscow

outlet RBC-Ukraine. He described the overall situation on the front line as difficult but under control, with the heaviest fighting continuing near Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine and Oleksandrivka in the south, where he said Russian forces have concentrated their main effort. There was no independent verification of his description of the military situation. However, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based

think tank, said late Monday that recent Ukrainian counterattacks "are generating tactical, operational and strategic effects that may disrupt Russia's spring-summer 2026 offensive campaign plan."

Meanwhile, a Kremlin aide said that Russian President Vladimir Putin told US President Donald Trump late Monday that Russian forces are "advancing rather successfully" in Ukraine.

That progress should "encourage" Kyiv to "move toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict," Yuri Ushakov told reporters - even though Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly demanded a lasting peace deal and

European governments accuse Putin of feigning interest in talks while the Russian military keeps hammering Ukraine. The Kremlin is hoping that by supplying its cutting-edge and battle-tested drone technology to the United States and its Gulf partners for the war in the Middle East, Ukraine will win more international diplomatic leverage against Moscow. (AP)

Tiya Gandhi revisits CIA, share dining experience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Culinary Institute of America (CIA) welcomed back one of its alumni this week as pastry professional Tiya Singh Gandhi returned to campus to share her experience working at the highest levels of fine dining.

Speaking to students at the institute's Hyde Park campus in New York, Gandhi reflected on her journey from culinary student to Lead Pastry Cook at the acclaimed three-Michelin-starred restaurant Le Bernardin - widely regarded as one of the most respected fine-dining establishments in the United States.

Her visit came at the invitation of faculty members who sought to give students a closer look at the demands and discipline required to succeed in Michelin-level kitchens. During the session, Gandhi spoke about the precision, coordination, and consistency behind high-end dessert service, describing the quiet choreography that unfolds nightly in one of the world's most rigorous culinary environments.

Addressing an engaged audience, she also discussed the technical refinement involved in plated desserts and the standards chefs must



maintain to deliver the same level of excellence service after service.

Faculty at the institute said the interaction offered students rare insight into the realities of operating at the pinnacle of the global restaurant industry, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities that come with pursuing careers in elite kitchens.

For Gandhi, the visit marked a personal milestone - returning to the Culinary Institute of America not as a student, but as a professional invited to mentor and inspire the next generation of culinary talent.

UN defies South Sudan order to shut base in opposition-held town

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Juba (South Sudan)

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan said on Monday that it would not comply with a Government order to shut down its base in Akobo, an opposition stronghold near the Ethiopian border where tens of thousands of refugees have fled.



The South Sudanese army ordered UN peacekeepers, as well as NGOs and civilians, to vacate the town ahead of a planned assault.

But the mission refused to leave and said it would provide "a protective presence for civilians" in the town, adding that the safety and security of its personnel "must be fully respected at all times."

The UN Mission said it was engaging "intensively with national, state and local stakeholders" regarding this order. "Any military operations in and around Akobo gravely endanger the safety and security of civilians," said mission chief Anita Kiki Gbeho.

India slams Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
United Nations

India has condemned Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan as a "flagrant violation" of international law, saying it is "hypocritical" to invoke Islamic solidarity while carrying out attacks that have killed civilians during Ramadan.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan on Monday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni reiterated New Delhi's support for the UN Secretary-General's call for compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law,



India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni

and for ensuring the protection of civilians.

"India strongly condemns the airstrikes on Afghan territory which are flagrant violations of international law and the UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty. It is hypocritical to espouse high principles of international law and

Islamic solidarity on the one hand, while mercilessly carrying out air strikes during the holy month of Ramadan that have killed 185 innocent civilians as of March 6," he said. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), around 55 per cent of the 185 victims were women and children, and more than 100,000 people have been displaced due to the attacks.

Parvathaneni expressed "grave concern on the practice of trade and transit terrorism by denial of passage for trade and cynical closure of access" to Afghanistan, a landlocked country.

Describing it as a violation of WTO norms as well as international law, he said the trade and transit vulnerabilities of Land Locked Developing countries (LLDCs) should not be weaponised.

"While we condemn these acts, we reaffirm our support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan," the envoy said.

He said terrorism continues to remain a global scourge afflicting humanity and stressed the need for coordinated international efforts to ensure that groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda and their affiliates, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and their proxies, do not carry out cross-border terrorism. The diplomat said the political situation in Afghanistan has changed over the last four years and urged the UN sanctions system to be reviewed.

The policies should be more flexible and practical, and the goal should be to help the Afghan people rather than isolate them, he said.

Human Rights Watch details deaths by drone attacks in Haiti

ASSOCIATED PRESS
San Jose (Costa Rica)

Drones operated by Haitian security forces and private contractors have killed at least 1,243 people and injured 738 others, Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday.

Of those killed, 17 were children, and 43 were adults not believed to be members of any criminal group. Of those injured, at least 49 were believed to be civilians, according to the rights group. The killings took place between March 1, 2025, and January 21, 2026. The most lethal drone operation killed



57 people, it noted.

"Haitian authorities should urgently rein in the security forces and private contractors working for them before more children die," Juanita Goebertus, Americas director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. A spokesperson for Haiti's Police did not respond to a request for

comment.

The Human Rights Watch said the number of armed drone attacks in Haiti's Capital, Port-au-Prince, which is 90 per cent controlled by gangs, has "significantly increased" in recent months, with 57 reported between November and late January, almost double that of the 29 attacks reported from August through October last year.

Human Rights Watch said its researchers analysed seven videos uploaded to social media or shared directly with the group that show armed quadcopter drones in action and geolocated four of them to Port-au-Prince.

JetBlue flights ground stopped by FAA

ASSOCIATED PRESS
New York

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) briefly grounded all JetBlue flights early Tuesday morning due to a request from the airline, the agency said in a notice posted to its website.

It was not immediately clear why JetBlue requested the ground stop, which was lifted about 40 minutes after it was imposed.

The airline and the FAA didn't immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press



requesting more information. The airline, which was founded more than 25 years ago, has its headquarters in New York City and its flagship terminal at the city's John F Kennedy International Airport.

North Korea's Kim Yo Jong condemns US-South Korea joint military drills

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Seoul

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday criticised the United States and South Korea for proceeding with their annual joint military exercises at a perilous moment for global security, and warned that any challenge to the North's safety would bring "terrible consequences."

The statement by Kim Yo Jong came a day after the allies started their 11-day Freedom Shield exercise involving thousands of troops, while Washington participates in an escalating war in the Middle East.



Without directly referring to the Iran war, Kim said the US-South Korea drills undermine regional stability at a time when the global security structure is "collapsing rapidly, and wars break out in different parts of the world due to the reckless acts of outrageous international

scenarios and security challenges. Freedom Shield will be accompanied by a field training program called Warrior Shield.

Mentioning the country's expanding nuclear program, Kim Yo Jong said that North Korea will continue to bolster its "destructive power" against what it sees as external threats and "constantly and repeatedly convince the enemies of our war deterrence and its fatality."

North Korea has long portrayed the allies' joint drills as invasion rehearsals and often used them as a pretext to ramp up its own military demonstrations or weapons tests. The allies say the exercises are defensive in nature.

RSP to pursue development diplomacy to boost Nepal-India ties: Lamichhane

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kathmandu

RSP Chairman Rabi Lamichhane has said he looked forward to strengthening Nepal-India ties through "development diplomacy" as he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for wishing him on the party's electoral success.

Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has won 125 of the 165 seats under direct voting in Nepal's parliamentary polls as vote counting under the first-past-the-post (FPTT) system concluded on Tuesday, putting it in a position to form a majority Government.

The party bagged 4,974,957 votes so far under



Rabi Lamichhane

the proportional representation (PR) system.

In a social media post on Monday, Lamichhane thanked Prime Minister Modi for his warm wishes and for "recognising the democratic mandate of the Nepali people."

"RSP and our Government will remain dedicated to

fostering a relationship built on mutual respect and shared prosperity where RSP will prioritise on 'development diplomacy,'" he said.

"We look forward to a partnership with India that scales new heights through cooperation in connectivity, cultural tourism, energy, and trade, ensuring a prosperous future for the people of both countries," the RSP leader said.

Congratulating Lamichhane and Balendra Shah for their election victory, Modi on Monday conveyed India's commitment to work with them for the mutual prosperity, progress and well-being of the two countries.

Colombia's President Petro wins in congressional election



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Bogota

The party of Colombian President Gustavo Petro secured a victory in congressional elections, but will have to build coalitions with other parties to carry out announced reforms, including a controversial push to rewrite the nation's constitution.

Petro's Historical Pact party won almost a quarter of all seats in the Senate on Sunday and about 15 per cent of seats in the House of Representatives, more than any other party.

But its staunchest opponents also made gains, with the Democratic Centre - the conservative party led by former President Alvaro Uribe - securing 17 seats in the 103-member Senate.

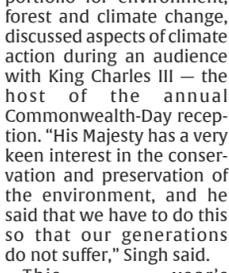
Traditional parties, including the Liberals and Conservatives, lost ground in the Senate, while the Green Party also saw a smaller showing. "The country seems to be turning away from voices in the centre, and it is becoming more polarised," said Carlos Arias, a political consultant based in Bogota.

Commonwealth can solve uncertainties by coming together: MoS Kirti Vardhan

ADITI KHANNA
London

The disruptions to the world order due to ongoing conflicts can be overcome by the Commonwealth as the largest gathering of democratic countries by pooling its resources to move forward together, Union Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh has said.

Singh concluded his UK visit to attend the 26th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) with a special reception at St James' Palace in London on Monday. The minister, who also holds the



Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh during a Commonwealth Day reception hosted by King Charles III at St James' Palace in London

portfolio for environment, forest and climate change, discussed aspects of climate action during an audience with King Charles III - the host of the annual Commonwealth-Day reception. "His Majesty has a very keen interest in the conservation and preservation of the environment, and he said that we have to do this so that our generations do not suffer," Singh said.

This year's Commonwealth-Day theme centred around "Unlocking opportunities together for a prosperous Commonwealth" and followed a weekend of packed engagements, with Singh leading the Indian



Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh during a Commonwealth Day reception hosted by King Charles III at St James' Palace in London

delegation at the wide-ranging discussions. "At the (CFAMM) meeting, the overarching thought echoed by all the countries was that we have to make our Commonwealth more relevant in today's times. One of the major points of the discussions was how the countries can use their comparative and competitive

advantages for positive, sustainable growth for all our countries," Singh said.

Asked if the conflict in West Asia featured heavily during the discussions, the minister shared: "The present disruptions and the changes that are happening in the world order were very much a part of our discussions at the meet.

"We are the largest gathering of democratic countries - some of them are developed, some are developing and we all just have to put our human resources and natural resources together to move forward.

Together, we can solve the uncertainties that we

are facing today regarding supply-chain disruption, regarding energy security," Singh said.

Singh said India, with its strong information technology and digital public infrastructure, can be an important resource for other developing countries in the organisation. "We all are very happy with the way the Secretary General (Shirley Botchwey) is taking the reforms of the Commonwealth forward and putting in measures that make it more inclusive, more democratic and more transparent," he added.

Earlier, the MoS met the UK's Minister for the Indo-Pacific and Minister for

Equalities Seema Malhotra at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Their discussions revolved around the importance of a "free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific, including maritime security collaboration under the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the proposed Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE)". Following floral tributes at the memorials of Mahatma Gandhi and BR Ambedkar and bilateral engagements on the sidelines of the CFAMM, Singh wrapped up the UK leg of his two-nation tour, which takes him next to Chile. (PTI)

PROSPECT



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma virtually inaugurating 5 District Science Centres at Science City Guwahati Complex, Tepesia, Sonapur



DG CRPF, GP Singh, IPS, inaugurated a state-of-the-art 'Shoot House' at RTC Srinagar



Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana on Monday inaugurated JUST IN TIME stores, one of India's leading watch retailers, with Founder & Managing Director Raju Chheda and CEO Ronak Shah, in the presence of media, influencers, and industry partners in Connaught Place. The retailers announced Khurrana as its Brand Ambassador on the occasion

New Delhi World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 Inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Paralympic Committee of India inaugurated the second edition of the New Delhi World Para Athletics Grand Prix on Tuesday at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The international para athletics competition will take place from March 11-13, 2026, bringing together around 257 athletes from eight nations.

The Grand Prix will feature athletes from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Hong Kong, Serbia, Bosnia, Egypt and Neutral Para Athletes. Team India will field the largest contingent, with approximately 219 athletes competing across multiple track and field classifications.

Several of India's leading para athletes are expected to compete in the event including Paralympic champions Mariyappan Thangavelu, Sumit Antil and Praveen Kumar. The Indian line-up will also include Paralympic medalists Ajeet Singh and Devendra Singh Gurjar, multiple Asian Para Games medallist Ankur Dhama, T12 sprinter Simran Sharma, the 2025 World Championships gold medallist, and Preeti Pal, who made history at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games by becoming the first Indian woman to win two track and field medals at a single Paralympics.

President of the Paralympic Committee of India, Devendra Jhajharia spoke about the New Delhi World Para Athletics Grand Prix reflects India's growing stature in global para sport. He noted that hosting athletes from across the world while providing Indian athletes with international competition on home soil is an important step in strengthening the country's para athletics ecosystem.

Speaking at the event Paul Fitzgerald, President of World Para Athletics said the organisation was pleased to return to New Delhi 1 year after the inaugural Grand Prix and 5 months after hosting the World Para Athletics Championships 2025. He said the investment in the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium has already benefited the current team of Indian ath-



letes, contributing to a record medal haul in 2026. Fitzgerald expressed hope that the continuation of the Grand Prix will provide a platform for both existing and new athletes to prepare for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games. He also highlighted the importance of support from the Government, commercial sponsors and the media in ensuring that para athletics remains visible across India. Reflecting on the occasion, Sminu Jindal emphasised the importance of accessibility in sport and public life, she said that making sporting infrastructure in schools, transport and training facilities accessible is essential to identify and support talented young para athletes who can represent India at the

global level. Svyam joined the Grand Prix as the Official Accessibility Partner, supporting efforts to ensure inclusive and barrier-free access for athletes and participants.

As part of this role, the organisation conducted an accessibility review of the venue and supported customised transport arrangements to ensure smooth mobility for athletes, officials and participants.

With participation from several countries and many of India's leading para athletes, the New Delhi 2026 World Para Athletics Grand Prix is expected to further strengthen India's role in advancing global para sport while promoting accessible sporting infrastructure.

Women's Day Held at Punjab & Sind Bank, Lucknow Zone



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Lucknow

Punjab & Sind Bank, Lucknow Zone, organised an International Women's Day celebration. Female staff members working in the office and branches enthusiastically participated in the event.

During the event, Zonal Head, AN Singh, honored the women present and praised their significant contributions to the workplace and society. In his address, he stated that women today are demonstrating their talent and capabilities in every field, and their role in the banking sector is also crucial.

Various activities and programs related to women's empowerment were organized on this occasion. To make the event interesting and engaging, a general

knowledge competition, a cultural song recitation program related to women, and other interesting competitions were organized, in which female employees participated enthusiastically. Participants who excelled in these competitions were rewarded and encouraged.

During the event, participants also shared their views on topics related to women's empowerment, equal opportunities at the workplace, and social awareness. The program was marked by a cordial and enthusiastic atmosphere.

The presence of the Assistant General Managers of the Zonal Office, Tarun Kanti Roy and Hanuman Ram Tak, was instrumental in the successful organisation of the program. Finally, the program concluded successfully with a vote of thanks.

Birla Open Minds launches futuristic campus in Jharkhand's Pathargama

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Strengthening its commitment to delivering progressive and future-ready education across India, Birla Open Minds International School has announced the launch of its new campus in Pathargama, Jharkhand. The inauguration ceremony, held on March 8, was marked by the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including Chief Guest Sanjay Prasad Yadav, Minister of Labour, Employment, Training & Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand, and Guest of Honour, double Olympic medallist, Harmanpreet Singh, Captain of the Indian Men's Hockey Team.

The launch of the new campus reflects the institution's ongoing vision to make holistic, innovation-driven education accessible to students across emerging regions of the country. Known for its learner-centric



approach, Birla Open Minds International School integrates academic excellence with experiential learning, character development, and global perspectives, preparing students to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

The inauguration ceremony witnessed enthusiastic participation from parents, local leaders, educationists, and community members,

all coming together to celebrate the arrival of a world-class educational institution in Pathargama. The new campus aims to provide students with modern infrastructure, advanced learning resources, and a nurturing environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and leadership.

With the launch of the Pathargama campus, Birla

Open Minds International School continues to expand its presence across the country, reinforcing its commitment to shaping future-ready learners and contributing to the growth of India's education ecosystem.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Sanjay Prasad Yadav, Minister of Labour, Employment, Training & Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand, said, "The establishment of Birla Open Minds International School in Pathargama is a significant step towards strengthening the educational landscape of Jharkhand.

Institutions like these play an important role in nurturing future leaders by providing students with modern learning opportunities, strong values, and the skills required for the future workforce.

I congratulate the Birla Open Minds team for bringing such a progressive educational initiative to the region."

IFS officer trainees visit army installations and forward locations at Mechuka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Likabali, Arunachal Pradesh



A delegation of Indian Foreign Service officer trainees visited Indian Army installations at Likabali, Aalo and forward locations at Mechuka to gain a first-hand understanding of ground realities in remote frontier areas and the operational role of the Army in safeguarding national borders.

The visit aimed to familiarise the trainee diplomats with the security environment in the sector and the factors that shape sustained border management.

During the programme, the trainees were taken to key installations and forward areas where they were briefed on the operational environment, logistics management and the challenges of maintaining an effective

military presence in high altitude and difficult terrain. They observed the level of preparedness and operational capabilities maintained by troops deployed in the region under demanding climatic conditions.

The delegation also interacted with commanders and senior officers who highlighted the strategic significance of the sector, operational posture and the coordination required between military preparedness and diplomatic engagement. The trainees appreciated the dedication, professionalism and resilience of soldiers serving in remote locations.



The visit reinforced the importance of synergy between diplomacy and defence in securing national interests and maintaining peace and stability along the borders.

The visit reinforced the importance of synergy between diplomacy and defence in securing national interests and maintaining peace and stability along the borders.

First national conference on psychogenic epilepsy at BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Department of Neurology at the Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi organised a 2-day National Conference on Psychogenic Epilepsy on March 7 to 8, 2026. The conference brought together leading experts from across the country to discuss research and treatment related to Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES).

4 senior faculty members from IHBAS, Delhi, were invited to present their research papers at the event. These included Dr CB Tripathi from the Department of Biostatistics, Dr Rachna Agarwal from Neurochemistry, Dr Suman Kushwaha from Neurology, and Dr UK Sinha from Clinical Psychology.

Dr CB Tripathi spoke on the validity and reliability of diagnostic tools and instruments used in identifying PNES. Dr Rachna Agarwal presented her research on the genetic and psychiatric aspects associated with Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures. Dr UK



Sinha discussed the psychological management of PNES, highlighting the importance of psychotherapy in treatment. Meanwhile, Dr Suman Kushwaha who participated as an expert neurological

panelist during the discussion sessions.

Professor VN Mishra from the Department of Neurology at IMS-BHU served as the organising secretary of the conference. According to organisers, the event was unique as it is believed to be the first national conference in the country dedicated specifically to this disorder. The conference provided a platform for clinicians, researchers and mental health professionals to share knowledge and improve understanding of PNES and its management.

Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures are involuntary episodes that resemble epileptic seizures but are not caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain. They are often triggered by stress, emotional distress, past trauma or underlying psychiatric conditions. Experts at the conference emphasised that PNES is primarily treated through psychotherapy, particularly cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), along with medication where necessary to manage conditions such as anxiety or depression.

Direct seeded rice can cut water use by 35%, lower costs by ₹14,000 per hectare

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) can reduce water use by up to 35 percent and lower cultivation costs by around ₹14,000 per hectare, agricultural experts said at a conference in New Delhi, calling for wider adoption of the method to address growing pressure on water resources and rising farm costs.

The Federation of Seed Industry of India organised the second edition of its conference on "Direct Seeded Rice for Sustainable and Profitable Rice Production" at the NASC Complex. The event brought together policymakers, scientists, industry leaders and agricultural experts to discuss ways to scale up the adoption of DSR across India's rice-growing regions.

Experts said that traditional rice cultivation methods are increasingly placing pressure on groundwater resources, especially in the north-western rice belt.

Ajai Rana, Chairman, Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) and also the CEO and Managing Director of Savannah Seeds, said groundwater extraction in



major rice-producing states has reached critical levels. In Punjab, groundwater extraction has reached nearly 156 percent of annual recharge, while in Haryana it stands at around 137 per cent, indicating severe stress on aquifers.

He noted that rice is one of the most water-intensive crops. Producing one kilogram of rice requires around 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water. Agriculture accounts for nearly 80 percent of India's freshwater withdrawals, highlighting the urgent need for more water-efficient farming methods.

Rana said the seed industry has been working with research institutions and farmers to promote DSR through technological innovations.

One of the major chal-

lenges in DSR cultivation is effective weed management. According to Rana, the seed industry, in collaboration with public research institutions, has introduced herbicide tolerance technologies developed by both public and private sectors. These technologies help farmers control weeds more effectively using herbicides.

During the last kharif season, nearly one lakh acres of farmland were cultivated using herbicide-tolerant rice through drill-based sowing under the DSR method. The highest adoption was reported in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, he said.

Experts also pointed to new challenges emerging in DSR cultivation. Rana said issues such as nematode infestation during germina-

tion are being addressed through continued technological innovation.

P K Singh, Commissioner in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, said early results from states adopting DSR technologies are encouraging. He added that new agricultural technologies will play a key role in transforming farming practices in India. These include biological crop protection solutions, improved crop protection chemistry and next-generation seed technologies such as hybrid and gene-edited varieties.

According to Singh, when these innovations are combined with improved farming practices, they can significantly improve agricultural sustainability and productivity.

Trilochan Mohapatra, former Secretary of DARE and Director General of ICAR, said DSR has the potential to greatly improve efficiency in rice cultivation while reducing input costs for farmers.

He estimated that 20 to 60 percent of India's rice-growing area could potentially transition to DSR depending on agro-ecological conditions. India current-

ly cultivates rice on nearly 44 million hectares of land, meaning even partial adoption could result in significant savings in groundwater, irrigation energy and greenhouse gas emissions.

However, Mohapatra noted that adoption of new agricultural technologies in India has often been slow and challenging. He stressed that collaboration between public institutions and the private sector will be crucial to support farmers in adopting DSR.

A K Singh said rice will remain central to India's food security, but production systems must evolve to address emerging challenges such as climate change and natural resource conservation. The conference also featured discussions on policy measures, agronomic practices, weed management strategies, seed technologies and mechanisation needed to expand DSR adoption across the country.

A progressive farmer from Madhya Pradesh shared his experience of adopting the method, saying it helped reduce labour costs and water use while improving the efficiency of rice cultivation.

BRIEFLY

Visa issues may leave Jamaican club short-handed



Mount Pleasant, a team from the Jamaican Premier League, is bracing to be without as many as 10 players on Wednesday when it takes on the LA Galaxy of Major League Soccer in a CONCACAF Champions Cup match. The reason: Those players, including six from Haiti, were unable to get visas to the US for the match, Jamaican officials said. Officials said on Monday that the match is still set to be played as scheduled, even while the Jamaican club – which plans to add younger players from the academy level if necessary – and CONCACAF seek a solution. The US has travel restrictions on citizens from some nations, including Haiti, though there are mechanisms that can assist athletes in some cases. The Jamaican club has been dealing with the issue since at least last week, apparently to no avail. The match is the first of a two-leg round of 16 match in the tournament, with the second leg set to be played in Kingston, Jamaica, on March 19.

Marusic goal in stoppage time gives Lazio win over Sassuolo



A stoppage time goal from Adam Marusic gave Lazio a 2-1 win over Sassuolo and snapped its four-game winless streak in Serie A. Marusic headed in his first goal of the season after 90+3 minutes on Monday. Lazio had not won since January or scored in over a month but Daniel Maldini opened the scoring two minutes after kickoff. The son of AC Milan great Paolo Maldini pounced on a loose ball to fire home from close range. However, Sassuolo's in-form winger Armand Lauriente equalized just before halftime with a well-placed drive from 12 meters out. It upped his recent stats to two goals and four assists in his last four league games. Lazio had the lion's share of the chances but its toothlessness in front of goal looked to be its undoing once again until Marusic popped up in the final seconds. The result lifted the capital side one place into 10th, a point and a place behind Sassuolo.

West Ham beat Brentford

ASSOCIATED PRESS
London

West Ham will face Leeds United in the FA Cup quarter-finals after beating Brentford 5-3 in a penalty shootout following a 2-2 draw after 90 minutes and extra time. The tie was decided when stationary West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola saved Dango Ouattara's woefully taken Panenka effort in the shootout on Monday. His effort, the third of Brentford's five, was the only penalty kick not converted. The finale came at the end of a pulsating match that featured two goals apiece from West Ham's Jarrod Bowen and



Brentford's Igor Thiago.

A regular talisman for the Hammers, Bowen got the opener after 19 minutes when he reacted quickly to a loose ball in the box to slam it past 'keeper Caoimhin Kelleher. Thiago equalised for

Brentford nine minutes later but West Ham was ahead again before halftime when Bowen coolly converted a penalty kick.

The second half failed to live up to the high standards set in the opening 45 minutes but another penalty

decision proved key.

Thiago got his double from the spot with nine minutes remaining after Crysencio Summerville was adjudged to have pushed Michael Kayode. It was Thiago's 20th goal of the season in all competitions.

The result means West Ham has needed extra time or penalties to win all three of its FA Cup ties thus far but that will bother neither the players nor coach Nuno Espirito Santos. They can look forward to an enticing home game against Leeds, one of the two all-Premier League encounters. The other has Manchester City facing Liverpool on the weekend of April 4-5.

La Liga: Espanyol plays draw with Real Oviedo



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Barcelona

Espanyol and Real Oviedo drew 1-1 in a game that extended Espanyol's winless La Liga run to 10 matches and left Oviedo rooted to the bottom of the table.

Oviedo came into the game on Monday without a win in five but took the lead after eight minutes through Alberto Reina. However, Espanyol was on top and got a deserved equaliser nine minutes before halftime thanks to Kike Garcia.

Jones, Yaw Yeboah banned for life

ASSOCIATED PRESS
New York

Two players were banned for life by Major League Soccer for gambling on soccer, including bets involving their own matches.

Derrick Jones and Yaw Yeboah were both placed on administrative leave in October pending a review of potential violations of league rules. MLS on Monday said the investigation concluded the players "engaged in extensive gambling on soccer, including on their own teams, during the 2024 and 2025 seasons."

The league cited one instance where the players bet on Jones to receive a yellow card in a 2024 match, which



he did. Both players were with the Columbus Crew at the time. "Major League Soccer remains steadfast in its commitment to match integrity," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said in a statement.

"The League will continue to enforce its policies, enhance education efforts, and advocate for the elimination of

yellow card wagering in all states to protect the integrity of our competition for clubs, players, and fans."

Jones was playing for the Crew when he was placed on leave. Yeboah, Jones' former teammate in Columbus, played for LAFC last season and is currently playing for Qingdao Hainiu in China.

Champions League: Barcelona travels to Newcastle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Barcelona

Barcelona faces Newcastle as the Champions League round of 16 gets underway on Tuesday.

The Spanish champions travel to St James' Park for the first leg, with coach Hansi Flick leaving his players in no doubt about what's at stake.

"It's one of the most important moments of the season and we are all ready for it," he said.

Five-time European champion Barcelona hasn't won the Champions League since 2015 and has had to watch on as its fiercest rival Real



Madrid has dominated the competition.

Flick delivered the Spanish title last season, but his team was knocked out of the Champions League at the semifinals stage. He is

aiming to improve on that this time around.

"What I can say is everything here in Barcelona is great," he said.

"I'm here 11-2 years and I'm enjoying every single day working with this fantastic team, with these fantastic players, with this staff around.

"Now we are building this club also for the future. This is what we want to do."

Liverpool travels to Galatasaray on Tuesday and Bayern Munich is away to Atalanta. Atletico Madrid hosts a Tottenham team that is fighting to avoid relegation from the Premier League.

Tournament is too big to be postponed: World Cup chief operating officer

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Dallas

FIFA's World Cup chief operating officer says the tournament is "too big" to be postponed because of global turmoil caused by the US and Israeli war against Iran.

Speaking on Monday at the International Broadcast Center for the 48-nation tournament, which starts June 11, Heimo Schirgi said FIFA continues to closely monitor the Iran war and its fallout.

"If I had a crystal ball, I could tell you now what is going to happen, but obviously the situation is developing," Schirgi said.

"It's changing day by day, and we are monitoring closely. We're working together with all our federal partners and also our inter-

national partners in evaluating the situation, and we basically take it day by day, and at some stage we will have a resolution. And the World Cup will go on obviously, right? The World Cup is too big, and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified."

The tournament, expanded from 32 nations to 48, is scheduled for 11 US venues plus three in Mexico and two in Canada. While the Trump administration has imposed a travel ban on four of the nations that have qualified – Iran, Ivory Coast, Haiti and Senegal – it says it will make an exception for players, team officials and immediate relatives.

Schirgi said FIFA is in constant contact with Iran's soccer federation for



updates, but he wouldn't share any details about those conversations. FIFA officials were in Dallas for the announcement of plans for the city's fan festival that will operate for 34 days during the World Cup and to view construction of the

broadcast hub at the downtown convention centre – about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from AT&T Stadium, the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, where nine matches will be played.

"Given the state of the world today, this will be a

great opportunity to bring everyone together," Schirgi said. "For you who have not experienced the World Cup, the World Cup is very special because it's truly global and it brings everybody together. We witnessed that in Qatar, in Russia, and everywhere. People were amazed how international this whole thing is."

Schirgi also addressed FIFA's surprise decision last month to add a 48-hour window for ticket sales. FIFA has been criticised for ticket prices as high as \$8,680 for category one seats – the best in the lower bowls – USD 5,575 for category two and \$4,185 for category three. Tickets for the first round range as high as USD 2,735 for category one, USD 1,940 for category two and USD 1,120

for category three.

"It was basically giving an opportunity to fans who have applied and were not successful for tickets in their category to offer them a different category of tickets," Schirgi said.

"So if you have applied for a category three ticket for a specific match and you haven't got it because we don't have enough category three tickets, we offered those people because they applied early – we said instead of having a category three ticket, would you like a category two ticket?"

After criticism, FIFA said in December it was selling a few hundred USD 60 tickets for every game to the 48 national federations in the tournament to be sold to their regularly attending fans.

Austria gets FIFA approval to pick Dortmund's Chukwuemeka and PSV's Wanner

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Zurich

Austria got permission from FIFA to select former England and Germany youth internationals ahead of playing at the World Cup against Argentina and Lionel Messi.

Borussia Dortmund winger Carney Chukwuemeka and PSV Eindhoven midfielder Paul Wanner both were born in Austria and eligible under FIFA rules to change their eligibility. Chukwuemeka's switch from England and Wanner's transfer of eligibility from Germany were approved by FIFA late Monday. Austria, coached by Ralf Rangnick, is in a World Cup group with defending



champion Argentina, Algeria and Jordan.

The 22-year-old Chukwuemeka played for Aston Villa and Chelsea

before moving to Dortmund. He was an England youth international who also was eligible through his parents to play for Nigeria.

The 20-year-old Wanner came through the Bayern Munich academy and played on loan last season with Heidenheim. He moved last August to PSV, which gave him the playmaker's No. 10 jersey. Austria will play at a men's World Cup for the first time since 1998. The team opens against Jordan on June 16 at the San Francisco 49ers' stadium, then plays Argentina at the Dallas Cowboys' stadium and Algeria at the Kansas City Chiefs' home.

Chukwuemeka and Wanner will first be eligible for warmup games this month when Austria hosts Ghana and South Korea, which both qualified for the World Cup.

Paralympic swimmer gets permanent ban in abuse case

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Denver

The US Centre for SafeSport has permanently banned a Paralympic swimmer who was accused of sexually assaulting an autistic teammate at the Games in 2021 and for about a year after that.

The centre on Monday handed down the suspension to Robert Griswold, whose case led to a 2022 lawsuit that was eventually dismissed when a judge ruled the court lacked jurisdiction. The lawsuit spelled out a pattern of grooming and sexual assault that began when Griswold and the swimmer traveled to Tokyo for the Paralympics in 2021. It accused the US



Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the SafeSport center for "shielding and protecting" Griswold while he committed the acts. "Accountability is the path to long-term culture change," said the centre's new CEO, Benita Fitzgerald

Mosely. "We are grateful to those who come forward with their stories because they make it possible for the Center to take action and protect others."

The USOPC did not immediately comment on the latest action by the center and Griswold's attorney did not immediately return an email sent by The Associated Press. The center, created in 2017 to deal with sex abuse in Olympic and Paralympic sports, was removed from the lawsuit over jurisdictional issues in 2023. Two years later, a federal judge dismissed the suit altogether.

The center placed Griswold on temporary suspension in August 2022, and more than 3 1/2 years later, increased that to perma-

nent ineligibility for sexual and physical misconduct. The center's Centralized Disciplinary Database said Griswold has the right to appeal. Though the plaintiff is named in the lawsuit he filed, the AP does not typically identify abuse victims without explicit permission.

The plaintiff's attorneys, Jason Lampert and Elizabeth Kramer, said in a statement that "the findings mark an important step toward accountability and justice." The lawsuit alleged the USOPC allowed Griswold to share a room and a shower with the plaintiff – an "especially troubling" decision "considering the extent of Plaintiff's disabilities," which left him with the mental capacity of a 5-year old.

Bhullar to lead strong field in opening leg of 2026 IGPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Chandigarh

Defending champion Gaganjeet Bhullar will lead a strong field in the opening leg of the Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) to be held here from March 11 to 13.

Bhullar got the IGPL to a sensational start in 2025 by winning the inaugural event.

As India's most successful player in Asian Tour history with 11 wins, the third highest on the all-time Asian list, Bhullar leads a group of talented stars including the big-hitting Pukhraj Singh Gill, who won the 2025 IGPL Order of Merit, Asian Tour star Karandeep Kochhar, also an IGPL winner in 2025, and



Aman Raj, who narrowly lost out on the Order of Merit honours to Pukhraj.

The battle in 2025 was so

close that the top three players – Pukhraj (81,90,652), Aman Raj (81,81,708), and Bhullar (81,30,000) – were

separated by just over 60,000. A total of 58 players, including nine amateurs, will play the main event from March 11-13, and there will be no cut.

The 1.5 crore event, which will set the wheels in motion for 2026, will also see the arrival of the pedigreed Varun Parikh, a multiple winner, Indian-American Manav Shah, a winner on the PGA Tour of Latin America and Varun Chopra. Bhullar said: "The game has given me a lot and I want to give back to the game."

The young brigade will be led by Veer Ganapathy, who came close to registering his maiden win more than once. The 18-year-old Bengaluru

lad and son of professional Rahul Ganapathy was seventh overall in the 2025 IGPL standings. Raghav Chugh (22) and newcomer Arjun Bhati (21) will be among the other young pros in the field.

The amateur segment will feature Harjai Milkha Singh, son of the legendary Jeev Milkha Singh, who has been having a good run on the Indian Golf Union circuit. Other notable amateurs include Krish Chawla and Chaitanya Pandey.

The invitees list includes the legendary Chawrasia, a six-time winner in Asia. Meanwhile, Gaurav Ghei, the first Indian to play the Open, has committed to playing the full season.

Women's soccer investor Michele Kang wins Olympic award

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Lausanne

Women's soccer club owner Michele Kang won a gender equality award from the International Olympic Committee.

Kang, who owns French powerhouse OL Lyonnes, Washington Spirit in the United States and London City Lionesses in England, was named the European regional winner in the IOC's Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions Awards on Monday.

The Olympic body's citation said the American businesswoman "has champi-



oned a vision of sustainable, independent women's sport built on the principle that equal means equal results." "Kang is strength-

ening the women's football ecosystem and advancing gender equality, representation and professional standards across the sport."

The global winner of the IOC's annual awards was Abhijit Bhattacharya, the former captain of India's men's volleyball team, who created a 400-team community league in rural Assam.

Bhattacharya, the IOC said, "partnered with UNICEF to deliver sport-based programs addressing adolescent leadership, gender equality, girls' education and broader social development outcomes in rural communities."

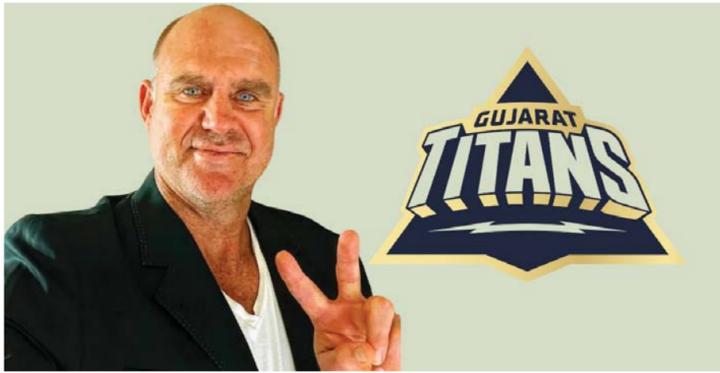
GT appoint Hayden as batting coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Ahmedabad

Former Australian opener Matthew Hayden has been named as the batting coach of Gujarat Titans (GT) for the upcoming IPL season, the franchise announced on Tuesday.

A two-time ODI World Cup winner and one of the most dominant opening batters of his era, Hayden joins the Titans set-up with an illustrious international career and expertise in modern-day T20 batting dynamics.

Hayden represented Australia in 273 international matches across formats, scoring over 15,000 international runs and played a



pivotal role in multiple ICC tournament victories. Commenting on the appointment, GT Director of

Cricket, Vikram Solanki said: "Matthew's appointment comes at a pivotal phase in our journey. His experience at

the highest level, coupled with his ability to mentor emerging talent, will be instrumental in shaping our

batting identity for the seasons ahead." On his part, Hayden said: "Good batting applies pressure. Great batting owns the game. That's the standard we want to set at Gujarat Titans."

His aggressive yet technically robust approach to batting laid early foundations for the evolution of powerplay dominance in white-ball cricket. He also featured in 32 IPL matches, showcasing a style of play ideally suited to the league's high-intensity demands. It has been learnt that Hayden comes in as a replacement of fellow Australian Matthew Wade, who was one of the assistant coaches during the 2025 edition.

BCCI announces ₹131 crore cash reward for team India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The BCCI on Tuesday announced a cash reward of ₹131 crore for the entire Indian squad following its third T20 World Cup victory.

The amount covers 15 players, coaching staff, other support staff. As per sources, the players are certain to get lion's share of the reward money while support staff amount will be decided as per hierarchy.

The amount is an increment of ₹6 crore from the ₹125 crore that Rohit Sharma's team was awarded back in 2024. As per sources, each of



the 15 players will receive ₹6 crore each while remaining ₹41 crore will be distributed among entire support staff. "The Board congratulates the players, support staff and selectors once again on this historic achievement and wishes them continued success in the future," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia

said in a statement. India lifted the prestigious trophy after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday, successfully defending the title and becoming the first team in the history of the tournament to retain the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Feels good to join elite company of Rohit, Dhoni: Suryakumar

PRADEEK SINGH
Mumbai

Two days after captaining India to a T20 World Cup title, Suryakumar Yadav is slowly taking in the enormity of the achievement that has put him in august company of Kapil Dev, MS Dhoni and Rohit Sharma, who too helped the team lift ICC trophies.

Soon after returning from Ahmedabad, where India won a record third T20 World Cup title on Sunday, Suryakumar reflected on the side's successful campaign and the road ahead.

"It feels good to win 24 and 26 back-to-back. It is a very special feeling. When we won



in 2024, we thought it would be so special to do this again at home in 2026," Surya told PTI Videos at his residence.

"The next target is to win the Olympic gold in 2028. The team has a good momentum. If India wins the T20

World Cup in the same year, it will be great."

On being compared to the likes of Rohit and Dhoni, he added: "It feels good to join that elite company. I am slowly feeling it. It is a very special feeling to be talked about among such great people. I will try to do the same in the future and help India more trophies.

Rohit was the captain when India ended an ICC trophy drought with the win in Barbados back in June 2024. Dhoni led India to victories in 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup. Kapil Dev's team the 1983 ODI World Cup, the first major title for the country. (PTI)

Lakshya 'a little disheartened' but shifts focus to recovery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Lakshya Sen admits the physical demands of modern men's singles are forcing him to rethink recovery and preparation, even as the Indian badminton ace continues to feel "a little bit disheartened" after falling short in his second All England final.

Lakshya battled through a series of long matches during a taxing week in Birmingham before finishing runner-up to Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-yi. "It's been a good week overall, but also an emotional week. Getting into the finals for the second time and not winning, it feels a little bit disheartened after the match. But overall, if I look back at the tourna-

ment, some good wins, a good run and the way I played the matches, I think something to look forward to in the coming tournaments," the 24-year-old from Almore said.

Lakshya had spent more than five hours on court during the week, including a gruelling semifinal in which he battled severe cramps, before going down narrowly in the final.

The experience, he said, reinforced the importance of balancing tournament schedules with recovery and structured training blocks. "It has been very physical in the matches and tournaments and also with the age, I mean, I'm not 20 anymore to recover as fast as I am," Lakshya said.



"I'm not saying I'm old. I mean, there are changes that you make in terms of your preparations, your recovery towards the next matches and especially the diet. When I was 21-22, I would not gain any weight if I eat everything. But now there's a slight difference

where I have to be conscious about the diet a bit more. "And also with the recovery, a lot of the things I have to manage. Tactically also, I feel the better I can get in my overall game, I try to do that in training and play a certain game style that suits me." Lakshya said man-

aging workload has also become crucial as the calendar grows increasingly demanding. "I've had also some shoulder injuries that took some toll on the shoulder where I was playing the attacking shots better in the last few years. But yeah, over time, you are cautious about how much you can push, how many matches you can play and then you have to give it rest," he said.

"And yes, there has been a little bit of a shift in that sense where the recovery part I'm taking much more care in between tournaments to stay injury free. I mean, that is a really interesting thing that I find. And I like to keep learning new things, new techniques to recover better, get back stronger in the recovery."

Rathnayake, Shanaka, Mendis fifties power Sri Lanka to 225/5



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Pallekele (Sri Lanka)

Pavan Rathnayake and skipper Dasun Shanaka returned to form with blazing fifties, while Kusal Mendis anchored the innings with another half-century as Sri Lanka piled up a formidable 225 for 5 against Oman in their Group B T20 World Cup clash here on Thursday.

After a poor World Cup debut against Ireland where he fell for sloppy upper cut for 5, Rathnayake made amends in style, smashing a 28-ball 60 (8x4, 1x6).

He brought up his maiden T20I fifty in just 24 balls, overtaking his previous best of 40 at this venue earlier this month. The 23-year-old charged pacer Jiten Ramanandi for the innings' first six in the 12th over and hammered Sufyan Mehmood for three successive fours to reach the milestone.

Rathnayake and the experienced Mendis added 94 runs off just 52 balls, maintaining a run-rate in excess of nine through the middle

overs. They rotated strike smartly as 40 of Sri Lanka's 96 runs at the halfway mark came in singles and twos.

Mendis, playing the senior partner's role to perfection, capitalised on width from the Oman spinners and struck seven fours in his 61 off 45 balls, his second successive fifty and 19th overall.

He was run out in the penultimate over.

Shanaka, who had endured a lean build-up to the tournament with scores of 1, 4 and 0, exploded at the death with a 19-ball fifty — the fastest by a Sri Lankan in the T20 World Cup. He took on Nadeem Khan with a boundary and back-to-back sixes, and then smashed Sufyan Mehmood for successive sixes to reach the landmark.

Shanaka and Mendis fell off consecutive deliveries in the 19th over, briefly slowing the charge. But Kamindu Mendis ended with a flourish, hitting Shah Faisal for two sixes in a row as the co-hosts scored 65 runs in the last four overs to post the highest total of this edition so far.

Kishan receives roaring reception in Patna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Patna

India top-order batter Ishan Kishan on Tuesday arrived to a grand welcome to his hometown after playing an integral part to his team's triumphant campaign in the T20 World Cup.

It was an inspiring comeback story for Kishan who was not even in the national setup couple of months ago. The left-hander played a match winning knock against Pakistan on a tough wicket before smashing a fifty in the final against New Zealand in Ahmedabad on Sunday. He also had to deal with a loss of his cousin sister



due to a car accident while preparing for the summit clash. On his arrival in Patna, Kishan said the team is determined to win more titles in the future. It was a record third T20 World Cup title for India who also became the first team to defend the crown. "I am feeling great. Team India has won, it is great moment not only for us but entire country."

Hero Indian Open set to tee off from March 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The 2026 Hero Indian Open, to be held in Gurugram from March 26 to 29, will feature a world-class field led by PGA Tour star Akshay Bhatia and a record prize purse.

Sanctioned by the DP World Tour and Indian Golf Union (IGU), the tournament's prize purse has been increased to a record USD 2.55 million, up from USD 2.25 million on offer a year ago.

The star-studded field will include the 24-year-old Indian-American Bhatia, who has risen to new heights by winning the iconic Arnold Palmer Invitational 2026 at Bay Hill, Orlando, USA. Now placed second on the FedEx



Cup standings, Bhatia, who is Hero MotoCorp's Global Brand Ambassador, will make his first trip to India with this tour. Another Hero MotoCorp Brand Ambassador, Rayhan Thomas, who has been on the Korn Ferry Tour for last two years, is also confirmed for the field. The field will also include Italy's Francesco Molinari, who is also a three-time PGA Tour winner.

Molinari became the first player from Italy to win a Major Championship when he triumphed at the 147th Open Championship in 2018. The six-time DP World Tour winner has also represented Europe in three victorious Ryder Cup teams in 2010, 2012 and 2018 — where he secured the winning point at Le Golf National in Paris. The current list of confirmed

players also includes the reigning champion Eugenio Chacarra of Spain, and Thomas Detry of Belgium, winner of the Phoenix Open on the PGA Tour in 2025.

Also, in the field are current season winners on DP World Tour — South African Casey Jarvis, who won two successive events on the DP World Tour recently, Spain's Nacho Elvira and Germany's Freddy Schott amongst others.

Former runner-up Veer Ahlawat, Yuvraj Sandhu, the 2025 India No. 1, Manu Gandas, along with Shaurya Bhattacharya, will be among the top Indian names in the field. Brijinder Singh, President, Indian Golf Union, said, "The Hero Indian Open remains the crown jewel in the calendar of the Indian

India eye semifinal berth in Women's Hockey WC qualifiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Hyderabad

India will look for at least a draw against Wales in their final pool match to advance to the semifinal of the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup Qualifiers on Wednesday.

India are currently leading Pool B with four points from two games, same as second place Scotland but enjoy a superior goal difference.

The top two teams from each pool will qualify for the semifinals and India will need a draw or a win to enter the last four round.

But if India lose, they will stay on four points and their qualification will depend on the match between



Scotland and Uruguay. The Indian women have had a strong campaign so far. They opened the tournament with a massive 4-0 win over Uruguay on March 8 and then fought hard for a

2-2 draw against Scotland on Monday. Young forward Sunelita Toppo has been in top form, scoring in both matches. Attackers Lalremsiami, Navneet Kaur, and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal have

also been excellent, finding the net and creating multiple scoring opportunities.

The Indian defence has also held firm, with goalkeeper Bichu Devi making crucial saves consistently. Playing in front of a cheering home crowd in Hyderabad has also given the hosts a wonderful boost of energy.

India captain Salima Tete is satisfied with the team's performance so far.

"After the opening two games, there is positivity in the team. The young players are taking their opportunity and have been doing very well. The team is relishing playing freely, and that is a very good thing for us," she said. "We want to qualify for

the World Cup and become champions. That's what we talk about when the team is together and that's our goal," Tete added.

India enjoy a promising record against Wales, leading the head-to-head battles 5-1. But Wales will come hard hard in their bid to register their first win of the campaign, and so India need to stay focused and avoid complacency.

The top three teams from this tournament will qualify for the World Cup to be held in Belgium and the Netherlands later this year.

In other matches of the day, England will play Austria, Italy will take on Korea and Scotland will be up against Uruguay.

Manu Bhaker tops women's 10m pistol event in national trials finals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Olympian Manu Bhaker topped the finals of women's 10m pistol event in the national selection trials T3 (Group A) which concluded here on Tuesday.

Trial two winner Sainyam finished second while Esha Singh secured the third spot in the eight-woman final.

Manu, who squeezed into the finals as the last qualifier, maintained her lead from the end of the second series to finish on top with a total score of 246.1, which was a comfortable 4.2 points more than World Cup Final silver medallist Sainyam who finished with 241.9. Asian Championship gold and World Championship bronze medallist Esha finished third with a score of 220.6. Asian Games champion Palak Gulia finished fourth after a score of 200.2 followed by Anjali Choudhary, who hit 179.8.

ICC books individual commercial flights for stranded WI, SA players

TAPAN MOHANTA
Kolkata

The ICC on Tuesday booked separate commercial flights for the stranded West Indies and South Africa teams after their charter flight scheduled to take off from Kolkata "was cancelled due to logistical issues".

"All the West Indies and South African players have been booked on individual commercial airline flights. Obviously, all can't be booked on same airlines but ICC has

taken care of individual bookings. ICC chairman Jay Shah has personally spoken and assured players of a safe journey back home," an ICC source privy to the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "It must be mentioned that Darren Sammy is already on his way home having left on Monday night," the source also informed. The two teams that played their final games in Kolkata (West Indies in Super 8s on March 1 and South Africa on March 4 in



semi-final) have not been able to fly out due to the disruption that has been caused

by International airspace restrictions across parts of West Asia following American

and Israeli strikes on Iran.

The situation has forced multiple airlines to avoid routes through the Gulf region. ICC's airline partner is Emirates and they are unable to operate due to shutdown of Dubai airspace.

The restrictions severely complicated outbound travel from India towards the Caribbean and Africa, forcing cricket authorities to explore alternative routes and charter arrangements.

Earlier, in a communication conveyed on Tuesday

evening, both teams were scheduled to leave Kolkata on a shared charter flight to Johannesburg on Tuesday afternoon.

From there, the West Indies contingent was to continue onward to Antigua, while the South Africans were expected to disperse for their respective commitments. However, the flight arrangement was called off hours before the scheduled departure because of some "logistical issues", an official of the Cricket Association

of Bengal told PTI.

"As per a latest development on Tuesday afternoon the 'chartered flight was cancelled and no further information regarding this is received', read a message communicated to the West Indies and South Africa teams. "Due to logistical issues the chartered flight may have been cancelled at the last minute so now maximum players are making their own arrangements," the local official told media.