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Tour Name	Ex-Mumbai	J&L
Swiss Paris Austria Germany (6D)	175K-190K	110K-125K
European Panorama (8D)	250K-260K	180K-190K
European Splendours (10D)	275K-285K	205K-215K
London Paris Swiss Italy (9D)	285K-295K	205K-215K
European Highlights (11D)	305K-320K	225K-240K
European Delight (13D)	370K-385K	290K-305K
European Jewels (15D)	410K-425K	330K-345K
European Essence (15D)	400K-425K	330K-355K
Multi-Country Europe (17D-27D)	465K-695K	385K-615K
Amsterdam Brussels/Swiss Paris (17D)	230K-345K	160K-275K
England Scotland/Ireland (10/15D)	315K-440K	245K-370K
Swiss Paris/French Riviera (8D/10D)	285K-310K	210K-240K
Swiss Paris London (11D)	375K-400K	290K-315K
Swiss Paris Italy (11D)	320K-335K	250K-265K
Swiss Austria/Italy (8D/10D)	275K-335K	205K-265K
Swiss Paris Austria (11D)	330K-340K	260K-270K
Italy (8D/15D)	295K-465K	230K-395K
Switzerland (7D/10D)	275K-360K	210K-290K
Best of Austria (8D)	275K-290K	205K-220K
Best of France (11D)	325K-340K	255K-270K

Tour Name	Ex-Mumbai	J&L
Highlights of Scandinavia (7D)	250K-275K	175K-200K
Best of Scandinavia (10D)	335K-360K	250K-275K
All of Scandinavia (15D)	475K-500K	385K-400K
Scandinavia Iceland (15D)	565K-590K	475K-500K
Scandinavia Eastern Europe (17D)	525K-550K	440K-465K
Scandinavia Russia (17D)	435K-460K	365K-390K
Scandinavia Midnight Sun (16D)	535K-550K	455K-470K
Scandinavia Midnight Sun (9D)	375K-400K	295K-420K
Scandinavia Iceland Midnight Sun (14D)	625K-650K	545K-570K
Scandinavia Northern Lights (9D)	400K-425K	310K-335K
Iceland Northern Lights (10D)	515K-545K	440K-465K
Scandinavia Iceland Northern Lights (14D) Mar 4	520K-545K	430K-455K
Scandinavia Iceland Northern Lights+Icebreaker Cruise (15D)	575K-600K	480K-505K
Best of Greenland (9D) Aug 31	675K-700K	585K-610K
Best of Russia (17D)	175K-200K	115K-140K

Tour Name	Ex-Mumbai	J&L
Highlights of Spain (7D)	200K-225K	130K-155K
Best of Spain (10D/11D)	265K-280K	195K-210K
All of Spain (15D)	375K-400K	305K-330K
Spain Portugal (13D)	335K-360K	260K-285K
Spain Portugal Morocco (16D)	375K-400K	295K-320K
Greece Athens Santorini (5D)	200K-225K	135K-160K
Greece Athens Santorini Mykonos (7D)	250K-275K	185K-205K
Greece Athens Santorini Rhodes (9D)	300K-315K	235K-250K
Greece Athens Santorini Rhodes Mykonos (10D)	325K-350K	260K-285K
All of Greece (14D)	425K-450K	360K-385K
Egypt Greece Turkey (15D)	425K-450K	360K-385K
Greece Turkey (12D)	350K-375K	270K-295K
Greece Turkey (10D/15D)	225K-350K	155K-180K
Baltic Berlin Warsaw Krakow (15D)	390K-415K	310K-330K
Baltic Europe Estonia Latvia Lithuania (8D)	250K-275K	180K-205K
Baltic Europe + Scandinavia (15D)	500K-525K	420K-445K
Baltic Berlin Warsaw Krakow (15D)	390K-415K	330K-355K
Balkan Romania Bulgaria Serbia North Macedonia (15D)	405K-430K	335K-360K
Best of Morocco (8D)	225K-250K	155K-180K
Tunisia Malta Sicily (10D)	375K-400K	295K-320K

Tour Name	Ex-Mumbai	J&L
Vienna Prague Budapest (8D)	250K-275K	175K-200K
Berlin Warsaw Krakow (8D)	240K-265K	170K-195K
Croatia Slovenia Slovakia Hungary (12D)	330K-345K	255K-270K
Central & Eastern Europe (17D)	400K-425K	325K-350K
Uzbekistan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan (20D)	215K-230K	160K-175K
Tashkent Samarkand (5D) Mar 17-24	81K-85K	61K-65K
Georgia Armenia Baku (10D)	225K-250K	175K-200K
Georgia Armenia (8D)	175K-200K	125K-150K
Georgia (5D/8D) Mar 17	99K-175K	49K-130K
Baku (5D/8D)	99K-150K	64K-110K
Baltic Europe Estonia Latvia Lithuania (8D)	250K-275K	180K-205K
Baltic Europe + Scandinavia (15D)	500K-525K	420K-445K
Baltic Berlin Warsaw Krakow (15D)	390K-415K	330K-355K
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USA East & West Coast with Chicago & Death Valley Yosemite (18 Days)
USA East & West Coast + Orlando & Bahamas Cruise (19 Days)
USA California Carnival with Death Valley & Yosemite (10 Days)
Alaska Canada (18D) | Best of Alaska (9D)
Best of Canada (11D) | Hawaii Mexico (11D)
Best of Mexico (7D)
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Antarctica The 7th Continent (13D) | 13,35,000 (J&L) | 11,35,000

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People ride their motorbikes in downtown Tehran on Tuesday. AP

Iran ready for any necessary steps to reach deal with US, says minister

Reuters
Dubai, February 24

IRAN IS ready to take any necessary steps to reach a deal with the United States, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said on Tuesday, as the two countries prepare for a fresh round of talks.

The talks are set to take place on Thursday in Geneva, a senior US official said on Monday, with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner slated to meet with an Iranian delegation for the negotiations.

The two countries resumed negotiations earlier this month as the US builds up its military capability in the Middle East. Iran has threatened to strike US bases in the region if attacked.

"We are ready to reach an agreement as soon as possible. We will do whatever it takes to make this happen. We will enter the negotiating room in Geneva with complete honesty and good faith," Takht-Ravanchi said in comments carried by state media.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Tuesday that US President

Iran nears deal to buy supersonic anti-ship missiles from ally China

London: Iran is close to a deal with China to purchase the anti-ship cruise missiles, according to six people with knowledge of the negotiations, just as the United States deploys a vast naval force near Iranian coast ahead of possible strikes on Islamic Republic.

The deal for the Chinese-made CM-302 missiles is near completion, though no delivery date has been agreed, the people said. The supersonic missiles have a range of about 290 kilometres and are designed to evade shipborne defences.

Donald Trump's first option was always diplomacy but that he was willing to use lethal force if necessary.

Indirect talks between two sides brought no agreement, due to friction over a US demand that Iran forgo uranium enrichment.

CARTELS SET UP MORE THAN 250 ROADBLOCKS; TOURISM MASSIVELY HIT

Army-cartel battle rages a day after drug lord is killed

Associated Press
Tapalpa, February 24

A DAY after the Mexican army killed the country's most powerful drug lord, the picturesque town where it happened was a study in contrasts.

Children whose classes had been suspended by the outbreak of violence played in cobblestone streets and tourist shops were open on Tapalpa's main plaza Monday. But gunshots also rang out, and just outside the town a dead man lay on the road next to a Jeep sprayed with bullets.

Meanwhile, heavily armed Mexican security forces kept up their battle with cartel gunmen following the killing that sparked a surge in violence and put the country on edge.

Cartel fighters continued to block roads as smoke rose on the outskirts of the town in the state of Jalisco.

More than 70 people died in the attempt to capture Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes and the aftermath, authorities said Monday. Known as "El Mencho," he was the notorious leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of the most powerful criminal organizations in Mexico.

The body count taken by security officials included security forces, suspected cartel members and others. Officials did not offer details, and the circumstances of most of the deaths were unclear.

Oseguera Cervantes was the boss of one of the fastest-growing criminal networks in Mexico, known for trafficking fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine to the United States and staging brazen attacks against Mexican government officials. The organization responded to his death with

HOW 'EL MENCHO' WAS TRACKED & KILLED



Follow the Money? No. Follow the Lover

To find Mexico's most-wanted kingpin, security officials did not follow the money or the trail of drugs. Instead, they followed his lover.

A trusted associate of Oseguera Cervantes' romantic partner was first tracked down.

The associate escorted the lover to a cabin in Tapalpa, in the wooded mountains of Jalisco, where "El Mencho" was hiding since Friday. It provided an opening.

Action Stations

Forces monitored the "romantic" meeting closely. Once the woman left the area the next morning, they moved in.

With the drug lord's presence confirmed, the Mexican Army and National Guard set up a ground cordon.

Six helicopters and special forces units were deployed across neighbouring states.

The Mexican Air Force provided aerial reconnaissance to ensure Cervantes could not escape.

Fight To The Finish

In the pre-dawn hours of Sunday, troops launched the operation.

Cervantes' gunmen opened fire on the forces and the fight moved to a cabin complex in a wooded area.

The operation culminated in a vicious firefight that killed several suspected cartel members.

Cervantes attempted to flee with two bodyguards, but failed.

All three were injured and put on a helicopter heading towards Mexico City.

Oseguera died on board the helicopter.

widespread violence, including erecting more than 250 roadblocks across 20 states and setting fire to vehicles.

The capo died after a shootout with the Mexican military on Sunday. Mexican Defense Secretary Gen. Ricardo Trevilla said Monday that authorities had tracked one of his romantic partners to his hideout in Tapalpa. The cartel leader and two bodyguards fled into a wooded area where they were seriously wounded in a firefight. They were taken into custody and died on the way to Mexico City, Trevilla said.



Members of the Mexican army and the National Guard keep watch at a roundabout in Jalisco state, Guadalajara, Mexico, on Tuesday. AP

US forces seize 3rd sanctioned oil tanker: Pentagon

Reuters
Washington, February 24

US MILITARY forces have captured a sanctioned oil tanker in the Indian Ocean after tracking it from Caribbean waters, the Pentagon said on Tuesday, adding that it was the third such interdiction.

In a post on X, the US Department of Defense said its forces boarded the Bertha overnight. It accused the crude oil tanker of seeking to defy Iran-related sanctions.

The vessel's last reported position on AIS ship-tracking was on February 24, sailing in Indian Ocean off Maldives, according to MarineTraffic data.

"Overnight, US forces conducted a right-of-visit, maritime interdiction and boarding of the Bertha without incident in the INDO-PAC area of responsibility. The vessel was operating in defiance of President Trump's established quarantine of sanctioned vessels in the Caribbean and attempted to evade," the Pentagon wrote.

"From the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean, we tracked it and stopped it. Three boats ran and now all three have been captured," Pentagon added.

Russia has not broken Ukraine after 4 years of war: Zelenskyy

Associated Press
Kyiv, February 24

PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR Zelenskyy declared Tuesday that Russia has not "broken Ukrainians" nor triumphed in its war, four years after an invasion that has severely tested the resolve of Kyiv and its allies and fueled European fears about the scale of Moscow's ambitions to gain territory.

In a show of support, more than a dozen senior European officials headed to the Ukrainian capital to mark the grim anniversary of the conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people, upended life for millions of Ukrainians, and created instability far beyond its borders.

Zelenskyy said his country has withstood the onslaught by Russia's bigger and better equipped army, which over the past year of fighting captured just 0.79% of Ukraine's territory, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. Russia now holds nearly 20% of Ukraine.

"Looking back at the beginning of the invasion and reflecting on today, we have every right to say: We have defended our independence, we have not



President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addresses an extraordinary plenary session via video link at European Parliament in Brussels on Tuesday. AP

"We have every right to say that we have defended our independence, we have not lost our statehood. He (Putin) has not broken Ukrainians; he has not won this war"

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

lost our statehood," Zelenskyy said on social media, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin has "not achieved his goals. He has not broken Ukrai-

nians; he has not won this war." Despite the show of defiance, Ukraine has struggled to hold off Russia's onslaught, and the war has brought widespread hardship for Ukrainian civilians. Russia's attacks have devastated families and denied civilians power and running water.

As the war of attrition enters its fifth year, a US-led diplomatic push to end the largest conflict on the continent since World War II appears no closer to finding compromises that might make a peace deal possible.

Negotiations are stonks on what happens to the Donbas, eastern Ukraine's industrial heartland that Russian forces mostly occupy but have failed.

EPSTEIN FILES FALLOUT UK approves disclosure of records related to former prince Andrew

Associated Press
London, February 24

BRITAIN'S HOUSE of Commons on Tuesday approved the release of papers related to former Prince Andrew's appointment as a trade envoy, a position he held for about a decade during which he is suspected of improperly passing government information to Jeffrey Epstein.

The approval came in a voice vote. It was unclear when the release could occur, as the former prince was arrested last week on suspicion of misconduct in public office. The government has made clear it does not want to interfere in the inquiry.

Ed Davey, the leader of the opposition Liberal Democrats and the lawmaker who introduced the motion, argued that it was time for transparency. "In many ways, this is the first truly global scandal from the White House and Silicon Valley to Oslo and Paris, but it's also a deeply British scandal reaching right to the top of the British Establishment," Davey said.

E. EXPLAINED

Envoy role comes under the scanner

The House of Commons approved releasing records on Prince Andrew's trade envoy role amid claims he shared official material with Jeffrey Epstein. The move follows US Justice Department disclosures and ongoing misconduct investigations, increasing pressure for transparency and accountability.

King Charles III's younger brother, who was stripped of his princely title last year due to revelations about his relationship with Epstein, was arrested last week on suspicion of misconduct in public office amid allegations that he shared confidential documents with Epstein during his time as trade envoy for the UK.

BRIEFLY

GERMANY

Merz starts maiden China visit today, seeks business openings



Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the German Parliament in Berlin. FILE

GERMAN CHANCELLOR Friedrich Merz visits China this week as the latest European leader seeking to reset relations with Beijing after a year that laid bare the crumbling of their alliance with the US and exposed vulnerabilities in their supply chains. Merz, making his first visit to China as chancellor, leads a delegation of some of Germany's most senior business leaders, including the heads of the carmakers Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Along with European peers, their companies have been hit by a double whammy of focusing competition from China's booming electric vehicle makers and US tariffs that have added billions in extra costs. REUTERS

UNITED KINGDOM

OTT must follow broadcast norms, says government

BRITAIN SAID on Tuesday Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ and other streamers would be required to follow the same rules on content and accessibility as traditional broadcasters like the BBC. Two-thirds of households subscribe to at least one major streamer, with 85% of people using an on-demand service each month, compared to 67% who watch live TV, the government said. REUTERS

SUDAN

Paramilitary kills 28 in Darfur region attack

AN ATTACK by Sudanese paramilitary forces on a stronghold of a Darfur tribal leader left at least 28 people dead, a doctors group said on Tuesday. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces on Monday rampaged through town of Misteriha in North Darfur province, according to the Sudan Doctors Network, which tracks the country's ongoing war. The town is a stronghold of Arab tribal leader Musa Hilal. AP

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

PAKISTAN

6 cops killed by armed militants in KPK province

AT LEAST six policemen were killed and one other was injured in a militant attack on a police van in Kohat district of Pakistan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, local police said. District Police Officer Kohat said the attack occurred on Shakardara Road, where assailants ambushed the police vehicle, resulting in multiple casualties. DY SP Wahid Mehmood and two gunners were initially reported killed. PTI

NEPAL

CEC: Poll results within 24 hrs of ballot collection

NEPAL'S ACTING Chief Election Commissioner Ram Prasad Bhandari on Monday said the results of the general elections scheduled for March 5 will be published within 24 hours of collecting the ballot boxes. A total of 18.9 million eligible voters will exercise their franchise to elect 275 members. While 165 will be elected through direct voting, 110 will be elected under the proportional voting system. PTI

Imran taken to hospital for eye treatment, shifted back to jail

Press Trust of India
Islamabad, February 24



Imran Khan

PAKISTAN'S INCARCERATED former prime minister Imran Khan on early Tuesday was taken from jail to a hospital here for treatment of an eye ailment and later shifted back, officials said.

Khan was diagnosed last month with right central retinal vein occlusion affecting his vision. He was brought to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) for a second dose of anti-VEGF intravitreal injection, a doctor at the hospital said. He had received treatment earlier on January 24.

Prior to the procedure, he was examined by a board of specialists: a consultant cardiologist who also performed echocardiography and ECG and a consultant physician. "After obtaining informed consent,

and under standard monitoring, precautionary measures and protocols, he was injected with a second dose of intravitreal injection of anti-VEGF by consultant ophthalmologist, and a consultant vitreo-retinal surgeon of PIMS and Al-Shifa Eye Hospital," the doctor said.

The procedure was carried out as a day-care surgery and Khan's vitals remained stable throughout, the doctor added. He was discharged after the procedure with instructions for care and follow-up.

FBI DIRECTOR'S ITALY TRIP, OFFICIALLY BILLED AS 'SECURITY MEETINGS', DREW CRITICISM OVER TIMING AND THE USE OF A GOVERNMENT JET

Kash Patel faces fresh scrutiny after attending US men's hockey team celebration

Eric Tucker
Washington, February 24

WHEN THE American men's hockey team retreated to their locker room to celebrate their Winter Olympics gold medal win, they were joined by a special guest from the United States: FBI Director Kash Patel.

For some supporters of the embattled law enforcement official, it was a patriotic, good-natured show of support for a team bringing home the first gold medal in the sport since 1980. For Patel's critics, though, it was yet another questionable use of government resources by an FBI chief already facing scrutiny over his personal travels

aboard a government plane.

An FBI spokesman had said in the days leading up to the game that Patel's trip to Milan during the Olympics was primarily for professional purposes, with the director posting on social media work-related photographs of his meetings with European security officials.

But the trip took a more jocular turn Sunday when videos circulating online showed a pumped-up Patel, a hockey fan, drinking beer from a bottle and spraying the rest around the locker room.

After one of the players draped his gold medal around Patel's neck, he joined the players as they jumped up and

down in celebration.

The episode deepened questions about Patel's personal travels, a persistent storyline from the first year of his tenure not only because of their frequency but also because he had chastised his predecessor, Chris Wray, for his use of the FBI plane.

In this instance, the Olympics celebration took place as FBI officials were investigating an armed man who was shot and killed by the US Secret Service after he breached the secure perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort.

"The grift & corruption is unreal," Democratic Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado posted on X.



FBI director Kash Patel at the White House on January 15. FILE

"Your taxpayer dollars funding the FBI Director's Italian vacation." Patel responded to the criticism by posting on his

personal X account that "yes, I love America and was extremely humbled when my friends, the newly minted Gold Medal

winners on Team USA, invited me into the locker room to celebrate this historic moment with the boys."

The White House signaled its backing for Patel, with communications director Steven Cheung writing on X that "Kash was in Italy meeting with regional partners and security teams"; telling a reporter "don't be mad because America won."

Patel is not the only Trump administration figure to face questions about his use of government resources, with congressional Democrats demanding answers from Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem about her department's contract for upgraded jets.

But the FBI in particular has struggled to shake questions about Patel's travels on the government Gulfstream G550 for flights around the country that have no known or apparent law enforcement purpose.

One example came in October when it emerged that Patel had traveled to State College, Pennsylvania, for a pro wrestling event, where his long-time girlfriend, country singer Alexis Wilkins, had performed the national anthem. Photos posted to social media by Wilkins show the couple side-by-side and smiling for the camera and her holding an oversized golden championship belt. The trips have come even

though as a bombastic podcaster during the Biden administration, Patel had repeatedly lambasted Wray for using the FBI plane for personal travels and even suggested that the jet be grounded.

"I'm just saying Chris Wray doesn't need a government-funded G5 jet to go to vacations. Maybe we ground that plane. \$15,000 every time it takes off. Just a thought," Patel said in one podcast interview.

FBI spokesman Ben Williamson has defended Patel, noting that he is required for security purposes to use the bureau jet even for personal trips and consistently reimburses the government for private travels. AP

The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM of COURAGE

NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 20 PAGES

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Happening today

● **PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA** Modi will begin a two-day State visit to Israel at the invitation of PM Benjamin Netanyahu. This will be PM Modi's second visit to the country.

● **GERMAN CHANCELLOR** Friedrich Merz will visit China. He will be the third top Western leader to visit the country this year — after the Prime Ministers of Canada and Britain.

● **ELECTION COMMISSION** will visit Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to assess poll preparedness.

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Business as Usual

By EP UNNY



THE BIG PICTURE



BANGLADESH'S NEW GOVERNMENT TARIQUE'S TEST
PAGE 12

POLITICS

CABINET NOD FOR MOVE TO RENAME KERALA AS KERALAM
PAGE 6

'50 LAKH DISCREPANCY CASES, ONLY 250 JUDICIAL OFFICERS'

SC allows Odisha, Jharkhand judges to help with Bengal SIR

If verification exercise fails to meet Feb 28 deadline for final list, then EC can publish supplements: Top court

Express News Network
New Delhi, February 24

THE SUPREME COURT on Tuesday permitted the deployment of judicial officers from Odisha and Jharkhand for completing the adjudication of claims and objections of persons included in the "logical discrepancy/unmapped category" during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices

Joyimala Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi also said that the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court can depute civil judges, if needed.

On February 20, the top court, while taking note of the "trust deficit" between the state government and the Election Commission of India (ECI), had directed deployment of serving and former district judges of West Bengal for vetting claims and objections.

The CJI said that on

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Unauthorised reviews, dodgy log-ins, blurred papers: TMC MP to top court

Damini Nath
New Delhi, February 24

RAISING CONCERNS that eligible voters could be deleted from the final electoral roll during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in West Bengal, TMC MP Dola Sen has told the Supreme Court that Election Commission-appointed micro-observers were allegedly overriding decisions taken by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), the statutory authority for inclusion and deletion of electors.

Sen, who is a petitioner be-

E. EXPLAINED

Key concerns

The TMC MP's charges come at a time when the SIR exercise is coming to a close in West Bengal, with the publication of the final roll on February 28. With Assembly polls slated to be announced soon after, any wrongful deletion now could disenfranchise voters with no time for correction.

fore the Supreme Court challenging the SIR, also submitted in two applications filed on February 16 and February 18 that officials were allegedly logging into the ECINET portal from locations other than where they were deputed, and that documents uploaded to the system were turning "blurry" after submission.

The final electoral roll for West Bengal is scheduled to be published on February 28. The EC did not respond to a request from *The Indian Express*

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TATA SONS CHAIRMAN

Questions on losses prompt Chandra to seek deferment of extension decision

Differences cropped up at board meeting

George Mathew
Mumbai, February 24

A DECISION on the third extension for Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran has been deferred after he requested the board of the Tata Group holding company to postpone the matter as disagreements cropped up in the board meeting on Tuesday.

While Chandrasekaran's second tenure will end only in February 2027, Tata Sons directors had earlier agreed on the third extension. However, differences came to the fore in the board meeting as Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata raised concerns over the losses in some of the group's companies, sources said.

Chandrasekaran then requested the board to postpone the decision on his extension. Noel Tata is on the board of Tata Trusts — which holds 66 per cent stake in the holding



N Chandrasekaran's second tenure will end in February 2027

company, Chairman Emeritus of the TVS Motor Company Venu Srinivasan is also on the board of Tata Sons, as a representative of the Trusts.

According to sources, Noel Tata was not happy with the losses in Tata Group's digital businesses and investments in certain acquisitions. He also wanted Tata Sons to remain an unlisted firm. However, other directors supported the extension.

Chandrasekaran, 63, became the Chairman of Tata Sons in 2017 after the exit of Cyrus Mistry. He got his second extension in 2022. For a third extension, Tata Sons will have to waive the retirement norms. As per the current policy, directors in executive position should retire on attaining 65 years of age.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Youth Congress chief arrested; stand firmly with my Babbar Sher colleagues, says Rahul

Alok Singh, Nirbhay Thakur & Asad Rehman
New Delhi, February 24

DELHI POLICE on Tuesday arrested Indian Youth Congress (IYC) national president Uday Bhanu Chib for his alleged role as the "main conspirator and mastermind" of the 'shirtless' protest during the AI Impact Summit in the capital last week.

Seven other individuals had been arrested earlier for the incident at Bharat Mandapam on Friday (February 20), during which around 10 protesters entered hall 5 wearing T-shirts printed with a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which they had concealed under their winter clothes.

Once inside, most of the protesters took off their tees, and allegedly raised slogans against the Prime Minister. Four of them, all Youth Congress office-bearers, were arrested on the spot and remanded in five days' police custody on Saturday.



Youth Congress president Uday Bhanu Chib at Patiala House Court on Tuesday. PTI

Three other Youth Congress leaders were arrested in Gwalior on Monday. Chib, the eighth person to be arrested in connection with the protest, had been questioned at Tilak Marg Police Station since Monday afternoon.

In the FIR registered at the Tilak Marg Police Station, police accused all protesters of offences under sections

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Top Maoist leader Devuji (centre) with Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy and Special Intelligence Branch chief Sumathi at an event where he formally surrendered, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. NIKHILA HENRY

Top Maoist after surrender: Will be in politics, within legal framework

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, February 24

TOP MAOIST leader Thippiri Tirupathi alias Devuji formally surrendered before the Telangana Police Tuesday, citing his "failing health" for his decision.

Considered one of the highest-ranking leaders of the banned Communist Party of

India (Maoist), the 62-year-old Devuji — who has spent 44 years underground — surrendered along with four more leaders of the outlawed CPI (Maoist).

At a press conference, Devuji said it "wasn't just for himself" that he took the decision. "I have decided to work within the legal framework and

adopt political life. I will always be at the people's side," Devuji, who wore a neatly pressed white shirt and cotton trousers, said, adding that despite giving up arms, he will be guided by the ideology he had so far followed.

The surrender comes ahead of the central government's

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Bias against Muslims and Dalits: SC judge flags social 'faultlines'

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

UNDERLINING THAT Constitutional morality must outweigh the argument of "public morality, even if it be the majoritarian view", Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said that personal or "popular morality" often conflicts with standards expected by the Constitution.

He was speaking at a seminar organised by the Telangana Judges Association and the Telangana State Judicial Academy in Hyderabad on February 21.



Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

To illustrate the "deep societal faultlines" that persist after 75 years of Independence, Justice Bhuyan shared two separate "random" instances: a PhD student denied accommodation in

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IDFC First scam: Rs 100-cr trail tracked to firm owned by siblings

Sukhbir Siwach
Chandigarh, February 24

THE STATE Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Haryana is pursuing a Chandigarh-based woman and her brother after investigators probing the IDFC First Bank scam found "suspicious" transfers totalling nearly Rs 100 crore to a firm owned by them. *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Officials said that a Look Out Circular (LOC) has been issued

sued against the woman, while police are searching for her brother. Sources said another LOC has been issued for a former manager of IDFC First Bank's Chandigarh branch.

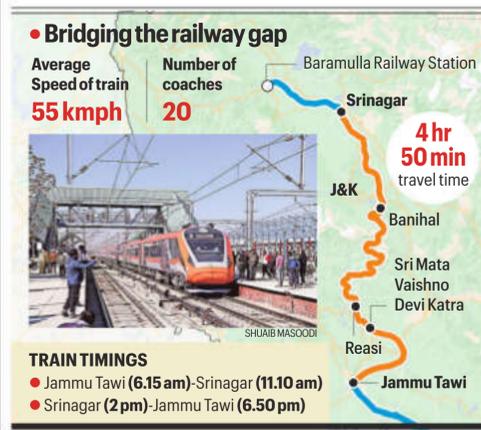
"We are searching for the sister and brother as part of our investigation. The LOC has been issued to alert authorities at international airports and seaports to ensure they are not able to leave the country," an official said.

Police sources said the role

of the former manager, a Panchkula resident, is also central to the investigation. He had left the bank over six months ago, bank sources said.

An FIR has also been registered against employees of IDFC First Bank, AU Small Finance Bank and unidentified public servants in connection with the alleged fraud. The bank said in a statement that its "preliminary findings indicate that certain employees of the branch acted

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Vande Bharat Express set to roll between Srinagar and Jammu

Dheeraj Mishra
New Delhi, February 24

PEOPLE FROM Srinagar and Jammu will soon be able to cover the distance between the summer and winter capitals of Jammu and Kashmir in less than five hours.

Fulfilling a long-standing demand, Indian Railways has decided to extend the services of the Vande Bharat Express up to Jammu Tawi station and the rake will be upgraded from

an eight-car to a 20-car configuration.

In an internal communication, Northern Railway had said that the operation of Vande Bharat Express from Jammu Tawi station will start from March 1. However, later it said that the order has been put on hold "due to unavoidable reasons". Officials said that a decision on the date of operation from Jammu Tawi station will be taken in a week's time.

Currently, two Vande Bharat

chair car trains operate between Katra and Srinagar — with extension of the service up to Jammu Tawi station pending due to ongoing development works. With this extension, it will now take only four hours and 50 minutes to travel from Jammu to Srinagar, as against the eight hours it takes by road. The Vande Bharat train will run at an average speed of over 55 kmph. "The yard-remodelling work was crucial for the operation of

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SEVEN PEOPLE WERE ON BOARD A REDBIRD AIRWAYS PLANE THAT CRASHED IN JHARKHAND'S CHATRA DISTRICT ON MONDAY

In the crash: 2 young pilots, a family that scrambled to fund air ambulance

Shubham Tigga
Chatra, February 24

WHEN 41-YEAR-OLD Sanjay Kumar was brought to Devkamal Hospital in Ranchi on February 16, after he got injured in a fire following a short-circuit at the restaurant that he ran in Jharkhand's Latehar, he was in critical condition, with 60-65% burns.

The hospital's CEO, Dr Anant Sinha, said doctors at his establishment were honest with the family: "With 60-65% burns, survival is never guaranteed. Families often seek a second option in bigger centres." That's exactly what Sanjay's

family did. Quickly putting together Rs 8 lakh with the help of their relatives, the family arranged to transport Kumar to Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi in an air ambulance.

However, soon after the aircraft took off from Ranchi with the patient on Monday evening, it crashed in a densely forested area of Jharkhand's Chatra district. All seven on board were killed.

On board the aircraft were Sanjay, his wife Archana Devi (35) and his sister's 17-year-old son, Dhruv Kumar. A doctor, 32-year-old Vikas Kumar Gupta, and a paramedic, Sachin Kumar Mishra (22), were

also among the passengers on the air ambulance. The pilots were Vivek Vikas Bhagat (27) and Savrajdeep Singh (30).

The cause of the crash has not yet been determined. Sujit Kumar, the patient's younger brother, said the family scrambled to put together the Rs 8-lakh fee for the air ambulance after Sanjay's condition did not "improve as expected" at the Ranchi hospital.

"He was taken to Devkamal Hospital in Ranchi. After a few days, we felt his condition was not improving as expected and decided to take him to Delhi for better treatment," Sujit told *The Indian Express*, adding, "We immediately arranged Rs 5 lakh



Family members of a victim at a hospital in Jharkhand's Chatra. PTI

from within the family. But the company said they would not fly unless the full payment was made. After that, our uncle

somehow arranged the remaining Rs 3 lakh," he said. The crash claimed three members of the family. Sanjay

Kumar and wife Archana Devi left behind an eight-year-old son, Sujit said.

Devkamal Hospital CEO Sinha said that Sanjay was brought to the hospital in serious condition, but the doctors there managed to "stabilise him and bring him out of shock".

"But with burns of that extent, the condition is always serious. We had informed the family that it would take at least three weeks of treatment. It was a 50-50 situation, though we felt we could try our best to bring him through," Sinha said.

However, the family was keen on moving him to Delhi. "They felt road transport would

take too long — 15 to 16 hours — for a patient in that condition. Around 1.30-2 pm [on Monday], we were informed that an air ambulance had been arranged," Sinha said.

He said a paramedic and a doctor are usually part of such transfers. The family arranged a doctor, Vikas Kumar Gupta, from Ranchi Sadar hospital to accompany Sanjay on the plane.

Committed doctor

Dr Gupta's father, Bajrangiprasad, said his son completed MBBS in 2015 from Cuttack in Odisha and was later posted in Ranchi. Originally from Manika in Bihar's Aurangabad district, Gupta lived in Ranchi with his

wife and eight-year-old son.

"He was always prepared to help. We encouraged him to complete his studies and build his career. We never imagined something like this would happen. He was in the prime of his life, serving patients day and night. Everything has ended in a moment," Bajrangiprasad said.

Sole earner of family

The other medical professional on the aircraft was paramedic Sachin Mishra. The 22-year-old's elder brother, Vineet (26), said he had spoken to Sachin just a day before the crash.

Sachin worked as a paramedic with a medical aviation

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SC stays HC order stopping LDF govt's Nava Kerala survey

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

THE SUPREME COURT on Tuesday stayed a Kerala High Court order that stopped the state's ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) government from going ahead with its controversial Rs 20 crore 'Nava Kerala Citizens Response Programme', with Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant asking what was wrong if a state government wanted to find out how its schemes had worked.

The 'Nava Kerala Citizens Response Programme' was touted as a "welfare study intended to obtain development suggestions and ideas from the people".

Issuing notice on the state government's appeal against the February 17 high court ruling that termed the Pinarayi Vijayan government's decision as a "colourable exercise of executive power", a two-judge bench presided by the CJI said that the high court order shall, in the meanwhile, remain stayed. The bench comprising Justice Joydalya Bagchi also asked the state to submit a report of the expenditure incurred for the work "at an appropriate stage".

Taking up the appeal, the CJI asked, "If a state government spends hundreds of crores of rupees on welfare schemes, and eventually... wants to know through an

evaluation that have my schemes worked or not... Assuming that elections are there, they want to go before the people that look here, though we have been spending so much on welfare schemes, but we have ultimately found we are at fault at so and so places, we would like to improve, what is wrong with that?"

With the Kerala Assembly elections due in a few months, the programme had come under a cloud as critics alleged that it was an attempt to carry out a political campaign at the expense of the exchequer.

The counsel appearing for the original petitioner said, "The wrong is the government can go, not the party, through the volunteers... The whole party is they send party workers to each house."

He referred to a letter issued by CPI(M) Kerala state secretary M V Govindan on September 23, 2025, more than two weeks before the state cabinet announced the programme on October 10, 2025. The letter asked party cadres "to flood" the 'Samoohya Sannadha Sena Portal', from which the volunteers for the Nava Kerala programme were being recruited.

The portal was created in 2020 for the specific purpose of forming a social volunteer force to provide assistance in natural disasters in the state and to help in any local crisis.

At AI Summit, Cong youth wing acted at Rahul's behest: BJP

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

CRITICISING CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed that the Leader of the Opposition was behind a "deliberate conspiracy" to defame India, especially at moments of global attention, and that the truth behind these actions is now being exposed "layer by layer".

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Bhatia alleged that Uday Bhanu, president of the Congress's youth wing, acted at the behest of Rahul Gandhi during the recently-concluded India AI Impact Summit. During the event, directions were given for removing T-shirts and creating a spectacle with the intent of tarnishing India's image, Bhatia alleged.

Bhatia said that at a time when public order was para-

mount -- especially when global leaders were present and the eyes of the world were on India -- Congress workers were attempting to disturb public order. Had any untoward incident occurred, the consequences could have been "severe", he added.

"The fake 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' run by Rahul Gandhi contains nothing but incendiary propaganda," Bhatia said.

Asserting that there is a limit even to freedom of expression and the right to protest, the BJP national spokesperson said that those who keep displaying the Constitution should at least read it and understand its true spirit.

The BJP national spokesperson said that even within the Opposition, leaders like Akhilesh Yadav have distanced themselves from the issue -- describing the protest at the summit venue inappropriate and unbecoming.

Lucknow University protests: 7 students get show-cause notices

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, February 24

LUCKNOW UNIVERSITY has issued show-cause notices to seven students while six ex-students have been barred from campus. The action follows days of protests by two groups -- one protested over the Lal Baradari monument being fenced off and the other over prayers allegedly being offered near the site.

University spokesperson Mukul Srivastava said in the wake of the incidents over the past two days, the university proctor has issued show-cause notices to seven students and has also written to the police stating that the entry of six former students has been barred.

In addition, 13 students have also been issued notices to furnish personal bonds to ensure maintenance of law and order. According to the SHO of Hasan-ganj police station, the magistrate issued notices to the 13 to furnish a personal bond of Rs 50,000 each, along with two sureties of the like amount, to ensure the maintenance of law and order for a year following the incident that occurred Monday.

The notice states that based on a police report, "it has been brought on record that students allegedly made deliberate attempts to obstruct construction work being carried out at Lal Baradari within the university

premises". It was further reported that they staged a protest by sitting on a road inside the campus, raised slogans, and attempted to offer namaz at a public place, "thereby creating a situation with the potential to disturb public order and disrupt communal harmony, resulting in tension".

Earlier on Tuesday afternoon, the varsity saw tense scenes after students allegedly affiliated to right-wing groups raised slogans at Lal Baradari and sprinkled Ganga jal.

Police immediately attempted to remove the group even as they alleged that students affiliated with other political groups had created a disturbance on campus the previous day. Additional police teams were eventually called in to remove them.

The fresh stir comes days after students, led by members of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) and Samajwadi Chhatra Sabha, protested the administration's move to fence off the Lal Baradari, claiming it was unauthorised.

The student groups also claimed it restricted access for Muslim students and community members who offer prayers there during Ramzan. Videos had also surfaced online showing namaz being offered at the site while seven student wing members formed a human chain.

[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM] SC on Bengal SIR

February 22 he had received a communication from the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court stating that while there are 50 lakh cases of logical discrepancy/unmapped categories to be decided, only 250 judicial officers were available for such duties. Even if one officer was to decide 250 matters a day, it would take at least 80 days to complete the process.

In view of this, the court directed that judicial officers from neighbouring states could be deployed too, if required.

"In addition to the judicial officers already assigned the tasks, the Chief Justice of the High Court would be entitled to draw officers from the rank of Civil Judges (Senior Division) and Civil Judges (Junior Division) who have experience of not less than three years," the bench ordered.

It added, that "if the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court is of the opinion that further human resources are required, he is at liberty to approach the Chief Justices of the High Courts of Jharkhand and Orissa to provide serving or retired judicial officers from those states of similar rank."

The SC asked the EC to bear the expenses of their travel, hon-

orarium etc and urged the Chief Justice of Jharkhand and Orissa "to sympathetically and urgently consider any request that may be made by the Calcutta High Court Chief Justice in this regard."

The bench also issued some directions for streamlining the nature of the work.

The court directed that "the verification shall be with reference to documents referred to in (a) notification dated October 27, 2025, issued by the EC... declaring the commencement of SIR in the state of West Bengal, read with notification dated June 24, 2025 of the Standard Operating Procedure (b) the order passed by this Court on September 8, 2025... whereby Aadhaar card was allowed to be accepted as proof of identity and (c) the order of this Court on January 19, 2026... whereby Maadhyanik (Class X) admit card and Maadhyanik pass certificate was also allowed to be submitted."

It said that "all such documents, whether submitted electronically or physically with necessary proof, on or before the cut-off date of February 14, 2026, may be considered."

Noting that the last date of publication of the final electoral roll is February 28, 2026, the

court also said, "If the verification exercise undertaken in respect of 'logical discrepancies/unmapped category' remains incomplete" as on that date, "the EC may publish the final list, followed by supplements to the final list. Such supplements shall be published on (a) continuous basis as soon as the pending exercise is completed..."

Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142, the court also declared that "the voters enlisted in such subsequent supplementary list shall be deemed to have been part of the final list published on February 28, 2026."

During the hearing, advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, who had filed a petition seeking nationwide SIR, raised the issue of forged Aadhaar cards and urged the bench to spell out some guidelines to ensure there is no misuse. "It is practically seen throughout the country (that) most Aadhaar (cards) are made in border districts. If the court can add one line -- to control fake documents. It is seen throughout the country (that) whenever Bangladeshi or Rohingya are captured by the police, the Aadhaar is from Bengal," he said.

CJI Kant said, "It may require a deeper probe. But this is not the time... lest we are misunderstood by anyone; let the right atmosphere and environment come."

Youth Cong

including criminal conspiracy, causing hurt to a public servant, assault on a public servant, disobedience of a public servant's order, and unlawful assembly. The investigation has been transferred to the Crime Branch.

Delhi Police Special CP Crime Branch Devesh Chandra Srivastava told reporters that the investigation so far had unearthed "concrete evidence that this (the protest) was done under a deep conspiracy".

Hours after his arrest, a city court sent Chib to police custody for four days. "The application of the IO (investigating officer) is partly allowed. The accused, Uday Bhanu Chib, is remanded to police custody for a period of four days commencing today till 28.02.2026 (inclusive). Judicial Magistrate Ravi of Patiala House Court ordered. Police had sought Chib's custody for a week.

In their "Grounds of Arrest", Delhi Police told Chib that he was "the main conspirator and mastermind of the incident of unlawful assembly... where Anti-national Slogans were raised and... [the accused] "tried to incite riot like situation".

Chib had allegedly conspired to "obstruct and assault" police officials, and had not "cooperated and also not disclosed the name of the co-accused persons" who had allegedly fled from the spot. Also, the police said, Chib had "not disclosed about the source of printing of T-shirts" that were used in the protest.

The counsel for Chib told the court: "They are saying we created a riot-like situation. This is their mantra: to insert riots everywhere. The accused persons were unarmed... and they were being beaten up. They're (police) saying they need to recover T-shirts from the accused? We'll become the laughing stock of the world!"

The lawyer argued that police had already interrogated Chib, and that he was not even

present at the spot. "The purpose of seeking remand is very frivolous and irrelevant," he said.

Public Prosecutor Atul Kumar Srivastava, representing Delhi Police, countered that while Chib was "not there", he was nonetheless "communicating and monitoring each and everything". "They (protesters) gathered together and beat up police personnel. Knowledge that it could lead to a riot-like situation is enough. He is the mastermind," he submitted.

Chib's counsel responded: "It was a simple case of criticism. Can we not even handle criticism? Where are we heading to? There was nothing. No *danda laathi*. Did they go with common intention to beat up the police? A few people in printed shirts are impacting the sovereignty, integrity of the nation!"

The Congress described the arrests as "completely unconstitutional" and "the result of the arbitrary whims of the dictator Narendra Modi, who wants to silence every questioning voice".

"Peaceful protest is the right of every Indian. No regime can erase this truth," the party said on its official handle on X. "Let it be clear: we will not be intimidated. We will not be silenced. We will continue to raise the voice of the people and fight relentlessly for their rights."

In a post, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said, "I am proud of my Babbar Sher colleagues in the Youth Congress, who have fearlessly raised their voices in the interest of the country against the 'COMPROMISED PM'... The Congress Party and I stand firmly with our Babbar Sher colleagues. Holding a mirror to the truth to power is not a crime, it is patriotism..."

In a statement, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said there is widespread anger among the people against PM Modi. "Mr Modi himself is the coward. Out of fear, he can't even come to Parliament to defend his policies. That's why he's trying to scare us... This won't work. I condemn this," he said.

Social 'faultlines'

Delhi after her name revealed her Muslim identity and a recent incident in Odisha where parents refused to let their children eat food prepared by a Dalit woman in a mid-day meal programme.

Referring to the incident in Delhi involving his daughter's friend, Justice Bhuyan said: "She approached a landlady who was running a working women's hostel in her building in South Delhi. The landlady asked her as to what her name was. When she told her name, which was quite ambivalent, the landlady queried further and asked her about her surname and when she said that, it revealed her Muslim identity. The landlady then told her quite bluntly that accommodation was not available and that she could search for some other place."

Such cases, he said, are merely the "tip of the iceberg". Recalling the landmark 2009 judgement in *Naz Foundation v Union of India*, in which the Delhi High Court struck down provisions that criminalised homosexuality, Justice Bhuyan

said the ruling explicitly restricted the state from giving weight to public morality over Constitutional morality.

"The case rejected the argument made by the Union of India that popular morality can be a legitimate state purpose and that the Union has the right to enforce the same through the law. The Delhi High Court held that popular morality or public disapproval of certain acts is not a valid justification for restriction of the fundamental rights under Article 21," he said.

Justice Bhuyan also said that Constitutional morality ensures that democratic institutions exercise restraint and adhere to Constitutional values and not bulldoze through on the strength of numbers, authority and power.

Quoting Justice Thoroughgood "Thurgood" Marshall, a former US Supreme Court Justice, Justice Bhuyan told district court judges that the "only real source of power" for a judge is the respect of the people, earned through independence and fidelity to the Constitution.

Train

Vande Bharat trains from Jammu Tawi station. Although the entire station's redevelopment is not yet fully completed, the infrastructure required for the Vande Bharat service has been prepared keeping the convenience of passengers in mind," said Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railway.

The official said that with road connectivity in the region -- particularly along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway -- often facing disruptions due to landslides, heavy snowfall and adverse weather conditions, the extension of Vande Bharat services will offer an all-weather connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir.

The Vande Bharat train from Jammu Tawi station will depart at 6.15 am and reach Srinagar at 11.10 am. The train from Srinagar will start at 2 pm and reach Jammu Tawi at 6.50 pm. It will have stops at Katra, Reasi and Banihal, apart from Jammu and Srinagar.

The extension of Vande Bharat services to Jammu station also paves the way for a direct train from New Delhi to Kashmir.

The 272-km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) became fully operational on June 6, 2025, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating its 63-km Katra-Sangaldan section, marking the completion of a project to link Kashmir to the rest of the country -- which was first initiated 42 years ago.

While different stretches of the project were made operational in phases earlier, the trickiest one, the 111-km Katra-Banihal section, was the most difficult. This included India's longest operational transportation tunnel, T-50, spanning 12.77 km; the world's highest railway arch bridge at 359 metres above the sea floor (the Chenab Bridge); and the first cable-stayed bridge of the Railways (the Anji Bridge).

In crash

company for nearly one-and-a-half years, and was part of an air ambulance crew that transported patients to hospitals across the country.

Originally from Siwan district in Bihar, he was based in Jharkhand and lived in rented accommodation in Jamshedpur.

Recalling their last conversation, Vineet said Sachin had recently appeared for a medical field examination for a higher grade qualification. "The result was to be declared the next day. I had his roll number and roll code, so I checked it online. He had passed. I thought I would call and congratulate him," Vineet said.

When he tried calling, Sachin did not answer. "I called once or twice, then five or six times, but he did not pick up. Later, I received a call from the medical company informing me that my brother was no more," he said.

According to Vineet, Sachin was unmarried and was the only

TMC MP in top court

seeking comment on Sen's allegations.

While the EC announced the SIR in nine states and three Union Territories on October 27 last year, it deployed micro-observers only in West Bengal, which was a first. On February 4, while defending its decision to appoint 8,100 micro-observers, who are Central Government employees, the EC told the Supreme Court that their role was to assist EROs and Assistant EROs (AEROs). "It is false to suggest that statutory powers have been vested in the micro-observers," the EC had said.

In her February 16 application, Sen submitted that micro-observers were allegedly continuing to exercise powers to review ERO decisions, in violation of the Supreme Court's February 9 order directing that they only assist the prescribed statutory authority.

"If such appropriate directions are not granted, the Order dated 09.02.2026 passed by this Hon'ble Court will be frustrated and grave prejudice will be caused to lakhs of electors who may be deleted from the Final Electoral Roll, despite being eligible to vote," Sen's application stated.

She alleged that the micro-observers, who are Group B and C officers, were using the ECINET portal to review decisions taken by EROs and AEROs from the Group A and B categories. She cited 13 cases in which electors cleared by statutory authorities were allegedly later marked for review by micro-observers.

"All these cases pertain to

various electors, most of whom are already mapped to previous SIR rolls and have filed Enumeration Forms -- but who have been made to undergo the hardship of collating documents, appearing for hearings on the pretext of frivolous logical discrepancies, and have finally been approved by election officials -- only for such decisions to seemingly be set aside by Micro-Observers," the application said.

Sen further claimed that between February 9 and February 11 alone, over 7 lakh electors were "reviewed" by micro-observers. "These actions directly impact electors who have undergone the statutory process, produced documents, and secured approval from the competent statutory authority, only to have such decisions reopened or placed in jeopardy through extra-statutory review," she said.

The petitioner also raised concerns regarding the ECINET portal, which is used by EROs, AEROs and micro-observers to process forms. She annexed purported screenshots, alleging that after February 14, the option for EROs and AEROs to upload documents had been removed from the interface.

While February 14 was the last date for hearings, the Supreme Court had granted EROs and AEROs a one-week extension until February 21 to scrutinise documents.

Sen also submitted screenshots allegedly showing electors being marked for review by micro-observers on grounds such as "no document of elector found to match with father's

Devuji surrenders

March deadline to end the Maoist insurgency.

According to police records, Devuji was a Politburo member and a member of the banned outfit's Central Committee. He headed the Central Military Commission for more than two decades. A native of Korutal town in Jagtial district, Devuji's father Venkata Narasiah was a farmer. He has three siblings, none of whom are part of the insurgency. Devuji married Arike Jaini alias Srujana from Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. While she was a party member when she married Devuji, she was later elevated to the rank of Regional Committee Member (RCM) and was killed in an encounter in 2020.

A Madiga Dalit, Devuji studied in a private school up to Class 5 and later completed his higher schooling in a government upper primary school. He joined a government junior college for his intermediate, where

he "joined Radical Students Union (RSU), police records say.

Before joining the CPI (ML) People's War Group -- a Maoist organisation -- in 1982, Devuji was president of RSU in Korutal town and Karimnagar district of Telangana. In 2004, the People's War Group merged with Maoist Communist Centre to become what is now the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

According to intelligence reports, Devuji was sent to Dandakaranya by former general secretary of the CPI (Maoist), Muppala Laxman Rao alias Ganapati. With Devuji, Malla Raji Reddy alias Sangram -- who also surrendered Tuesday -- was sent to the forest to "work in the armed squad".

The surrender comes as security forces are intensifying anti-insurgency operations ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's March 31 deadline to end the insurgency.

IDFC First Bank scam

fraudulently in clearing forged instruments and payment instructions, potentially in collusion with external parties".

Sources said investigators have traced significant diversions of the nearly Rs 590 crore deposited by various Haryana government departments in the bank.

"The key questions before investigators are whether the bankers diverted these funds on the basis of an authorisation letter from the government department concerned or acted on their own. And, if authorisation letters were issued,

whether the officers concerned were empowered to take such decisions. The investigators must determine whether the money was diverted solely for investment in stock markets or also in real estate," a government official said.

The ACB has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by a DSP-rank officer and supervised by an SP-rank officer, to intensify the probe. Officials said several suspects have been questioned and arrests are expected soon in the case.

The FIR in the case was

name", despite extracts of the 2002 electoral roll having been submitted along with the relevant details.

In a separate application filed on February 18, Sen alleged that login credentials issued to the 30 special roll observers appointed by the EC were being used from locations other than those to which they had been deputed. For instance, she claimed that one such login was used from the Tea Board Office in Kolkata.

She further alleged that on February 18, electors who had been "parked for the final roll by EROs or AEROs on the ECINET portal were "pushed back for review by observers.

"More than 5 lakhs Parked Electors are now pushed into review which also includes cases of Logical Discrepancy. The number of Parked Electors pushed into review by RO/MO [roll observer/micro-observer] is increasing day by day," the application stated.

According to Sen, another modification to the ECINET portal on February 18 left EROs and AEROs with only two options after an observer's review -- either agree and mark an elector as "ineligible", or disagree. If the ERO disagreed, there was no option to mark the elector for inclusion in the final roll.

She also alleged "serious technical anomalies" in the portal, stating that documents and Enumeration Forms earlier uploaded by Booth Level Officers (BLOs), AEROs and EROs, and clearly visible at the time, had subsequently become blurred, inaccessible or effectively invisible. Some electors were then allegedly marked by observers for review due to the absence of visible documents.

Chandra

Chandrasekaran is also the chairman of major entities within the \$180-billion group, including Air India, TCS, Indian Hotels, Tata Power and Tata Steel. Air India, which was taken over by the Tatas in 2022, continues to incur losses. The group also acquired Iveco, an Italian automotive company, for around 3.8 billion pounds last year.

On January 17 this year, the board of Sir Ratan Tata Trusts did not induct Neville Tata, son of Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata, as a trustee. That meeting was postponed amid uncertainties over the timing of the appointment. In November 2025, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust had unanimously approved Neville Tata and Bhaskar Bhat, former MD-CEO of Titan Company, as trustees for three years. However, the board was unable to induct Neville due to procedural issues raised by trustee Venu Srinivasan.

lodge at the ACB's Panchkula station on February 23 following a communication from Haryana Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi. A senior officer confirmed that Section 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act has been invoked to probe the role of public servants. The FIR also cites provisions of the BNS related to criminal breach of trust, criminal conspiracy, cheating and forgery.

The FIR has been lodged on the basis of "serious irregularities" found in a probe conducted by officials of the Development and Panchayats Department, which had deposited Rs 50 crore in IDFC First Bank and Rs 25 crore in AU Small Finance Bank in 2025.

craft, Savrajdeep Singh, was from the Govind Nagar area of Amritsar in Punjab. "When the call came at around 11.30 at night, it was not clear what exactly had happened. We didn't know whether he was safe or not. We kept hoping," said Simrandeep Singh, a close friend of Savrajdeep's for the last 15 years. "Around 2.30 am, the family came to know about his death. It is so heart-breaking that we have no words to express our grief," he said. Savrajdeep is survived by his wife and their three-month-old son, his parents, and his brother.

Throughout the day, relatives, neighbours, and well-wishers from across the city and beyond visited the grieving household. The atmosphere inside the home was one of inconsolable sorrow. Savrajdeep's young wife sat surrounded by relatives, holding their infant son, while his parents struggled to come to terms with the devastating news.

With inputs from ANJU AGNIHOTRICHABA IN JALANDHAR

LIVING BY CUSTOMER FIRST PRINCIPLES

When it matters most.



IDFCFIRSTBANK/SD/293/2025-26

February 24, 2026

National Stock Exchange of India Limited
Bandra, Mumbai
NSE Symbol: IDFCFIRSTB

BSE Limited
Fort, Mumbai
BSE Scrip Code: 539437

Sub.: Disclosure under Regulation 30 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("SEBI Listing Regulations").

1. Please refer to our earlier disclosures under Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Regulations dated February 21, 2026 and February 22, 2026.
2. Our Bank always upholds the highest principles and standards. We call ourselves a customer-first bank in the way we define our product policies, disclosures, and no fine print banking. We give benefit of doubt to customers in event of difference of opinion.
3. Now was the occasion to stand up and deliver when it truly matters and put our CUSTOMER FIRST principles in action. We are a principle-based bank, and we mean it. We did not hold up the payment on account of the matter being under investigation. This is the DNA of IDFC FIRST Bank.
4. Hence, even though the investigation in the matter is ongoing, we have paid out 100% of the principal and interest to the relevant departments of Haryana Government as claimed, which works out to a net amount of INR 583 crore. The departments have sincerely thanked and appreciated the Bank for the positive approach, professional manner, and speedy and principle-based resolution.
5. The Bank remains committed to working together with the relevant Haryana Government departments and the law enforcement agencies, to pursue actions against the perpetrators of the fraud and look forward to recovering our dues.
6. Our Bank is strong with the following details as of 31st December 2025:
 - We are rated AAA CRISIL for Fixed Deposits, AA+ long-term rating from CRISIL, ICRA, India Ratings, and CARE.
 - Our total Customer Business (Loans and Deposits) is INR 5,62,090 crores (up 22.6% YoY)
 - Our Asset quality is high (GNPA 1.69%, net NPA 0.53%, among the best in the industry)
 - Our Capital Adequacy is strong at 16.22%
 - Our Current and Savings Account % is around 50%
 - Our Unit Economics are strong and we are a growing Bank. Our Net Interest Margin is 5.76% in Q3FY26. Currently, this is not entirely reflecting in the net profit of the Bank as the Bank is in investment stage in building out products, technology, distribution, branches, ATM, rural Banking and other such universal banking solutions to be a large, diversified bank of the future. The last few years have been a phase of building the foundation blocks, and the next few years we expect the operating leverage to reflect in the earnings.
 - As stated publicly, with the MFI situation behind us, we expect to be strongly back in trajectory of profits from FY'27 onwards.

We are building a world-class bank in India with strong governance and ethics and will emerge stronger from this incident.

Request you to kindly take the above on record.

For IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

SATISH ASHOK
GAIKWAD

Digitally signed by
SATISH ASHOK GAIKWAD
Date: 2026.02.24 15:09:36
+05'30'

Satish Gaikwad
General Counsel and Company Secretary

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

Corporate Office: IDFC FIRST Bank Tower, (The Square), C-61, G Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400 051. Tel: +91 22 7132 5500 Fax: +91 22 2654 0354
Registered Office: KRM Tower, 7th Floor, No. 1, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai 600 031. Tel: +91 44 4564 4000 Fax: +91 44 4564 4022
CIN: L65110TN2014PLC097792; **E-mail:** bank.info@idfcfirstbank.com; **Website:** www.idfcfirst.bank.in



CUSTOMER FIRST

WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN ON PWD ROADS

Govt has a bright idea: Streetlights on EMIs

Vendors will be paid monthly; model will ensure they retain a critical stake in the performance of the lights; make them partners in accountability, says PWD Minister

Gayathri Mani
New Delhi, February 24

THE DELHI government has devised a unique "EMI model" to pay for new smart LED streetlights installed on roads under the PWD, under which contractors who install the lights will be paid monthly, after they have ensured that they remain fully lit.

Currently, the government makes bulk advance payments to private companies or contractors who install and maintain the lights, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said.

"The idea is that the government should not have to run after contractors; it is they who have to fulfill their obligations... Under this framework,

the private company installing the lights will receive monthly EMI payments only after the lights are fully operational with 40 lux, ensuring that the company remains responsible for upkeep, performance, and timely maintenance," the Minister told *The Indian Express*.

Singh said the average brightness provided by streetlights in Delhi is only 10-15 lux, far less than the 40 lux ideal for flyovers, highways, and main roads. Lux is the SI unit for illuminance, and is used to assess brightness as perceived by the human eye.

Under the proposal, the vendor will be required to install and maintain streetlights constantly at 40 lux, under monitoring by a supervisory

control and data acquisition (SCADA) architecture. The proposal will be presented in the next meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC), and tenders will be floated in 10-15 days after final approval is received, the Minister said.

Roads in Delhi come under multiple agencies, including PWD, DDA, NDMC and MCD. While PWD maintains around 1,400 km of main roads, there are around 1 lakh streetlights on these roads, and many of them are old high-pressure sodium vapour (HPSV) fittings. All lights under the PWD will be replaced with the energy-efficient smart LEDs that will ensure brighter illumination, lower electricity consumption, and longer lifespans, officials said.

• HERE'S THE DEAL

- 1 LAKH lights on PWD roads
- 50,000 yellow sodium lights
- SMART LEDs planned on all PWD roads
- Rs 400 CR is estimated cost of project

PROPOSAL to be presented in next EFC meeting TENDERS expected within 15 days of clearance

"These days, everything from homes to household appliances is available on EMIs, so why not streetlights," the Minister said. "Tenders will be floated soon, and the payment will be done on the EMI model... This will be a first for the country," Singh said.

The tender will also have a condition requiring the vendor to replace a faulty or malfunctioning LED within 24 hours. "We have held meetings with prospective companies, and they have agreed to this condi-

tion," Singh said.

The expected cost of the project is Rs 400 crore. Officials flagged the large potential economic benefits of the transition. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show the switch from HPSV to smart LEDs will lead to savings of around Rs 31.53 crore annually in electricity and maintenance costs. This, they said, would allow the government to invest more resources into critical infrastructure and welfare projects.

Each smartlight will be con-

nected to a centralised dashboard and control room, which will allow officials to monitor them in real time, detect faults instantly, and ensure immediate repair. Citizens will also be able to view the status of streetlights in their area and register complaints, which will be resolved in a time-bound fashion, officials said.

"With this model, we are changing not just fittings, but the very system of governance. The EMI model will ensure that companies retain a critical stake in the performance of the lights, and make them partners in accountability. For the first time, citizens themselves will be able to see, monitor, and question the system in real time. This is transparency in its truest form..."

"Currently, governments spend money upfront, and the public has to wait endlessly for results... Now, things will work differently - install, prove performance, and only then will payments be made," Singh said.

• Skywatch



Forecast: February 25, 2026

Mainly clear sky, mist during morning hours

MAX: 29-31
4.9°C above normal

MIN: 12-14
2.2°C above normal

- Sunrise: 6:49 AM (February 26)
- Sunset: 6:18 PM (February 25)
- Moonrise: 11:53 AM (February 25)
- Moonset: 2:44 AM (February 26)

• AQI Tracker



Anand Vihar Very Poor AQI: 370
Burari Poor AQI: 267

ITO Poor AQI: 292
JLN Stadium Poor AQI: 218

- Good (0-50)
- Satisfactory (51-100)
- Moderate (101-200)
- Poor (201-300)
- Very Poor (301-400)
- Severe (401-500)

• BRIEFLY

Guard found charred to death in MCD school

A 58-YEAR-OLD guard was found charred to death after a fire broke out in a room at an MCD primary school in Outer Delhi's Ranhola on Tuesday. By the time a police team reached the spot, the fire had already been extinguished. Inside a pump room, officers said, the body of a man was found. "His face was completely burnt," said DCP (Outer Delhi) Sachin Sharma. The deceased was later identified as Naresh Kumar, who would stay overnight in the pump room, said police. ENS

HC dismisses PIL against Waqf notification

THE DELHI High Court on Monday dismissed a PIL filed by a Trust, Save India Foundation, challenging a Delhi Waqf Board notification from 46 years ago declaring three mosques in Jahangirpuri as Waqf properties. It also noted that the Trust "appears to be habitual of filing the petitions describing them as public interest litigations". Since 2024, the Trust has filed 37 PILs and 11 petitions before the HC. The bench opined that "the petitioner has unnecessarily attempted to rake up the past". ENS

DAY 2 OF YOGI'S SINGAPORE TRIP

UP bags Rs 8,000-crore investment in projects linked to Jewar airport

Express News Service
Lucknow, February 24

THE NOIDA International Airport region in Jewar has attracted the attention of investors during Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Singapore visit, with fresh agreements being signed for projects linked to it on Tuesday. This takes the total investment linked to the airport region to about Rs 8,000 crore.

The airport will be inaugurated next month by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CM had said on Monday.

Officials said on day two of the trip, aviation services major AISATS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UP government to invest Rs 4,458 crore in two key projects.

The company will develop a world-class cargo complex aimed at positioning Jewar as a major air freight and logistics gateway for North India, supporting high-value sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals and perishable agricultural

• New MoU for Jewar

₹4,458 cr

Investment promised by AISATS in two projects

- Will develop a world-class cargo complex, supporting high-value sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals and perishable agricultural products
- Taj SATS air-catering facility, which will serve flights operating from Noida International Airport and also supply meals to other airports across North India



"We also want to develop Jewar International Airport as a global hub for aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) ecosystem."

YOGI ADITYANATH, CHIEF MINISTER

products, informed officials.

As for the second project, officials said it was agreed that a Taj SATS air-catering facility will be established in the area, which will serve flights operating from Noida International Airport and also supply meals to other airports across North India.

Officials said the agreement, signed in the CM's presence, is expected to boost trade,

strengthen supply chains and generate significant employment opportunities, further reinforcing Uttar Pradesh's position as an emerging global investment destination and advancing its goal of becoming a major aviation and logistics hub in the northern region.

The latest agreement comes a day after the state government signed another major MoU for

the development of an international theme-based group housing township near the airport.

Officials said the Rs 3,500-crore project will be developed over 100 acres in the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) area and is expected to generate employment for around 12,000 people. Scheduled to begin in 2027, the township is aimed at supporting rapid urbanisation around the airport.

With projects spanning aviation services, logistics and urban infrastructure, officials said the airport is increasingly being positioned as a multi-sector economic node rather than a standalone transport facility. They added that its strategic location along the Yamuna Expressway, planned multimodal connectivity, and proximity to industrial and manufacturing clusters are seen as key factors driving investor interest.

The CM said he also visited the SATS Changi Airport Logistics Hub in Singapore.



Youth Congress supporters protest on Tuesday. PRAVEEN KHANNA

Cong's youth wing chief, Uday Bhanu Chib, gives push to party cause on the ground

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, February 24

THE ARREST of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) national president Uday Bhanu Chib in connection to the shirtless protest by the outfit's workers at the India AI Impact Summit in Delhi is likely to turn into a political flashpoint between the Congress and the BJP.

The Delhi Police announced the arrest on Tuesday morning after questioning Chib at Tilak Marg police station since Monday afternoon.

Chib (39), who is said to enjoy the backing of Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, is the eighth person to be arrested in the case. He is suspected of having played a role as a conspirator, said police officers.

Chib hails from a political family in north Jammu and broke into the national political scene on September 22, 2024, when he was appointed the national president of the IYC, succeeding Srinivas BV.

The son of a district level

Congress leader Hari Singh Chib, he has electoral ambitions. He wanted to contest the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in 2024 and picked Jammu North. "But as the seat went to the alliance partner National Conference, he couldn't contest," said a Congress leader in Jammu.

Chib's political career began in the NSUI, the student wing of the Congress, where he was the national secretary, and in the youth wing, he held the post of the IYC's Maharashtra in-charge.

Chib, who has a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and an MBA, was the in-charge of Delhi NSUI in 2017 when the organisation won the posts of president and vice president elections in the Delhi University Students Union.

Chib is also into martial arts. He practices judo and has been the president of Shastri Judo Club in Jammu. He has also been associated with the Silabam Martial Arts Association (J&K).

Delhi gets first processing plant to dispose of green waste dumped on roadsides

Express New Service
New Delhi, February 24

PWD MINISTER Parvesh Sahib Singh on Tuesday inaugurated the Capital's first-ever green waste processing plant to process horticulture waste generated alongside roads that are under the department's jurisdiction.

Officials said the plant, developed by PWD, will convert the waste into compost for reuse in landscaping and plantation works.

Singh said the initiative addresses a long-pending concern raised by resident welfare associations (RWAs), schools,



Parvesh Sahib Singh inaugurates the processing plant. EXPRESS

and local residents. Earlier, whenever branches, shrubs or trees fell due to storms or pruning activities, the waste often remained dumped along road-

sides or open spaces for days, where it would decay, emit foul smell, and cause inconvenience to people. "RWAs and schools had been repeatedly

demanding a proper mechanism for green waste disposal. We have now created a permanent solution," he said.

"For the first time, our government has built this infrastructure. Instead of dumping waste, we will now process it scientifically and convert it into compost that will be reused," Singh added.

Under the initiative, six green waste plants have already been developed, while six more will be constructed in the next phase, officials said. The government's plan is to establish at least one such facility in every district to ensure localised waste management, they added.

• GURGAON ROAD RAGE

Ex-Army colonel says accused were drunk, police say no

Abhimanyu Hazarika
Gurgaon, February 24

WHEN RETIRED Army Colonel Anil Yadav (55) was driving back home on Saturday evening after dropping his father, who was just discharged from a hospital, he did not know what fate had in store for him.

"I am better now," Yadav, who was on Monday allegedly assaulted by five youths, told *The Indian Express* on Tuesday.

The five youths were arrested on Monday. They allegedly also damaged the former Armyman's vehicle and extorted Rs 30,000 from him, after his car collided with theirs.

"They were clearly drunk. I

even told them that I have been in the Army — just as a cautionary message, in case things escalated. They said they did not care. Yes, there was a collision... but the fault was not mine since they had swerved sharply. I got down to inspect what was a very minimal damage. But they were in no mood to listen and just attacked me, including with a steel bottle of mine. I have not received any update about the Rs 30,000 yet," Yadav said.

A sixth accused remains at large, he said.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Yadav was involved in combat operations in Kashmir and is currently the founder-CEO of AVision, a joint



Anil Yadav

venture of Israeli firm Uvision and India's Aditya Precitech. "We have supplied missiles to the armed forces of India and

Israel. I left the Army [in 2018] since I wanted to start something of my own," he added.

The accused arrested in connection with the case were identified as Pankaj (23), a resident of Niganiwas in Rewari; Vikas (21) from Bagthala, Rewari; Nikhil (21) from Masani, Rewari; Sahil (22), a resident of Kheri Talwana in Mahendragarh; and Ankit Kumar (22) from Kheri Talwana, Mahendragarh, police said.

Police said Pankaj, Sahil, and Ankit work at a Nippon office in Rewari, while Vikas is a second-year BA student and Nikhil a second-year BCom student. Their car, a Hyundai i20 model, was seized, police said.

Sector 50 SHO Inspector Sukhbir on Tuesday evening told *The Indian Express* that the five were produced before a city court earlier in the day and remanded to judicial custody.

"Medical test reports do not mention any presence of alcohol or intoxicants. We have not received any further complaints from the victim either," the SHO said.

Police had on Monday said that the accused allegedly dragged Yadav out, assaulted him, pinned him to the ground, kicked him, and smashed his car's headlights and windows with beer bottles.

"The youths then allegedly attempted to force him into

their vehicle and also take his car along. However, as his car would not start, they allegedly extorted Rs 30,000 from him as 'compensation' for the damage to their vehicle," ASI and Gurgaon Police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar had said.

An FIR was registered on Monday under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 190 and 191(2) (related to rioting), 351(2) (criminal intimidation), 281 (rash or negligent driving), 125 (mischief), 324 (mischief by fire or explosive substance), and 308 (extortion, particularly by putting in fear of injury/death/grievous hurt), police had said.

Delhi to extend PM-JAY benefits to widows who get govt pension, persons with disabilities

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

THE DELHI Cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal to bring widow pension beneficiaries and persons with disabilities receiving government pensions under the Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). Officials said the families of these widow pension beneficiaries and persons with disabilities will also be eligible to avail benefits under the scheme.

Stating that the decision will bring direct and meaningful change to the lives of lakhs of needy families, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said: "There are approximately 3,96,615 widow pension beneficiaries and around 1,31,515 Divyangjans who will directly benefit from this scheme."

She reiterated that the government is firmly committed to ensuring that no poor, vulnerable or needy citizen of Delhi is deprived of medical treatment due to financial constraints.

The CM said that PM-JAY is the country's largest health protection scheme, and the Delhi government has taken a significant step to make it more effective and inclusive.

Gupta also said that following this decision, around 5.5 lakh additional families will come under a robust health security cover. "These families will be in addition to those already covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Household (PRS) categories, senior citizens aged above 70, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers, Anganwadi workers and helpers. With this, the scope of health protection in Delhi will expand in an unprecedented manner," she said.

She added that 7,23,707 Ayushman cards have been issued in Delhi so far that includes 2,74,620 to senior citizens. Also, for effective implementation of the scheme in the Capital, a network of 208 hospitals has been empanelled, comprising 156 private and 53 government hospitals, she said.

Through the State Health Agency (SHA) in Delhi, more than 29,120 beneficiaries have received treatment under the PM-JAY to date. "This is not merely an administrative decision, but a commitment linked to the health and dignity of every needy family in Delhi..." the CM said.

Father held for engaging minors to steal from foreign tourists near Jama Masjid

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

A MAN has been arrested for allegedly engaging his minor children to steal from foreign tourists in the market near Jama Masjid, police said on Tuesday.

On February 15, police had received a complaint from an Uzbek national, who alleged that \$7,200 was stolen from his bag while he was visiting the Jama Masjid market.

"...Two suspects — aged 13

and 15 — were identified and apprehended," said DCP (Central Delhi) Anant Mittal.

Police said that it emerged that the juveniles were allegedly acting at the behest of their father, who was later arrested.

Police records showed that the accused had been previously involved in a robbery case registered at Pandav Nagar police station in 2013. The juveniles were also found to have been involved in theft-related cases, police said.

Govt nod to road along both sides of Najafgarh drain

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

THE DELHI government on Tuesday approved the construction of a 60.77-km corridor along both sides of the Najafgarh drain, aimed at improving connectivity between rural areas and the main city, while also easing congestion on existing arterial roads.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Finance Expenditure Committee chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta at the Delhi Secretariat. The project, estimated to cost of Rs 453.95 crore, involves the construction of a two-lane road – 7 m wide – along the drain, said officials. While a 5.94-km two-lane road will be built on the left bank from Jhatikra Bridge to Chhawla Bridge, from Chhawla to Basaidarapur, roads will be developed on both sides of the drain over a length of 27.415 km, totalling 54.83 km across both banks, they added. The overall stretch will measure 60.77 km.

The corridor will connect major roads, including Outer Ring Road, Inner Ring Road, Shivaji Marg, Pankha Road, UER-II linking NH-9 (Rohtak Road), and Najafgarh Road. At different points, it will provide connectivity to Basaidarapur, Keshopur, Vikaspur, Kakrola and Dhulsir, enabling access to the IGI Airport and Dwarka Expressway.

Officials said the project will benefit areas like Uttam Nagar, Vikasuri, Najafgarh, Bijwasan, Chhawla, Dwarka, Paschim Vihar and Rajouri Garden, besides improving links towards Gurgaon. Several villages along Dwarka Expressway are expected to gain improved access, they added.

'CASTEIST' REMARKS MADE AT PODCAST INTERVIEW

Ex-JNUSU chief, founder of forum on Ambedkar move NCSC against JNU V-C

Vidheesha Kuntamalla & Vikas Pathak
New Delhi, February 24



Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit

FOLLOWING PROTESTS that erupted late Sunday and continued through Monday at JNU campus, at least two complaints have been filed with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) against Vice-Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit over alleged casteist remarks she made in a recent podcast interview, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

One of the complainants is Dhananjay, a former president of the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) and the first Dalit student to be elected to the post in nearly two decades in 2024. The second complaint was filed by Suraj Kumar Baudh, founder of Mission Ambedkar, a forum working on spreading B R Ambedkar's teachings.

The remarks in question were made during a 52-minute podcast interview published on February 16, in which Pandit spoke about student protests on campus, the recent rustication of JNUSU office-bearers, the University Grants Commission's (UGC) equity regulations, and what she described as the role of left-wing politics at JNU. "You cannot progress by being permanently a victim or playing the victim card. This was done for the Blacks; the same thing was brought for Dalits here," she had said.

Seeking Pandit's removal as the V-C in his complaint submitted to the NCSC chairperson on Tuesday, Dhananjay – a PhD

dents and members of the Dalit and marginalised community".

The complaint also claimed that following the circulation of Pandit's remarks, "there have been incidents of harassment on students belonging from the Dalit and marginalised communities", and that the general atmosphere on campus had become "hostile". It further noted that Pandit had not issued any apology, which, it argued, "bolsters the fact that the statement... was a well thought statement, given to create discrimination and to promote feelings of hatred and ill-will".

Dhananjay urged NCSC to direct an independent inquiry, and "recommend stern disciplinary and legal action, including the immediate removal of the said Vice-Chancellor from her position..."

The complaint filed by Baudh raised similar concerns, accusing Pandit of making "de-meaning and dismissive" remarks. It said Pandit's statements suggested that efforts to address caste inequities were merely claims of "victimhood" rather than "legitimate claims for equality, dignity, and constitutional safeguards".

Baudh requested NCSC to "take cognizance of the matter and examine whether the remarks promote prejudice, incite hostility or constitute contempt or disrespect towards scheduled caste communities" and "issue a notice seeking detailed explanation from the V-C".

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Baudh, a lawyer who did his LLM from the University of

Allahabad, said: "I have not yet received a response to my mail from the NCSC. I will wait for it until tomorrow, and complain on their web portal in case there is no response by then."

Pandit and the JNU Media Cell did not respond to calls, messages and emails sent by *The Indian Express*. There was no response from the NCSC secretary, too, despite multiple attempts to reach him.

Responding to the controversy earlier, Pandit had told PTI that her remarks were taken out of context. "I am a Bahujan myself, I come from an OBC background," she had said, adding that she was referring to what she described as "woke" interpretations of history and the creation of "imaginary worlds" around permanent victimhood.

On UGC's equity regulations, which were stayed by the Supreme Court last month, Pandit had said during the podcast interview that they had been introduced without adequate consultation. "It was done secretly. Many of us who are part of the system didn't even know what was in it," she said, calling the regulations unnecessary and constitutionally flawed.

She had also defended the JNU administration's decision to rusticate five student leaders for allegedly vandalising surveillance equipment at the Ambedkar Library. "They destroyed this property, literally broke it down, sat on top of it, took pictures and they themselves put it on social media as though they have done something great," she said.

VICTIM'S KIN ALLEGE POLICE APATHY

15-yr-old killed after fight during cricket match, 3 minors held

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

A 15-YEAR-OLD boy was killed in a physical altercation allegedly with three juveniles – aged 12, 13 and 17 – over a cricket match in West Delhi on Monday evening, police said. The three juveniles have been apprehended.

Police said the incident took place around 7.20 pm on Monday at a park.

According to police, initially, the victim and a 12-year-old boy had an argument while playing cricket.

This soon allegedly turned into a physical altercation, they said, following which the younger boy went home and informed his cousins, aged 17 and 13. Later in the day, the three allegedly returned to confront the victim.

"Hand blows were exchanged and during the fight, the victim sustained injuries to the neck and head, after which he fell unconscious," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar.

The boy was rushed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital,

When I saw him, he was unconscious. There was swelling on his neck and injuries on the face... I don't know what kind of grudge could have led to this; brother of the victim

where doctors declared him dead, officers also said.

The boy's uncle alleged the accused had come looking for his nephew at his home. "Some boys came asking for him while my sister-in-law was washing clothes on the terrace. By the time she could ask why they needed to see the boy, they had left with him," he said.

"We later learnt he had been choked and beaten," the uncle said, also stating that the family initially thought it was a minor scuffle.

A brother of the 15-year-old said he received a call about the assault.

"When I saw him, he was

unconscious. There was swelling on his neck and injuries on the face... I don't know what kind of grudge could have led to this," the brother added.

The boy's mother alleged that the assault went far beyond a routine quarrel between children. "Children fight all the time, but my son was beaten and killed," she said.

'Relatives beaten, thrashed by police'

The mother also claimed that when the family approached the police, "no one listened to us". "...Instead, some of our relatives were beaten and detained," she alleged.

The victim's aunt also alleged police apathy. "My nephew is dead, and the police are doing nothing but harass us. My brother was beaten, and he has injuries. They have not even given us a copy of the FIR. They tore our clothes..." she was quoted as saying by PTI.

Police said the victim is the son of a tea vendor.

They added that the post-mortem examination report is awaited to determine the precise cause of death.

'WHERE IS THE TOLERANCE?'

AUD student expelled over alleged participation in protests; punishment 'disproportionate': HC

Sohini Ghosh
New Delhi, February 24

THE DELHI High Court, while dealing with a petition by a first-year student of Dr BR Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) against an expulsion order issued against her, orally remarked Tuesday that the punishment appeared to be "disproportionate".

The student, in a separate petition moved earlier in the HC, had claimed that she was being "relentlessly harassed" after being expelled allegedly over participation in protests.

Nadia was first suspended on March 5, 2025, for a period of one year over alleged violation of code of conduct by participating in protests against an incident of ragging and bullying of a student, after which she moved the HC. Following the court's intervention, the university had revoked the suspension and agreed to consider the case afresh with due process.

The court, while disposing of the petition, had also cautioned that she should not take part in any demonstration, "directly or indirectly related with regard to the incident".

The university, in May 2025, however, accused Nadia of participating in protests even after the HC's caution, where students had demanded reopening of the AUD main gate, restoration of timings, etc.

While Nadia denied participating in the protests, the university went ahead and issued an expulsion order on June 27 that year. Nadia challenged this expulsion order last year before HC that remains pending.

In a fresh petition, Nadia has now challenged the latest expulsion order against her, according to which she stands permanently dismissed from the university and rendered ineligible for readmission. Nadia, through her counsels Abhik Chimni and Pranjal Abrol, has submitted before the court that she has been punished twice for the same cause: once with an apology and then with the expulsion.

Chimni submitted, "The expulsion order is completely bad in law to the extent that they make me write an apology, and treat it as a written statement (as part of the fresh inquiry), and use it (the apology) to expel me. That's the double jeopardy."

Addressing the varsity's counsel Mohinder Rupal, Justice Jasmeet Singh Tuesday remarked orally: "...This is disproportionate... Where is the tolerance? What is happening?"

While the court initially remarked that it is inclined to stay the expulsion order, the varsity sought time to take instructions and to bring the record of the case to the court's attention.

The court will hear the matter again on Wednesday.

GREATER NOIDA

Man shot, stabbed multiple times in broad daylight dies; two held

Express News Service
Noida, February 24

A 30-YEAR-OLD man died after he was shot and stabbed multiple times on Tuesday morning in broad daylight in Greater Noida's Luskar village, which falls under the jurisdiction of Ecotech-1 police station, police said. They said that two men were arrested in connection with the murder which, prima facie, seemed to be a fall-out of an old rivalry.

Officers said that the deceased, identified as Nitin Nagar, ran an RO water plant and an e-rickshaw agency in the village. According to the police, Nitin, who was named the main accused in a 2024 murder case, was currently out on bail and was scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday.

According to the police and eyewitnesses, Nitin was attacked around 10 am while he was returning home from a friend's house in a nearby lane. "As Nitin started walking towards the main road, three to four assailants, allegedly armed with pistols and knives, appeared," a police officer said.

Eyewitnesses told police that the attackers allegedly first opened fire from a close range. Police were also told that Nitin managed to dodge the bullets and started running, but slipped and fell into a drain near his residence, after which the attackers pinned him to the ground.

Police said that one of the assailants allegedly reloaded



A purported CCTV footage of the incident has surfaced.

his gun and fired four more shots, while another stabbed him repeatedly in the neck and other parts of the body.

Hearing the commotion, as Nitin's wife, Shweta, stepped out of their house, one of the accused allegedly pointed a gun at her, forcing her to retreat, police said, adding that the attackers then fled.

A purported CCTV footage of the incident has also surfaced that shows the men shooting Nitin multiple times. Additional DCP Sudhir Kumar, meanwhile, said that Nitin was involved in an altercation with other residents of Luskar village and the issue had been ongoing since a long time.

Nitin was rushed to Kailash Hospital by his family where he died during treatment.

A case was registered based on Shweta's complaint, police also said.

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WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR PROJECT ASSISTANT
The walk-in interview for the post of Project Assistant in the Department of E&ICT Academy is scheduled to be held on 13th March, 2026. Desirous and eligible candidates may appear at the interview along with all certificates in Original and two set of photocopies. For further details please visit institute website www.nitp.ac.in
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NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS
SPECIAL WINDOW FOR RE-LODGE-MENT OF TRANSFER REQUESTS OF PHYSICAL SHARES
The Securities and Exchange Board of India, through its Circular dated January 30, 2026, has extended the special window for shareholders who had lodged physical share transfer deeds of before April 1, 2019, but whose requests were rejected/returned/not attended due to deficiency in the documents/process. The new window runs from February 5, 2026 to February 4, 2027. All securities shall be credited only in demat form, subject to a one-year lock-in. Such securities shall not be transferred, lien-marked or pledged during the lock-in period. The required process is outlined below:

Window for re-lodgement	From February 5, 2026 to February 4, 2027
Procedure for re-lodgement	Submit original transfer documents, along with corrected or missing details to the Registrar to an Issue and Share Transfer Agent i.e. MUFG Intime India Private Limited (formerly Link Intime India Private Limited)
Documents to be sent to	MUFG Intime India Private Limited Unit: The Tata Power Company Limited C-101, 1 st Floor, 247 Park, Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, Vikhroli West, Mumbai - 400 083
For any queries	• Helpline no: +91 810 811 8484; • Website: www.tatapower.com ; • Email address: investorcomplaints@tatapower.com ; • Raise service request on: https://web.in.mpmis.mufg.com/helpdesk/Service_Request.htm

For The Tata Power Company Limited Sd/-
Vispi S. Patel
Company Secretary
FCS 7021
Place: Mumbai
Dated: February 24, 2026

DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS
KATHUA
E-mail: sspkathua@jkpolice.gov.in Fax/Phone No.: 01922-234010
LOOK OUT NOTICE
On 13-02-2026, person namely Abdul Mushtaq S/O Gulam Mohd R/O Ward No. 04 Tehsil and District Kathua reported at P/S Kathua stating therein that on 12-02-2026 at about 1045 hrs, his wife namely Jauna Akhter, age 26 years is missing from home. The complainant tried his best to search his wife, but all in vain. On this, missing report vide DD No. 21 dated 13-02-2026 has been entered at Police Station Kathua.
During the course of investigation, best efforts were made to locate missing individual, whereas she is still un-traced.
As such Description Roll/Photograph of said missing individual is being shared with the appeal that anybody having clue/information about her whereabouts may inform us accordingly. The informer will be rewarded suitably:-
Description Roll:-

Name	Jauna Akhter
Husband	Abdul Mushtaq
Permanent Address	Ward No. 4
Present Address	Ward No. 4
Tehsil	Kathua
Police Station	Kathua
Age	26 years
Complexion	Wheatish
Height	05 FT 2 inch
Built	Normal
Face	Oval
Eyes	Black
Languages known	Hindi/ Dogri

Any information related to the whereabouts of the subject may be communicated on following contacts:-
1. DPO Kathua 01922-234010 (Phone/Fax)
2. dpokathua@jkpolice.gov.in (Mail ID)
3. PCR Kathua-01922-234311 (Phone/Fax)
4. Police Station Kathua-01922-234310
Sd. Superintendent of Police
Kathua.
DIP/J-12016/25 - DATE 24 FEB 2026

Protests in Sector 15A after Noida Authority advertises scheme to set up 'religious site' in park

Neetika Jha
Noida, February 24

SEVERAL RESIDENTS of Noida's Sector 15A protested on Sunday against the Noida Authority's "Scheme for Setting up Religious Places/ Sites" launched on February 5, 2026. A petition has been filed in Allahabad High Court on behalf of 59 residents of the sector, which is home to several eminent people.

According to Noida Authority, the scheme was notified after some residents of two sectors – 15A and 93 – asked for temples on a plot in each of these sectors. The land in Sector 15A is a 300-sq-m plot num-

bered 226B/1, valued at Rs 2.77 crore; the plot in Sector 93 measures 600 sq m, and is valued at Rs 4.18 crore.

Under the scheme, the plots will be awarded to applicants who fulfill certain eligibility criteria.

"The selected entity shall get the land for a lease of 90 years on an interview basis after the applications will be scrutinized by the screening committee of the Noida Authority. The date of the interviews are still awaited," says the document.

After the interview process, the Allotment Committee shall recommend the allotment, and the Authority CEO shall take

the final decision, says the scheme brochure.

The residents who protested on Sunday alleged that the scheme was a ploy to allot a part of a park for the construction of a temple. This land has more than 100 developed trees which would likely be felled, they said. They also expressed fear of widespread disruption in daily life if a large temple were to come up in the neighbourhood.

"This land has been a part of the park for 40 years and is maintained by the Authority," a resident said.

When contacted, the CEO of Noida Authority, Krishna Karunesh, said the scheme was

notified after residents of the area expressed a desire for a temple in the area.

"It is facility land. We have facility plots in nearly all sectors in Noida. These lands can be used for any facility, including an electric substation, a community centre, skill development centre or a religious site. It can be anything – a temple, a mosque, a church or a gurdwara," he said.

The CEO said that the scheme had been advertised for 15 days and objections had been invited. "It is the residents who demanded it, and now it is they who are protesting. If they don't want it, we will cancel it," he also said.

Cabinet nod to rename Kerala as Keralam, PM says 'will of people'

Divya A New Delhi, February 24

THE UNION Cabinet on Tuesday approved the proposal to change the name of Kerala to Keralam.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, will now be sent to the state Assembly for its approval...

In a post on X, PM Narendra Modi, who chaired the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, said, "The decision of the Union Cabinet on alteration of the name of Kerala to Keralam reflects the will of the people of the state. It is in line with our efforts to strengthen the connect with our glorious culture..."

"After approval of the Union Cabinet, the President of India will refer a Bill, namely the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, to the State Legislative Assembly of Kerala for expressing its views under the proviso to Article 3 of the Constitution of India..."



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANIL SHARMA

sembly of Kerala for expressing its views under the proviso to Article 3 of the Constitution of India," Vaishnaw told reporters.

After receipt of the views of the Assembly, the Centre will take further action, and the recommendation of the President will be obtained for the introduction of the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, in Parliament.

In June 2024, the Kerala Assembly had passed a resolution to alter the name of the state to "Keralam". Quoting the resolution, a statement by the Union government on Tuesday said: "The name of our State is 'Keralam' in Malayalam Language. States were formed on the basis of language on the 1st day of November, 1956. The Kerala Piravi Day is also on the 1st day of November."

"Since the time of National Independence Struggle, there has been a strong demand for the formation of United Kerala for the people speaking Malayalam language. But in the First Schedule to the Constitution the name of our State is recorded as 'Kerala'. This Assembly unanimously appeals to the Central Government to take urgent steps as per Article 3 of the Constitution for modifying the name as 'Keralam'," the resolution read.

Thereafter, the Kerala government requested the Centre to take necessary measures to amend the First Schedule to the

Constitution by altering the name of 'Kerala' as 'Keralam' under Article 3 of the Constitution, said the government statement. Article 3 of the Constitution provides for alteration of names of existing states.

The matter regarding alteration of the name was considered in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, and with the approval of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the draft note for the Cabinet for the alteration of the name was circulated to the Department of Legal Affairs and Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice for their comments, the government said on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, at its first meeting at Seva Teerth, the Cabinet also resolved that every decision taken in the premises will be inspired by the sentiment of 'Nagrik Devo Bhava' and will be a centre for the empowerment of every Indian, said Vaishnaw.

According to the resolution passed at the meeting, termed 'Seva Sankalp Resolution', every decision taken in the new building will be inspired by a spirit of service toward 1.4 billion citizens and will be connected to the broader goal of nation-building.



Wanted to rename West Bengal as Bangla, said the CM

Then why can't West Bengal be renamed as Bangla: Mamata Atri Mitra

Kolkata, February 24

WITH THE Central government approving the renaming of Kerala as Keralam, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday questioned the decision stating that her own government's proposal — sent eight years ago — to change West Bengal's name to Bangla was not approved.

She claimed that the Centre approved the proposal of CPI (M)-led Kerala government due to their "connection" with the BJP while accusing them of being "anti-Bengal".

"When our students go for exams or interviews, they are called at the end since the name of the state begins with 'W', which comes at the end alphabetically. I too face the same problem. I get the chance to speak at the end as I am the CM of West Bengal," Mamata said in a statement. "Based on the culture of the state, we wanted to rename West Bengal as Bangla. In this regard, we have passed resolutions twice in the Legislative Assembly." The CM said, "Whenever I met PM Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, I have raised this issue. However, much to my surprise, nothing has happened. I think they are not approving it because they are anti-Bengal. They disrespect the icons and visionaries of Bengal," she added.

"They only use the word 'Bangla' during polls to get electoral benefit. That is why they have not given the approval to rename the state," Mamata said.

Rs 1,677-crore plan for Srinagar airport expansion approved

Sukalp Sharma New Delhi, February 24

THE SRINAGAR airport is set to get a makeover with the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approving a major expansion project at an estimated cost of Rs 1,677 crore.

The redevelopment is expected to more than treble the airport's passenger-handling capacity, to 10 million passengers per year from the current 3 million, and is expected to be completed in four years. The project will be funded fully by equity from the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

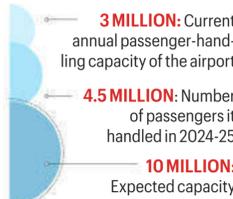
The Srinagar airport is a military airport — housed in the Indian Air Force's Budgam airbase — with the AAI operating the civil enclave. The airport handled almost 4.5 million passengers in 2024-25, significantly higher than its 3 million-per-annum capacity.

"The new Civil Enclave project, spread over 73.18 acres, will feature a state-of-the-art terminal building spanning 71,500 square meters (including 20,659 square meters of existing structure), designed to serve 2,900 passengers during peak hours (up from 950 at present) and an annual capacity of 10 million passengers per annum," the government said in a release.

The expanded apron will equip the airport with 15 aircraft parking bays from nine bays at present. The project will also include the construction of a multi-level car parking facility for 1,000 cars, barracks for 1,344 security personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), and accommodation for AAI staff.

"Beyond infrastructure enhancement, the project is expected to significantly boost tourism and economic growth by improving connectivity to iconic attractions, including Dal Lake, Shankaracharya Temple and the Mughal Gardens..." the government said.

Capacity to treble



Four years: Estimated time for completion of project

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Gujarat: GIFT City Metro corridor to be extended

Express News Service New Delhi, February 24

THE UNION Cabinet on Tuesday approved the extension of the Metro corridor between Ahmedabad and GIFT City at a cost of Rs 1,067.35 crore.

In a statement, the government said the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Gujarat Metro Rail Corporation's extension of the North-South corridor from GIFT City to Shahpur. With three elevated stations, the new corridor will cover 3.33 km and take about four years to complete, it said.

"This extended corridor is expected to benefit approximately 23,702 passengers in

2029 and approximately 58,059 passengers in 2041. This corridor will strengthen connectivity between Ahmedabad and GIFT region. Major multinational companies, educational institutions, and commercial centers located along the proposed route will directly benefit," the statement said. It added that the project was likely to create around 1,000 jobs in the construction phase and another 250 post construction in the form of operations and maintenance.

"This project will generate a significant number of direct employment opportunities, equivalent to the number mentioned above... Other activities will generate indirect employment for even more people," it said.

Historical, linguistic roots of the demand

Shaju Philip Thiruvananthapuram, February 24

WITH THE Union Cabinet approving the renaming of Kerala as Keralam on Tuesday, the demand, previously endorsed twice by the Kerala Assembly, is finally set to be fulfilled.

The Assembly passed resolutions in 2023 and 2024 urging the Union government to amend the Constitution and change the state's name from Kerala to Keralam. Both resolutions were moved by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Last month, Kerala BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar wrote to the CM extending the party's support to the move.

Explaining why the resolution had to be moved for a second time, Vijayan said the earlier resolution had sought changes not only in the First Schedule but also across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

However, upon examination, it was found that the required correction — from Kerala to Keralam — had been effected only in the resolution's First Schedule.

states were reorganised on linguistic lines on November 1, 1956, which is observed as Kerala Piravi (Kerala Formation Day). It noted that while the state is referred to as Keralam in Malayalam, its name in the First Schedule of the Constitution is Kerala.

The Assembly unanimously requested the Union government to take immediate steps under Article 3 of the Constitution to change the name to Keralam.

Explaining why the resolution had to be moved for a second time, Vijayan said the earlier resolution had sought changes not only in the First Schedule but also across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. However, upon examination, it was found that the required correction — from Kerala to Keralam — had been effected only in the resolution's First Schedule.

Origins of the name

There are multiple theories about the origin of the name "Kerala". The earliest epigraphic reference is found in Rock Edict II of Ashoka, dated to 257 BCE, which mentions "Keralaputra" (Sanskrit for "son of Kerala"), also interpreted as a reference to the Chera dynasty.

Some scholars trace Keralam to Cheram. German scholar Herman Gundert, who compiled the first Malayalam-English dictionary, noted that keram is the Kannada form of cheram and described Keralam as Cheram, the region between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari. The root "cher" is understood to mean "to join", and appears in the compound "Cheralam", with "alam" meaning land or region.

The demand for a unified Kerala Malayalam-speaking regions

were historically ruled by various kings and princely states. The Aikya (unified) Kerala movement gathered momentum in the 1920s, demanding a separate state for Malayalam-speaking people by integrating Malabar, Kochi and Travancore.

Inspired by the freedom movement, Malayalis pressed for political unification. Following Independence, the integration of princely states paved the way for statehood. On July 1, 1949, Travancore and Kochi merged to form the Travancore-Cochin state. When the Union government decided to reorganise states on linguistic lines, the State Reorganisation Commission recommended the creation of Kerala by including the Malabar district and the Kasargod taluk, while excluding the southern taluks of Travancore.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

CONSULTATIONS, LEGAL VETTING DONE New Seed Bill likely in second part of Budget Session

Harikishan Sharma New Delhi, February 24

THE CENTRE is likely to introduce the new Seed Bill in Parliament during the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, The Indian Express has learnt.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, which is piloting the Bill, has reportedly completed the inter-ministerial consultations and legal vetting process and is ready to send the draft of the Seed Bill for the Union Cabinet's approval "anytime soon".

Once approved by the Cabinet, the Bill will be introduced during the second part of the Budget Session, which is scheduled to begin on March 9. To make way for the new legislation, the government will withdraw the old Seed Bill, which has been pending in the Rajya Sabha since 2004.

The ministry had unveiled the draft of a new legislation — the Seeds Bill, 2025 — in November last year, seeking comments from stakeholders. Once enacted into law, it will replace the existing Seeds Act, 1966, which is six decades old. The new Bill proposes mandatory registration of seed varieties and a penalty of Rs 30 lakh and three years' imprisonment for major offences such as the sale of spurious and non-registered seeds.

The existing law regulates only notified kinds and varieties of seeds and does not provide for

the regulation of research hybrid varieties or varieties that are not notified. Also, seed registration is not compulsory under the current law.

Additionally, green manure seeds, commercial crops, plantation crops, and the like are not covered by the present law. Apart from this limited coverage, the penalties under the present law were also very low. This is why the need for a new law was felt.

Earlier governments attempted to amend the existing law. For instance, a Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 9, 2004, and referred to a parliamentary committee on December 17, 2004, but it never became a law.

As per the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the annual requirement of seeds was estimated at 48.20 lakh tonnes in 2024-25, against which the availability was 53.15 lakh tonnes. In terms of money, India's seeds market is estimated to be about Rs 40,000 crore.

'Sold the country': Rahul Gandhi links trade deal to Epstein files, Adani case

Express News Service Bhopal, February 24

LEADER OF Opposition Rahul Gandhi Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "selling the country" by conceding to the US on agriculture, data and textiles under "pressure" linked to unreleased convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein files and a criminal case in the US allegedly involving the Adani Group. Speaking at the Kisan Mahachaupal in Bhopal, Gandhi claimed these factors forced the PM to rush through the India-US trade agreement without Cabinet approval.

Gandhi alleged that negotiations with the US had remained stalled for four months over agriculture, as the government had resisted opening Indian markets to American soy, cotton, maize and pulses. "No Indian farmer wants this, no politician wants this, and the Government of India also did not want this," he said, adding that talks were "at a standstill" until the PM abruptly reversed course.

According to Gandhi, the agreement amounted to a betrayal of multiple sectors. "He sold India's farmers. Sold India's garment industry. Gave all of our data to America," he said. The Congress leader attributed the government's decision to what he described as two sources of pressure from the US. The first, he claimed, related to unreleased Epstein files. "In America, lakhs of Epstein files are lying closed... emails, messages, videos, everything," Gandhi said, alleging that selective disclosures were being used to exert



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi at the party's Kisan Mahachaupal in Bhopal on Tuesday. ANI

leverage. Gandhi also alleged that a criminal case in the US against industrialist Gautam Adani constituted a second, more serious threat.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge warned the deal would devastate small and marginal farmers and cripple domestic industries. Drawing a contrast between American and Indian agriculture, Kharge said, "In our country, 65 percent of people depend on agriculture... here we have two acres, four acres — small and marginal farmers. And this small farmer of ours... Modi is destroying that today." Kharge alleged that cheap American produce would be dumped in India, forcing farmers out of the market.

In response to these remarks, CM Mohan Yadav said, "The Congress committed injustice against farmers. During its 55 years of rule, the area under irrigation in the state was only 7.50 lakh hectares..."

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leverage. Gandhi also alleged that a criminal case in the US against industrialist Gautam Adani constituted a second, more serious threat.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge warned the deal would devastate small and marginal farmers and cripple domestic industries. Drawing a contrast between American and Indian agriculture, Kharge said, "In our country, 65 percent of people depend on agriculture... here we have two acres, four acres — small and marginal farmers. And this small farmer of ours... Modi is destroying that today." Kharge alleged that cheap American produce would be dumped in India, forcing farmers out of the market.

In response to these remarks, CM Mohan Yadav said, "The Congress committed injustice against farmers. During its 55 years of rule, the area under irrigation in the state was only 7.50 lakh hectares..."

HC reserves verdict on Rahul plea against defamation case

Express News Service Mumbai, February 24

THE BOMBAY High Court on Tuesday concluded hearing and reserved its verdict on plea by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi challenging the defamation case over a derogatory remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018.

The court continued the interim order it had passed on December 16, 2021, which deferred proceedings before magistrate court in Mumbai in the case, until pronouncement of the verdict. The court had earlier granted relief to the Congress leader from personal appearance before the magistrate.

The complainant, BJP supporter Mahesh Shrivastava, alleged that the remark made over the Rafale fighter jet deal had "hurt the sentiments of PM Modi's supporters".

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ECI, SECs adopt declaration to synergise poll processes

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India (ECI) and State Election Commissioners (SECs) on Tuesday resolved to work together to synergise electoral processes, including preparation of electoral rolls.

At a conference hosted by the ECI and attended by around 30 SECs, a declaration was adopted that said: "ECI and SECs will work together to synergise the laws relating to the elections to panchayats and municipal bodies with those relating to the elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures."

According to the Constitution, the EC and SECs work independently. ENS

House panel condemns 'unfortunate incident' at AI event

Liz Mathew New Delhi, February 24

WITH THE BJP scaling up its offensive against Congress over its youth wing's 'shirtless protest' at the AI Impact Summit recently, an attempt by the ruling party to denounce the action triggered protests during the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Communications and Information Technology meeting on Tuesday, leading to voting for a resolution, it is learnt.

The committee, however, passed a resolution lauding the "grand success" of the summit and condemned the "unfortunate incident" after the proposal was put to vote that the ruling party won 10 against six.

Committee chairman Nishikant Dubey pushed the resolution lauding the government for the "grand success" of the summit held in New Delhi from February 16 to 20. "The summit delivered a diplomatic declaration that 91 countries and leading companies committed to inclusive AI development. The companies announced over \$200 billion AI investment in India. Google, besides committing for a big data centre in India, pledged to lay a direct sea cable link between India and

the USA," the resolution said. While appreciating the successful organisation of the summit, the resolution said that the committee "condemn the unfortunate incident that happened on 20-2-2026 at the venue of the India AI Summit." A political row erupted after

in a dissent note, one of the Opposition MPs is learnt to have mentioned about "avoidable controversies"

YIC activists took out a shirtless protest at the AI Summit with the BJP alleging that the Opposition had maligned the country's image at an international event and the Congress defended its workers, saying protests are part of democracy.

Opposition MPs, Shafi Parambil, S Sumpomeren Jamir and G Kumar Naik (all Congress); Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena UBT); Saket Gokhale (TMC); and Devesh Shakya (SP) protested against the move to pass the resolution, sources said. In a dissent note, also signed by his two party colleagues, given to Dubey, Param-

bil is learnt to have mentioned about "avoidable controversies that had overshadowed India's genuine potential in the global AI landscape". According to sources, the Congress MPs highlighted the showcasing of China-manufactured robot and foreign-made spherical ball drone by private exhibitors, claiming that they created adverse optics.

In the just concluded AI Summit, a private university, Galgotias University, was asked to vacate its booth at the AI Expo for showcasing a China-made robot as its own, triggering widespread criticism.

Centre to soon roll out HPV vaccination drive for girls aged 14

Every year, 1.15 crore girls who turn 14 will be eligible for single-dose vaccine

Anonna Dutt
New Delhi, February 24

THE GOVERNMENT will roll out a special single-dose Human Papillomavirus (HPV) nationwide vaccination campaign for girls aged 14 to eliminate cervical cancer this month, sources in the Health ministry said.

Persistent HPV infection is known to cause nearly 85% of all cervical cancers, the second most common type of cancer among women in India, affecting nearly 1.25 lakh and killing 75,000 each year.

Under the campaign, girls aged 14 will be able to book a vaccination slot at their nearest health and wellness centre using the U-win portal — a process similar to what was used for vaccination during the pandemic using CoWIN.

Every year, 1.15 crore girls who turn 14 will be eligible for the HPV vaccine in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunisation.

"The decision to introduce the vaccine at the age of 14 years was taken because evidence sug-

gests it is the age at which immunisation results in the strongest and longest protection," the source said. For the vaccination campaign to be rolled out soon, the well-proven vaccine MSD's Gardasil will be used, at least for the first two years. "The indigenous vaccine, Cervavac, developed by the Serum Institute of India has not yet been approved by the WHO. Additionally, the efficacy of Cervavac's single-dose regimen has not yet been established. A call on using this vaccine can be taken at a later date," the officials said. The doses, at present, will come from the GAVI vaccine alliance.

The organisation will provide India 2.6 crore doses, of which 1 crore has already reached India. The rest will come in through this year and next.

HPV vaccination using the four most common strains known to cause cervical cancer has been shown to prevent most infections and thereby cancers. Studies from Sweden and England in 2020-21 demonstrated that vaccination in teenage years could reduce the risk of cervical cancer by over 85% at age 30.

E. EXPLAINED

Efficacy of Cervavac being studied

The ICMR is still studying the efficacy of one-dose regimen of SI's indigenously developed Cervavac, which is yet to get the WHO approval. "The current vaccine stock is likely to last for two years. After that, a decision may be taken to use the indigenous vaccine, once data becomes available," said sources. While planning the vaccination campaign, with global evidence suggesting one dose could be as effective as two, experts had earlier proposed a delayed second dose — to be given three or five years after the first shot — giving time to the company to generate evidence. "If the data finds the one-dose regimen to be effective, then the second dose can forgo," another source said. This extended interval between the two doses was recommended by WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts to tide over shortage in doses based on findings from the UK and Canada.

PM on Israel visit from today, strategic ties upgrade on table

Shubhajt Roy
New Delhi, February 24

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will be travelling to Israel on a State visit on February 25-26 (Wednesday and Thursday), where he will meet Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to strengthen cooperation in defence and security, trade and economy, and innovation.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced the visit on Tuesday, even as there is tension between the US and Iran and the Pentagon has mobilised its military assets in the region. Iran and the US are expected to hold new talks in Geneva on Thursday over Iran's nuclear programme.

Stating that this will be the "second visit" of the PM to Israel, the MEA said, "During the visit, the PM will meet the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. The two leaders will review the significant progress made in India-Israel Strategic Partnership, and discuss further opportunities in various areas of cooperation, including science and technology, inno-



Modi and Netanyahu are also expected to exchange perspectives on regional and global issues of mutual interest, the MEA said. FILE

vation, defence and security, agriculture, water management, trade and economy, and people to people exchanges."

"The leaders are also expected to exchange perspectives on regional and global issues of mutual interest," it said. Modi will also call on Israel's President Isaac Herzog.

"This visit will reaffirm the deep and long-standing Strategic Partnership between the two countries and will present an opportunity to review the common challenges as well as realign efforts towards achieving their shared vision for a ro-

busit partnership between two resilient democracies," it said.

According to sources, Modi will be meeting Netanyahu on Wednesday for a private dinner and address the Israel's parliament, Knesset.

The two leaders are expected to hold bilateral talks on Thursday and visit the Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem. Modi will also interact with the members of the Indian diaspora and also visit an exhibition of technologies and innovations during his stay there.

Modi had last visited Israel in July 2017.

AHEAD OF CARNEY'S VISIT TO INDIA Canada moves to revoke Tahawwur Rana's citizenship

Press Trust of India
Toronto, February 24

AHEAD OF Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to India, the Canadian government is pushing to revoke the citizenship of a Pakistan-born businessman, Tahawwur Rana Hussain, accused of playing a key role in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

Rana, 64, is a Pakistan-born Canadian national and close associate of one of the main conspirators of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, David Coleman Headley, alias Daood Gilani, a US citizen.

Documents obtained by Global News show that immigration officials have notified Rana that they intend to strip him of the Canadian citizenship he acquired in 2001. He immigrated to Canada in 1997 and was later convicted in the US of plotting to attack staff at a Danish newspaper.

Rana, the mastermind behind the 26/11 attack, which killed 166 people, was extra-

ditioned from the United States to India in April 2025 and arrested by the NIA.

In its decision, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) wrote that Rana's citizenship was being revoked not for terrorism, but rather because he lied on his application form, the report added.

When Rana applied for citizenship in 2000, he claimed to have lived in Ottawa and Toronto for the previous four years, with only a six-day absence from the country, the IRCC wrote in a report.

An RCMP investigation, however, determined he had actually spent almost that entire time in Chicago, where he owned several properties and businesses, including an immigration firm and a grocery store.

The revocation decision accused him of "a serious and deliberate deception", and said his "lack of respect for the citizenship laws of Canada" had led immigration officials to wrongly grant him citizenship.



Nidhi Chhibber is a 1994 batch IAS officer

Chhibber gets additional charge of Niti Aayog CEO

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

THE CENTRE has given the additional charge of NITI Aayog's Chief Executive Officer to senior IAS officer Nidhi Chhibber "till a regular appointment or until further orders". Incumbent CEO B V R Subrahmanyam completed his tenure on Tuesday.

Chhibber, a 1994-batch IAS officer of Chhattisgarh cadre, currently serves as the Director General, Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office at the NITI Aayog.

Subrahmanyam, a 1987-batch IAS officer of Chhattisgarh cadre, was appointed the NITI CEO on February 20, 2023, initially for a period of two years and then he got an extension of one year.

The NITI Aayog, a premier government think tank, was established by the Modi government in 2015 after it scrapped the erstwhile Planning Commission.

Nagaland doctor at AIIMS Gorakhpur molested, 3 arrested

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, February 24

A ROUTINE trip to the mall turned into a nightmare for a 25-year-old resident doctor from Nagaland, working at AIIMS, Gorakhpur, after three men on a motorcycle followed her for 1.5 km — allegedly molesting and verbally abusing her along the way.

All three accused have been arrested, said police.

Police said the incident took place on Sunday evening. They said the accused followed the victim from the mall and allegedly passed obscene remarks before engaging in further misconduct near the AIIMS entrance.

"Three persons are involved in the case. Two of them have been arrested and will be produced in court today. Raids are underway to trace the third accused," said Superintendent of Police, Gorakhpur, Abhinav Tyagi.

Taking serious note of the incident, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma demanded stringent actions against the perpetrators. "Racial discrimination and sexual harassment of women from the North East should not just be a headline, sensationalized, forgotten and revived every time a fresh incident appears. The racial and sexual abuse of a resident

Doctor of AIIMS Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, from Nagaland is deeply shameful. Outraging a woman's modesty is not what a civilized nation should tolerate. They are your sisters and daughters too. Urge the authorities to take stringent actions against the perpetrators," he wrote in a post on X.

According to police, the case came to light on Monday after a complaint was filed, following which a police team went to AIIMS and recorded the victim's statement.

Citing the woman's complaint, police said she had gone to a mall to buy some items and was returning to the institute when three men on a motorcycle began following her.

Police said the accused allegedly passed lewd remarks and verbally abused her as she walked back to AIIMS. The victim also alleged that the accused touched her inappropriately and made obscene gestures till she reached Gate number 2 of AIIMS. When she raised an alarm, the accused fled the spot after issuing threats of dire consequences. The victim reached her hostel and told her colleagues about the incident, who informed higher authorities.

Police said the accused, Suraj Gupta (22), Amrit Vishwakarma (21), and Aditya Rao (23), are residents of neighbouring Deoria district.



Taming of the snow

A participant during the SnowBoard event at the Khelo India Winter Games 2026, in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir, on Tuesday. PTI

Vandalism at Azim Premji univ: 18 ABVP activists held

Express News Service
Bengaluru, February 24

AS MANY as 18 ABVP activists were taken into custody after they staged a protest outside the Azim Premji University in Bengaluru and allegedly vandalised its property on Tuesday.

The ABVP was protesting against an event that they claimed showed the Indian Army in poor light.

In a press release ahead of the protest, the ABVP condemned the "anti-national, Kashmir separatist events and sessions against the Indian Army", saying, "Azim Premji University has been a centre for sessions against the sovereignty and integrity of our nation, Kashmir separatism and against the armed forces of our nation."

The protesters allegedly smeared the university's billboard with black ink and some of them managed to enter the campus, after which security personnel intervened. The protesters spray painted "Ban Spark" on signboards and walls on the campus.

Superintendent of Police (Bengaluru Rural district), Chandrakant M V, told *The Indian Express* that the police were not informed about the protest. "As soon as we came to know, we rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. They should have submitted a



The university said no such event that the ABVP members were protesting against ever took place on campus

written intimation and informed the local police before the protest. Citizens cannot take the law into their own hands," he said, confirming the detention of 18 ABVP activists.

In a memorandum addressed to the Union Home ministry, the ABVP sought strict action against the student organisation behind organising the event and the university administration for permitting such a programme on campus.

The university, responding to the incident, said, "... The Azim Premji University had not authorised any event of this nature. The University follows strict procedures before any event is held on campus. This event which was allegedly planned by a small group of students did not happen at all".

Kerala Story 2 makers present 33 conversion 'victims', none from state

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

AT A press conference in Delhi on Monday, producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah and director Kamakhyia Narayan Singh unveiled their upcoming film, *The Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond*. At the event, the filmmakers were joined by 33 women who said they were survivors of forced religious conversions and shared their stories.

While the programme drew attention for its strong claims, none of the 33 women, presented as survivors, were from Kerala or neighbouring southern states.

Speaking at the event, Shah said the new film would extend the conversation beyond the incidents depicted in *The Kerala Story*, and bring attention to what he described as a nationwide problem. "I often hear people say that love jihad and forced conversions are not happening in India. So, we have brought together victims from all over the country," he said. "In our country, there is a



Director of the film Kamakhyia Narayan Singh and producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

narrative going on when *The Kerala Story*-1 came and the same again... Anyone can say anything to us; we do not care, but all such victims felt more pain when they heard that people were calling them a liar. The same thing happened during *The Kerala Story*-1, and that time, we called 26 victims from Kerala in Mumbai, but even

after hearing the ordeal of all these victims, the 'eco-system', who call them liars, did not change their mindset," he added.

The women who attended the event belonged to West Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Delhi, and the National Capital Region (NCR). Each of them briefly shared their experiences, recounting alleged instances of being deceived, coerced, or pressured into conversion and marriage.

Among those who spoke was national-level shooter Tara Shahdeo from Ranchi. Shahdeo said she married a man who initially introduced himself as Ranjit Kohil but later disclosed his identity as Rakibul Hasan. Shahdeo said she managed to escape the situation and pursued legal action, resulting in the conviction of Hasan and his mother in October 2023.

UTTARAKHAND

Woman gangraped at gunpoint by brother-in-law's 'friends'

Aiswarya Raj
Dehradun, February 24

A WOMAN was allegedly gangraped by three men at gunpoint while heading home with her brother-in-law on Sunday night in Uttarakhand's Udhham Singh Nagar district, police said.

According to police, the incident took place around 9 pm on Sunday, when the woman was returning from a fair with her brother-in-law. Police said that they are investigating the possibility of the brother-in-law's potential involvement in the crime and alleged that the accused were friends of his.

A complaint filed by the woman said

that the three men came on two motorcycles and pulled her brother-in-law aside to talk.

The men then allegedly brandished a country-made pistol and asked her to go with them while threatening to shoot her. "They made me sit on a motorcycle behind my brother-in-law and took me to a deserted place. There, in front of my brother-in-law, all three boys raped me one after another," she said in her complaint.

The complaint said that when the woman resisted, one of the men allegedly slashed a finger on her left hand with a knife. She also said in her complaint that her brother-in-law knew the three men.

ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
प्लॉट नं. 1, सेक्टर के.पी.-4, ग्रेटर नोएडा सिटी, गौतमबुद्ध नगर-201308, उ.प्र.
वेबसाइट: www.greaternoidaauthority.in | ई-मेल: authority@gnida.in

पत्रांक: वरि. प्र./ई-निविदा सेल/2026/722 दिनांक: 23.02.2026

ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

महाप्रबन्धक (अभियन्त्रण) ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण द्वारा मुख्य कार्यालयक अधिकारी, ग्रेटर नोएडा की ओर से ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या- वरि. प्र./ई-निविदा सेल/2026/721 दिनांक 23/02/2026 के माध्यम से उल्लेखित क्रम संख्या 01 से 39 तक के कार्य की ई-निविदाय आमंत्रित की जाती है। समस्त नियम व शर्तें ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट: www.greaternoidaauthority.in पर ई-निविदा लिंक एवं ई-पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है किसी परिवर्तन, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सूचनाओं के लिए उक्त वेबसाइट देखते रहें।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम / वर्क सॉकिल	अनुमानित लागत
निर्माण का कार्य		
1.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम हतेवा में कब्रिस्तान की बाउण्ड्रीवाल का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 8)	रु. 17.75 लाख
2.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में ग्राम हल्दोली के शमशानघाट के पहुँच मार्ग, रोड, चबूतरा और कमरे का निर्माण। (वर्क सॉकिल - 3)	रु. 21.50 लाख
3.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर टेकनॉन-4 में शमशान घाट निर्माण कार्य।(वर्क सॉकिल -3)	रु. 22.65 लाख
4.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर पी-3, विक्टोरि एरिया में स्थित सामुदायिक भवन का अनुसंधान कार्य (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 26.02 लाख
5.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम खेड़ा धर्मपुरा, छपरौला में रोड, चबूतरा, सेटिंग हॉल की बाउण्ड्रीवाली और शमशान घाट की इन्टरलॉकिंग टाईल्स का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 1)	रु. 28.56 लाख
6.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम ब्रह्मपुर गजदौली उर्फ नवादा में शमशान घाट के रोड एवं चबूतरा का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 30.55 लाख
7.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम तिलपता कर्नवास में तिलपता कर्नवास से श्योराजपुर तक नहर सफाई का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल -2)	रु. 44.02 लाख
8.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर पाई-1 के अपडेटेड भवनों (ब्लॉक- ए, बी, सी, डी एवं ई) की आन्तरिक सड़कों की रिसॉर्सिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 44.96 लाख
9.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम रोना याकूपपुर में शमशान घाट की बाउण्ड्रीवाल, रोड, चबूतरा और प्रतीक्षा कक्ष का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 2)	रु. 46.11 लाख
10.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के पट्टी चौक से पी-3 रोडटी तक इंट की दीवार रेलिंग का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 4)	रु. 47.67 लाख
11.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम अदौली फाटक से पटेल इंट कॉलेज तक सी.सी. रोड और सी.सी. इन्टरलॉकिंग पैवट ब्लॉक से चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 8)	रु. 65.18 लाख
12.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर-2 ब्लॉक-एफ में अवशेष डिस्पोजिंग का कार्य और अवशेष सड़क का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 3)	रु. 74.51 लाख
13.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के रामपुर रोडटी का नवीनीकरण और सड़कीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 91.66 लाख
14.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम भनौता में इन्टरलॉकिंग टाईल्स का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 2)	रु. 110.69 लाख
15.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के कानना बरदादा रोड (अस्पताल से सुनिवेशिटी चौक तक) की केक सीलिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल -7)	रु. 128.21 लाख
16.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर जू-2 एवं जू-3 में सामुदायिक केन्द्र की बाउण्ड्रीवाल, सी.सी. रोड एवं इन्टरलॉकिंग टाईल्स का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 6)	रु. 134.90 लाख
17.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर-2 ब्लॉक-ए और बी तीन वर्ष तक ठरमठाव / अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 3)	रु. 149.52 लाख
18.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम सेठों में ससारा संख्या- 67, 730, 731, 239, 593, और 112 में इन्टरलॉकिंग टाईल्स का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 2)	रु. 149.79 लाख
19.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम पतवाड़ी में 6 प्रतिशत आबादी भूखण्डों की रिसॉर्सिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 1)	रु. 160.10 लाख
20.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम रोना जंगलपुर में पी.इ.डी.डी. सड़क के साथ-साथ आर.सी.सी. नाली का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 1)	रु. 155.34 लाख
21.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर इटा - 1 में ट्रांफ़ व्हाट्टर टाईप - 1 (18 नग), टाईप-2 (85 नग), टाईप-3 (59 नग), में तीन वर्ष का मरम्मत एवं अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 160.32 लाख
22.	ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण के वर्क सॉकिल 4, 5, 6 एवं 7 के विभिन्न टोइों एवं सेक्टरों में पंच टिपियोरिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 164.90 लाख
वाणिज्य अनुसंधान		
23.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर अल्फा-1 में कॉन्सिलियल वेल्ड का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल -5)	रु. 84.31 लाख
24.	ग्रेटर नोएडा डी.एस.सी. रोड, कच्ची सड़क से नोएडा एण्टी फ्लाइट तक का तीन वर्ष तक ठरमठाव / अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 2)	रु. 126.11 लाख
25.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में अनुसंधान रोडटी से सेक्टर - 2 रोडटी और अर्गोरोटी रोडटी से गौल्फ कोर्स रोडटी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 145.74 लाख
26.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम तिलपता कर्नवास, रूपवास और केलाशपुर का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान कार्य (जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, नाली मरम्मत और अन्य विविध कार्य)। (वर्क सॉकिल - 2)	रु. 143.53 लाख
27.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर पाई - 1 में तीन वर्षों का अनुसंधान कार्य (सर्फेस ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, पेंटिंग, एवं अन्य विविध कार्य)। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 142.67 लाख
28.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर गागा-2 में तीन वर्षों के लिए रखरखाव कार्य (सतह ड्रेनिंग जंगल की सफाई, नाली की सफाई और मरम्मत, पेंटिंग और अन्य विविध कार्य)। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 155.79 लाख
29.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर इकोटेक-3 (यू.के.-2) का तीन वर्ष का अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल-3)	रु. 158.52 लाख
30.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के ग्राम बिटोण्टी के आबादी भूखण्डों इकोटेक-1 एवं होण्डा मिलेज जंक्शन से इन्फी रोडटी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी का तीन वर्ष का अनुसंधान कार्य (सर्फेस ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, पेंटिंग, एवं अन्य विविध कार्य)। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 164.19 लाख
31.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में एम.के. रोड पर (एल.जी. रोडटी से स्वण नगरी तक) तीन वर्ष के लिए (नाली सफाई, पट्टी ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, रोड मार्किंग, पेंटिंग, फ्लाइट वॉशिंग और अन्य विविध कार्य) रखरखाव / अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 4)	रु. 161.37 लाख
32.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क, (जिम्जन रोडटी) से 105 मीटर से 80 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क, सेक्टर टिकिणेशन ग्राम-5 से न्यू - 2, 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का तीन वर्ष लिए कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - 6)	रु. 161.69 लाख
33.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर पाई - 2 में तीन वर्षों का अनुसंधान कार्य (सर्फेस ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, पेंटिंग, एवं अन्य विविध कार्य)। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 164.43 लाख
34.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के नवादा रोडटी से नोटों की मध्या तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क पर (सर्फेस ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, पेंटिंग, एवं अन्य विविध कार्य) का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 152.67 लाख
35.	ग्रेटर नोएडा के सेक्टर के.पी.-4 में चौड़ी सड़क के आसपास (सर्फेस ड्रेनिंग, जंगल सफाई, नाली सफाई, पेंटिंग, एवं अन्य विविध कार्य) का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान। (वर्क सॉकिल - 5)	रु. 109.16 लाख
जलापूर्ति एवं सीवर के कार्य		
36.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में आईपीएस गौतमबुद्ध विश्वविद्यालय का 36 माह के लिए संचालन एवं रखरखाव का कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - सीवर)	रु. 105.28 लाख
37.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में आईपीएस सेक्टर पाई-3 का संचालन एवं रखरखाव का कार्य (36 माह के लिए)। (वर्क सॉकिल सीवर)	रु. 106.00 लाख
38.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में आईपीएस सेक्टर पाई-3 का संचालन एवं रखरखाव का कार्य (36 माह के लिए)। (वर्क सॉकिल - सीवर)	रु. 106.88 लाख
उद्यान विभाग के कार्य		
39.	सेक्टर के.पी.-5 में सिविल कार्यालय सहित छोटे डी-पार्क का तीन वर्ष तक अनुसंधान कार्य। (वर्क सॉकिल - उद्यान)	रु. 21.41 लाख

क्रम सं.-01 से 39 तक के कार्यों का दिनांक - 25.02.2026 से 06.03.2026 को 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड किया जा सकता है। प्राप्त ई-निविदाओं की प्री-क्वालिफिकेशन दिनांक 09.03.2026 को 11:00 बजे खोली जायेगी।
वरिष्ठ प्रबंधक (ई-निविदा सेल)

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 BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Inside the tent, with Pax Silica



RAJA MANDALA
 BY C RAJA MOHAN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's visit to Israel on February 25-26 marks a significant milestone in the evolution of bilateral relations and coincides with a transformation in the geopolitics of the Middle East. On both the bilateral and regional fronts, the PM's talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could turn out to be consequential.

India's engagement with Israel was taboo in the early decades of post-Independence diplomacy. It became a cautious adjunct after the early 1990s, when Delhi established full diplomatic relations. It was only after the Modi government took charge in 2014 that the relationship acquired a strategic dimension. To be sure, Modi's trip — only the second ever by an Indian prime minister to Israel — will provoke concern in parts of Delhi's political class. Some will argue that India is abandoning the founding principles of its foreign policy. A closer look at the history of India-Israel relations, however, reveals a far more complex trajectory.

There is no question that stronger ties with Israel are part of the BJP's ideology, dating back to the Jana Sangh days. In 1977, as foreign minister in the Janata Party government, Atal Bihari Vajpayee opened a political channel to Israel, quietly hosting its foreign minister, Moshe Dayan, in a secret visit to Delhi. It did not remain a secret for long and triggered controversy. As

prime minister, Vajpayee hosted Ariel Sharon for the first-ever visit by an Israeli PM to India in 2003. Modi followed with his path-breaking 2017 visit.

But it would be incorrect to say Congress was always hostile to Israel. Jawaharlal Nehru recognised Israel early on, but held back on establishing full relations. He allowed Israel to open a consulate in Mumbai in the 1950s. Ideological antipathy to Israel sharpened only in the Indira Gandhi years, when Indian diplomacy embraced radical rhetoric in the Middle East. Yet, even she did not ask Israel to shut its consulate.

Rajiv Gandhi revived engagement, and Narasimha Rao normalised ties in 1992. Yet, the Congress governments thereafter kept the relationship discreet. The communist parties that rail against engagement today conveniently forget that their tallest leader, Jyoti Basu, travelled to Israel in 2000 to establish cooperation between West Bengal and the Jewish state. Part of the Indian ambivalence toward Israel is due to the huge emotional salience of the Palestinian cause.

An Israeli diplomat in Delhi used to quip that the Congress governments treated Israel like a "mistress" — private engagement and public distance. Modi's 2017 visit broke that mould. The 2026 trip signals a major expansion of strategic collaboration — especially in security, defence, and advanced technologies.

Modi's visit comes as Israel faces global criticism for its regional policies. But that is not weighing heavily in Delhi's calculus. Israel today enjoys greater room for manoeuvre in the region than ever before. Several Arab and Muslim states have normalised ties with Israel. Even those that haven't — Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Indonesia — sit with Israel on Donald Trump's Board of Peace,

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which is now empowered to administer Gaza. The gulf between rhetorical solidarity with Palestine and actual statecraft has never been wider in the Middle East and the Muslim world.

Meanwhile, the balance of power on the ground has shifted dramatically since October 7, 2023. The US and Israel's attacks against Iranian nuclear infrastructure and the systematic degradation of Hamas and Hezbollah — Tehran's allies — have reshaped the regional balance. Iran — the most consequential revisionist power in the Middle East for four decades — has been severely weakened. Its Axis of Resistance against Israel has been hollowed out. Israel, by contrast, emerges militarily dominant in the region. Tel Aviv's influence on Washington's Middle East policy reinforces it politically.

Amid this churn, Netanyahu has floated a new "hexagonal" alliance. Presented as a regional coalition against regional radicalism, it seeks to cover a vast swath stretching from the Mediterranean to the Horn of Africa and Asia. The proposal reflects Netanyahu's view that India must play a key role in stabilising the Middle East. For India, the idea is attractive not as a formal alliance — which Delhi instinctively avoids — but as an emerging framework for raising its regional profile.

Meanwhile, Iran's weakening in relation to Israel has also triggered a counter-movement among some regional states — including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar — exploring a coalition to constrain Israel. Pakistan has been drawn in. Riyadh and Islamabad signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement last year, treating an attack on one as an attack on both. Turkey has signalled interest in joining. Talk of an "Islamic NATO" worries many, including India. But alliances of this kind have rarely en-

duced in the Middle East; what has persisted is the historic Anglo-American domination. The US remains the chief arbiter of war and peace in the Middle East.

India's ties with Israel now sit atop broader transformation. Relations with the UAE are flourishing — from energy and investments to defence manufacturing, fintech, AI, and critical minerals. Economic and military ties with Saudi Arabia have grown. India launched free trade talks with the Gulf countries this month. India's ties with Israel no longer shape the Middle Eastern engagement with Delhi.

This has enabled India to pursue parallel tracks with confidence: Supporting Palestinian statehood while engaging Israel as a vital partner. Delhi has navigated the competing pulls of Shia and Sunni, Arab and Persian, Ottoman and Arab, as well as internecine quarrels within the Arab world. Except with Turkey, India now maintains productive ties with nearly all major actors in the region.

None of this means India's Middle East policy has become a walk in the park. The region remains volatile, and conflict remains endemic. Military tensions between the US and Iran, Israel's domestic political turbulence, and humanitarian crises in Gaza and elsewhere in the region will test India's ability to balance principle and pragmatism.

But unlike in the past, Delhi is no longer defensive. Today, it engages the Middle East with greater realism. India's growing interests — ranging from energy to expat labour and connectivity to counter-terrorism — are too important for Delhi to engage the region with old ideological slogans.

The writer is contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express. He is associated with the Motwani-Jadeja Institute of American Studies, Jindal Global University, and the Council on Strategic and Defence Studies, Delhi

Silence in 'Boong' is not absence, it is history



VANI TRIPATHI TIKOO

IN AN era when cinema often raises its voice to be noticed, *Boong* arrives like a whisper from the hills of Manipur — gentle, observant, and quietly transformative. It does not announce itself as a manifesto. It does not parade its politics. And yet, in tracing the fragile interior world of a child growing up in India's borderlands, it becomes one of the most radical films of recent times.

Now, the whisper has travelled far beyond those hills. With its recognition at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), *Boong* has carried the emotional landscape of the Northeast onto one of the world's most prestigious cultural stages. The win signals that stories rooted in hyperlocal realities can resonate globally without diluting their specificity. In honouring *Boong*, the international community has affirmed that the margins, too, are central to the human story.

Set against the textured backdrop of Manipur, *Boong* transforms geography into feeling. The border here is not a breaking-news headline or a geopolitical abstraction. It is a lived condition. It shapes childhood, inflects identity, and scripts aspiration. Through the eyes of a young boy navigating friendship, family, and uncertain dreams, the film renders the political deeply personal.

What distinguishes *Boong* is its refusal to exoticise the Northeast. Mainstream Indian cinema has either ignored the region or reduced it to aesthetic shorthand — mist-laden mountains, insurgency, distance. *Boong* rejects spectacle. The camera lingers not on sweeping vistas alone but on faces — on pauses that stretch just a little too long, on silences that carry unspoken anxieties. It trusts that interiority is dramatic enough.

The film is a coming-of-age story. Yet, unlike the urban narratives of ambition that dominate Indian screens, this is not about scaling ladders of success. It is about negotiating belonging. What does it mean to grow up in a place the nation scarcely sees? What does citizenship feel like when your features, your name, your language are routinely misrecognised? The child at the

centre of *Boong* does not articulate these questions in ideological terms. He embodies them. His innocence becomes the film's most piercing critique.

The film's aesthetic restraint is its moral stance. Conflict is never sensationalised. Pain is never aestheticised for consumption. Instead, the storytelling is patient. Scenes unfold with an almost meditative rhythm, allowing ambient sounds to deepen the emotional register. Silence in *Boong* is not absence; it is history. It carries memories of neglect, of resilience, of a region negotiating its place within the larger national imagination.

And yet, this is not a film steeped in despair. There is warmth threaded through its frames. Friendship becomes sanctuary. Play becomes subtle resistance. Imagination becomes both escape and assertion. In its child-centred gaze, *Boong* aligns itself with a global cinematic tradition where children refract adult complexities with startling clarity.

The BAFTA recognition amplifies what the film already achieves artistically. It destabilises the hierarchy of "mainstream" and "regional". It suggests that authenticity, not scale, is what travels. When a film rooted in the socio-cultural realities of Manipur stands acknowledged on a global platform, it quietly rewrites the grammar of representation. It tells young filmmakers from India's so-called peripheries that their stories need no translation of spirit — only integrity of vision.

When the credits roll, one feels recalibrated. The border ceases to be a distant line on a map; it becomes a child's backyard, a mother's worry, a friend's laughter. The film's true triumph lies in its ability to shift perception.

Boong is more than an award-winning film. It is an evocation of belonging in a fractured world. In its quietness lies its courage. In its specificity lies its universality. And in the journey of one child, we glimpse a larger conversation between nation and identity — unfinished, urgent, and now, unmistakably heard across the world.

The writer is a theatre actor, filmmaker and film producer

Four years on, Russia-Ukraine war has no victors



RAJAN KUMAR

FEBRUARY 24 marked the fourth anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine war, but peace remains as elusive as ever. It has turned into a war of attrition with little substantial gains for anyone. The war has exceeded the duration of Russia's involvement in the Great Patriotic War (World War II), which lasted 1,417 days. Ukraine has fought valiantly but the Trump administration is pushing it to sign a humiliating deal with Russia. The ongoing negotiations in Geneva largely favour Russian terms and conditions: Captured territory will remain with Russia, Ukraine will not be offered NATO membership, and sanctions on Russia will be lifted gradually.

Russia started the war with three primary objectives: Prohibiting Ukraine from joining NATO, protecting its Russian-speaking population in the Donbas region, and installing a favourable regime in Kyiv. Moscow expected a short war that would force President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to surrender. But it was a mighty miscalculation. With European backing, Ukraine continues to resist Russian advances even after four years. Moscow might have succeeded in halting Kyiv from joining NATO, but the fact that two neutral states, Sweden and Finland, joined the military alliance means that Russia's insecurity persists unabated.

For political purposes, Russia can claim victory by showcasing the roughly 20 per cent of Ukrainian territory under its control. But what matters for Russia is long-term border security and strategic balance. With new territorial acquisitions, Russia will not acquire the deterrence and security it seeks. Further, Russia's economy has been sanctioned and isolated from the West. The normalisation of ties will take years. Europe has fared no better. Blinded by its idealism, Europe presented it as a war between democracy and dictatorship, expecting widespread international support. But, barring a few states, the important countries of the Global South declined to take sides and treated it as a European war. They refused to condemn the Russian invasion and continued their economic ties with Moscow. Because of this support, Russia has been able to withstand Western sanctions.

The war has had a ripple effect on geopolitics. Israel may not have decimated Hamas and Hezbollah, and attacked Iran if Russia were not involved in a grueling war. The Kremlin could not save Bashar al-Assad and it appeared helpless to save Iran from an attack by the US. It could not protect Armenia from an Azerbaijani attack. Capturing Nicolás Maduro might not have been possible for the US had Russia provided the necessary weapons to Venezuela. The Global South did not proactively engage in efforts to mitigate the conflict. China, India, and Brazil appeared more concerned about maintaining their balanced ties than brokering an honest ceasefire. However, they must realise that a hands-off approach will not serve their interests.

The writer is professor, School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi

The film is a coming-of-age story. Yet, unlike the urban narratives of ambition that dominate Indian screens, this is not about scaling ladders of success. It is about negotiating belonging

What matters for Russia is long-term border security and strategic balance. With new territorial acquisitions, Russia will not acquire the elusive deterrence and security it seeks

Rajaji, the dissenter, may not have approved

THE INSTALLATION of a bust of C Rajagopalachari within the precincts of Rashtrapati Bhavan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his February 22 *Mann Ki Baat*, is another step in his government's drive towards what it has framed as decolonisation and restitution. The tribute to Rajagopalachari is befitting. He was a freedom fighter, an administrator, a statesman, and a principled dissenter from majoritarian currents. To honour him is to acknowledge the nation's polyphonic heritage. Yet the symbolism of replacement — Rajaji's bust displaced that of Edwin Lutens, the architect who designed what was the Viceroy's House in imperial India — opens an unsettling question: Does decolonisation of public spaces and memory have to be about erasure?

The decolonisation debate has gained urgency in recent times. The government has set a 10-year deadline to shed what PM Modi has termed "*gulami ki mansikta*" by 2035, the bicentenary of Macaulay's 1835 education minute. From the National Education Policy (2020) to the unveiling of a new Parliament building, the ongoing effort is framed as a civilisational reassertion. But all too often, this endeavour is made to ride a politics of erasure — the renaming of avenues, the recasting of syllabi to exclude rather than include, the excision of inconvenient chapters — as if the recovery of voice and agency necessarily requires the displacement or diminishment of an Other from whom history and culture need to be constantly rescued. Added to this is the bogey of the fifth column, the "enemies within". This zero-sum approach does not befit the country and it does disservice to its citizens. It narrows imaginative and intellectual horizons.

History's burdens and inheritances are often intertwined and the path to decolonisation has to begin with an intellectual generosity. A mature republic can hold in the same frame both the courage of a statesman and the aesthetic bequest of a colonial architect, whose vision, however imperial its patronage, is an indelible part of India's urban landscape. One wonders what Rajagopalachari would have made of this erasure. As he put it in a 1953 speech, "Truth should not be sacrificed at the altar of other objectives. It is to this I think you give the name of cultural freedom." Only such capaciousness allows decolonisation to move beyond being a project of perpetual contestation to an acknowledgement of the past in all its diversity and complexity.

Trump's joke follows an old sexist script

THE US women's hockey team dominated every match they played at the recent Winter Olympics in Italy, clinching the gold in a hard-fought final — only to be reduced to a sexist punchline by their President. "I must tell you, we're gonna have to bring the women's team, you do know that... I do believe I would probably be impeached," Donald Trump could be heard saying in a viral video to the American men's team, which had also won a gold medal, right after he invited them to the State of the Union Address. The callousness of the framing — that the invitation to the women was a burden to be borne — underlines sports' persisting gender problem.

Trump's words would perhaps have been easy to dismiss, if not for the raucous laughter from his listeners. It suggests that for all the edifying words spoken about gender equality in sports, women athletes continue to be afterthoughts, the plus-ones invited to stand on the podium, instead of being celebrated for claiming their space on it. The limits of merely speaking the language of equity and inclusion are evident to anyone paying attention, from the massive pay gaps and unequal investment in infrastructure and equipment to sexualised coverage of women athletes and the persistence of the "locker-room" culture.

The Milano Cortina Games are being celebrated as the most gender-balanced Winter Olympics in history. Women athletes, who represented roughly 47 per cent of the total participants, competed in events that were as challenging as any attempted by their male counterparts. Crude words cannot dim the shine of their triumphs — but they do show what more needs to be done to rewrite an old sexist script.

40 YEARS AGO

February 25, 1986



US asks Marcos to resign

PRESIDENT RONALD Reagan has asked President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines to step down and allow a peaceful transition of power to a new government. For the first time, the US President has stated that attempts to continue the present regime through bloodshed are futile and has asked Marcos to resign even as the latter declared a state of emergency. President Marcos called on all civilians loyal to him to come to the palace with guns and defend him.

Indira Gandhi murder case

THE DELHI High Court admitted appeals moved by Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh, and

Balbir Singh, challenging their convictions and death sentences awarded by a sessions court for the murder of Indira Gandhi. A division bench comprising Justice R N Aggarwal and Justice Malik Sharif-Din directed that the appeals be heard along with the murder references made to the high court by the special trial judge, Mahesh Chandra, for confirmation of the death penalties.

Fake encounters in Punjab

ACCUSING THE law enforcement agencies in Punjab, including the paramilitary forces, of indulging in terrorism and lawlessness, the Bains Committee has in its final report recommended that some of the officers mentioned

in "fake encounters" should not be retained in the police force. The four-member committee, headed by Justice Ajit Singh Bains (retired), was unanimous in its recommendations submitted to the government in the last week of January.

Terrorists loot armoury

TERRORISTS LOOTED an armoury of the Railway Police and robbed a businessman in Amritsar district in the last 24 hours while the Punjab government announced a new scheme to combat terrorism. Four armed terrorists donning police uniforms and wielding Sten guns took the home guards by surprise and carried away 16 rifles and about 457 rounds of ammunition.



● **WHAT THE OTHERS SAY**
History will judge Putin for his crimes. The west must continue to stand by Kyiv.
— *The Guardian*

After AI Summit, a question: Has India chosen to be a consumer in age of creators?



MANISH TEWARI

THE INDIA AI Impact Summit 2026 was unfortunately marred by allegations of plagiarism, leading to unseemly optics. The substance, in any case, was always a chimera, a delusion erected on foundations of sand. The chasm between our aspirational rhetoric and our investment reality looks unbridgeable.

The Union Budget 2026's allocation of a mere Rs 1,000 crore for the India AI Mission is, in the context of global capital flows into this domain, tokenism. It is a figure that speaks not of a national mission, but of a pilot project. It is not even enough to subsidise the compute costs for a significant portion of our research community, let alone build the kind of large-scale GPU clusters that would allow Indian researchers to train models comparable to GPT-6 or Claude 4.5.

By way of comparison, China spent USD 98 billion on AI in 2025 out of which the government spend was USD 56 billion. Five US-based private companies — Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Meta and Oracle — will collectively invest USD 700 billion in 2026. The Government of India will spend 1.2 billion over five years on its AI Mission.

The message from the finance mandarins is clear: Artificial intelligence, for all the ministerial speeches dedicated to it, remains just another sector, not a core strategic priority. The greatest risk we face is not an AI investment bubble, but insufficient investment, and consequently ceding the technological future to competitors like the US, China and Europe. Yet, our response to this existential challenge is a budget that has been effectively halved from previous projections, a move that signals to the world, and more importantly, to our own innovators, a comfortable acceptance of the slow lane.

This chronic underfunding has a corrosive effect that permeates the ecosystem. The India AI Mission, with its stated goal of building sovereign capabilities, finds its ambition directly contradicted by the ground reality.

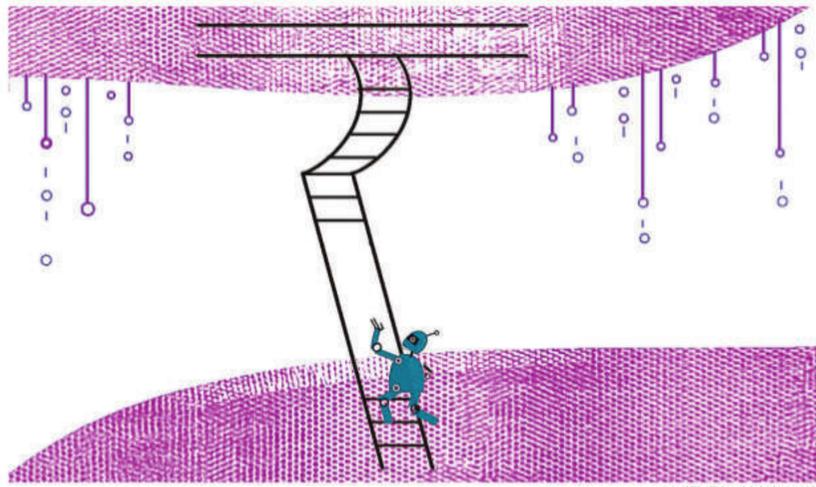


ILLUSTRATION: C.R. SASIKUMAR

Nearly three out of four Indian AI deployments rely on Western proprietary models accessed via APIs. A staggering 65 per cent of GPU computing power among these startups is dedicated to inference (using models to complete tasks) while a paltry 21 per cent goes toward training new models. The argument that value lies in the application layer is a convenient rationalisation for our failure to compete at the foundational level.

The talent pool, too, is a casualty of this skewed investment. While MeitY mandarins underscore that global giants are looking to India to hire AI engineers, we must interrogate the nature of this demand. The shortage is not in machine learning theory, but in "AI Ops" — the practical, high-level expertise required to evaluate, optimise, deploy, and monitor complex AI systems in production.

Our education system, starved of research funding and world-class computational infrastructure, is producing a workforce that is highly skilled for service roles but ill-equipped for the frontier work of model development. We are training the global AI economy's middle management, not its C-suite.

Fiscal timidity becomes even more alarming when viewed through the lens of global com-

The greatest risk we face is not an AI investment bubble, but insufficient investment, and consequently ceding the technological future to competitors like the US, China and Europe

petition. The Stanford HAI Global AI Power Rankings consistently places India in the second tier, trailing not only the US and China but also a host of European and Asian economies.

The World Economic Forum's recent ranking places us eighth in AI investment, a position that sounds respectable until one comprehends the gulf that separates the top three from the rest of the pack. The rhetoric of "AI for All" collides with the reality that "AI" includes virtually no one when it comes to foundational investment.

The contrast with the global front-runners is more than a matter of scale. The US and China are engaged in a high-stakes competition funded by hundreds of billions of dollars, a fact underscored by the patent race. While NASSCOM reports that over 86,000 AI patents were filed in India between 2010 and 2025, the Forbes analysis of the global AI patent race clarifies the distinction: China outpaces the US in sheer volume of patents, but that does not equate to winning the AI war.

Many patents are defensive, incremental, or filed for tax and compliance reasons. The real measure of sovereignty is the ability to build and train state-of-the-art models

on homegrown infrastructure using sovereign data. On that front, the Carnegie Endowment's recent analysis correctly identifies the missing pieces in India's AI puzzle: Talent, data, and R&D funding.

The government has based its entire AI vision on India's rapid adoption of digital payments. However, adoption of finished technology is not the same as ownership of the means of production. India's UPI is a world-class digital public infrastructure, but it was built on top of underlying technologies and protocols that are globally available. AI is different. The models themselves are the product, and the countries that control the most advanced models will set the terms for everyone else. We become the perfect market for others' innovations, our data and our market size fuelling their growth while we remain on the periphery of value creation.

So, what, then, was the purpose of a grand AI summit? Was it to provide a platform for our start-ups to network with the Western API providers they are already dependent on? Was it to showcase our "vibrant ecosystem" of consumers of technology, rather than producers? Was it a gathering where the real players — OpenAI, Anthropic, Google — politely acknowledged our market potential while their IP continues to form the bedrock of our digital economy?

The summit's real value does not lie in the myriad photo opportunities or lofty declarations, but in its potential to catalyse a fundamental rethink of our AI fiscal strategy. The potential is real; the opportunity to build India into a global AI powerhouse exists. The adoption of AI agentic workflows among Indian developers shows the hunger and willingness to experiment. But we are asking our start-ups to run a marathon on a diet of crumbs. The global AI race is not a sprint; it requires sustained, massive investment in data centres, in research grants, and in PhD programmes.

If this is not prioritised, the summit will be remembered not as a turning point, but as a poignant misfortune of a nation that mistook a conference for a commitment. The world will smile for the camera, and quietly note that India, for all its grand ambitions, has chosen to remain a consumer in an age of creators.

The writer is a lawyer, third-term MP, and former Union Information and Broadcasting Minister

Lutyens of Britain might be alien to us, Lutyens of Delhi is our own



FAHAD ZUBERI

WHenever I meet a bureaucrat from Delhi who works in any of Edwin Lutyens' buildings, I ask them what they think about Lutyens. "Iconic" is a ubiquitous response. Lutyens' Central Vista is indeed an icon for the republic — refreshed and ritualised through the Republic Day Parade, Independence Day decorations, and oath-taking ceremonies.

In contrast to Corbusier's brutalist Chandigarh — built by the Indian government — Lutyens' buildings resonate deeply with Indians. And unlike architects who adore Chandigarh, people do not have to be taught to admire Lutyens. The pictures of khadi-clad crowds at the North and South blocks on August 15, 1947, the millions who visit India Gate yearly, and the charged civic debate around the Central Vista project, are evidence that Indians consider Lutyens' architecture as their own heritage.

Lutyens' architecture was a deliberate exercise in creating state legitimacy for the British — one in which he reinvented himself. Before being hired in 1912 to design New Delhi, Lutyens had been practising in Britain. Most of his buildings were private residences in the arts and crafts tradition.

Indian presence in British politics had begun in the late 19th century with Dadabhai Naoroji, and the Indian Councils Act, 1892 cemented "native" power in governance. Thus, Viceroy Lord Hardinge insisted that Lutyens incorporate local elements into New Delhi's design. With some initial resistance, Lutyens agreed and travelled to various cities, studying stupas, temples, mosques, and tombs, and incorporated them with the Beaux-Arts-inspired axial, symmetric layout — creating the "Delhi Order", and in the process inventing a new stylistic and climatic solution.

Rashtrapati Bhavan's classically organised composition of podium, colonnades and a central dome worked seamlessly with the Sanchi-inspired dome, *chhatris*, *chhajjas*, and *jalis*. India Gate translated the European triumphal arch into an Indian war memorial, using restrained classical detailing and local sandstone.

Despite being patronised by the imperial power, New Delhi's architecture is uniquely Indian. Lutyens' hybrid classicism became a reference style that Indian architects and institutions had to position themselves toward, whether by emulation, adaptation, or, later, by architects like Charles Correa and Raj Rewal, through explicit post-colonial rejection.

Lutyens was also significant in the birth of architecture as a profession in India. He standardised the figure of the architect as a private consultant who practises outside the state's institutions but can build public architecture, and who is unique enough to be

authorial but agile enough to adapt to the demands of an all-powerful client. This professional, unlike the *sthapatis* who gate-kept the profession through caste before the 20th century, could be an architect through formalised education. The New Delhi commission, revolving around a named architect-consultant and large drawing offices, hence, helped legitimise the profession.

Around the time Lutyens arrived in India, a new, Western-style professional field was already emerging. The JJ School of Arts in Bombay created a five-year architecture diploma in 1913, and the Indian Institute of Architects was founded in 1929 to formalise practice and align it with RIBA standards. But this wave was limited to Bombay, commissioned largely by private clients, and never received large state commissions.

The Delhi project required systematic sketch schemes, working drawings, specifications, and bureaucratic correspondence. This modelled the documentation, coordination, and office-structure that would later be standard in major Indian practices and state offices. Echoing the professional structures contemporaneously being taught through British-linked curricula, Lutyens led a team of British architects, draughtsmen, engineers, and contractors in clear organisational hierarchies. Many of the architects employed by Lutyens, such as Herbert Baker and Walter Sykes George, carried this culture into long-term practice, transmitting a Lutyens-inflected model of form and profession to first-generation Indian architects. They designed some of the first modernist buildings in India. George lived the rest of his life here and designed Delhi's icons such as Miranda House, the Arts Faculty Building at the University of Delhi, and Mandi House.

The removal of Lutyens' bust from Rashtrapati Bhavan is a denial of history and a disservice to a professional. C. Rajagopalachari should not be pitted against a British professional who created an architecture that continues to be synonymous with the republic. Lutyens of Britain might be alien to us, but Lutyens of Delhi is our own. We made him our own.

The writer is a PhD scholar in Architectural History and Theory at MIT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

After tariffs ruling

THE ARTICLE rightly underlines the shift in Washington from calibrated unpredictability to genuine instability following the Supreme Court's scrutiny of tariff actions ('Post US SC ruling, openness must be India's strategy', *IE*, February 24). When executive trade measures face legal uncertainty and potential congressional resistance, global partners such as India must reassess not intent alone but durability of policy. Walking away from negotiations may unnecessarily provoke the White House. Equally, entering binding commitments amid legal flux would be imprudent. A balanced approach protects India's interests.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

Lasting peace

THE NEAR-collapse of Left-Wing Extremism is welcome news ('Naxalism nears end, work of democracy goes on', *IE*, February 24). Security gains matter, but they are only half the story. The red corridor persisted for decades because governance failed large sections of tribal and forest-dwelling communities. Surrenders and neutralisations will not hold unless the state addresses what drove recruitment in the first place. Forest rights, fair land acquisition, and basic services must reach these areas in earnest.

A Myilsami, Coimbatore

Tariff twist

THE AUTHOR gives some logical reasons in favour of the shirtless protest at the AI Impact Summit by the Congress party youth wing ('Congress protest didn't hurt India's image. It sparked a conversation', *IE*, February 24). But she omits some key issues. A protest at an event attended by many heads of government should be visible and compelling, but should not be weird. Agitators pulling out their T-shirts, waving them and shouting slogans presented an indecent spectacle. Congress may not have embarrassed the nation, but it was hardly effective.

YG Chouksey, Pune



REUVEN AZAR

INDIA AND Israel are two old civilisations that have left a significant mark in history. Despite many centuries of foreign invasions, both have managed to preserve their unique identity and cultural heritage.

The revival of our sovereignty as nation-states in the modern era hasn't come easily, either. We had to overcome external and internal challenges. Both nations are in challenging neighbourhoods. Our non-belligerent nature and peace-seeking has too often been interpreted as weakness. Cross-border terrorism, radical ideologies, cyber threats, and asymmetric warfare are daily realities. We had and still have to fight wars and face constant attacks while building our economies. Therefore, we must create the robustness needed to prosper while handling constant attempts at destabilisation.

Due to these similarities and despite geographical distance, differences in size and other gaps such as tradition and language, India and Israel are growing closer, and that is not a coincidence. In the last decade, prime ministers Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu have been the main drivers. Their exchange of visits back in 2017 and 2018 injected momentum into the relationship, mainly in the fields of defence and food security. The vast economic reforms that both have led domestically unleashed a tsunami of entrepreneur-

The rediscovery of India by Israelis and of Israel by Indians is a result of a new urgent need jointly identified: To build resilience in a world that is shakier and more competitive than it has ever been

ial energy that led to major leaps forward in the economies of India and Israel, which have made our countries attractive on the global level and bilaterally.

On top of these advancements, 2025 was a transformative year for bilateral relations. While Israel emerged triumphant from one of the more significant war efforts in its history, India changed the rules of the game in its neighbourhood following Operation Sindoor. India and Israel discovered, again, who their trusted partners are in times of need.

This discovery has been a catalyst in the expansion of our exchanges: Deeper cooperation in defence and new dimensions in our cooperation, such as doubling the Indian workforce in Israel, inviting Indian infrastructure companies into the Israeli market or signing the bilateral investment treaty and the terms of reference for a free trade agreement. All of that and much more has been achieved thanks to nine ministerial visits in

both directions and dozens of business, cultural and academic delegations during a short period of time.

The rediscovery of India by Israelis and of Israel by Indians is a result of a new urgent need jointly identified: To build resilience in a world that is shakier and more competitive than it has ever been.

India and Israel are ideal partners also because of almost perfect complementarity of relative

advantages. India is the fastest-growing large economy in the world, capable of scaling-up solutions that benefit billions of people, while Israel is the strongest innovation hub outside the US. With the right set of policies and agreements, India and Israel can increase existing technological partnerships through joint ventures, capital investments, mergers and acquisitions, and joint R&D.

PM Modi's upcoming visit to Israel will realise that potential by signing new agreements that expand the scope and depth of cooperation in sensitive and emerging technologies. What India and Israel have achieved together has created the trust that gives our leaders the opportunity to reinvigorate this relationship. A special strategic partnership that will take us where we want to be: Building joint resilience and elevating competitiveness by merging our efforts in developing cutting-edge technologies.

The series of trade deals signed by India during the last year have implications for the future of trade. Trillions of dollars' worth of merchandise will start moving towards West Asia, Europe and the US. That will diversify supply chains and create more opportunities for regional and bilateral cooperation.

India and Israel are on a new path to success. We are thankful to PM Modi for his leadership and look forward to welcoming him in Israel.

The writer is Israeli ambassador to India

India and Israel, trusted partners in times of need

Note to JNU V-C: We seek agency, not sympathy



ADITI NARAYANI PASWAN

THE DISCOURSE surrounding the recent UGC Regulations on equity in the classroom has gone off the rails — so much so that the agency of vocalising our pain has also been stripped away. From public intellectuals to social-media trolls, the conversation across platforms appears fixated on a single question: Who is the victim? JNU vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit's recent statements are not merely disappointing but alarming, revealing how sections of the intelligentsia can perpetuate and justify systemic injustice. Her remarks on the regulations, now stayed by the Supreme Court until further hearing, and the

struggle against caste discrimination shows exactly why the guidelines are necessary. As an alumna of the hallowed institution she helms, it breaks my heart to witness the erosion of decades of scholarship it has produced, and the seeming attempt to deny us the agency to articulate and process our experiences of marginalisation — and victimhood. Her remarks reveal a myopic understanding of caste. The regulations are a powerful moral and political reminder of the need to address India's unfinished project of social justice; to call it "irrational and totally unnecessary" is outrageous.

At a recent dinner conversation, a friend repeatedly asserted her upper-caste identity. What struck me was the confidence with which she affirmed her caste location. It was unselfconscious, secure, and socially validated. In that moment, I found myself con-

fronting an uncomfortable question: Why does the assertion "I am a Dusadh" not carry the same effortless legitimacy or confidence in my identity and cultural heritage? This reflects a broader issue of epistemic justice. The hesitation is a product of centuries of graded inequality, as B R Ambedkar observed.

Speaking about discrimination in academia carries professional risks. Silence often feels safer than dissent. Yet, the un-

Our stories of marginalisation are appreciated and received well so long as they can be adapted into research grants that generate social and cultural capital for others

comfortable questions that must be asked are: Who produces knowledge in our universities? Who validates it? Our struggles and resilience are frequently reduced to archives of suffering. Our narratives have largely been produced, interpreted, and circulated by those outside these lived experiences. We are often positioned as subjects of study rather than authors of theory. The cycle of knowledge production, dissemination, and institutional recognition has historically excluded us as creators while including us as objects. Even our accounts of pain and resistance are often quoted selectively, depending on when others choose to portray us as victims or dismiss us as playing the victim. Our stories of marginalisation are appreciated and received well so long as they can be adapted into cinema or converted into re-

search grants that generate social and cultural capital for others. They become uncomfortable, however, when we claim the right and agency to tell our own stories. When we do so, we are accused of "playing the victimhood card".

This brings me to a question for institutional leadership: Who gets to speak about our stories? Whose experience is recognised as objective? Whose pain is deemed credible? What we seek is not sympathy, but the right to define our own experiences, to produce knowledge from our social locations, and to have that knowledge treated as intellectually legitimate. It has taken centuries for our voices to enter institutional spaces. Please do not trivialise the courage it takes to use them.

The writer is assistant professor of Sociology, Lakshmi Bai College, Delhi University

Amid spurt in small aircraft accidents, DGCA cracks whip

Says stricter norms for non-scheduled operators, pilots alone can't be blamed

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, February 24

IN VIEW of the recent spurt in accidents involving small aircraft — mostly operated by charter flight operators — aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday announced a slew of measures in a bid to enforce a "zero-tolerance policy" on flight safety among non-scheduled operators (NSOPs). It stressed that the pilots' decision to divert, delay, or cancel a flight for safety reasons is final and must be respected by operators, irrespective of commercial consequences.

The DGCA also announced new public disclosure requirements for NSOPs, a public safety ranking system, strengthening of oversight through intensive audits of flight data, increased scrutiny of maintenance records of older planes, stricter liability norms for the NSOPs' management, and sterner penalties for pilots for violation of operational limits. The announcement came after the DGCA held a high-level meeting with all NSOPs a day after a small aircraft — operating as an air ambulance — crashed in Jharkhand, killing all seven persons on board. The crash came less than a month after a chartered jet crashed in Baramati, killing then Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and four others.

NSOPs are flight service providers that provide on-demand and non-regular air transport services like charter flights, private jets, and air ambulances. Over the past few years, flight

safety in NSOP operations have been flagged as an area of concern by aviation safety experts. Weak safety oversight, poor maintenance, inadequate risk assessment, and training lapses have been cited as key reasons behind growing number of incidents involving smaller aircraft. "This high-level interaction follows a comprehensive review of accident data from the past decade, which identifies non-adherence to SOPs, inadequate flight planning, and training deficiencies as the primary causative factors in aircraft accidents. Consequently, the regulator has announced a set of new measures...", the DGCA said on Tuesday. "In a significant move towards transparency, the regulator is introducing a mandatory disclosure policy. NSOP operators will be required to disclose critical safety information on their websites, including aircraft age, maintenance history, and pilot experience..."

The DGCA also announced that it will increase random cockpit voice recorder audits and cross-verify flight data, fuel records, and technical logs to detect falsification of data. "Accountable managers and senior leadership will be held personally responsible for systemic non-compliance; safety lapses cannot simply be blamed on pilots... Pilots found violating Flight Duty Time Limitations or attempting to land below safety minima may face licence suspensions of up to five years. Operators failing to meet compliance standards will be penalised and licenses/permits may be suspended," the DGCA said.

DGCA grounds 4 Learjet aircraft of VSR Ventures after audit shows lapses

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, February 24

THE DGCA on Tuesday announced immediate grounding of four aircraft operated by VSR Ventures, the charter flight operator whose Learjet 45 crashed in Maharashtra's Baramati on January 28, killing the then Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and four others. This follows a special audit of VSR Ventures that was initiated after the accident; the audit revealed various non-compliances by VSR Ventures.

"The multi-disciplinary audit team observed several non-compliances of approved procedures in the organisation in the area of airworthiness, air safety, and flight operations. In view of the non-compliances observed and considering the gaps in maintenance procedures it is decided to initiate the corrective measures by immediately grounding Learjet 40/45 aircraft with registration VT-VRA, VT-VRS, VT-VRV, and VT-TRI till continued airworthiness standards are restored," the DGCA said.

According to the DGCA database, VSR had a fleet of 17 aircraft, including the one that crashed in Baramati. Of these 17 planes, eight were Learjets. "Deficiency reporting forms have been issued to M/s VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd in above mentioned areas to submit root cause analysis on the non-compliances for further assessment..." the DGCA said. It did not detail the non-compliances observed in the special audit.



Police personnel inspect the wreckage of the Pawan Hans helicopter. PTI

Andamans: Chopper carrying 7 crashes into sea, all rescued

Press Trust of India
Sri Vijaya Puram, February 24

A PAWAN Hans helicopter carrying seven people, including two crew members, crashed into the sea just 300 metres away from its scheduled landing at Mayabunder helipad in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Tuesday, and all of them were rescued, officials said.

The crash occurred around 9.30 am, after the chopper took off from Rangat in the North and Middle Andaman district, they said. All five passengers and the two crew members, rescued from mid-sea, were admitted to a hospital, one of the officials said.

"The helicopter crashed into the sea around 9.30 am. A preliminary inquiry revealed that there was some technical snag, and the pilot made a crash-landing on the sea," a senior Civil Aviation official said.

An inquiry has been initiated, he said.

"On February 24, 2026, PHL Dauphin N3 helicopter (VT PHY) took off from Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) at around 8.30 am for a passenger flight

from Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) to Rangat and further to Mayabunder.

"The helicopter landed at Rangat helipad around 9.05 am. It further took off from Rangat to Mayabunder at around 9.10 am. The helicopter ditched about 300 metres short of Mayabunder helipad in the sea (shallow water) at around 9.30 am," Pawan Hans Ltd, a central public sector undertaking based in Noida, said on X.

The helicopter operator also said all passengers and the crew members have been "safely retrieved", and "PHL is actively coordinating with all respective agencies". A district official said a team from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation is expected to visit the site to investigate the helicopter crash.

"The helicopter wreckage is still in the sea. It was left there for investigations by the local administration and the DGCA. The statements of both pilots have been taken by the police, and further inquiry is going on," he said.

North and Middle Andaman Deputy Commissioner Sushant Padha said the rescue team, the

police, forest personnel and the Coast Guard acted promptly and rescued all seven people.

"Those who were travelling in the helicopter are identified as Rajita Devi and her child Shivansh, Kamala Chandra Das, Shipra Saha, Nambi Amma, and two pilots, Captain Anil Janu and Captain TPS Gullia. All are safe," the DC said.

One of the seven people was referred to GB Panth Hospital in Sri Vijaya Puram for a CT scan as she suffered head injuries, another district official said.

"Injured passenger Rajita Devi was taken to Sri Vijaya Puram in a chopper from Mayabunder around 3.20 pm for treatment. Her child is perfectly fine," he said.

Civil Aviation Director Nitesh Rawat had, earlier in the day, said all injured persons were undergoing treatment at Dr Rajendra Prasad Hospital in Mayabunder.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands DGP Hargobinder Singh Dhaliwal commended the Police Marine Force for their quick response and rescuing all the passengers and the crew members from mid-sea.

From Maoist bastion to 'education city': Chhattisgarh plan for Bastar in state Budget

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, February 24

ABUJHMAD and Jagargunda in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, which were known as hotbeds of Naxalism for over four decades, will now be turned into "modern education cities" and Rs 100 crore has been allocated towards this, as per the state's 2026-2027 Budget.

The allocation is part of the Budget presented by Chhattisgarh Finance Minister O P Choudhary in Vidhan Sabha on Tuesday. The Rs 1.72 lakh crore Budget is the third presented by Choudhary. Last year's Budget was of Rs 1.65 crore.

The capital expenditure this time is Rs 26,500 crore, marginally up from Rs 26,341 crore last year. The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) increased by 12.4% from Rs 6,31,920 crore to Rs 7,09,553 crore.

"The fiscal deficit as a percentage of GSDP this year is 2.87%, which is less than 2.91% last year, with 3% being the normal limit," said a finance department official.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai later elaborated on the "Five Chief Minister Missions" for which Rs 100 crore each has been allocated.

Sai said, "These are CM's AI Mission, Sports Excellence Mission, Tourism Development Mission, Infrastructure Mission, Startup & NIPUN (New Age Industrial Preparedness for Upskilling New Generation Youth) Mission." Choudhary said, "With this mission, youths will create jobs, not only seek them. The idea behind the mission is focused and fast implementation in identified sectors. For the next five years, each mission will receive a minimum of Rs 100 crore every year."

This year's Budget had a special focus on development activities in the Bastar region,

OTHER ALLOCATIONS

Rs 720 crore for communities categorised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)

Rs 4,000 crore under the Viksit Bharat G RAM G Yojana (formerly MNREGA) to ensure 125 days of guaranteed employment annually in rural areas

Rs 10,000 crore under the Krishak Umnati Yojana to promote modern agricultural technology, better inputs, productivity enhancement and crop diversification

once known as a Maoist bastion. Two modern education cities will be developed in Abujhmad and Jagargunda — both areas in the Bastar region that were major strongholds of the Maoists.

"The proposed education cities will have an integrated system ranging from primary schools to higher secondary schools, sports facilities and roads. In addition, pre-matric and post-matric hostels will be constructed so that children from remote villages can study in a safe and supportive environment. This is expected to particularly benefit tribal students and those from weaker sections. The education cities will also include IT and skill development training programmes aimed at providing employment-oriented education to local youth. This is expected to open new avenues for jobs and self-employment, while also accelerating economic activities in the region," said a government official.

In the irrigation sector, a major project has been announced to construct Matnar and Deurgaon barrages on the Indravati River at an estimated cost of Rs 2,024 crore. This initiative is expected to provide irrigation facilities to an additional 32,000 hectares in the Bastar region, significantly boosting agricultural productivity and supporting farmers' livelihoods.

1,500 new positions have been created for Bastar Fighters, a unit of the state police. With the aim of promoting girls' education, preventing child marriage and supporting higher studies and skill development, the government will launch the Rani Durgavati Scheme, where the government will pay Rs 1.50 lakh to every girl from the state once they attain 18 years of age (subject to guidelines).

The Budget will also provide for the establishment of a Transgender Welfare Board and a residential school for children who are visual and hearing impaired.

सार्वजनिक सूचना

1. सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि एक नवजात शिशु (लडकी) उम्र लगभग 1-2 दिन जो कि दिनांक 17/01/2026 को लावारिश हालात में हनुमान नगर, खोरिकला, तावडू, जिला नूह में मिला। जिसके संदर्भ में एफ-आई-आर नं० 0012 दिनांक 17/01/2026 को थाना सदर तावडू जिला नूह, हरियाणा में दर्ज है।

यदि उपरोक्त बच्चे को माता-पिता या अभिभावक यह सूचना पढ़े तो 60 दिन के अन्दर-2 जिला बाल संरक्षण कार्यालय/बाल कल्याण समिति, नूह कामकाजी महिला होस्टल के सामने, नंगली रोड नूह में संपर्क करें। अन्यथा बच्चे को गोद देने की प्रक्रिया में ले लिया जाएगा। उक्त से संबंधित वतालाप हेतु Ph. No. 8059159786, 01267-274270 Mail ID- icpsnuh@gmail.com पर संपर्क करने का कष्ट करें।

जिला बाल संरक्षण अधिकारी, जिला बाल संरक्षण इकाई, नूह।

No. 43308/HRY

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Ajay Kumar Tiwari on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he made ultimate sacrifice while fighting militants in Srinagar, J&K.

	CONSTABLE AJAY KUMAR TIWARI 20.09.1971 - 25.02.1994	
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CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

	Veer Balidani Lance Naik Brahmanand Upadhyay 21 Bn 01-11-1948 To 25-02-1988		Veer Balidani Lance Naik Basudev Sinha 21 Bn 31-12-1951 To 25-02-1988
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DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to two valiant troopers of 21 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while countering an attack by insurgents in Kalimpong, Darjeeling on 22 February 1988. #CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

	Veer Balidani Lance Naik Ishwar Dayal 61 Bn 01-07-1965 To 25-02-1995		Veer Balidani Constable Ramesh Chander 61 Bn 01-01-1975 To 25-02-1995
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DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to two valiant troopers of 61 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while countering an ambush on their patrol in Assam on 25 February 1995. #CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

	Veer Balidani Head Constable Prem Lal 73 Bn 25-10-1951 To 25-02-1995		Veer Balidani Constable Ashok Kumar 73 Bn 22-11-1969 To 25-02-1995
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	Veer Balidani Constable Makhan Lal 73 Bn 20-02-1967 To 25-02-1995		Veer Balidani Constable B. Shobran 73 Bn 05-08-1972 To 25-02-1995
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	Veer Balidani Constable Ram Singh 73 Bn 01-07-1973 To 25-02-1995		Veer Balidani Constable /SK Ramesh 73 Bn 01-02-1962 To 25-02-1995
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	Veer Balidani Head Constable Nand Kishor 119 Bn 10-08-1956 To 25-02-1995		Veer Balidani Constable Jagdish Prashad 119 Bn 01-07-1967 To 25-02-1995
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DG and all ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to the eight valiant troopers of the 73 and 119 Bn who made the supreme sacrifice in an IED blast targeted at their train by insurgents in Manipur on 25 February 1995. #CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)

25 FEBRUARY, 2026

ITBP salutes its braveheart Head Constable Asha Ram of 11th Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2002.

Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Ltd

Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)

Specification No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Name of the Work
OT - 1	CE / PROJECTS	Ennore SEZ - Establishment of Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) system & its Auxiliaries for 2 x 660 MW Ennore SEZ under Single EPC basis.

For details of works / Procurement / Due date of submission / Opening, viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit websites: www.tangedco.gov.in, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.intenders.gov.in/nicgeapp

DIPR/1374/Tender/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Applications are invited under scheme of 'One Station One Product' for setting up :

C. Total Thirteen (13) Stall at: Delhi, Delhi Cantt., Delhi Shahdara, Meerut City, Shamli, Gurgaon, Meerut Cantt., Faridabad, Kurukshetra, Bahadurgarh, Sonapat, Samalalka, Ghaziabad Railway stations.

D. Total Thirty six (36) Trolley at: Anand Vihar Terminal, Baghpat Road, Baraut, Delhi Kishanganj, Delhi Sarairohilla, Faridabad New town, Garhi harsaru, Jakhai, Jind, Khekra, Mansa, Nangloi, Narwana, Noli, Okhla, Palam, Shakurbasti, Tapri, Tohana, Tughlakabad, Vivek Vihar, Asawati, Ballabgarh, Delhi Azadpur, Delhi Safdarjung, Deoband, Khatauli, Mangolpuri, Modinagar, Muradnagar, New Ghaziabad, Partapur, Sakoti Tanda, Sampal, Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge Railway Stations.

The period for setting up of stall/Trolley at Delhi Jn., Kurukshetra, Subzi Mandi, Palwal, Gurgaon, & Meerut Cantt., Panipat, Narela, Badi Rohtak, Julana, Samal Railway Stations per spell will be 90 days.

Registration fee for NSG 1, 2, 3 stations will be charged @ rate of Rs. 2000 for each spell of thirty days and for NSG 4,5,6 (Delhi Kishanganj, Deoband, Badi, Okhla, Shamli, Tapri, Jind, Jakhai, Tohana, Mansa, Narwana, Baghpat Road, Khekra, Nangloi, Muradnagar, Khatauli, Meerut Cantt., Julana, Sampal, Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge, Ganaur, Badi, Subzi Mandi, Narela, Tughlakabad, Faridabad New Town, Ballabgarh, Palam., Delhi Safdarjung, Partapur & Sakoti Tanda Railway Station registration fee will be charged @ rate of Rs. 1000 for each spell of thirty days.

The following are the eligibility criteria for participant viz.

- Holder of Artisans/Weaver ID card issued by Development Commissioner Handicraft, Development Commissioner Handloom, or by the requisite state/Central Government Authority.
- Individual artisans/weavers/craftsmen enrolled/registered with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)/National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC)/Khadi/Village Industries Commission (KVIC)/associated with Social Organisations, State Govt. bodies and associated with registered micro enterprises on the Udyam Portal of the Ministry of MSME and NGOs etc.
- Self Help Groups registered with PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme).
- Marginalized or weaker sections of society.
- No separate logo shall be allowed.

The applicant will have to submit an undertaking to the Station Superintendent indicating that no activity would be undertaken to adversely affect the train operations, passenger safety and image of the Railways.

Applications should be addressed and can be submitted to Station Superintendent at station by the applicant till 15:00 hrs. of 07.03.2026, which will be opened on same day.

Station Superintendent will make priority roster of all approved participants and priority will be established through a draw of lots conducted at the station in the presence of all approved applicants by the Station Manager/Sectional CMI and nominated Finance representative.

The One Station One Product scheme shall be governed by Railway Board's Commercial Circular No. 12 of 2022 and 09 of 2023 respectively available at website www.indianrailways.gov.in and https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic_comm/Comm_Cir_2022/QSOBP%20Policy.pdf & https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic_comm/Cir_2023/CC%20%2009%20%202023.pdf For any queries applicant may contact Station Superintendent or CMI of the respective stations.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 622/26

WESTERN RAILWAY

SIGNAL & TELECOM WORK

Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Field) (Const.) Churchgate, Mumbai, Western Railway, Mumbai-400020 invites Tender Notice No. Dy.CSTE-C-BCT-340, Date 23.02.2026. Name of work: Shifting of existing S & T gears for infringement removal, Design, Supply, Installation, Programming, Testing, & Commissioning of New Electronic Interlocking (EI) systems. Alteration in existing Electronic Interlocking (EI), modification in Train Management System (TMS)/Interfacing of EI with TMS. Shifting of Auxiliary Warning system, complete Indoor & Outdoor Signalling and Telecom Works in connection with work of HARBOUR BG Line Between Goregaon (GMN) to Borivali (BVI) section & Vasal Road (BSR) station along with development of New Coaching Terminal for Platform returning Trains of Mumbai Division, Western Railway. NIT Value: ₹ 90.21,38,134.01. EMD: ₹ 46,60,700/- e-Bid closing date: Till 27.03.2026, 15:00. e-Bid opening date: 13.03.2026. For further details please visit our website www.irps.gov.in

Like us on: www.facebook.com/WesternRail 1162

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WDSC UMRAIN

ZILA PARISHAD ALWAR

File No. :- () 87 Date :- 13/02/2026

NOTICE INVITING BID

NIB NO. 04/2025-26

Bids for Construction of Bawdi renovation Anicut, Amrit Sarovar, PCD, Johad WHS, and CCT etc. Under MJA 2.0 Phase II, BLOCK Thanagazi of Estimated value INR 144 Lacs [02 Package] are invited from interested bidders up to 6.00 PM, 26/02/2026. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in/>, <https://sppc.rajasthan.gov.in/> of the State.

UBN: WSC2526WSOB02908, WSC2526WSOB02909

Raj.Samwad/C/25/21099 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

BENGALURU SOUTH CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer, Traffic Engineering and Mobility Cell, 2nd Floor, 9th Main Road, Jayanagara 2nd Block, Bengaluru-560011

No.: EE/TE&M Cell/BSCC/TEND/05/2025-26 Date: 24.02.2026

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPPP Portal only)

The Executive Engineer Traffic Engineering and Mobility Cell (BSCC) invites bids through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal from eligible licensed / registered advertisers with BSCC / any other Bengaluru City Corporation for assignment of commercial advertisement rights in 2-Zones in accordance with the Greater Bengaluru Area (Advertisement) Rules 2025.

Assignment of Commercial Advertisement Rights in Two (2) Zones of Bengaluru South City Corporation.

The tender schedule is as mentioned below:

- (1) Tender Notification No.: EE/TE&M Cell/BSCC/TEND/05/2025-26 Date: 25.02.2026. (2) Date from which bid document is ready for download through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal of Government of Karnataka (<https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/>): 25.02.2026 from 5:30 p.m. (3) Date of Pre-bid meeting and venue: 09.03.2026 at 3:00 p.m. Office of the Addl. Commissioner (Advertisements), BSCC, 2nd Floor, 9th Main Road, Jayanagara 2nd Block, Bengaluru-560011.
- (4) Last date for seeking clarification if any: 09.03.2026 at 11:00 a.m. (5) Last date and time for uploading of tender in Karnataka Public Procurement Portal platform: 21.03.2026 upto 5:00 p.m. (6) Date and time of opening of tenders: Technical bid & Technical Evaluation: 24.03.2026 at 3:00 p.m. (7) Date and time of opening of tenders: Commercial bid & Technically qualified bidders (if possible): Immediately after technical evaluation. (8) Contact person for queries: Additional Commissioner (Advertisements), Mobile: 9480056951, Email: addl.comm.rev.bscc@gmail.com (9) Place of opening of tenders and address for communication: Office of the Executive Engineer, Traffic Engineering and Mobility Cell, 2nd Floor, 9th Main Road, Jayanagara 2nd Block, Bengaluru-560011. (10) EMD Amount: Rs. 20 Lakhs (out of which Rs. 16 Lakhs as bank guarantee and rest of Rs. 4 Lakhs paid in KPP Portal) for each Zone wise bid. Further details may be obtained from the above office, during office hours or website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Traffic Engineering and Mobility Cell, Bengaluru South City Corporation

RAJYA ANAND SANSTHAN

(An Autonomous Institution of Govt. of M.P., Anand Department)

Board Office Campus, Shivaji Nagar, Bhopal-462011

BID FOR PROCUREMENT OF COMPUTERS, LAPTOPS, PRINTERS, SOFTWARE AND OTHER PERIPHERALS ON GeM PORTAL

Rajya Anand Sansthan invites quotations from eligible bidders for procurement of Computers, laptops, printers, software and other peripherals. Bidders can download the bid documents from the website <https://gem.gov.in/>. The financial bid is to be submitted online only on GeM portal.

Please refer to Gem Bid No. - GEM/2026/B/279960 The last date of bid submission is 17 March 2026 At 03.00 PM.

M.P. Madhyam/124615/2026 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

VEER SURENDRA SAI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY BURLA

ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମିକ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ

(A UGC Recognized State Government University by an Act of Assembly, Estd. -1956)

Siddhi Vihar, P.O. Engineering College, Burla, Dist: Sambalpur, Odisha, (India) -768 018

No.: VSSUT/VSSIC/05/2026 Date: 23/02/2026

TENDER CALL NOTICE

Sealed bids, in two separate covers (technical bid and Price bid) are invited from original manufacturers/authorized suppliers/ authorized dealers for the supply, installation, commissioning, maintenance and demonstration of (1) Single-vessel Dip Coating System, (2) Digital Soldering Station (Temperature controlled) for the Veer Surendra Sai Space Innovation Centre (VSSIC)", VSSUT, Burla, Sambalpur, Odisha. The tenders shall reach the office of the undersigned through Speed/Registered post/Courier services only on or before 12.03.2026 up to 4.30 PM.

For more details, please visit our university website www.vssut.ac.in. The authority reserves right to accept or reject all the tenders without assigning any reason therefor.

Sd/- REGISTRAR

OIPR/44001/44006/1/25-26/0002

AMARAVATI GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED (AGICL)

PROJECT OFFICE, RAYAPUDI, THULLURU MANDAL, (A.P.)

E PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

- NIT No:119/MAU61-USIOHB(OTH)/494/2025-HB, Dt: 24.02.2026**
Providing Home Automation, Additional wardrobes, additional store room, juice counter, spiral staircase, balcony with canopy, car parking shed, Glazed railing, tensile roofing, heat pumps, Additional HVAC Items, Transformers and external electrical works etc., as per the request of AIS association for the AIS Secretary & AIS Principal Secretary Bungalows" at Amaravati Capital City, Rayapudi Village, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh.
- NIT No:120/MAU61-USIOHB(BG)/7/2026, Dt: 24.02.2026**
Construction of Club House Buildings comprising G+4 Floors with Civil Structure, including Interiors, Furniture, MEP and External Development Works, to AIS, Secretaries and Principal secretaires near APCRDA Office Rayapudi, Amaravati.
- NIT No:121/MAU61-USIOHB(BG)/6/2026 Dt: 24.02.2026**
Construction of Club House Buildings comprising G+3 Floors with Civil Structure, including Interiors, Furniture, MEP and External Development Works, to Hon'ble MLAs & Hon'ble MLCs, Hon'ble Ministers near APCRDA Office Rayapudi, Amaravati.

The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from 27.02.2026 to 13.03.2026 up to 14.00 Hrs. Pre-Bid Meeting Date 05.03.2026, Due date for submission of Bid 13.03.2026 up to 15.00 Hrs, Technical bid opening 13.03.2026 @ 16.00Hrs. For further details please refer to www.aeprocmnt.gov.in and www.crda.ap.gov.in

Sd/- Managing Director, AGICL, Rayapudi.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

No. 89-Electrical/Tender/2025-26 Dt. 21.02.2026

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/General, North Western Railway, Bikaner for & on behalf of the President of India, invites E-tenders for the following work. 1. Complete details of tenders can be seen on Website : <http://www.irps.gov.in> 2. Date & time of closing of e-tenders - 16.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs. 3. Date & time of opening of e-tenders : After 15.00 Hrs on 16.03.2026 Tender Notice No. : 35-EL-BKN-E-Tender-25-26 Name of work : Provision of Air Conditioners on hiring basis at Divisional Hospital, Lalgarh for the period of 05 years over Bikaner Division, Approx. Cost of the work : ₹ 64,42,436/- EMD/SD (Rupees) : ₹ 1,28,900/- Tender Documents cost : Nil 273-CR/26

Follow us on www.facebook.com/NWRailways www.instagram.com/NWRailways www.youtube.com/NWRailways

Centre blocks 5 OTT platforms for streaming obscene shows

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, February 24

THE MINISTRY of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) recently ordered the blocking of five OTT platforms for streaming obscene content, The Indian Express has learnt.

The platforms — MoodX, Koyal Playpro, Digi Movieplex, Feel and Jugnu — were blocked by the I&B Ministry after following due procedure, officials said on Tuesday.

Actions to block a video streaming platform are taken under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are directed to restrict access to these platforms.

All these OTT platforms were learnt to have been airing majorly obscene content, including pornographic content.

Last year, the I&B ministry had directed intermediaries to disable public access to 25 OTT platforms, including common names like Ullu, ALTT, and Desifix.

Ullu and ALTT have come under the government's scanner multiple times in the past before their blocking was ordered by the government last year. In July and August 2024, references received from the National Commission on Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) had flagged the obscene content streamed by both platforms.

Kashmiri students allege lack of food for Iftar at varsity; V-C steps down

Express News Service
Ludhiana, February 24

THE CHANCELLOR cum Chairman of the CT University, Charanjit Singh Channi, on Tuesday confirmed the Vice-Chancellor's resignation following misbehaviour allegations by a group of Kashmiri students over requests for 'sehri' and 'iftar' arrangements on Monday.

Channi said the private university has also initiated an internal probe into the matter while the situation is being monitored by local authorities.

The students claimed that they requested for 'sehri' and 'iftar' arrangements to be made in the university mess amid the ongoing month of Ramzan. However, they alleged that V-C Nitin Tandon "abused them and passed derogatory comments" and threatened to cancel their admissions.

Channi told *The Indian Express*, "The V-C was asked to resign and he has done so. Rest all is a matter of enquiry..."

Itija Mufti, daughter of former J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti, tagged the Punjab CM and posted on X: "Dear Bhagwant Mann ji, do you endorse the Vice-Chancellor of CT University Punjab abusing and bullying Kashmiri Muslim students only because they requested food for Iftar and Sehri since it's Ramzan? Shocked that assaulting Kashmiris has been normalised even in a state like Punjab. We request strict action against the Vice-Chancellor..."

To deport foreign drug dealers fast, MHA for swift action on petty cases

Mahender Singh Manral
New Delhi, February 24

TO PREVENT prolonged stays of foreign nationals due to legal delays, the Centre is learnt to have asked all law enforcement agencies to expedite the deportation of foreigners booked in drug cases by enabling the withdrawal of prosecution in suitable cases.

Following the directions of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), police across states have started compiling lists of such individuals and submitting applications to withdraw cases.

The fresh directive was issued recently, two months after the MHA issued guidelines directing law enforcement agencies to deport those convicted of petty offences immediately upon completing their sentences or paying fines. If a fine remains unpaid, the individual should be deported and blacklisted according to MHA's prevailing guidelines, sources told *The Indian Express*.

According to the communi-

cation sent by Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Anti Narcotics Task Force of Crime Branch), on February 5 to all DCPs in the Delhi Police, the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which came into force from September 1, 2025, can be an effective tool to deal with such foreign offenders.

"It also provides for compounding certain offences committed under this Act, before or during trial by the notified officers, so that it becomes possible to deport a foreigner found without a valid passport or visa, instead of engaging in long drawn-out prosecution proceedings. It would be appropriate to mention here that district SP/DCP have been notified as Registration officer in pursuance of clause (r) of Section 2 of the Act to exercise power under the Act within their districts," Yadav said.

"...As many accused are on-going trial proceeding to prolong their stay in India and using jails to form drug trafficking networks, MHA has issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) on withdrawal from prosecution in cases filed against foreign nationals to facilitate their deportation, to address the issue, the States can make use of SOP for initiating appropriate action for withdrawal of prosecution against foreign drug offenders in appropriate cases for the purpose of their early deportation," he said.

A source said all the officers in the Delhi Police have been asked to look for low-quantity drug peddling cases.

The Narcotics Control Bureau in its annual report said that 660 foreign nationals were arrested across India on charges of drug trafficking in 2024, with Nepalese (203), Nigerians (106), Myanmar (25), Bangladeshis (18), Ivorians (14) and Ghanaians (13), topping the list

Procedure (SOP), was issued in connection with the foreign nationals against whom an offence has been registered and he would be required in India during investigation, trial or till the consent of the trial court concerned is obtained for withdrawal from prosecution under Section 360 of BNSS. "A foreign national may require a visa for their stay in the country...and it is also necessary to keep a record of such foreign nationals and track their movements," an official said.

The Narcotics Control Bureau said in its annual report that 660 foreign nationals were arrested across India on charges of drug trafficking in 2024, with Nepalese (203), Nigerians (106), Myanmar (25), Bangladeshis (18), Ivorians (14) and Ghanaians (13), topping the list.

The directive communicated by MHA to additional chief secretaries (Home), DGPs, and principal secretaries of all states and Union Territories specifies that offences punishable by nominal fines or short imprisonment terms warrant swift deportation to the native country, a source said.

The move addresses multiple references received by MHA's Foreigners Division regarding visa approvals for foreign nationals entangled in criminal proceedings. These include individuals released on bail whose presence is required for court appearances, or cases in which applications under Section 360 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), pertaining to withdrawal from prosecution, have been filed.

A Standard Operating

Procedure (SOP), was issued in connection with the foreign nationals against whom an offence has been registered and he would be required in India during investigation, trial or till the consent of the trial court concerned is obtained for withdrawal from prosecution under Section 360 of BNSS. "A foreign national may require a visa for their stay in the country...and it is also necessary to keep a record of such foreign nationals and track their movements," an official said.

This SOP also covers all such cases where the foreign national is on bail and the case is under trial, cases where the investigation of the registered case of a serious offence is on against the foreigner for their involvement, those where an application has been filed for withdrawal from prosecution, where the prosecuting agency has filed appeal against the orders of trial/acquittal court, and cases where the Supreme Court, High Court or the trial court, specifically orders for grant of visa to the foreign national to stay in India for completing of legal proceedings.

SERIAL DROUGHTS, MINING EXPANSION, CONSTRUCTION OF RESERVOIRS AMONG TRIGGERS

As forests shrink and herds grow, central India's jumbo crisis is primed to spiral

Jay Mazoomdaar
New Delhi, February 24

ELEPHANT ATTACKS killed eight people in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district and one in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district last week. In neighbouring Odisha, three women were killed in a tusker attack in Dhenkanal the previous week. The attacks followed nearly two dozen deaths in West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand, prompting authorities to declare an "elephant emergency" last month.

These incidents are part of a wider pattern. Fewer than 8% of India's 22,446 elephants — spread across six states — are responsible for nearly half of all human-elephant conflict casualties nationwide. Most belong to nomadic herds displaced from shrinking forest habitats and forced into croplands.

In fact, four of the new 'elephant' areas, located across central India — south Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra — had negligible elephant presence till recently from the other two states, Jharkhand (then south Bihar) and Odisha, started moving in around the mid-1980s. What forced these now 'stateless' elephants out were a combination of natural and manmade triggers: serial droughts, rapid expansion of mining, and construction of reservoirs in south Bihar and Odisha. The outcome is that hundreds of elephants now depend solely or primarily on raiding agricultural fields, where they must compete with desperate farmers.

Last year, the government's elephant population report recorded that the central Indian



The elephant population in the forests exceeds what these heavily degraded habitats can sustain. FILE

landscape is fragmented due to "unmitigated mining and linear infrastructure construction" etc, which has pushed elephants to new areas, "resulting in escalating conflicts with humans".

This deadly phase of human-elephant conflict, experts warn, is likely to intensify.

Even as high-nutrient crops are boosting breeding in the crop-dependent herds, leading to a surge in numbers, the elephant population in the forests exceeds what these heavily degraded habitats can sustain.

"Most herds of habituated crop-raiders have multiple calves. These new generations will have no memory of natural foraging. Nobody knows if they will stop visiting croplands if they come across good forest habitats tomorrow," says ecologist Raman Sukumar of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), who has worked extensively on Asian elephants.

Agrees Bivash Pandav, a senior scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII): "Even with a focused policy, any habitat restoration programme takes 20-40 years to make an impact."

Annual to-and-fro move-

ments between forests depending on seasonal needs is natural, what biologists describe as migration of wildlife. Most elephant herds in India used to migrate locally, driven by rainfall and foraging requirements. However, beginning the 1980s, herds of central India were increasingly denied access to their traditional migratory routes.

One of the triggers was the severe drought caused by one of the 20th century's most intense El Nino events in 1982-1983 and 1986-1987. Around the same time, iron ore mines expanded rapidly in Bihar's Singhbhum (Saranda) and Odisha's Keonjhar and Sundargarh forests. Meanwhile, a series of reservoirs in the Mahanadi and Brahmani river basins drowned vast stretches of quality riverine forests.

The first major movement of desperate herds was eastward. In 1986, a few elephants from Jharkhand's Dalma spent around two weeks in Bengal.

The next year, a 50-strong herd stayed through the winter season. As villages in Bankura and Purulia suffered routine crop raids, the watershed moment arrived in 1993 when more than 60



How the elephants spread out

elephants travelled nearly 400 km, reaching the outskirts of Kolkata. Conflict peaked in 2010s as more and more elephants started entering through the Singhbhum-Jhargram-Bankura-Purulia route from Jharkhand, and also through Kharagpur-Nayagram forests of Paschim Medinipur from Odisha, to stay put for longer periods. Now, a 200-strong population of crop-dependent elephants is spread across the Jangalmahal landscape in south Bengal. "The fragmented forests here are mostly monocultures, interspersed with farmlands. The Forest Department is regenerating elephant fodder through joint forest management. Early results are good, but this can make a real difference only in the long term. For now, more than 200 elephants are feeding on crops," says conservation biologist Samya Basu, who has worked on elephants in south Bengal.

Meanwhile, in the 1990s, elephants from Odisha's Sundargarh showed early signs of seasonal use of Chhattisgarh's Surguja and Surajpur forests, and started raiding farmlands. Next, herds from mine-ravaged

Keonjhar forests of Odisha were pushed out to Chhattisgarh's north Jashpur. By mid-2000, as coal mines expanded in Odisha's Talcher, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh, herds stopped returning and started breeding in Chhattisgarh. Around this time, elephants from southern Jharkhand also entered Chhattisgarh and moved to Raigarh and Dhamrajaigarh forests.

Over time, more than 50 elephants started using Taimur Pingla forests in Surajpur district as a permanent refuge. Then inter-state dispersal began towards the Hasdeo Arand forests, where conflict escalated during 2010-2025. But like Bengal's Jangalmahal, the Surajpur patch cannot sustain elephants, and the herds continue to raid crops in the surrounding villages.

In mid-2000, around the time a herd moved to Hasdeo Arand from northern Chhattisgarh, others ventured out to Madhya Pradesh towards Sidhi, Shahdol and Anuppur during crop season.

By 2010, elephants from southern Chhattisgarh's Bastar division became regular visitors to Maharashtra's Gadchiroli.

Says a senior forest officer who served in one of Chhattisgarh's most acute conflict zones: "There is no easy answer to the questions we face. How will the farmer survive total loss of harvest? What will these elephants eat if they don't get access to farmland? And how long can we stave them off anyway?"

Sukumar calls for multi-state, landscape-level studies. "Habitat restoration is key...For that, we need an honest policy on how much space we are going to save for the species."

BRIEFLY



IAF's heavy-lift Chinook helicopter during Exercise Vayu Shakti-26, at Chandan Field Firing Range, in Jaisalmer on Tuesday. PTI

RAJASTHAN

Indian Air Force conducts full dress rehearsal of exercise 'Vayu Shakti'

THE INDIAN Air Force on Tuesday conducted a full dress rehearsal of Exercise 'Vayu Shakti', a firepower demonstration, at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in the Thar desert of western Rajasthan. The rehearsal, which showcased coordinated day-to-dusk-to-night operations, was conducted ahead of the main event scheduled for February 27. Fighter jets, transport aircraft and helicopters carried out simulated strikes on designated targets in a near-realistic combat scenario. However, Tejas fighter jet did not take part in the rehearsal following reports of technical issue. Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft targeted enemy runways and positions, while MiG-29 jets struck a simulated convoy of tanks. PTI

KERALA

Govt relaxes age limits for PSC jobs

THE KERALA Cabinet on Tuesday increased the upper age limit to apply for state public service commission jobs from 36 to 40 for candidates in the general category. It also decided to accept in principle and publish the report of the Justice JB Koshy Commission, which looked into issues of the Christian community in the state. ENS

BIHAR

Four dead in road accident in Bhagalpur

FOUR PEOPLE, including a 6-year-old boy, died and 11 others were injured in an accident involving a bus, a small commercial vehicle and an e-rickshaw in Bihar's Bhagalpur district on Tuesday evening, officials said. The accident occurred near Bagri Pul in the Jhandapur Police Station area of Naugachia subdivision in the district, said a police officer. PTI

'No legal right': SC for rehabilitating Haldwani railway land occupants under PM Awas Yojana

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

THE SUPREME Court on Tuesday said that the land in Haldwani sought to be cleared of encroachments indeed belonged to the Railways, and asked the Uttarakhand Legal Services Authority to hold a camp so that the families facing eviction can apply for rehabilitation under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Jyotsna Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said those who had encroached upon the land have no right to demand to be rehabilitated there itself.

"Why to insist for them to stay there when there can be another place with better amenities. For any ambitious project, there is vacant space needed on both sides. The people staying there cannot dictate where railway should lay line etc." CJI Kant said.

Justice Bagchi said the land belongs to the State and it is prerogative of the State to decide how to use it. "The only thing is they have been staying there and now the issue is when they are asked to leave, they be

given some cushion. Our prima facie view is that it is more of a privilege and less of a right," he said.

The court said it is unsafe for people to stay near railway lines, and suggested that they move to a safer place.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhatti, appearing for the Railways, said that they can be accommodated under the PMAY. The bench then directed that they be given application forms to apply under PMAY. "In order to facilitate the application, we direct the member secretary of the State Legal Services Authority to hold with them a rehabilitation camp at the site and ensure that every head of the family is persuaded to apply under the Awas Yojna," the bench said.

The court further asked the District Collector to determine the family-wise eligibility of the applicants and submit a report to it. The court was hearing an appeal against the December 22, 2022, order of the Uttarakhand High Court to evict those living on railway land. It had said that they cannot be uprooted overnight and some rehabilitation scheme is necessary for those claiming legal rights on the land.

Gujarat ex-DGP acquitted in 'custodial torture' case

Aditi Raja
Vadodra, February 24

FORMER DGP Shabbir Khandwawala, 76, was on Tuesday acquitted in a case of custodial torture going back 50 years by the Gujarat High Court on the grounds that the prosecution had "failed to establish beyond reasonable doubt" the bodily injury to the complainant was inflicted in police custody.

In a 164-page judgment delivered Tuesday, Justice Gita Gopi of the Gujarat HC set aside the 2003 judgment that had convicted the 1973-batch IPS officer to five years of rigorous imprisonment handed out by the Additional Sessions Judge of the Fifth Fast Track Court in Junagadh, holding

that it was "erroneous and fails in merit". The government's appeal seeking enhancement of the sentence was also dismissed. The trial was carried out on a complaint by one Merag Haja, who alleged he was tortured in custody to "extract a confession" that led to him being permanently maimed.

Khandwawala, who went on to head the Anti-Corruption Unit of the BCCL, told *The Indian Express* that the acquittal had provided him "great relief".

Khandwawala was posted as SP, Junagadh and was investigating the murder of the Porbandar Municipality president Dhanji Kotiyawala when he conducted a combing operation in the house of Merag Haja who was treated as a suspect.

CASSAVA, A GLUTEN-FREE AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT TUBER, IS WIDELY GROWN IN SOUTHERN STATES SUCH AS KERALA AND TAMIL NADU

Cassava harvest in Jalandhar signals a shift beyond paddy

Anju Agnihotri Chhaba
Malsian (Jalandhar),
February 24

JALANDHAR WITNESSED an unusual agricultural moment on Monday as farmers gathered in Malsian village to harvest a crop rarely seen in Punjab's fields. Instead of the familiar paddy or wheat, thick cassava tubers were pulled out from neatly raised ridges on a three-acre experimental plot, drawing curiosity and cautious optimism. The successful harvest of this tropical crop marked what many described as a decisive step towards crop diversification in the state.

The initiative was spear-

headed by former Punjab minister and Congress MLA Rana Gurjit Singh along with his son Rana Inder Pratap Singh, MLA from Sultanpur Lodhi in Kapurthala district. The experimental cultivation was carried out in the fields of Congress MLA Hedeve Singh Laddi Sherowalia in Malsian village.

Cassava, a gluten-free and climate-resilient tuber, is widely grown in southern states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Originally native to South America, it later spread across Africa, which today accounts for nearly 50% of global cassava production, and eventually became a major crop in South India.



At Malsian village on Monday. EXPRESS

A large number of farmers gathered at the site to witness the results of the experiment. Dr M Neduchezhiyan, Princi-

pal Scientist and Head, Regional Centre of the ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Bhubaneswar, who

was present during the harvest, said introducing cassava to North India had been a long-cherished goal.

"I had been attempting for nearly 15 years to introduce cassava in North India but could not succeed until Rana Inder Pratap Singh approached me with a concrete plan," he said. He explained that Punjab's climate is suitable if the crop is sown in the first week of March, when temperatures are around 28 °C. The crop requires warm weather during early growth and cooler temperatures at maturity, making it possible to harvest by the end of December, January or February under Punjab condi-

tions. In North India, cassava becomes a 10-month crop, whereas in South India it can be grown almost year-round and harvested within seven to eleven months.

"Cassava requires nearly one-tenth the water used for paddy, making it a strong alternative amid Punjab's water crisis. The first two months are crucial for irrigation, but later the crop needs only soil moisture. It is highly climate-resilient and can tolerate dry conditions. Even after maturity, tubers can remain in the soil without rotting, allowing farmers flexibility to harvest when market rates are favourable," he said.



BANGLADESH'S NEW GOVERNMENT

TARIQUE'S TEST

After the chaos of the last couple of years, Bangladesh has a new government led by the BNP's Tarique Rahman. SHUBHAJIT ROY looks for signs of a new spring and warnings from past seasons — in the post-victory celebrations, in the chatter at cafes, on the campus of Dhaka University, in an impromptu jamming session by the roadside

METRES AWAY from the February 13 celebrations outside the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) office in Dhaka's posh Gulshan-2 neighbourhood, at a coffee shop in Shahabuddin Ahmed Park, young women and men sit by its tall glass windows, chatting. It's Basanta Utsab, the spring festival, and many of the women are in yellow saris; one has a bouquet of sunflowers to match.

For Bangladesh, this is a new season, a new spring. After a violent youth-led uprising that ended two decades of Awami League (AL) rule and an interim government led by Mohammad Yunus, Bangladesh finds itself at another crossroad. This time, it has a new leader, the 60-year-old Rahman, who returned from London days before his mother Khaleda Zia's death to take over the reins of the BNP and return the party to power after 20 years.

Rahman and the BNP's decisive victory — the party won 209 seats in the 300-member parliament — couldn't have come at a better time for Bangladesh. The political instability had continued through the 18 months of Yunus's interim term and the country's relationship with India had nosedived. As he began, Rahman hit the right notes, inviting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his swearing-in ceremony and talking of a new beginning for Bangladesh.

Yet, Rahman's real test begins now, and depends on how he navigates the competing pulls and pressures within his party, government and country.

His opposition: A rising Jamaat

As the results poured in, the one tally Rahman would have keenly watched, apart from his BNP's, is the Jamaat-e-Islami's.

With 68 seats, the Islamist party emerged as a distant second to the BNP, but Rahman would know that there's more to that number than meets the eye. Up from 18 seats in 1991, the Jamaat's performance was powered by gains in the north and south-west — areas along the India-Bangladesh border adjoining West Bengal — but the party would be especially happy with Dhaka. Of the 15 seats in the capital region, Jamaat won 6, and one in alliance, thus winning almost half of Dhaka. Since the 1990s, Dhaka has always been a bellwether of the country's voting behaviour. The party that wins the majority in national elections has usually got all or 90 per cent of the seats in Dhaka. Not this time for the BNP.

The Jamaat's youth wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, won the university elections held late in 2025, with the BNP's youth wing a distant second. The National Citizens' Party (NCP), a student-led party born out of the protests, ended up third on most seats. The NCP managed to win only six seats in the recent national elections, that too in a tie-up with the Jamaat-e-Islami.

It's a dramatic fall for the youth movement that captured the imagination of the nation merely 18 months ago, when its protests toppled the Hasina government. But soon after, some of the student leaders became part of the interim government and, many say, soon found themselves on the

other side, their credibility diminished by power and pelf. "The student leaders were seen enjoying luxurious lifestyles, driving fancy cars, dining in hotels. Their income tax returns in the election affidavits showed income not commensurate with their income. That raised questions about the integrity," says writer-historian Altaf Parvez.

If the student-led movement fell as spectacularly as it rose, the Jamaat's rise, on the other hand, has been gradual as it was targeted by the Hasina government over 17 years.

Hasina may have unwittingly paved the way for the Jamaat's rise when, in 2017, her government recognised madrasa qualifications for university admission, paving the way for many madrasa students to pursue higher education, including at universities in Dhaka and other cities. Dhaka university officials say more than 50 per cent higher education students are now from madrasas. Not surprising then, they say, that the Jamaat won the late 2025 university elections.

The win was a boost for the party, which anyway had a presence among the youth. Its members often help students with scholarships, paying for their tuition fees and taking care of their accommodation. "Jamaat's politics is seen as welfare-oriented, and that's how they campaigned," says Zillur Rahman, president of the think-tank, Centre of Governance Studies.

The Jamaat's rise, amidst the Hasina government's crackdown on the party, has sharpened the politics of identity among the youth.

On campuses and the streets of Dhaka, veils and headscarves are more visible than ever. "It is my choice that I don't wear a hijab, and it is my friend's choice that she wears one," says Nahida, a history student at Dhaka University, as she sits with her friends at the iconic Modhur canteen, the site of the 1971 student protests against Pakistan's Op Searchlight.

In the shadows: Team Hasina

Writer Mohiuddin Ahmed says that even in 1970, the Jamaat got about 10 per cent of the votes cast, but its electoral success is a "new phenomenon", made possible by the absence of the AL in the recent elections.

Analysts say the Jamaat may have peaked, and that it won't be able to grow any further if the AL makes a comeback. Not an impossible proposition given the unpredictable nature of politics, observers say. Jalal Uddin Sikder, an Associate Professor of Political Science at North South University, says, "AL can and should be revived for the sake of inclusive politics, but that has to be done without Hasina."

Since the fall of the Hasina government, AL leaders have been at the receiving end of violence and harassment, with a report by newsagency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha saying that within a year of the Yunus-led interim government, over 700 cases of murder or attempt to murder were filed against more than 5,000 ministers, MPs and senior officials across 50 police stations in Dhaka.

Lawyers appearing in some of these cases say many are instances of "political vendetta". "Many AL supporters or leaders



(Clockwise from top, left): Outside Tarique Rahman's office in Dhaka's Gulshan locality; an Obama-esque poster of Rahman; the iconic Modhur canteen at Dhaka University; the 900-year-old Dhakeshwari temple in Dhaka.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHUBHAJIT ROY



were not involved in the shooting of students and protesters; some were not even in the country or at the spot where the shootings took place. So many have been charged with false cases to implicate them while unfortunately many of the AL leaders and workers and police involved are sitting comfortably abroad, engaged in wholesale denial of the atrocities they carried out," says Sara Hossain, Senior Advocate in the Bangladesh Supreme Court.

With Hasina, her sister Rehana and key ministers of the party having sought political asylum abroad, those who stayed on in the country are bitter about having to fend for themselves. Across the country, AL offices are shut, with some used as godowns and toilets.

Speaking from a hideout inside Bangladesh, an AL leader says what has worsened their situation is that Hasina has not expressed regret or apologised for the shooting of about 1,400 youngsters during the protests. "That puts us at risk. Those sitting in Kolkata and Delhi can say what they want, but we have to face the music back home," he says.

There is a sense among many party leaders that the only way the party can survive is if Hasina "apologises" and then nominates an "interim leadership" in Bangladesh that can continue to project the party's policies. They say that the few AL leaders who continue to have a degree of acceptance and credibility can be asked to step up and lead the beleaguered party. "But they need Hasina's blessings," says a local leader.

BNP's rise and win

With the AL out of the picture for now and the Jamaat snapping at his heels, Rahman will have to walk a thin line. If he governs by retribution, the kind that Bangladesh's two most political dynasties have always engaged in, his promise of offering

a new start to the country will sputter even before he begins. And if he governs by reconciliation, he risks alienating his base.

All bets are off on which of the two paths the first-time parliamentarian will choose.

So far, Rahman has shown restraint in his language against the AL and India, despite the mood on the ground.

His personal style, too, has been a departure from the past. While the grammar of speeches made by Bangladesh's leaders still carry Sheikh Mujib's imprint — the raised index finger, the stern, admonitory tone — the BNP leader has a different style, says Jyoti Rahman, political analyst and executive editor of Counterpoint Bangladesh, a news portal.

"He is more conversational and adopts a more town-hall meeting style. We can see he has been influenced by the British political campaigning style, which has resonated with the youth here. So he has successfully broken out of Mujib's mould," he says.

Recalling his interactions with Rahman, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Professor of Economics at the Department of Development Studies of the University of Dhaka, says, "He is a very good listener, gets into difficult issues and asks tough questions. He only promises what he can deliver."

What next for Rahman

Rahman has a personnel challenge at hand. He has to learn to balance his team — a mix of young advisers who are seen as "imported" from the UK (Rahman was accompanied by a team of over 60 when he landed in Dhaka on December 25, 2025), and the senior leadership of the BNP who stayed on and braved the Hasina regime.

But beyond that immediate task of team management, he faces three major challenges: an unstable law and order situation, a fragile economy and the ever-vexing India angle.

He will also have to get to work to get the country's internal security in order, given the string of attacks on minorities.

Standing inside the 900-year-old Dhakeshwari temple in Dhaka, Manindra Kumar Nath, a minority leader, says, "We are living in fear. This is our country as well."

Saying that the "cycle of revenge" has to end, writer and historian Altaf Parvez says, "Many had high hopes from Yunus, but he failed to act as Nelson Mandela did in South Africa to reconcile between the polarised groups. Now it is for Tarique Rahman to act."

But that will be easier said than done, many argue, as the BNP chief will face resistance from his own party activists who stayed on and "braved" the Hasina regime while Rahman was in the UK.

Rahman's second major challenge will be to manage the fragile economic situation. Inflation rates are rising, the country is operating under an IMF-backed reform programme and real GDP growth has slid to about 4% in FY25, well below the recent historical trajectory of 6-7%.

"The new government inherits an economy that is more stable but structurally strained... the macroeconomic story over the last two years is not one of recovery, but of pause. The harder phase, rebuilding confidence, investment and employment, begins now," says Ashikur Rahman, Principal Economist, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

And, finally, the diplomatic challenge for Rahman lies in whether he can reset Dhaka's ties with New Delhi.

"India should deal with the BNP in a positive manner, and they should develop good ties with the party in power. Delhi can reach out to people by giving visas for medical treatment and to students. That will build a strong, positive atmosphere in favour of India, which is not the dominant spirit on the streets right now," says Rezaul Karim Lotus, Editor of the *Daily Sun*, one of Bangladesh's English dailies.

Somewhere in these celebrations and the challenges, the protests and the politics, it's the weight of memory that hangs heavy. Of the ideals of liberation, the search for identity and stalled promises.

Outside BNP's Gulshan office, two men sing as they strum their guitar: "Ondhokar ghore kagojer tukro chire/ Kete jay amar somoy, tumi gecho chole jaoni barter otle/ Jemon shukno phool boiyer majhe roye jay (In a dark room, tearing pieces of paper, my time passes/ You have left, yet not left the depths of the house — like a dried flower that remains pressed between the pages of a book.)"

NEW GDP SERIES WITH 2022-23 AS BASE YEAR TO BE RELEASED ON FRIDAY

Unstable, too broad: No UPI payment data in new GDP series

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, February 24

THE MINISTRY of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will not use Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transaction data to calculate gross domestic product (GDP) in the new revised series that will be released this week due to the numbers being unstable and certain payment categories being too broad.

Proposed as one of the non-traditional sources of data that could be used as an alternative indicator in the Consumption of Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) — one of the key components of GDP when it is calculated from the expenditure side of economic activities — for quarterly GDP figures, a sub-committee of the statistics ministry's Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS) has said it is too soon to use UPI transaction data.

"Transactions against clubbed items (e.g. Super markets) cannot be bifurcated into separate PFCE items, whereas, it accounts for substantial share

in total transaction value and volume," the report of the sub-committee on methodological improvement for the base revision of GDP, released last week, said. UPI data in value (rupees) as well as volume (number of transactions) is available from the National Payments Corporation of India, with each payment categorised by the type of merchant.

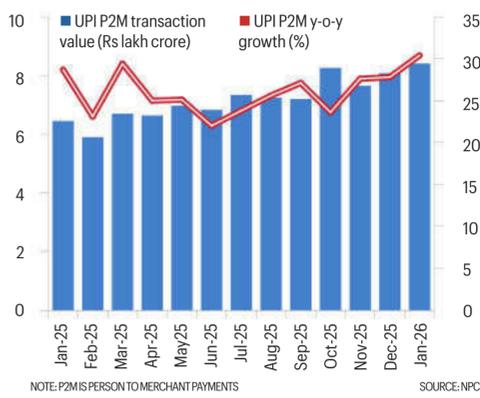
For instance, 'Grocery Stores, Supermarkets' category transactions are for a variety of goods sold in these stores.

As such, data for this category — which is sizable, accounting for 25% of all person-to-merchant transactions by volume and 9% by value in January — is not useful for the purpose of compiling private final consumption expenditure within GDP on an item-wise level.

The report also said that payments transaction data is not stable, with many people yet to move to UPI from cash.

"Once the UPI transaction data get stabilised, it may be explored for possible inclusion as an indicator in the estimation of PFCE."

UPI payments continue to rise rapidly



GDP data for October-December 2025 and the second advance estimate for the financial year 2025-26 according to the new series with 2022-23 as the base year will be released on Friday, with MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg and Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran addressing the media on the same.

Estimating private consumption

MoSPI calculates GDP using two methods — production or income approach and the expenditure approach. While the production-side GDP figure is seen as being more reliable and accurate, changes in the various components of the expenditure side are crucial from a policy perspective.

One such component is PFCE, an indicator of household consumption levels, which makes up more than half of India's GDP.

"The PFCE methodology basically draws indicator from relevant sectors vis-a-vis items encompassed in production side. The reason is that, except for few items, High Frequency Indicators pertaining to item-level HH (household) consumption figures are not available. Therefore, growth rate observed in production estimates for an item/sector are taken as a proxy for the growth rate in PFCE for that item," the minutes of a June 2025 meeting of the above-mentioned ACNAS sub-committee, also released last week, said.

It was in this context that the exploration of new indicators such as UPI transaction data was proposed to "capture the consumption accurately" at an item level. The last time India's GDP series was updated was more than a decade ago, in early 2015. **FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM**

India's dependence on imported oil may hit fresh full-year high in FY26

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, February 24

INDIA'S DEPENDENCE on imported crude oil grew to 88.6% in the first 10 months of the ongoing financial year (2025-26), indicating that the import reliance level for the full financial year could be headed for yet another record high.

It was 88.2% in the corresponding period of FY25, according to the latest data released by the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG).

For the full FY25, reliance on imported oil was 88.3%. According to industry insiders, the import dependency for the full FY26 could be a tad higher than the April-January level, similar to what happened in the last financial year.

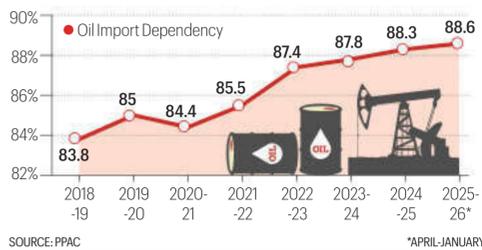
India is seen as a major growth centre for oil demand given the future potential in energy-intensive industries, growing vehicle sales, a rapidly expanding aviation sector, expected growth in consumption of petrochemicals, and a still growing population with relatively low per-capita energy consumption.

In fact, India is among the few markets where refinery capacity is expected to expand substantially over the coming years. The country currently has a refining capacity of 258 million tonnes per annum.

India's reliance on imported oil has increased over the years, with the exception of FY21 when demand was suppressed due to the pandemic. Given the country's stagnant domestic oil production, rising demand for petroleum fuels and products is expected to lead to higher oil imports in the foreseeable future.

India's heavy reliance on imported crude oil makes its economy vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations. This also im-

India's rising reliance on crude oil import



pacts the country's trade deficit, foreign exchange reserves, the rupee's exchange rate, and inflation rate, among others.

The government aims to reduce the country's reliance on imported crude oil but faces challenges due to sluggish domestic oil output amidst rising demand. In 2015, the Centre targeted to reduce reliance on oil imports to 67% by 2022.

The government has implemented several policy reforms to encourage investments in India's oil and gas exploration and production sector. It is also promoting electric mobility, biofuels, and other alternative fuels to reduce oil imports.

While there has been an increase in electric mobility adoption and the blending of biofuels with conventional fuels, it has so far not been sufficient to offset petroleum demand growth.

In numbers: India's growing reliance

India's crude oil imports rose to 206.3 million tonnes (mt) in the 10 months to January from 201 mt in the year-ago period, as per provisional data from the PPAC. Domestic oil production for the period declined slightly to 23.5 mt from 24 mt, while domestic consumption of petroleum products rose 1.6% to 202.2 mt. Of this, 23 mt of products are

estimated to have been produced from crude oil produced in India, thereby resulting in a self-sufficiency level of 11.4%.

The calculation of the extent of import reliance is based on the domestic consumption of petroleum products and excludes petroleum product exports as those volumes do not represent India's demand. Consumption of petroleum products is projected to increase by 2.8% in FY27, reaching 250.8 mt, according to PPAC projections.

If these projections hold, the country's petroleum fuel and product consumption in FY27 will hit yet another record. And the trend of growing petroleum consumption is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. In November, Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) had said that India will be the biggest driver of global oil demand over the next 10 years, surpassing China.

"India leads global oil demand growth over the next ten years, with almost half of the additional barrels produced globally to 2035 heading in its direction. Its oil use increases from 5.5 mb/d (million barrels per day) in 2024 to 8 mb/d in 2035 as a result of rapid growth in car ownership, increasing demand for plastics, chemicals and aviation, and a rise in the use of LPG for cooking," the IEA said in its World Energy Outlook 2025.

Cabinet nod for 3 projects worth Rs 9,072 cr to ease Railway traffic

New Delhi: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Tuesday approved three multi-tracking projects to decongest high density network and highly utilised network of the Indian Railways. These projects include Gondia-Jabalpur Doubling, Punarakh-Kiul 3rd and 4th line and Gamharia-Chandil 3rd and 4th line. The projects will cost Rs 9,072 crore.

The three projects covering eight districts across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 307 km.

Gondia-Jabalpur doubling project will join Howrah-Mumbai High Density Network at Gondia and Itarsi-Varanasi Highly utilised Network route at Jabalpur. It provides shortest route between Varanasi, Prayagraj to Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Railways officials said the projects are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as coal, steel, iron ore, cement, ballast and stone chips, fly ash, fertilizers etc. and will increase the freight loading by 52 million tonnes per annum. **ENS**

NIFTY IT ON COURSE TO LOG WORST MONTH POST APRIL 2003

IT sector stocks crash 5% as report warns of SaaS becoming obsolete; down 21% in Feb

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, February 24

IT INDUSTRY stocks crashed further on Tuesday as fears of an AI-led disruption and software-as-a-service (SaaS) turning obsolete intensified across the sector. The sell-off extended for the 5th straight session, with the Nifty IT index down 21% so far in February and on course to log its worst month since April 2003.

The fresh sell-off came after US-based Anthropic, which had first triggered fear across the sector, announced that its Claude Code AI tool can sharply reduce the cost and complexity of modernising legacy software systems, an area which is a major revenue generator for Indian IT firms.

A report by US-based Citirni Research sounded a warning to the IT services sector, further deepening fears. The entire success model of the Indian IT SaaS sector was based on being cost effective, offering quality developers to the US counterparts at a fraction of the cost. However, the shift to AI automation tools means the cost of an AI coding agent is equivalent to "essen-

Worst hit stocks in Nifty IT on Tuesday

NAME	TUESDAY CHANGE	FEBRUARY CHANGE
LTIMindtree	-6.4%	-24.3%
Tech Mahindra	-6.2%	-22.0%
Persistent Systems	-6.0%	-22.4%
HCL Tech	-5.8%	-20.6%
Coforge	-5.2%	-26.1%
Nifty IT	-4.7%	-21.0%

tially the cost of electricity," the report said.

With giants such as TCS, Infosys, and Wipro already facing increased contract cancellations through to 2027, the shift in the technology landscape may lead to mass layoffs, with white-collar jobs being the worst hit, the report noted. For every new job AI will create, it will render dozens obsolete, it added. The IT sector has been among the largest employment generators in India

The entire success model of the Indian IT SaaS sector was based on being cost effective, offering quality developers to American counterparts at a fraction of the cost

Inc., and mass layoffs are likely to cause panic in the system.

After these developments, the Nifty IT index nosedived over 5% intraday on Tuesday and eventually ended 4.7% lower. The likes of LTIMindtree, Tech Mahindra, and Persistent Systems crashed over 6%. Blue chips such as TCS, Infosys, and Wipro ended 3-4% lower, hitting fresh 52-week lows. The sell-off in the sector weighed on the benchmark stock indices too, with the Nifty 50 index falling over 1% to end at 25,424.65 points. There was a similar reaction in the US, with the technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite index, a barometer for the IT sector, falling over 1% overnight. Shares of IBM plunged 13%, its

biggest single-day drop since October 2000. CrowdStrike sank 10%, whereas giants such as Microsoft and Amazon lost 2%.

Warning bells

Other global broking and research firms have also flagged worries on the Indian IT sector over the past month. HSBC said it expects a 14-16% gross deflationary risk to revenues in the overall sector over the next few years due to AI, compared to the earlier expectation of 8-10%.

Jefferies recently downgraded its recommendations on the likes of Infosys, TCS, HCL Technologies, and LTIMindtree, warning that valuations across the sector may fall another 30-65% from current levels in the worst-case scenario. In current circumstances, the sector offers more downside than upside for investors, it added.

Another global company, CLSA cut their price target for shares of most players in the sector. While the firm said AI-related fears are overdone, the current negative mood around IT will be changed only by actual earnings growth, and not by any positive commentary.

As soon as there is clarity, India will start trade talks with US: Goyal

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said "as soon as" there is more clarity in the situation at the tariffs front in the US, India will resume trade talks, when asked how soon India will be resuming trade talks with the US.

India and the US, on February 22, decided to reschedule the proposed meeting of their chief negotiators, supposed to be held in Washington this week, to finalise the text for the interim trade pact.

The Indian team was scheduled to start the three-day meeting on February 23 in the US.

When asked about the government's view on easing of investment curbs imposed through press note 3 for attracting investments from countries like China, Goyal said the ministry is in dialogue with industry to understand the issues and can make it easier for them to engage with neighbouring countries, where relationships have improved. **PTI**

BRIEFLY

Govt to sell up to 4% stake in IRFC via OFS

New Delhi: The Centre said on Tuesday it will divest an up to 4% stake in Indian Railway Finance Corp through an offer for sale on Wednesday. The Centre currently owns an 86.36% stake in the financing arm of the Indian Railways. It will sell 2% equity in the financier over the next two days, with an option to additionally sell another 2% based on investor response. Divestment Secretary Arunish Chawla said in a post on X. The financing arm of the Indian Railways will sell the shares at a floor price of Rs 104 per share. **REUTERS**

India, GCC begin negotiations for free trade pact

New Delhi: India and the six-nation bloc of Middle Eastern nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), started negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA), an official statement said on Tuesday. In this regard, a joint statement was signed between the visiting Secretary General of the council, Jasem Mohammad Al Budaawi, and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal here. "The Joint Statement on the India-GCC FTA... in New Delhi formally launching negotiations for a com-

prehensive and mutually beneficial agreement," the Commerce Ministry said. Al Budaawi emphasised the FTA will serve as an important tool to strengthen trade and investment ties between India and GCC countries by infusing predictability and certainty for businesses. **PTI**

Resilient subsea networks critical to India's AI ambitions: TRAI

New Delhi: Submarine cable systems face significant challenges from natural disasters to pressures from geopolitical tensions and growing data demand, TRAI Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said Tuesday, calling for a multi-pronged approach to address issues. Describing submarine cable systems as the backbone of the digital economy in the AI era, Lahoti said that improving route planning, placing cables in low-risk areas, deploying real-time monitoring systems and building redundant routes can reduce the impact of physical damage and outages. Global cooperation and stronger regulatory frameworks are key to enhancing security and resilience, Lahoti said while addressing a conference on 'Subsea Cables and Digital Cloud Infrastructure' organised by Broadband India Forum. **PTI**

Power Grid's equity investment cap raised to Rs 7,500 cr

It will ensure greater participation by company in project bids: Vaishnav

Pratyush Deep
New Delhi, February 24

THE CABINET Committee on Economic Affairs Tuesday approved an enhancement in the permissible equity investment limit of Power Grid Corporation, enabling the state-run

transmission major to participate in capital-intensive projects critical for evacuating renewable energy (RE).

Power Grid's equity investment ceiling per subsidiary has been raised from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 7,500 crore, capped at 15% of the company's net worth.

The move is expected to enable the company to bid for large transmission projects such as Ultra High Voltage Alternating Current and High Voltage Direct Current networks, which require substantial upfront capital. These technologies are crucial for integrating large-scale renewable energy capacity located far from demand centres.

In a media briefing, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav

said the move would ensure greater participation by Power Grid in bids that it was earlier unable to pursue. It would enable the company to contribute more towards strengthening the country's power grid. Companies are required to infuse equity equivalent to at least 20% of the total project cost while bidding for such projects.

The enhanced investment limit is expected to allow Power Grid and its units to bid for pro-

jects with higher funding requirements.

"The approval will enable Power Grid, the country's largest and most experienced transmission service provider, to expand its investment in its core business and support the evacuation of RE capacity, helping achieve the target of 500 GW from non-fossil-based sources," the government said in a statement. **FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM**

DEEPSEEK COULD REMOVE TECHNICAL INDICATORS SHOWING USE OF US CHIPS, OFFICIAL SAYS; US EXPORT CONTROLS BAR BLACKWELL SHIPMENTS TO CHINA

'China's DeepSeek trained AI model on Nvidia's best chip'

Reuters
Washington, February 24

CHINESE AI startup DeepSeek's latest AI model, set to be released as soon as next week, was trained on Nvidia's most advanced AI chip, the Blackwell, a senior Trump administration official has said, in what could represent a violation of US export controls.

The US believes DeepSeek will remove the technical indicators that might reveal its use of American AI chips, the official said, adding that the Blackwells are likely clustered at its data center in Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region of China.

The person declined to say how the US government received the information or how DeepSeek obtained the chips, but emphasised that US policy is: "we're not shipping Blackwells to China."

Nvidia declined to comment, while the Commerce Department and DeepSeek did not respond to requests for comment.

The Chinese embassy in Washington said Beijing opposes "drawing ideological lines, overstretching the concept of national security, expansive use of export controls and politicising economic, trade, and technological issues."



Blackwells are likely clustered at DeepSeek's data center in Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region of China, said a US official. **REUTERS**

Asked about the Reuters report at a regular Chinese foreign ministry briefing on Tuesday, spokesperson Mao Ning

said they were not aware of the circumstances and that China had earlier repeatedly clarified its stance on Washington's

treatment of US chip exports to China. US government confirmation of DeepSeek obtaining the chips, first reported by Reuters, could further divide Washington policymakers as they struggle to determine where to draw the line on Chinese access to the crown jewels of American AI semiconductor chips.

White House AI Czar David Sacks and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang argue that shipping advanced AI chips to China discourages Chinese competitors like Huawei from redoubling efforts to catch up with Nvidia's and AMD's technology.

But China hawks fear chips could easily be diverted from

commercial uses to help supercharge China's military and threaten US dominance in AI.

"This shows why exporting any AI chips to China is so dangerous," said Chris McGuire, who served as a White House National Security Council official under former President Joe Biden. "Given China's leading AI companies are brazenly violating US export controls, we obviously cannot expect that they will comply with US conditions that would prohibit them from using chips to support the Chinese military," he added. US export controls, overseen by Commerce Department, currently bar Blackwell shipments to China.

MARKETS

Sensex 82,225.92 -1,068.74 -1.28%	NIFTY 25,424.65 -288.35 -1.12%	Gold ₹1,59,241 ▲	US Dollar ₹90.95 ▼
		Silver ₹2,62,912 ▼	Oil \$70.61 ▼

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF FEBRUARY 23, 2026

● **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mumbai 'melody road' faces the music: Science, history behind it

Nayonika Bose
Mumbai, February 24

WHEN THE Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) unveiled a new technology along the Mumbai Coastal Road earlier this month, it came bearing the promise of a novel experience for Indian commuters: Drive past a 500-metre stretch between Priyadarshini Park and Amarsons Garden at the speed threshold of 80 kmph and hear the road belt out the tune of "Jai Ho", the Oscar-winning song from the 2008 movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

Touted as India's first "melody road", it opened amid much fanfare. But it wasn't long before the road soon became the centre of jokes, memes, and complaints aplenty. Merely two days after the concept was introduced, residents from the upscale Breach Candy pocket, which is situated across the 500-metre stretch, wrote a letter to the BMC Municipal Commissioner, flagging concerns over disturbance, noise pollution and safety. "On a high-speed arterial road, any auditory distraction is a matter of concern. Drivers are slowing down unexpectedly or becoming distracted, which poses avoidable safety risks," it said.



While local residents have called for civic intervention into the matter, musical roads have been implemented successfully across the world over the past 25 years.

The science

The concept of a musical road entails specially engineered roads where music is generated through grooves embedded into the road surface. When vehicles drive past the precisely designed ribs at a constant speed, the road produces a musical tune.

The variation in tune generated from the grooves is determined by the spacing and width of each of the ribs. If the ribs

MAKING NOISE

● While most musical stretches are developed in sparsely populated areas, there have been instances of these being relocated owing to disturbance.

● A musical road in California, built in 2008, was re-paved and moved to a more secluded area amid noise pollution concerns.

are constructed closely, it produces higher notes while wider spacing creates lower tones.

When vehicles roll past the ribs, the friction against wheels generates vibrations which transmits through the wheels to the car body. Since each rib is laid out to correspond to a particular pitch, it corresponds to a certain frequency and the melody is experienced optimally when vehicles maintain the speed limit.

According to experts, environmental factors ranging from wind conditions, vegetation, and nearby structures play a crucial role in ensuring the clarity of sound generated. Careful analysis of the surroundings is also crucial to minimise interference from external noise.

The history

The history of musical roads goes back to 1995 when two Danish artists — Steen Krarup Jensen and Jakob Freud-Magnus — invented the "asphaltophone" (musical road) through specifically designed road surface topology in Denmark. However, it was only in 2007 that the concept of musical roads took shape and burst to popularity. In Japan, engineer Shizuo Shinoda accidentally discovered that rumbly in the road generated music while he was working with a bulldozer.

Soon, the idea of musical roads was implemented across over 30 stretches in Japan where the idea was not only to entertain but also to encourage road safety and prevent drivers from dozing off. In recent years, such musical roads have been implemented across the world including in countries like South Korea, Hungary, Taiwan, UAE, and the US, amongst others.

When the music came to India

The musical stretch along the Coastal Road, built at a cost of Rs 6.21 crore, marks India's first foray into the technology. Jointly developed by Routes Worldwide India in collaboration with UTKOPRO Kft., Budapest, Hungary, the project was implemented by BMC along with a team of 6-7 Hungarian technical experts.

On why the Coastal Road was chosen for the project, BMC officials said that it was a stretch "that allows for constant 60-80 kmph travel speed". Besides aiming to "introduce joy, engagement and cultural pride" into everyday travel, BMC hopes this would attract tourists.

● **GEOPOLITICS**

As PM visits Israel, how ties evolved over the years



SHUBHAJIT ROY & DIVYA A

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will be in Israel on Wednesday and Thursday in his first visit to the country in nine years.

Modi's July 2017 visit, the first by an Indian prime minister, brought the India-Israel relationship out of the shadows and placed it firmly in the limelight.

The circumstances of the latest visit are very different. West Asia is holding its breath over the prospect of a potential US-Iran conflict, even as a fragile ceasefire remains in effect in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip. In such a moment, it is worth looking at how India's ties with Israel have grown over the years, and the message in Modi's latest visit.

A slow build-up

India recognised the state of Israel soon after it was created in 1948. The establishment of full diplomatic relations would take four more decades — but not before a defining moment involving an unlikely figure.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was in India on January 19-20, 1992. During a meeting with Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao, he was told that India's establishment of a diplomatic relationship with Israel would be helpful for the Palestinian cause. New Delhi, he was told, could exert its influence on Israel only if it had an ambassador in Tel Aviv. Arafat came on board.

He famously told a press conference in New Delhi: "Exchange of Ambassadors and recognition (of Israel) are acts of sovereignty in which I cannot interfere... I respect any choice of the Indian government".

India formally established diplomatic ties with Israel on January 29, 1992, around 10 days after Arafat's public approval.

The military relationship, meanwhile, gradually evolved. India had sourced Israeli weapons during the war with China in 1962, but the support was rather episodic.

By the time of the Kargil war in 1999, the full diplomatic ties came in handy. The Indian Air Force (IAF) needed precision bombs to target Pakistani intruders hiding in the caves and bunkers in Kargil's mountains. After political approvals, IAF leaders reached out to their Israeli counterparts. Israel is understood to have dug into its emergency



stockpiles and shipped them to India's air bases within days. India responded to this decisive show of support by organising a series of high-profile visits to Israel in 2000, with external affairs minister Jaswant Singh leading the first-ever Indian bilateral visit to the country. Home minister L K Advani also visited that summer.

To counter criticism from the Left and minorities, the BJP-led NDA government also organised visits by Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal CM and CPI(M) leader, and Najma Heptullah, the Congress leader and deputy chairperson of Rajya Sabha, the same year.

Since then the defence and security relationship picked up pace, as was evident during Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit in September 2003.

During the Congress-led UPA government's stint, external affairs minister S M Krishna visited Israel in 2012. The conversation, then, revolved around cooperation on science and technology, agriculture and commerce. The strategic areas of defence and security were avoided in public.

After 2014

After coming to power in 2014, Modi has made the relationship much more visible. He met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2014 — the first such meeting in a decade. The Israeli defence minister also visited India the next year to openly talk about defence cooperation.

PM Modi with Netanyahu during the Israeli PM's visit to India in 2018.

RENUKA PURI/FILE

Home minister Rajnath Singh visited Israel in November 2014, followed by President Pranab Mukherjee in October 2015 (the first-ever Presidential visit from India) and external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj in January 2016. A number of Indian ministers and parliamentarians have visited the country in the last 10 years.

But what set Modi's 2017 visit apart was him skipping the stop at Palestine that was part of previous official visits. This time, too, Modi is making a standalone visit to Tel Aviv.

Netanyahu visited India on January 14-19, 2018. In the last three years, since Netanyahu was re-elected for the sixth time, Modi and the Israeli PM have spoken at least 10 times. In November 2025, pacts on defence and launch of free trade negotiations were signed. The two sides have been cooperating on a range of sectors, from AI to agriculture.

They have also developed close strategic cooperation in defence, as was seen during the recent Operation Sindoor, and cyber security, as was revealed during the Pegasus disclosures.

The changing region

In the years since Modi's first visit, the geopolitical environment has shifted considerably.

Israel and the Arab world have been attempting to normalise their ties under the Abraham Accords signed during Donald Trump's first term as US president.

Then & now
For long, India-Israel ties largely flew under the radar.

●
After coming to power in 2014, Modi has made the relationship much more visible.

● **HISTORY**

Rajaji: Respected by Gandhi and Nehru, now invoked by BJP

Nikita Mohta
New Delhi, February 24

PRESIDENT DROUPADI Murmu unveiled a bust of C Rajagopalachari in Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday, replacing one of British architect Edwin Lutyens. Announcing the change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "Rajagopalachari was among those who saw power not as a position but as a service. His conduct, self-restraint, and independent thinking in public life inspire us even today."

Role in Quit India Movement, CR formula

C Rajagopalachari was born in 1878 into a Tamil Brahmin family in the Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu. He had his first brush with political activism as a law student in Madras (now Chennai), and by 1916, he had joined Annie Besant's Home Rule League. Rajaji met Mahatma Gandhi a few years later, eventually becoming his close associate.

In 1930, he led the Salt Satyagraha in the South, marching from Trichy to Vedaranyam on the Tanjore seaboard. He was arrested twice for refusing to sign a bond

specifying peaceful behaviour.

His commitment to the movement did not mean Rajaji shied away from dissent. During the Quit India Movement in 1942, he publicly disagreed with Gandhi and argued that a Congress-Muslim League understanding was the "golden key" to freedom.

Despite reservations, Gandhi said he would assent to the "Rajaji formula". The plan required the Muslim League and the Congress to form a provisional national government, provided, among other conditions, that a plebiscite be held on the Pakistan question after the transfer of power from Britain. Jinnah rejected it.

Stance on Hindi, temple entry

Rajaji's approach to Hindi is best captured by the simile he used to describe its introduction in high schools when he was Premier of Madras in 1938 — it was like "chutney on a leaf, to be tasted or left alone". But during the 1965 anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu, he opposed Hindi as the sole official language. Author Vasanthi Srinivasan wrote in *Gandhi's Conscience Keeper* (2009), "It is not hatred for Hindi per

Independent voice

● Despite being one of Gandhi's closest associates, Rajaji disagreed with him during the Quit India movement, arguing for a Congress-Muslim League compromise.

● He had served as Home Minister under Nehru, but soon grew critical of what he saw as Congress's statist and centralising policies.

se but hostility to its imposition by the force of numbers that dominates his writings."

CR was also a leading advocate of temple entry for marginalised castes. In 1938, when Dalit leader MC Rajah introduced a Bill to punish discrimination in employment and access to public spaces, CR fully backed it.

A majority of the trustees and priests of the famous Meenakshi Temple expressed willingness to admit Dalits but feared a backlash. CR promised them protective legislation. On July 8, 1939, his friend Vaidyanatha Iyer led a group of Dalits into the temple. Receiving the news, CR was "beside himself with delight", wrote historian Rajmohan Gandhi in the biography *Rajaji: A Life* (1997).

Others reacted less favourably. A priest in Srirangam cited the shastras to justify his opposition, which led CR to respond that the shastras were "like the infinite ocean from which... one can draw pearls and coral as well as mire and shark."

Political legacy

CR had served as Home Minister under Jawaharlal Nehru, but soon grew critical of what he saw as Congress's statist and cen-

Since Modi's first visit in 2017, the geopolitical environment in West Asia has shifted considerably. The latest visit will be closely watched

The October 7, 2023 Hamas attack triggered a two-year war in which Israel killed around 70,000 people in Gaza and left much of the territory in ruins. An uneasy truce now prevails in the territory under Trump's peace plan, which now faces a crucial test — disarming Hamas. India recently attended the first Board of Peace meeting in Washington as an observer.

Then there are the tensions in Iran as the US masses its forces around the country. This comes after the 12-day war in June 2025 between Israel and Iran during which the US bombed Iranian nuclear facilities.

Clearly, the Indian government and Modi are taking the risk of travelling to Israel at a time when the region is in turmoil. For New Delhi, this is a tricky diplomatic situation where it has to weigh the cost and the benefit of the visit.

Israel is not only a key defence and security partner, it is also an important economic partner in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). And Tel Aviv is a political player with whom many countries in the region are willing to have bilateral ties.

On the other hand, Iran and other nations in West Asia are closely watching New Delhi's close relationship with Israel and weighing what impact it would have on their respective equations with India.

On the agenda

Defence, trade, AI and technology, and the IMEC project will be on the top of the agenda during Modi's visit.

Netanyahu also recently described India as a central pillar of his proposed Hexagon of Alliances which seeks to unite Israel with Greece, Cyprus and several Arab countries, besides India. Tel Aviv has framed this as a move to counter "radical adversaries". It remains to be seen if New Delhi provides legitimacy to this new formation considering its global image.

Besides, Modi and Netanyahu are expected to exchange notes on how to push the IMEC, which Israel is part of.

During the visit, Modi is slated to address the Israeli Parliament, Knesset, becoming the first Indian leader to do so. However, this moment may get entangled in Israel's domestic politics.

The country goes to the polls in October in what will be its most contentious elections in recent history. Netanyahu, who is facing political pushback, is showcasing the visit as one of his key achievements.

Modi's Israel trip will be among the most watched visits to the region.

● **SPORT**

Being Eileen Gu: Row over the American representing China at Winter Olympics

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, February 24

THE WINTER Olympics' grittiest and most glamorous skiing star Eileen Gu, an American-born athlete representing China, spent Valentine's Day on a date with 'Big Air' at the qualifiers.

The Big Air was considered one giant step for womankind in 2022, because its jaw-dropping daredevilry involved accelerating up a giant ramp that tilted at the edge, catapulting into a 20-metre orbit, spinning four-and-a-half times mid-air while rotating twice off-axis, before descending to land, floating backwards. Milano Cortina's most recognisable star picked silver here, one among six medals from six events at the Winter Games. On February 9, she had picked silver in what is considered the most "progressive" (read: daring) event of the 2026 edition, the women's slopestyle, where self-doubt, fear, and injury are one tiny mistake away. Celebrating to a Kendrick Lamar ditty, she then picked gold in the pipe event,

and proceeded to secure most Olympic medals in free ski history.

Eileen, 'Ailing' in Mandarin, would dedicate the medals, which came after a considerable battle with concussions and mental health troubles in 2025, to the woman who inspired her most — her Chinese grandmother Guozhen Feng, who passed away on Monday. "Because I promised her I'd be brave like her," the 22-year-old would say.

Her Chinese connection, however, is something that has attracted less-than-positive attention, including from the US Vice President. J D Vance told *Fox News* that he would root for "people who identify themselves as Americans". "I certainly think that somebody who grew up in the United States of America, who benefited from our education system, from the freedoms and liberties that make this country a great place, I would hope that they want to compete with the United States of America," Vance said.

SanFran & sangfroid

Eileen Gu was born in San Francisco to



Eileen Gu after winning the freestyle skiing halfpipe final at the Winter Olympics. AP

an American father and a Chinese mother. Yan Gu was frazzled watching her 3-year-old skii downhill at a breakneck speed, and steered her towards freestyle, which combines snowboarding stunts and downhill

skiing, not realising the higher risks. But the young Eileen loved to fly, and was ready to be coached.

Around 2019, she shifted allegiance to China after splitting time in both countries. Even at age 9, Eileen had competed on Chinese slopes, while simultaneously gaining proficiency in Mandarin and keeping top grades in academics back home.

In the last edition of the Games, she was pitted against two other equally hardworking American borns who turned out for China — Beverly Zhu and Ashley Lin, both figure skaters. This year, American internet chatter has propped up figure skater Alysa Liu, born to Chinese-American parents who fled communism and representing the US, to create a non-existent beef between the talented youngsters.

Her Chinese representation had stirred up controversy last time, too, when French opponent Tess Ledeux was quoted as grumbling by AP: "What I know is that she got lucky and that's only fair, she was able to train in the venues before everyone else

and that probably made a difference today." Milano Cortina proved her Beijing Winter Olympics performance wasn't a one-off. But cyberbullying has followed her over her decision to represent China.

Why China

Eileen Gu first availed of her right to represent China in 2015, saying that though it was an "incredibly tough decision," she was "proud of my heritage, and equally proud of my American upbringing."

Olympics has several athletes with dual citizenships, which allows them to switch nationalities, under Rule 41 of the Olympic Charter. Eileen's mother was born in China and went to Peking University before heading to Stanford and to a career as a venture capitalist. Young Eileen spent many summers competing on Beijing's slopes. Sports federations of many countries routinely look for talent that can represent them, even if foreign-born. China, however, does not allow dual citizenship, and this has led to added scrutiny around Eileen.

Eileen has participated in international competitions under the stars and stripes banner, but never in the Olympics.

Unfazed

Eileen — who has a net worth of USD 50 million, a successful modelling career and is pursuing international studies at Stanford University — has maintained her composure about the controversy.

"I hope people channel their effort to make this world better," she told *CGTN*. "I handle all my social media myself, so I'm the one who reads those comments. Those who ski and love sport, those furiously passionate about life and with dreams, are not the ones offending me online or spreading malevolence or rumours. I'm 22. It's part of growing up, and I know many women go through it, just that for me stakes are higher," she explained.

She is also clear about what she thinks of herself. "An 8-year-old Eileen would adore the now me, and be obsessed with me," she once replied to a journalist's question.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, BEENY SHARMA, W/O KISHAN LAL SHARMA, R/O A-65 GROUND FLOOR, DAYALBAGH, SECTOR-39, SURAJKUND, FARIDABAD, HARYANA-121009, have changed my name to BEENU SHARMA for all future purposes. 0071020735-1

I, Anita Rani W/o Sh. Vijay Kumar R/O C-1/26, Pandara Park New Delhi-110003, have changed my name from Anita Rani to Anita for all purposes in future. 0040840964-1

I, Anil Kumar S/o Shri Tejpal Singh Village Kuhadwas, Tehsil Buhana, District Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan solemnly affirm and declare that my wife's name Kabita and Kavita both are one person and her name will be Kavita for all future purposes and in all documents. 0040840959-1

I, Anil Kumar S/o J. Chandrasekhara Pillai R/o 23G, Pocket B3, Mayur Vihar Phase-3, Delhi also known and using my name as Anil Kumar. C.P. for all purposes. Both the above names are pertained to be the same person. 0040840961-1

I, Alic David S/o Joseph David R/O RZ-105, Third Floor, Gali No-14, Tughlakabd Extn New DELHI-110019 have changed my name to Alic David for all future purposes 0071020808-1

I, (Mahaveer Saran Jain) S/O (Vinay Kumar Jain) born on (05-10-1982) residing at (H. 88-2A Nehru Gali West Sant Nagar Burari Delhi - 110084), have changed my name to (Mahaveer Jain) vide affidavit dated (20-02-2026) at (Sant Nagar Burari Delhi-110084) 0040840729-1

I, Shalini Dubey alias Shalini Shukla D/o Kamlesh Dubey W/o Mayank Shukla R/o Flat No.103, Gayatri Vatika, First Floor, Gauri Chaukhandi Pusta Road, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201307 have changed my name to Shalini Shukla for all purposes. 0040840960-1

I, Ria Vijay Singh D/o Vijay Chandramohan Singh R/o Flat. No.702 Tower-3 Imax Nri City, GH-2 Greater Noida Uttar Pradesh, have changed my name to RIA V SINGH For All Future Purposes. 0071020759-1

I, Ramesh Goel S/o Gokul Prajapati R/o 38, Gali No-3, Bhagwat Colony, West Sant Nagar, Burari, Delhi-110084, have changed my name to R K Prajapati 0071020737-1

I, Ramesh Chander Maini, S/o Harbans Lal Maini R/o FA-134, Mansarovar Garden Delhi-110015 Changed my Name to Ramesh Maini 0040841092-1

I, Rajiv Goswami S/o Suresh Chand R/o 404-A1, Fourth Floor Right Side Portin, Gali No-5, Kalkaji, Govindpuri, South Delhi - 110019, have changed my name to Rajeev Goswami 0071020798-1

I, Parma Nand S/o Late Sh. Ghisa Ram R/o H.No. 2/6071, 4th Floor, Block 2, Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005 have changed my name from Parma Nand to Parmanand Satolia for all future purposes. 0040841073-1

I, Omkar Ajay Lengare S/o Ajay Bharat Lengare, Address- K-75-B, First floor Lajpat nagar-2 Delhi-110024, changed my name to Omkar Lengare 0040841094-1

I, Montoo Das S/O, Paritosh Das R/o B 603 DDA Flats Kalkaji New Delhi 110019 have changed my name to Montu Das. 0040840969-1

I, Md Juvaidd Alam S/o Nizamudin R/o B-164, Sharda Vats Enclave, Prem Nagar-3, Kirari Suleman Nagar, Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Zuber Alam 0071020794-1

I, Akanshu Goel S/o Sunil Goel R/O C-23A, Mahindra Park, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my name to Akanshu Goel. 0040841095-1

I, Mahesh Kumar Sakya S/O, Heera Lal Shakya R/O House No.56 Gali No C 13, Surendra Colony Part-1, Jharoka Majra Delhi-110084 have changed my name to Mahesh Kumar Shakya and My Wife Name to Laxmi Devi from Laxmi Shakya. 0040840970-1

I, Kuljeet Kaur Sandhu d/o Jaspal Sandhu r/o E-166, Mansaram Park, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 changed my name to KULJEET KAUR. 0040841031-1

I, Gandhari Nigam Alias G Nigam D/o Balram Nigam and W/o Atul Bhalla R/o D-7/7171, Vasant Kunj, Delhi-110078, have changed my name to Gandhari Bhalla 0071020785-1

I, Gagandeep S/o-Kuldeep Singh R/o-D-305, Rohini Heights Apartment, Sector-29, Rohini, Delhi-110042 have changed my name to Gagandeep Singh for all purposes. 0040841035-1

I, KANWALJEET SINGH, S/O, JAGJIT SINGH, R/O, A-314, AIP THE PEACEFUL HOME, SECTOR 70A, PALRA ROAD, GURGOAN-122001, have changed my name to KANWALJEET SINGH BHATIA. 0040841100-1

I, Deepak S/o Shardhanand, R/O H.No.67, Village Dhanwas, Gurgaon(Haryana)-122505, have changed my name to Deepak Yadav for all Purposes. 0040841095-3

I, SHALINI MANMOHAN SHARMA, W/O-MANMOHAN SHARMA R/O-B-4/6, SAFADARJUNG ENCLAVE, NEW DELHI-110029, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SHALINI SHARMA. 0040841065-2

It is for general information that I, Shivam Kumar S/O Rambrij R/O N-118/R-13, Wazirpur Village, Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as Ramesh Kumar in my 10th and 12th Class Educational Documents. The actual name of my father is Rambrij respectively which may be amended accordingly. 0040841093-2

I, Yashveer Singh, F/o-Arun Kumar R/O, Village + post-Bhainsi, District- Muzaffarnagar, Uttar-Pradesh, Pin-251201, have changed my name from Yashveer Singh to Jasbir, vide-affidavit dated-24/02/2026 0040841092-9

I, Viraj w/o. Purna Shankar Bhalke R/o.26, Ishwari Nagar, Diversion Road, Khargone, Madhya Pradesh-451001, have changed my name to VIRAJ BHALKE permanently 0040841095-6

I, Unnati Mehndiratta W/o Tarun Mehndiratta R/o PP-2, Second Floor, Pitampura, Maurya Enclave Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Unnati Mehndiratta 0040841091-1

I, URMIL JINDAL, W/O KRISHAN LAL JINDAL, R/O Plot no 349, 2nd Floor Block KP, Mandir Pitampura Delhi-110034, have Changed my name to URMILA JINDAL. 0040841092-4

I, Surender Singh, S/o Sh. Balwan Singh R/o H.No.-3, Block-E, Rajeev Nagar, Village Begum Pur, Delhi-110086, have changed my name Surender Yadav. 0040841095-2

I, Saud Arshad, R/o H.No.-2, Street No-D-3, Shahi Masjid, D-Block, Vasant Vihar-1, South West-Delhi-110057, have changed my minor son name Asaad ur Rahman to Asad ur Rahman. 0040841094-4

I, Sanjeeta Barman w/o. Hrishikesh Barman, R/O, H.No.103, Zamrudpur, GK-1, New Delhi-110048, have changed my name to SANJITA BARMAN permanently 0040841095-5

I, Reeti Tyagi, w/o Deepak Nagar, R/O H-NO-7, Block-E, Axis House, Sector-27, Noida Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, have changed my name from Reeti Nagar to Reeti Tyagi for all future purposes. 0040841094-7

I, SURJEET KANTA KINGER, W/O-NARENDAR KUMAR KINGER, residing at, 503, LINK APARTMENTS, 18P EXTENSION, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to SURJEET KANTA, for all future purposes. 0040841092-5

I, SIMRANJEET KAUR, W/O-DILRAJ GILL, Address-B.105, 3 FLOOR B.BLOCK, BUDD BAZAR ROAD CHAUKHANDI TILAK NAGAR-110018, changed my name to SIMRAN GILL. 0040841065-6

I, SHATRUGHAN KUMAR RAM S/O RAM SAKAL RAM R/O WZ-35, GROUND FLOOR, HARI SINGH PARK, NEW MULTAN NAGAR, PASCHIM VIHAR, DELHI-110056, have changed my name to SHATRUGHAN KUMAR. 0040841093-3

I, SEEMA W/o PRADEEP KUMAR MEHRA R/o-A-3/28 GF, Sector-16, Rohini Delhi-110089, have changed my name to SEEMA MEHRA. 0040841094-3

I, Rahul S/o-chunni Lal kashyap, Address-Rz-A-18/B, Pul prahaladpur badarpur new delhi jaitpur, Delhi-110044, have changed my name to Rahul Kashyap. 0040841065-4

I, Radha Sharma, W/O Pawan Kumar, R/o, MIG Flat-no.329, G/F Pocket-A, Phase-2, Dwarka, Sector-17, South-West Delhi-110077, have changed my name to Radha. 0040841065-9

I, PRADEEP KUMAR S/O PURAN CAHND MEHRA R/o-A-3/28 GF Sector-16, Rohini Delhi-110089, have changed my name to PRADEEP KUMAR MEHRA 0040841094-2

I, P S Bhalke alias Purna Shankar Bhalke, S/o. Babul Bhalke, R/o. 26, Ishwari Nagar, Diversion-Road, Khargone, Madhya Pradesh-451001, have declared that P S Bhalke-and-PURNA SHANKAR BHALKE, both are same person. 0040841095-7

I, Neelam Maurya, W/O. Mukesh Kumar, R/O, H.No-63, Chhawla Extension Kanganheri-Road, Chhawla, New Delhi-110071, have changed my name to Neelam, for all, future purposes. 0040841065-7

I, NIRMAL THAURANI, S/O AVAT RAM R/O-46, 4TH FLOOR, POKET-15A, SECTOR-24, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, have changed my name to NIRMAL KUMAR THAURANI 0040841091-3

I, MOHAMMAD HANNAN, S/O MOHAMMAD IBRAHIM R/O 6240, GROUND FLOOR, PAKKI GALI, BARA HINDU RD, DELHI-110006, have changed my name to ABDUL HANNAN, for all future Purposes. 0040841094-5

I, REETU CHOUDHARY, W/O ARUN KUMAR Resident of Plot.No-26, 27, 33, Flat.No-402, 4th-Floor, Sector-107, Opp-Lotus.300, Gautam Budh Nagar, PIN-201304, P.O-Barola, have changed my name from REETU CHOUDHARY TO REETU SANKLA. Henceforth I would be known by the name of REETU SANKLA, for all future purposes. 0040840966-1

I, Manoj Vijay, S/o Devi Sahai Vijay R/O 3875/25, Raigar Pura Karol bagh Delhi-110005 changed my name to Manoj Kumar Vijay 0040841092-3

I, Khemchand S/o, Late Sua Ram, R/o, B-224, J.J.Colony, Madipur, New Delhi-110063, that my father's name is wrongly mentioned in my Aadhar-Card as Suva Ram instead of his correct name Sua Ram. 0040841065-10

I, Kajal w/o-sunil kumar r/o, G-26/89-90, first floor sector-3, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to KAJAL KUMARI for all purposes. 0040841065-8

I, Jitendrakumar Jayantil Patel, S/O-Patel Jayantil Bikhhabhai, R/O House Number-113 Masoodpur Dairy, Vasant-Kunj, South West-Delhi-110070, Have Changed My Name to Jitendrakumar Jayantibhai Patel. 0040841092-2

I, Shabnam W/o Gaffar R/o 38A, Ashok Vihar, Loni Dehat, Ghaziabad, have changed my name to Shabnam Prveen. 0071020761-1

I, GAURAV GUPTA, S/O PARMOD KUMAR GUPTA alias PRAMOD GUPTA, R/O-131/1, KH.NO-62, GALLI, NO-5, SM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, KAUSHAL PURI, CHAUHAN PATTI, KARAWAL NAGAR, NORTH EAST, DELHI-110094, inform that my father's name PARMOD KUMAR GUPTA alias PRAMOD GUPTA, both names are same person. 0040841094-6

I, FIROZ AHMAD S/O-NABIYAAS KHAN R/O-A-11 T-Huts, Sanjay Camp Chanakya Puri Delhi, has changed my name to FIROZ, for all purpose 0040841091-5

I, Chander Kanta Taneja, W/o, Shri Subhash Chander Tarneja R/O, F-7, Kirti-Nagar, New-Delhi-110015, Inform that Chander Kanta Tarneja and Chander Kanta Taneja refer to one and the same person. 0040841091-10

I, Chakresh Kumar Jain S/o Vijay Kumar Jain, R/O-House No.1/9249/C-4, Plot No.78, Street.No-7, Near-Kamia Nehru-Park, West-Rohtas Nagar, Shahdara, North East Delhi, Delhi-110032, have changed the name of my minor Son Siddhit jain aged 06 years and he shall hereafter be known as HARDIK JAIN. 0040841065-11

I, Brijesh Kumar S/o Suresh Singh R/O C-21, C Block, Begum Vihar, Begumpur, Delhi-110086 changed my name to Brijesh Singh. 0040841100-2

I, BHUBNESWAR BRAHMA, R/O Sh. Magha Ram Brahma, R/o H.No. Qtr.No-55, Sec-5, Pushp Vihar, M.B. Road, New Delhi-110017, have changed my child named from BIBEK BRAHMA VIVEK BRAHMA, for all future purpose. 0040841094-8

I, Amit Joon, R/o, Village- Deshalpur (48) Po Noona Majra Teh. Badli Distt Jhajar Haryana. Have changed my Minor Son Karthik to Karthik Joon, for all purposes 0040841065-3

I, Aman S/o-Neeraj Kumar, R/o H.No.7/111, Raho Bahadury Wali Gali, Modal Town, Haridwargh Distt-Jhajjar (Haryana)-124507, have changed my name to Aman Grover. 0040841095-4

I, ASHWANI KUMAR, S/O PREM SWAROOP R/O F-202, SECOND FLOOR, GALI NO-6, MANGAL BAZAR, DELHI-110092, Have Changed My Name To ASHWANI VERMA For All Future Purposes 0040841092-6

I, ALAM GEER, S/O-SHER KHAN, R/O-HNO-D-167, STNO-21 NEAR-NOOR MASJID OLD MUSTAFABAD, DELHI-110094, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME ALAM GIR TO ALAM GEER FOR ALL PURPOSES. 0040841065-1

I, Yash Pal Singh, son of Brij Ballabh, residing at FLAT No.132, GROUND FLOOR, RADHA CITY, GOVERDHAN ROAD, SATOHA ASGARPUR, MATHURA, UTTAR PRADESH Pincode-281004, have changed my name to Yashpal Singh for all purposes. 0071020760-1

I, Vijender Kumar s/o Kashmiri Lal Gupta R/o G-4/29-30, sector 16, Rohini Delhi 89 have changed my name to Vijender Kumar Gupta. 0071020790-1

I, Udaypal Singh S/O Ganga Singh Rawat R/O EU-16A, Vishaka Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Udaypal Singh Rawat. 0040841093-1

I, Thakur Sweta Singh W/o Vishok Singh R/O Flat No.B-1401, Amrapali Eden Park, Sector-50, Noida, Guatambuddha nagar, Uttarpradesh-201301, have changes my name to Sweta Singh. 0071020740-1

I, Sayar Devi Sethia W/o Amar Chand Sethia R/O F-13/5, Model Town-11, Delhi-110009 have changed my name to SHASHI SETHIA for all future purposes. 0040841054-1

I, Sachin Dabas S/o No. JC46811L Rank Ex Sub Nitranjan Singh R/O Sulttan Pur Dabas, North West Delhi-110039 have changed my name to Sachin Kumar vide affidavit date 23-2-26 before Delhi. 0071020757-1

I, Ravi S/o Rajesh Kumar Sood, I-1029A, Gali No-23, Hari Nagar Extn., Jaitpur, Delhi-44 have changed my name to Ravi Sood. 0071020788-1

I, O C Sharma, S/o-Dev Raj Sharma, Address-G-4/104, first floor, NEO Town, GH-03, Opposite to Nirala Estate Tech Zone 4 Greater noida Gautam Budha nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201306, have changed my name to Onkar Chand Sharma 0040841065-5

I, Prince Wasan S/o Om Prakash Wason, R/o 11/22, GF, Patel Nagar, New Delhi-8, declares that henceforth my name will be known as PRINCE WASON for all purpose. 0040840971-3

I, Poonam Saini W/o Amit Kumar R/O Flat No-159, OM Apartment, Pocket -2, Dwarka, Sector-14, Delhi - 110078, have changed my minor daughter's name from Yoshi aged 12 years to Yoshi Saini forever 0071020799-1

I, OM PRAKASH BANSAI S/o Tej Pal, R/o 336-C, Hari Nagar, Ashram, New Delhi-110014, have changed my name to OM PRAKASH for all purposes. 0040840971-2

I, Nuzhat Malik W/o Malik Mohammad Zafar, 131-C, Pocket-A, DDA Flats, Sukhdev Vihar, Delhi-25 have changed my name to Nuzhat Jahan. 0071020783-1

I, Nitin Singh s/o Rajender Singh, R/o 33-B, Suvai Bari Road, Nathuwakhan, Bareilly, PO: Devdwar, Nainital, Uttarakhand-263158, have changed my name to Nitin Singh Biroriya. 0040840971-1

I, Neetu Taneja d/o Vijay Ahuja R/o B-3/455, FF, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063 have changed my name to NEETU AHUJA 0040840972-1

I, Monpal Chopra s/o Krishan Lal r/o A-22, Manak Vihar, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to MONPAL 0040840972-3

I, Mohd. Saleem S/O Samay Din R/O H.No.225, J- Extn., Street No.6, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092 have changed my name from Saleem Ahmed to Mohd. Saleem for all future purposes. 0040840975-1

I, Kalpana Devi Sachan d/o Ram Chander Sachan r/o RZ-26P/53A, Gali-37, Indra Park, Palam Colony, Delhi-110045 have changed my name to KALPANA SACHAN 0040840972-2

I, KM ASHA W/O-NARENDRA SINGH, R/O 6, 3RD FLOOR, POKET-14, SECTOR-22, ROHINI, DELHI-110086, have changed my name to ASHA DEVI 0040841091-2

I, KESHAV KUMAR ROY, S/O Vijay Kumar Roy, R/O B-115, Gali no 9, Jaitpur EXTN part-2, South Delhi-110044, have changed my name to KESHAV BHARDWAJ for all future purposes. 0130062189-1

I, Jiwan Sehgal (DOB-01/11/1955) W/o Late Shri S.C. Sehgal R/O G-91, Gete No-5, Chandani Street-2, Alfa-2, Greater Noida Dist. G.B.Nagar, U.P-201310 have changed my name & Date of Birth to Radhika Sehgal (DOB-07/09/1956) for all future purposes. 0071020801-1

I, Gayatri, W/o-Siddharth Goyal, R/O-WZ-104, Plot No.G-93, Street No.6, G-block, Hari Nagar, Delhi-110058, have changed my name to Gayatri Goel 0040841091-4

I, Jigyasa Wadhwa, R/o H.No.10, Road No.57, West Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi-110026, have changed my daughter's name from Heer Wadhwa to Heer J Wadhwa (DOB:09-08-2025), for all purposes. 0040840973-1

I, JAY KISHAN KUMAR S/O RAMESH SAH R/O WARD NO-07 VILL PURPATHAR, BEGUSARAI, BIHAR-848204, declares that henceforth my name will be known as RAJU KUMAR for all purposes. 0040841049-1

I, Geeta Devi, have changed my name to Gita Yadav and shall hereafter be known as Gita Yadav for all purposes. 0130062186-1

I, Chinkey Grover W/o Bhaskar Panchoi R/O H-2101, Great Value Sharanam, Sector-107, Noida, UP-201301, have changed my name to AASHI PANCHOLI for all future purposes. 0071020762-1

I, Himanshu Sehgal S/o Sh. S.D. Sehgal has to inform that we have misplaced the Original Allotment Letter, Possession Letter and Share Certificate in respect to Flat Bearing No. 101, Link Apartments, Plot No.18, I.P. Extension, Patparganj, Delhi-110092 and the same is not traceable by my best efforts. Mobile No: 9220238650 0040840967-1

I, Ranjana, W/O-Late Raj Pal Singh, Have Lost Share-Certificate Of Flat.No.A-12, Shivlok Apartment, Group Housing Society, Plot.No-6, Sector-6, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075, Finder Contact: 070119 41959 0040841095-11

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I, Baganal Kumar S/O Sh. Ram Gosal R/O HOUSE NO.-199-200, POKET-5, SECTOR-22, ROHINI, BEGUMPUR, NORTH WEST DELHI-110086 have lost my original Perpetual Lease of Property executed by DSIIDC HAVING ADDRESS PLOT NO.57 POKET-M SEC-1 DSIIDC BAWANA IND AREA DELHI-110039 in favour of Sh. ANAND PRODUCTS proprietor Basant Kumar. Finders may contact at above address. Phone no.9811597858 0040840960-2

I, PUNYISH JAIN, S/O LATE S P JAIN, R/O: F-180A, WEST GURU ANGAD NAGAR, LAXMI NAGAR, DELHI-110092. MY BUILDER BUYER AGREEMENT FOR MY FLAT NO. B3-1107, IN AMRAPALI DREAM VALLEY, PHASE-2, GREATER NOIDA HAS LOST SOMEWHERE (E FIR NO.: 124469/2026). PLEASE RETURN, IF FOUND AT MY ABOVE RES. ADDRESS. 0040841040-1

I, Rakesh Kumar Ailawadi, S/O, Krishan Chandra Ailawadi Owner of House.No. 172, Sector-19, Dwarka, New-Delhi-110075, have lost my Original-Conveyance Deed Dated:22/04/2004, On-10/02/2026 at around 2 P.M.I was going to the market of Sector-19, Dwarka to get photocopy of the same. If found please contact at-9871493123. 0040841092-10

I, Rakesh Kumar Ailawadi, S/O, Krishan Chandra Ailawadi Owner of House.No. 172, Sector-19, Dwarka, New-Delhi-110075, have lost my Original-Conveyance Deed Dated:22/04/2004, On-10/02/2026 at around 2 P.M.I was going to the market of Sector-19, Dwarka to get photocopy of the same. If found please contact at-9871493123. 0040841092-10

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CROSSWORD

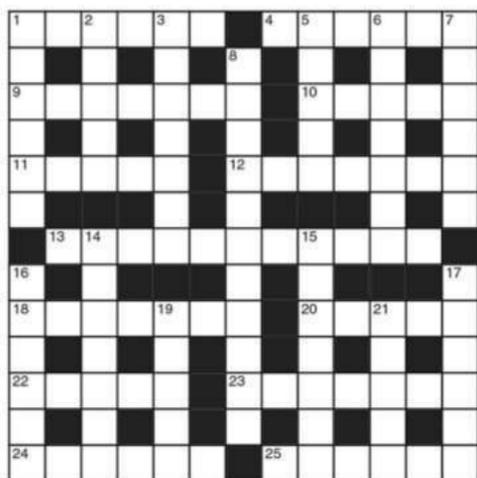
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OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

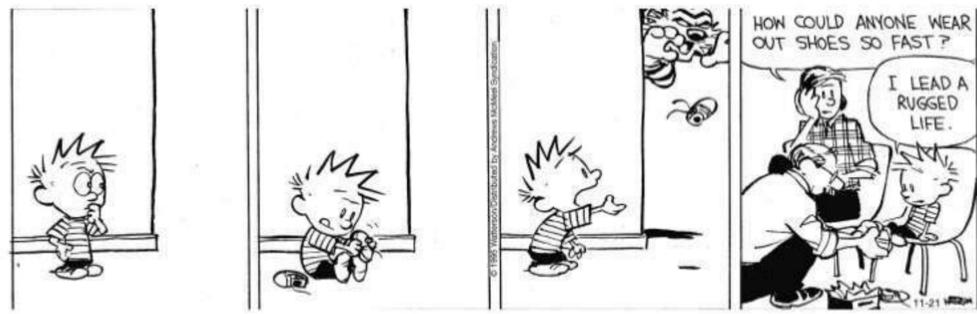


ACROSS
1 Aim to express disapproval (6)
4 Empty talk over the Sahara? (3,3)
9 One can't alter what's inborn (7)
10 Like the cubed root of carrot perhaps (5)
11 She gets it pat perhaps (5)
12 Stories about raids (7)
13 A status symbol (5,2,4)
18 Decorate one way or the other (7)
20 Clergyman provides transport after six (5)
22 Enter the lists? (5)
23 Use this and presumably all's well (7)
24 One who cares to make an offer (6)
25 Commander left lacking several divisions (6)
DOWN
1 Busy tenant (6)
2 Girl making article in stone (5)
3 Third-class packaging? (7)
5 Give instructions to society (5)
6 Where lots go despite rising prices (7)
7 The pungent root in an extra dish (6)
8 It checks on underground movement (11)
14 Longin' for a painkiller (7)
15 Even in sorrow taxpayers contribute to it (7)
16 Important advocate not without heart (6)
17 In time a little beast will make mistakes (6)
19 It naturally beats peas and beans (5)
21 Long after getting key to the treasure (5)



CALVIN & HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5920 ACROSS: 1 Infanta, 5 Secco, 8 Press for money, 9 Lehar, 10 Impious, 11 Grille, 12 Apathy, 15 Offence, 17 Roods, 19 Breaking point, 20 Ended, 21 Sweater DOWN: 1 Impel, 2 Fresh-air fiend, 3 Nostril, 4 Adonis, 5 Sum up, 6 Contortionist, 7 Odyssey, 11 Goodbye, 13 Porkpie, 14 Tennis, 16 Naked, 18 Satyr

JUMBLER WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

There is no _but_ - Christopher Marlowe (3,..9)

Word jumble puzzle with letters O, A, T, E, R and G, I, N, N, N in circles. Includes a grid of letters and a list of words: OATER, GIUNNN, CNIO, COIGNS.

Sudoku puzzle with difficulty level 2s. Includes instructions for solving and a grid of numbers.

उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग (Uttarakhand Public Service Commission) recruitment notice for various posts.

NORTHERN RAILWAY Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system for supply of various items.

RAJASTHAN GRAMEEN AAJIVIKA VIKAS PARISHAD Corrigendum notice regarding tender details.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice for supply of water treatment equipment.

VACANCIES/EMPALEMENT OF STAFF IN AF SCHOOL AGRA table listing various posts and vacancies.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल (Rajasthan Housing Board) notice regarding tender for housing projects.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 CrPC.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD Invitation of Bids - Item War (Two Cover System) Second call (Short Term) e-Submission.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल (Rajasthan Housing Board) notice regarding tender for housing projects.

PROVISION OF POWER SUPPLY REDUNDANCY notice regarding power supply redundancy.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD Invitation of Bids - Item War (Two Cover System) Second call (Short Term) e-Submission.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD Invitation of Bids - Two Cover - Item War Tender System (E-Submission - Short Term) (2nd Call).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C. / 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C. / 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

PAKISTAN ON THE BRINK

Brook leads from the front with a ton to complete imperfect chase

Skipper chose Tuesday to make a statement as a batsman and a leader, taking England to the WC semi-finals

Tushar Bhaduri
New Delhi, February 24

THE LAST few months haven't been kind to Harry Brook. Many would say that's his own doing. The ghosts of the night out in Wellington at the start of November had not left him since, prompting several apologies — first for going out on the eve of leading his team in an ODI and getting punched by a nightclub bouncer, and then for lying to protect his teammates.

It didn't help that he hadn't done much with the bat since, either in the Ashes — where the manner of some of his dismissals had England supporters pulling their hair — or in the T20 World Cup till now.

But the England skipper

chose Tuesday to make a statement as a batsman and a leader as his 51-ball 100 almost single-handedly took England to the semifinals with a two-wicket win over Pakistan in Pallekele with five balls to spare.

After the washout against New Zealand, Pakistan now need to beat Sri Lanka and hope for other results to go their way to have a chance of progress.

England had been scratchy throughout the tournament and didn't play the perfect game on Tuesday either. Their fielding was well below par, and their chase of 165 had got off to a poor start as Shaheen Shah Afridi showed some of the prowess he has been known for, taking three powerplay wickets to reduce the two-time cham-



Harry Brook scored a 51-ball ton to lead England to the win. AP

ions to 35/3 inside five overs.

Brook walked out to bat after Phil Salt was dismissed off the first ball of the innings — the first time he had batted at No.3 in his T20I career — and the captain counter-attacked with aplomb even as wickets continued to fall at the other end, scoring 100 of

• SUPER 8 GROUP 2

POS	TEAM	PLAYED	WON	LOST	N/R	NET RR	POINTS
1	England	2	2	0	0	+1.491	4
2	New Zealand	1	0	0	1	0	1
3	Pakistan	2	0	1	1	-0.461	1
4	Sri Lanka	1	1	0	0	-2.550	0

the 155 runs scored while he was in the middle. His knock can be put in proper context as none of the other batsmen in the top five reached double figures. In fact, apart from Brook, who got out with 10 runs left to get and saw two more wickets fall to engineer a nervy finish, only Will Jacks (28) and Sam Curran (16) did.

The regular departure of his teammates never fazed Brook as he got to work with a boundary and a six off left-arm seamer Salman Mirza in the second over. Pace or spin, offside or on-side, all were treated with equal disdain. He, by and large, targeted the straight boundaries — even off the back foot — and

often made room to hit over the offside. The sweep was also put to good effect, and the number of twos that England ran on the large field had Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha frustrated.

But it was not all indiscriminate hitting. Recognising that spinner Usman Tariq (2/31) were Pakistan's main weapons on the day, but the other spinners — Saim Ayub, Mohammad Nawaz and Shadab Khan — hardly had any impact when it really mattered.

Despite losing wickets, the required run rate was always

under control, and once Brook had a stable ally in Jacks, their 52-run stand off 31 balls more or less settled the matter.

In the first 20 overs, there were ground-fielding errors and the rare dropped catch, but Pakistan were always behind the par score on the surface. Sahibzada Farhan, their best batsman in the tournament, was the main contributor here also, but was dismissed for a 45-ball 63 with more than four overs left.

As for Babar Azam, he looked to mean business when he came in at 27/2 in the fourth over, but a 24-ball 25 didn't serve Pakistan's purpose. England had a match against the Kiwis before the semifinals and would hope Jos Buttler gets into some kind of rhythm after looking woefully short of form again.

BRIEF SCORES: Pakistan 164/9 in 20 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 63; Liam Dawson 3/24) lost to England 166/8 in 19.1 overs (Harry Brook 100; Shaheen Shah Afridi 4/30) by two wickets.

Angst, energy and supla; India mean business at Chepauk



Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson at practice in Chennai. PTI

Sandip G
Chennai, February 24

THREE MINIATURE pop-up nets were mounted parallel to each other. Two had a set of portable plastic stumps apiece; a size four football was placed beneath the third. India's cricketers, in a straight column, stood crouched. One of the support staff would throw them the ball from a sideways angle. Each time, they had to aim at a different net and hit the object. Hitting the plastic stumps was straightforward, but the football — which kept shifting in the light breeze — was not. It was the cricketing equivalent of hitting a moving target in archery. Shivam Dube completed the treble first, a feat his teammates celebrated by piling over him.

Their screams and shrieks sliced the balmy air, the sea breeze ferrying them to Wallajah Road and beyond. In the first practice session after the shuddering defeat in Ahmedabad, India were louder than usual.

A few fans lingered on the pavement outside the gate, peeping through a square crack to see if anyone was training at the Muthu Nets. They chanted names into the silence as the team largely confined themselves to the makeshift nets in the main ground. The defeat had not doused their passion — if anything, it had only intensified the hunger for a comeback.

Stoic face

The fielding session was intense, elaborate, and perceptibly fun. The plastic stumps bore the brunt of their throws — flat, powerful, the defeat's frustration channelled into every release. Informal laughter and chatter pierced the arena, like the eve of a wedding. At least outwardly, they wore a stoic face ahead of their must-win game against Zimbabwe. To bounce back and resurrect their campaign is the sternest test Suryakumar Yadav's men have faced in recent memory.

Aggression carried into the nets. Tilak Varma — his strike rate in the tournament a tepid 118.88 — showed that his big strokes had not rusted. He unleashed a brace of fearsome slog sweeps and then sashayed down the surface and lifted Washington Sundar over his

head with a languid extension of his arms. Circumstances had forced a wary approach in the tournament and the criticisms had been mounting, but here he offered an unambiguous glimpse of his true instincts.

Watching the fireworks, Suryakumar couldn't resist. When his turn came, he got off the mark with a fiercely whipped flick that cleared a long boundary from where he stood. He urged Axar Patel to target his pads — and then worked through his full repertoire: the paddle sweep, the orthodox sweep, the slog sweep kissing the night sky. The supla arrived on cue.

Abhishek update

The pair fed entirely on spinners. Varun Chakaravathy repeatedly bowled his leg-breaks — he had rediscovered the drop that had eluded him in Ahmedabad. Kuldeep Yadav, whose lone appearance in the tournament came against Pakistan, had a long haul. So did Abhishek Sharma, who — as he had done the day before the South Africa game — kept trundling his left-arm spin rather than batting. Towards the end, more than two hours in, Abhishek finally came to bat. He didn't go full blast, but interspersed the high notes with slow riffs — before producing one moment for the night: a gorgeous pull.

The adjacent nets, on either edge of the square and separated by the centre pitch, were the pacers' den. Gautam Gambhir and Mornel Morkel circled the area like real estate agents beside a prime property. It was faster and sharper in there. Mohammed Siraj revved up his pace and probed Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan with short balls. Samson — potentially in the equation for the Zimbabwe game to restore the right-left balance — later moved to the Muthu Nets for throwdowns from Ryan Ten Doeschate, putting in extra time after the main session wound down.

Everyone in the batting lineup, except Rinku Singh, had a hit. The mood throughout was the same — intent, purposeful, slightly feverish — as balls flew across the ground and shadows lengthened. The thumping clatter of bat on ball kept resonating, the wind carrying it to Wallajah Road and beyond.

Rinku flies home ahead of Zimbabwe clash

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, February 24

INDIA'S MIDDLE-ORDER batsman Rinku Singh has flown home from Chennai for personal reasons, two days ahead of their Super 8 match against Zimbabwe in the T20 World Cup. It is understood that Rinku, who arrived in the city with the team on Monday, left for New Delhi on Tuesday morning, but is expected to re-join the team on Wednesday.

48 hours before the must-win fixture, India had a full-fledged training session at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. Apart from Rinku, the rest of the batting unit had a long and lengthy net session, with Sanju Samson in particular receiving plenty of attention from the coaching staff.

As previously reported, including Samson for the Zimbabwe fixture has been among India's discussions. With Abhishek Sharma struggling at the top and Ishan Kishan not offering favourable match-ups against off-spinners, there have been discussions to break the pattern by including Samson. But the move would see other batsmen drop a position, which could add to the chaos. To prevent that, there have been discussions of Suryakumar Yadav at No.3.

Which way India lean remains to be seen, as alternatively, the idea of using Shivam Dube as a floater at No.3 also seems to be part of their thinking. The left-hander, who has incredible hitting power against the spinners, can make opponents revisit their strategy of operating with the tweekers in the powerplay.

Meanwhile, a batting-friendly surface has been rolled out for India's fixture.

Pitch No.5 has been hand-picked and unlike other venues, where India have encountered slow, tacky surfaces, the pitch at Chepauk promises runs with a par total expected to be around 180-190. That it is the centre pitch means spinners don't need to worry about short boundaries.

ICC T20 WORLD CUP

India's middle-overs trump card looks for redemption at home

Varun faces Zimbabwe in a must-win game at Chepauk, carrying the weight of his reinvention from 2021

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, February 24

THE GROUND will be familiar. So will the pressure. On Thursday, Varun Chakaravathy returns to Chepauk — his home, his people, his pitch — for what is effectively a knockout game for India at the T20 World Cup. The must-win fixture against Zimbabwe comes on the back of a chastening defeat to South Africa, where the Proteas appeared to hand the world a blueprint for dismantling him. And that exposed something uncomfortable: despite the presence of Jasprit Bumrah, India are heavily reliant on Varun in the middle overs. When he has an off day, there is simply no reliable Plan B.

The scrutiny, then, is intense. But those who know him best will tell you: he has been here before.

It was soon after Varun landed in Chennai following the 2021 T20 World Cup — a tournament India failed to get past the group stages of, one where he had paid the heaviest price. The mystery wasn't working, and he was the first casualty. Threats flooded his social media. His place in Indian cricket felt suddenly, terrifyingly uncertain. And it was in that moment, in that city, that he called his mentor AC Pratheepan and dropped a line that would change his career.

"Anna, I'm gonna let go of my stock delivery and move from the side spin to over spin."

"The 2021 World Cup was his first big tournament aside from the IPL. There was a lot of expectation on him, which wasn't fulfilled. He was left out after just one game, and the threats on-

“To suddenly be in the Indian team, doing yo-yo tests, standing next to Virat Kohli and Hardik Pandya — that's probably the most intimidating thing he faced.”

AKKIL SRINAATH,
ON WHY VARUN HAD TO WORK ON HIS FITNESS

line were intense," Pratheepan recalls. "In those circumstances, he walked up to me and said he wanted to change everything that made him. He had got there because of his stock delivery — the carrom ball. To let go of that isn't easy. But he chose to be brave at his lowest point. You need b***s to do that."

Moving to over spin opened new dimensions. The ball now hits the top half of the bat more consistently, denying batsmen the sweet spot, and the extra bounce has made him significantly harder to read. "I remember him telling me, 'Anna, if I get this ball sorted, I'll be the best bowler,'" Pratheepan says. "And he has just walked the talk."

Their conversations these days have a different quality. "Initially, it would take a lot of time for us to agree on whether something would work. Now that time has reduced dramatically — we understand the limitations clearly. We mostly talk about the mental side and making sure he is at peace," Pratheepan says.

The bowling reinvention, though, was only half the story.



Varun Chakaravathy will get an immediate opportunity to bounce back from the South Africa match on Thursday. (Right) The spinner implemented a fitness plan with friend Akkil Srinaath. PTI/INSTAGRAM

Despite taking wickets consistently in the IPL, the India call-up kept being delayed by fitness concerns. After a standout IPL in 2024 still didn't bring the national recall, his friend Akkil Srinaath offered a blunt assessment when they met during the Tamil Nadu Premier League.

"Without sugar-coating, I told him, 'Machi, your fitness is your weakness.' He had everything else, but fitness was the only reason he wasn't in the Indian team. He didn't even have a personal coach for his training. That got him thinking," Akkil says. "After TNPL, we started working together with one clear target: the 2026 T20 World Cup."

Fitness programme

A rigorous 16-month programme followed. The first two months were dedicated en-

tirely to running, before nutrition was addressed and weight-loss work began in earnest. Varun has since shed around 10 kilograms. The transformation in his fielding has been equally striking — from a player the team management had to carefully hide in certain positions, he became someone who asked captain Suryakumar Yadav if he could patrol the long-on boundary.

"I don't blame him for not having that fitness awareness earlier — he wasn't a cricketer who came through the system. He was an architect. To suddenly be in the Indian team, doing yo-yo tests, standing next to Virat Kohli and Hardik Pandya — that's probably the most intimidating thing he faced," Akkil says. "His bowling got him up the ladder from TNPL to IPL to India. But to succeed at this level, fitness

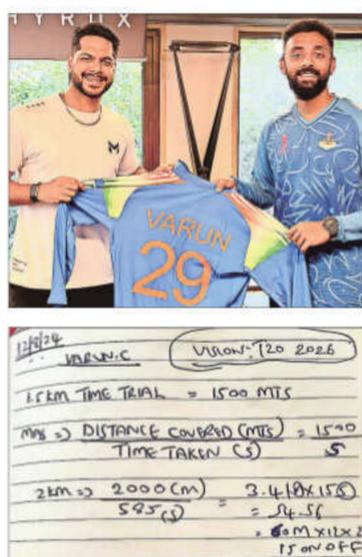
was non-negotiable."

Through all of it, the man himself has remained unchanged. When he is with Pratheepan, a good chunk of their time goes into discussing the movie scripts Varun has been writing. Some days, he still puts on his architect's hat and adds colour to a house or two.

And when he needed a batsman to practice a new delivery recently, he didn't call a professional. He called someone from his local cricket days.

"He told me, 'if this fellow struggles to pick me, then nobody can,'" Pratheepan says. "That tells me he is the same Varun I met years ago."

On Thursday, with India's World Cup hopes on the line and a home crowd willing him on, that Varun — the one who scrapped everything and started again — is exactly who they'll need.



Varun Chakaravathy will get an immediate opportunity to bounce back from the South Africa match on Thursday. (Right) The spinner implemented a fitness plan with friend Akkil Srinaath. PTI/INSTAGRAM

• SUPER 8 GROUP 1

POS	TEAM	PLAYED	WON	LOST	N/R	NET RR	POINTS
1	West Indies	1	1	0	0	+5.350	2
2	South Africa	1	1	0	0	+3.800	2
3	India	1	0	1	0	-3.800	0
4	Zimbabwe	1	0	1	0	-5.350	0

T20 freelancer Raza inspires Zimbabwe out of doldrums

Namit Kumar
New Delhi, February 24

IN MAY last year, Sikandar Raza knew the right way to lift himself after Zimbabwe's innings defeat in a one-off Test against England in Nottingham.

A week prior, he had flown from England to Rawalpindi to aid Lahore Qalandars, the franchise he plays for in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), to the knockouts and returned in time for the Test. This time, the 39-year-old all-rounder took advantage of the early look to make it back in time for the final.

He found a car ride to Birmingham, hopped on multiple flights to and from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and landed in Lahore. He was on his way from the airport to the stadium when he was announced in the playing XI at the toss. Lahore ended

up winning a tense final with Raza taking them home in the 200+ run-chase with two sixes and two fours at the death, one each in the final over to seal a sensational finish.

For most, Raza's 24-hour globetrotting journey was symbolic of the idiosyncrasies of modern-day cricket. That he swapped formats and juggled allegiances on a whim, while getting his sleep in airports and flights, was proof of the mismanaged chaos of the bloated calendar. But for Raza, the lightning rod who has spearheaded Zimbabwe's return to the big league at the ongoing T20 World Cup, the journey was symbolic of the life of a cricket tragic who had to forge his competitive spirit and fine-tune his skills while balancing multiple obligations.

In Chennai on Thursday, Zimbabwe could seal a historic



Sikandar Raza has the opportunity to knock India out of a home T20 World Cup. PTI

victory over India that could ensure the ouster of the hosts and overwhelming pre-tournament favourites. It would be a

massive statement, not that they need to make any more. Their victory over Australia had turned plenty of heads before they beat Sri Lanka, on their turf to top the group, to prove that they are no one-hit wonders. It has already been an inspired campaign, one that has Raza's fingerprints all over it: as leader, tactician, spokesman, as well as the No.1-ranked all-rounder in the world.

Everywhere at once

His multi-faceted skillset screams modern T20. A middle-order batter known to hit big sixes, he could initially bowl a few overs of off-spin. He developed himself into a bit of a mystery spinner with varying lengths and speeds while also concealing his finger-spin till the last minute. The evolution is thanks to an accumulation of more than a

decade of experience.

In cricket-cynic parlance, Raza is what you would call a "T20 freelancer": those players that rove around the world playing in different franchise leagues. He has plied his trade in leagues in as many as 12 countries including a year-long stint in the IPL with Punjab Kings in 2023.

Perhaps it is his background that explains his comfort with being everywhere all at once. Born in Sialkot to Punjabi-speaking parents, an education in IT took him to university in Glasgow and club cricket in the UK. He followed his parents to Zimbabwe; the multicultural upbringing may excuse the Sangakkara-esque British lilt in his accent. It was in Harare that a franchisee, Mashonaland Eagles, gave him his start, a few years prior to his first cap with the Chevrons, that's what Zim-

babwe are called.

And for him, international cricket is the big time. Hark back to Raza's insistence to be with the national team even as Lahore went into the business end of the PSL and an idea about his priorities emerges. Listen to his impassioned takes about Zimbabwe's return to the elite fold during the ongoing tournament and it becomes clear.

There is talk around this World Cup being the first to feature, and be dominated by, the T20 babies. These are the youngsters that have grown up on the shortest format. At 39, Raza is perhaps among the T20 graduates, not unlike Shimron Hetmyer or Rashid Khan. These are the wily veterans who craftily moulded themselves to suit this format's needs. He's lifting his team, and re-lifting a cricketing nation, by doing so.

Hundred row: Moeen bats for Pakistan players' rights

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 24

FORMER ENGLAND international Moeen Ali said that the England and Wales Cricket Board must protect the Pakistani players' rights to play the Hundred, adding that players will take appropriate actions if the Pak cricketers are boycotted by the Indian-owned franchises of the league.

"In the UK, I'm not sure that can happen — and I hope it doesn't happen. It just shouldn't happen, hopefully it won't happen. We just have to wait and see if it does, but I think it'd be a massive shame, and I'm sure the ECB will definitely keep an eye out," Moeen said to *The Telegraph*.

"There'll be a group of players that will speak up.

There'll be things done about it. I think players should speak up. Anyone that has any sort of concern for these kind of things — it doesn't matter if they have Pakistani heritage — should speak up. Obviously, the news is very new.

"So I've not really had a chance to speak to anyone, but most of the players would be on the same page. It'd be really interesting to see what happens, because I genuinely think other countries can do what they want, obviously we're not in control of those things, but in the UK, we have a bit more say about these things," he added.

On Monday, Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan had said that the decision to play in the hundred was not in their hands.

Athlete banned for evading dope test

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, February 24

INDIAN LONG-DISTANCE runner Pooja Aatmaram had made a nervous dash away from her Chaperone ahead of a scheduled in-competition dope test last year, revealed the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) as it handed her a reduced three-year ban for early admission of guilt. The 30-year-old Pooja, who mostly competes in the 5000m and 10,000m events, had finished third in the Indian Grand Prix 2 in 2024 while representing Rajasthan, which remains her most noteworthy performance.

She was picked out for a dope test after winning the Indian Oil WNC Navy Half Marathon in Mumbai on November 23 last year.

"The Athlete was verbally notified of her selection for Testing immediately after she had finished the Race by a Doping Control Officer (DCO) and a Lead DCO. The Athlete failed to sign the Doping Control Form (DCF) at the time of notification," the AIU said in its detailed judgement.

"Following the verbal notification, the Athlete was accompanied by a Chaperone from the finish line heading towards the Doping Control Station (DCS). During this time the Athlete ran away from the Chaperone and into a crowd.

"The Chaperone tried to locate the Athlete and immediately reported that the Athlete had run away and disappeared into the crowd after verbal notification of her selection for Testing to the DCO, who subsequently informed the Race Director," it added.

The Race Director then attempted to contact her over phone but the AIU said she did not respond to any of those calls.

"The Lead DCO also attempted to reach the Athlete by telephone, without success. No Sample was ultimately collected from the Athlete."

Describing the chain of events that led to her escape, the AIU said the DCO and the Chaperone described Pooja as "exhausted and sweating" after the race. She picked up a water bottle from a stand near the finish line while being accompanied by the Chaperone before running away.

"The Athlete proceeded towards the DCS with the Chaperone, who repeatedly checked that she remained within their sight due to the crowded conditions.

"The Athlete appeared nervous and looked around," the AIU report stated. "Before reaching the DCS, the Athlete ran away from the Chaperone and in the opposite direction of the DCS."

Pooja was picked out for a dope test after winning the Indian Oil WNC Navy Half Marathon in Mumbai on November 23 last year

RANJITROPHY FINAL

Pundir, Hassan blunt Karnataka as J&K start off on the right foot

After a string of stop-start outings, two top-order batsmen grab the spotlight by helping team post 284/2

Lalith Kalidas
Hubballi, February 24

SHUBHAM PUNDIR was 16 when he made his Ranji Trophy debut in 2015. The third-youngest ever to play for J&K, he was soon cast out into the wilderness for three years. The stop-start nature has never faded from the No.3 batter's profile, averaging 27 in his entire career of 31 games.

Pundir's top-order partner, Yawer Hassan, earned his first cap when India heavyweight Rohit Sharma turned up for what would eventually be his last First-Class appearance last year. Young Yawer, an elegant right-handed opener in Rohit's ilk, didn't have anything to write home about when a five-wicket J&K coup over Mumbai was set up by the bowlers. Hassan's snappy 20-odd knocks did not weigh much but left glimpses of a firm prospect.

Ear-picked from a talent hunt program, the promise failed to light up the score-sheets, averaging 14 from as many innings. All that would change during a momentous start to J&K's maiden Ranji Trophy final against the star-studded Karnataka side in Hubballi on Tuesday.

Repositioning the billing from a battle between their bowling and the hosts' stacked batting group, J&K's young ramparts stubbed Devdutt Padikkal's bowlers in chunks on the opening day. Chalking off 284 for two in 87 overs, Pundir (115 batting) and Hassan (88) shored up momentum to build a hefty mound that could soon

match the Nruptanga hills in the distance during round two of this bout on Wednesday. Bicep-flex from an ever-ready Abdul Samad (52 batting) meant the charge on a flatbed wicket had begun late evening.

There were no unsettling nerves, even for an inconsistent top order. That much was clear when Hassan earnestly claimed that his team has locked in on tripling the shares, up to "650-700" in the forthcoming sessions. "Banaane padega," he says, throwing a reminder of what Karnataka's vaunted order could do on a benign pitch.

With a winding track leading up to the Unkal railway station on one side and an assembly line of timber mills on the other, the centre strip at the KSCA ground in Rajnagar does not belie its vicinity. Runs are served on a belter far too often here, even as 12 First-Class games have been scattered across a little over 13 years.

The toss favoured the visiting skipper, Paras Dogra, on a sultry morning. Batting first seemed like the only certainty, and so Dogra did. The only real blemish of a canter to the final has been the inconsistent J&K top-order. But by the time Dogra arrived at the crease in the afternoon and left the pitch copping one too many body-blows, Hassan and Pundir had played defining knocks of their careers thus far.

A fairly swelling crowd, rooting for KL Rahul and the big stars in Karnataka's batting group, were soon left muted by their largely listless day in the



Jammu and Kashmir's Shubham Pundir is unbeaten on 117 from 221 deliveries against Karnataka. PTI

field. They will find their voice when the hosts belt out Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, KL Rahul, Karun Nair and finally breakout star Smaran R, who averages 95.

Sound application

J&K's match however, began with Hassan's sound application - alien to his own rut of no scores crossing 30 in eight innings this season - nerfing a probing new-ball burst from Vidhyadhar Patil and V Vysakh. On a slightly moist surface that still assisted skiddy bumpers, Hassan applied an assortment of cuts. The dabs, slices and punches with an open bat-face made up for 68 of his runs between cover and third.

"There were chances that the drives could clip the edge off lengths on this pitch. And my cut shot is a little strong. So, I backed it," the young Hassan from South Kashmir's Bijbehara told reporters at stumps.

While Hassan disarmed the

seamers with an offensive cut catalogue, the left-handed Pundir had quietly played himself to a half-century jotted with shots all around.

Starting off with a firm sweep to the fine-leg fence off veteran leggie Shreyas Gopal, Pundir accounted for Prasadh Krishna's around the stumps line with back-to-back bluffs down to the sight screen.

Even as the mercurial Krishna found the shorter length rewarding on a sapping afternoon, nipping Hassan with a lifter that carried an edge to the slips, Pundir doubled down on the scoring. With an expansive spread on both sides, he offered tweekers Gopal and Shikhar Shetty no room to settle, seizing a steady diet of runs that matched up to Hassan's cuts (68) before him.

Pundir still reserved the best - a power-packed slog off Shetty over mid-wicket - to bring up his fourth century with a maximum.

Karnataka's only bright

spots during a grinding opening were the spurts of hope enforced by Krishna's lifter. Having toppled both openers across two sessions with his favoured shorter lengths, Krishna landed a nasty blow on Dogra's collarbone.

The J&K captain appeared the most iffy of the bats, opening the scoring only off his 15th delivery before being dropped on 7 at gully. He eventually retired after tea, landing another hit from Vysakh on the webbing of his right palm before the ball ricocheted off to the helmet.

Similar lines backfired against a muscular Samad who romped to a half-century in no time. And with Dogra declared fit to take the field again, J&K have inserted doubts into the minds of Padikkal's one-dimensional bowling pack.

BRIEF SCORES: J&K 284 for two in 87 overs (Shubham Pundir 115 batting, Yawer Hassan 88; Prasadh Krishna 2/36) vs Karnataka.

India winless despite improved show against Spain

Scoreline

INDIA		SPAIN	
1		1	
M Singh	19'	B Font	59'

Mihir Vasavda
Mumbai, February 24

CRAIG FULTON began with a caveat. "Performance first," he stressed when asked about India's winless stretch in the Pro League.

From his vantage point, the 2-2 draw against Australia represented tangible improvement. The 1-1 result against Spain on Tuesday fits the same narrative: incremental gains in structure and control, even if the results column still lacks a win.

There were striking parallels between the two contests. As was the case against Australia, India dictated long stretches of the first three quarters - looking composed and purposeful, although they weren't as assertive against Spain as they were against Australia.

But the final quarter proved

India's undoing once again. On Sunday, a hard-earned two-goal cushion evaporated in the last 15 minutes. Against Spain, they battled to protect a 1-0 lead, only to concede the equaliser with a minute left. It might have been worse: three penalty corners were conceded in the final 13 seconds, and only a heroic Suraj Karkera save from the last action of the game, at the buzzer, spared them a damaging, heartbreaking defeat. However, India could not pocket the bonus point as they lost 4-3 in the shoot-outs.

There was, however, a lot that India did right.

Better defence

The defence, for a start, was a lot better; better even than the Australia game. Spain were better off the blocks; they knocked the ball around, showed a lot of patience and tried to drag Indian defenders, who sat deep, out of their positions.

But the four at the back maintained their structure and foiled Spain's repeated attempts to raid India's 'D'. When the Spanish forwards - led by



India are yet to register a win in the FIH Pro League but their matches against Australia and Spain had upsides. HOCKEY INDIA

the trio of José Basterra, Pepe Cunill and Bruno Font - slipped in behind the Indian defenders, the goalkeepers stood firm. Mothil HS enhanced his growing reputation with a strong display under the bar. After a few tough outings, Karkera pro-

duced some critical saves, including one at the very end that will boost his morale.

The defenders looked assured and strong on the ball, which helped India stay in the contest longer. A functional defence is critical for Fulton's India, as it forms the base of his playing philosophy. It also allowed Hardik Singh to adopt a more attacking role, and it was a smart interception by the captain that led to India's first goal.

Hardik won the ball around 23 yards from the Spanish defence and rolled it forward to Maninder Singh at the top of the 'D'. Maninder, playing only his eighth match for India, received it on the reverse, guided it into space and unleashed a fierce tomahawk. Spain goalkeeper Luis Caldozo shifted to his right to cover the near post, but Maninder found the far corner to score his second international goal. It was the kind of attacking play that had been missing from India's game over the last two weeks.

Midfield concern

The midfield, however, re-

mains a major concern for India. Once again, they were second-best in the middle of the park, repeatedly losing control. Fulton highlighted the issue at half-time, admitting his team was giving away the ball 'a bit too much.' "If we keep giving them gifts, it'll come back and hurt us," he warned.

His words proved prophetic. India began the fourth quarter nervously. Karkera nearly fumbled a routine save immediately after the restart. Jugraj Singh then committed a clumsy foul inside the 'D', conceding a penalty corner that struck the woodwork.

Mandeep Singh thought he had doubled India's lead, but his goal was ruled out for a foul in the build-up. As Spain raised the tempo, India seemed content to retreat deep into their half and protect the slender advantage. They paid the price with a minute left, conceding a soft goal. Font collected a pass in stride and fired from just inside the box at a difficult angle - his shot skidding across the face of goal, beyond an outstretched Karkera, and into the far corner.

Australia extend winning streak at India's expense



Beth Mooney's 76 was the platform for Australia's successful chase against India in the first ODI in Brisbane. REUTERS/FILE

Vinayakk Mohanarangan
New Delhi, February 24

By the time the winning runs were hit, Australia had extended their record at the Brisbane venue to 21-0

"HAPPY DAYS," said Alyssa Healy at the toss, and she meant every word. When Harmanpreet Kaur - chuckling at her own unbroken run of luck with the coin - called it right and opted to bat first, Australia's captain barely concealed her delight.

At Allan Border Field, a ground they know intimately and have never lost at in women's ODIs, Healy's side wanted to bowl first anyway. They made full use of it.

By the time the winning runs were hit, Australia had extended their record at the Brisbane venue to 21-0, overhauling India's 214 with six wickets and 70 balls to spare. It was a controlled, clinical performance - from the first over to the last - that served as a sharp reminder that, whatever India's T20I series win a few days ago might have suggested, Australia remain the benchmark in women's ODIs at home.

"We weren't too unhappy when they won the toss and opted to bat first. It does a little bit here," said Beth Mooney, the player of the match after a classy 76. Smriti Mandhana, who stood in for an injured Harmanpreet in the field during the second half, was candid in agreement. "The wicket didn't play like we thought it would," she said.

India's innings never truly recovered from its opening overs. A fit-again Pratika Rawal had won her place back at the top alongside Mandhana, with Shafali Verma dropping to No. 3 - but both fell cheaply to give Australia early control. Pratika was pinned in her crease by Megan Schutt's signature in-dipper, the pacer herself a late addition to Australia's squad after injuries to Kim Garth and Ellyse Perry. Shafali, in an unfamiliar position and still searching for timing, offered a return catch to Darcie Brown off a leading edge. At 25/2 in the eighth over, India's plans were already unravelling.

Mandhana rode her luck early - a flurry of outside edges somehow bisecting the slip cord - but gradually found her footing, becoming the only Indian top-order batter to read the extra bounce and consistently access the square boundaries.

A promising partnership with Harmanpreet offered a brief period of relief, but it ended in the 24th over when Mandhana top-edged a Tahlia McGrath cutter to deep fine leg. Jemimah Rodrigues had already gone to a lifting delivery

from Ash Gardner, and Deepti Sharma followed shortly after, undone by Alana King - whose figures of 1/43 flatly failed to reflect how well she controlled the middle overs, ripping her stock legspinner with consistent menace. Richa Ghosh, having flirted with the cut shot one too many times, was eventually taken at point off Sophie Molineux.

The brightest passage of India's batting came from Kashvee Gautam, back in the side after a spell away, who used the sweep to telling effect against the Australian spinners, striking three sixes and three fours in a stroke-filled 43. At the other end, Harmanpreet ground out a patient half-century - 36 singles and 39 dots in that knock told their own story - before falling the moment she tried to shift gears at the death. When Kashvee was run out with nine deliveries still remaining, India's total looked well below par.

Anxious passage

Australia's chase had one anxious passage: Sree Charani removed Phoebe Litchfield and Georgia Vull off consecutive deliveries just after the ten-over mark, and suddenly the game had some tension.

Then Mooney walked out to face the hat-trick ball, and that was largely that. She was authoritative from the start - using her feet to drive down the ground, rocking back for cuts, picking up anything short with ease.

Healy, meanwhile, compiled one of her more measured half-centuries, content to let her partner set the tempo. Together, they drained whatever hope India had carried into the evening. It was, as Healy had wanted, the perfect counter-punch - and a pointed one at that. The T20I series result made for a lively storyline coming in, but Australia answered the only way that matters: on the field, at a ground where they simply do not lose.

BRIEF SCORES: India 214 all out in 48.3 (Smriti Mandhana 58, Harmanpreet Kaur 53; Ashleigh Gardner 3/33) lost to Australia 217/4 in 38.2 ovs (Beth Mooney 76, Alyssa Healy 50; Shree Charani 2/41).

● IN SEARCH OF NEXT BIG STAR

Sidek, coach who made Chong Wei, 'excited' to produce his fourth No.1 — in India

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, February 25

A GOOD 20 years after Malaysian badminton icon Datuk Misbun Sidek produced his third World No. 1 in Lee Chong Wei in 2006, the renowned coach is stationed at Thiruthangal's Hatsun Badminton Academy. The spy coach, a grandfather now, still lands on the court at 5 a.m. daily, and in his first week at the academy's courts in Virudhunagar district, was the last man standing after introducing the trainees to a basic fitness module - leaving them breathless and panting, but acutely aware of the tough regimen he brings.

"Indians have excellent skills and in the early rounds of top tournaments it's fine. But can they maintain fitness levels on the seventh day of the tournament when it'll be the finals?

I'm going to push them hard to ensure they can handle the intensity," he declares.

The sport has changed since Misbun trained brothers Rashid Sidek (1997) and Roslin Hashim (2001) to their respective World No. 1 claims.

At Hatsun, he trains India's reigning national champion Rithvik Sanjeevi Satish Kumar, hoping to level up his fitness for when he lands at the top tier of the international circuit. Misbun's training focuses on high-intensity drills with fewer gaps - the same method that put together Lee Chong Wei's explosive game.

"I am excited to produce my fourth World No. 1 - in India," he says.

Hatsun chief R. Chandramogan, who had earlier invited Rudi Hartono for a short stint at his picturesque academy, had been keen to bring in Misbun



Coach Misbun Sidek (R) at the Hatsun Badminton Academy.

Sidek for some time. It lit a flame within Misbun to renew his ambition, though it took some persuading. "Coach Rajnikant was very deter-

mined, and I had never coached outside Malaysia. But I really liked the academy and their vision after I visited just to try it out. The infrastructure is

impressive - courts, swimming pool, gym, all on one campus. I hadn't envisioned such an academy in India, and I knew I could start again to find my next No. 1," says the 66-year-old.

His mop of recognisable curls is trimmed, but the eyes are alight with excitement. "The badminton style, education, coaching stays the same as Malaysia. But these are two different badminton cultures," he explains. It started with him needing to communicate constantly in English, but another facet surprised him: Indians of stronger build.

Strong physiques

"Those days too, Indians had very good technique. But this time I saw they have strong physiques. We need to work on speed and power. Indians are very humble and listen to

coaches. I have started them on modules that will add to their skill," he says.

Misbun reckons new-age badminton - even in the 15-point format - puts a lot of store on speed, power, and minimising mistakes, all turbo-charged, while learning to monopolise the shuttle. "Whoever can hold fitness will win. And I have to make them understand and accept this, because Indians can lag behind in this. I know the regimen is tough but only if their fitness and tactical levels go up can they get mentally stronger," he stresses.

He considers Rithvik a good aggressive player - hardworking and explosive.

"I will give my heart to training them and raising their confidence. But to maintain consistency, workouts need to be intense. To make young players

trust this is not easy. To cover the whole court and keep up with the Chinese and Indonesians, he needs to be determined and accept the difficult path," says Misbun, a double bronze World Championships medallist.

The Sidek brothers were hugely entertaining for their flair, their personalities, and the way they innovated their serves. "It's the starting point - and the most important thing is to learn to manipulate the game," he says, smiling as he adds he will part with his bag of tricks as his Indian wards raise their fitness.

Misbun recalls playing alongside Prakash Padukone, Sanjay Sharma, Partho Ganguly, the late Syed Modi, and Vimal Kumar. "That was a totally different time, the rally scoring era. But we always expected top skill from Indians.

Now we see powerful smashes - Satwik-Chirag are wonderful. Gopichand, Prannoy, Lakshya, all play the big power game. But to get more explosive, the new generation of Indians will need inputs from outside, which I intend to provide at Hatsun," he says.

It's a tough time to be away from home, in the month of Ramadan.

"I'm not fussy about weather or food. Besides, I love to eat - and I can ask for anything and I'll get it here, homely food with chapati and rice," he says. The chefs at the cafeteria even surprised him with nasi goreng, complete with tempered tamarind. Misbun Sidek's badminton appetite, though, will only be satiated when he finds his fourth World No. 1 material - right around the firecracker capital of India, Sivakasi.