

Richa Chadha Enjoys Pool...

नौकरशाही



बबुल मिश्रा

नौकरशाही के गलियारों में इन दिनों यूपी मॉडल चर्चा में है। सरकारी का एक महकमा इन दिनों फुटफुट कर उतरकर खिल रहा है।

गाड़ी पलटी वाली गुगली

गुरु अपने बरामदे में बैठे होली की खुमारी उतार रहे थे। एक हाथ में चाय की प्याली, दूसरे में अखबार। पीछे से भोजपुरी गीत का स्वर आ रहा था : पिया जी के मुस्करी हमरा लागेला बेजोड़ रे सुखी...

खबर निकलती थी। सो, बातचीत को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए जवाब देना था, 'हा गुरु छुट्टी तो खत्म हो गई। बस, सोचा आपके मिल लूँ। होली में भी मुलाकात नहीं हुई।' इस जवाब के बाद भी गुरु मोन रहे।

बातचीत जारी रखते हुए कहा, 'चाय गुरु! आप भी डर रहे हैं? सिस्टम में रहकर सिस्टम की बात कहना तो लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था में है।

मारा गया हमारा का सैन्य खुफिया इकाई प्रमुख ओसामा तबाश

NEW DELHI : इज़राइली डिफेंस फोर्स (आईडीएफ) ने दक्षिणी गाजा में आतंकी समूह हमारा को तहस-नहस करने के अपने अभियान के दौरान उसके सैन्य खुफिया इकाई के प्रमुख ओसामा तबाश को मार गिराया।



जमना की सुरक्षा और शांति के लिए ऐसे अपराधियों पर कठोर कार्रवाई आवश्यक है। पुलिस प्रशासन को इसी दृष्टि से अपनी कार्रवाई जारी रखनी चाहिए।

है। कुछ दिनों पहले ही खबर आई कि सियासी खेमे में विरोधी गुरु के अनुभा कुछ खफा से हैं। कोर्ट-कचहरी का चक्कर लगा रहे हैं। खाकी की कार्यप्रणाली पर सवाल उठा रहे हैं। गुना जी ने ऐन वक्त पर यूपी मॉडल वाली ऐसी गुगली डाली कि मैदान के बड़े सुरमा क्लीन बोल्ड हो गए।

रांची बंद का दिखा व्यापक असर, परेशान रहे लोग अस्त-व्यस्त रही राजधानी



PHOTON NEWS RANCHI : सिरमटोली फ्लाईओवर के रैंप निर्माण को लेकर शुरू हुआ विवाद अब व्यापक रूप ले चुका है।

आम लोगों के साथ-साथ वीआईपी को भी झेलनी पड़ी दिक्कत अरगोड़ा, लोवाडीह, रातू के तिलता, पंडरा महावीर मंदिर सहित कई जगहों पर टायर जलाकर किया गया प्रदर्शन सड़कों पर कम दिखे वाहन आँटो परिवचालन भी रूठा बंद

मेन रोड, सकुंलर रोड, कांके रोड, हरमू रोड, कोकर रोड, बूटी मोड़ से सुजाता चौक रोड, डोरंडा, हिन्दू सहित अन्य इलाकों में नहीं खुली दुकानें

उपदिवियों से निपटने के लिए शहर के सभी चौक-चौराहों पर मैजिस्ट्रेट के साथ अतिरिक्त पुलिस बल के जवान थे तैनात

बंद के समर्थन में उतरे आदिवासी संगठनों के लोग पारंपरिक हथियारों से थे लैस

यात्रा करने वाले यात्रियों को भी भारी परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ा। कई इलाकों में यात्री पैदल ही स्टेशन और एयरपोर्ट जाते नजर आए।

बंद समर्थकों में छोटे-छोटे बच्चे और महिलाएँ भी शामिल थीं, जिन्होंने गली-मोहल्लों में भी सड़कों पर आवागमन बंद करा दिया।

राजधानी के हर चौक-चौराहे और गली-मोहल्ले में यातायात बंद समर्थकों के कारण प्रभावित रहा। बस, ट्रेन और वहाँ तक कि हवाई

माह-ए-रमजान

इफ्तार (रविवार) : 06:03 सेहरी (सोमवार) : 04:31

SARAFI

सोना : 8,420 चांदी : 110.00

(नोट : सोना 22 कैरेट प्रति ग्राम)

BRIEF NEWS

परिसीमन से संबंधित बैठक का हेमंत ने किया समर्थन

RANCHI : मुख्यमंत्री हेमंत सोरेन ने तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री एमके स्टालिन द्वारा बुलाई गई परिसीमन से संबंधित बैठक का समर्थन किया है। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने परिसीमन के माध्यम से सिर्फ जनसंख्या के आधार पर विधानसभा या लोकसभा सीटों को सीमित करने पर सवाल उठाए हैं।

जिहादी संगठन के हमले में 44 नागरिकों की मौत

NEW DELHI : नाइजर के पश्चिमी हिस्से में एक गांव पर एक जिहादी संगठन के हमले में 44 नागरिकों की मौत हुई है। देश के गृह मंत्रालय ने यह जानकारी दी। मंत्रालय ने एक बयान में बताया कि माली और बुर्किना फासो की सीमा से सटे कोकोरु ग्रामीण क्षेत्र के फामिस्ता गांव में शुक्रवार दोपहर यह हमला हुआ।

चमरा लिंडा ने सदन में दी जानकारी, विधि विभाग ने कर दिया है अनुमोदन

एक माह में बनेगी अनुसूचित जाति आयोग की नियमावली

कार्मिक और वित्त विभाग का अनुमोदन मिलना अभी बाकी

अगस्त में पूरा हो जाएगा विधायक आवास निर्माण का कार्य

समीर कुमार मोहंती ने कहा कि मंत्रियों के लिए प्रोजेक्ट भवन के करीब स्मार्ट सिटी में और विधानसभा के सदस्यों के लिए वर्तमान विधानसभा के पास आवास का निर्माण किया जा रहा है। राज्य सरकार के मंत्रियों एवं विधानसभा के सदस्यों को शीघ्र ही इन आवासों को आवंटित किया जाना है।

सत्र के दौरान सीएम हेमंत सोरेन



सत्र के दौरान सीएम हेमंत सोरेन

हेमलाल मूर्मु ने कहा कि झारखंड में तीन हजार लोगों की आबादी पर एक विकित्सक है, जबकि डब्ल्यूवओ के मानक अनुसार, 1000 लोगों पर एक विकित्सक होना चाहिए। विधान सभा सचिवालय एवं राज्य सरकार के सचिवालय के पदाधिकारियों के लिए विधानसभा भवन के समीप ऑफिसर क्वार्टर बनाने की योजना नए विधानसभा भवन के निर्माण के समय ही रूप से स्वीकृत है।

दिल्ली में अवेध रूप से रह रहे 18 बांग्लादेशी अरेस्ट

NEW DELHI : राजधानी में दक्षिण दिल्ली जिला पुलिस ने यहाँ अवेध रूप से रह रहे 18 बांग्लादेशियों को गिरफ्तार किया है। इनके कब्जे से 23 मतदाता पहचान पत्र, 19 पैन कार्ड, 17 आधार कार्ड, 11 सीपीसी, 11 जन्म प्रमाण पत्र और 6 खाली मतदाता पहचान पत्र बरामद हुए हैं।

राजधानी में अवेध रूप से रह रहे 18 बांग्लादेशियों में 6 को एफआरआरओ के माध्यम से बांग्लादेश भेज दिया गया है। आठ बांग्लादेशी पुलिस की गिरफ्त में हैं जबकि चार से पूछताछ चल रही है। उनसे पूछताछ में कुछ अन्य खुलासे संभव हैं।

आज भी मौसम विभाग ने कई इलाकों में पानी बरसने की जताई है संभावना

चाईबासा में सबसे अधिक 54 मिमी रिकॉर्ड की गई वर्षा

मौसम विभाग की ओर से दी गई जानकारी के अनुसार, सुक्रा बलों में निम्न दबाव के चलते बारिश, तेज हवा और ओलावृष्टि हुई। सबसे अधिक बारिश चाईबासा में 54 मिमी रिकॉर्ड की गई।

मणिपुर : उग्रवादी संगठनों के छह कैडर गिरफ्तार

IMPHAL : मणिपुर में सुरक्षा बलों ने उग्रवादी संगठनों के खिलाफ बड़ी कार्रवाई की है। सुरक्षा बलों ने अलग-अलग संगठनों के छह सक्रिय कैडर गिरफ्तार किया है। पुलिस प्रवक्ता ने आज सुबह यह जानकारी दी।

बड़ी उपलब्धि

टेक्नोलॉजी का कमाल, मिसाइल अटैक से भी बच जाएंगे भवन

PHOTON NEWS @ RESEARCH DESK : कल जो असंभव लगता था, आज उसे साइंस और टेक्नोलॉजी ने संभव बना दिया है। बेशक विज्ञान और तकनीक की बहुत ही शक्तियाँ विध्वंसक हैं, तो अन्य शक्तियों रचनात्मक भी हैं।

आईआईटी मद्रास के वैज्ञानिकों ने विकसित किया बैलिस्टिक रोधी कंक्रीट पैनल

सिविल इंजीनियरिंग डिपार्टमेंट के दो विशेषज्ञों ने तैयार किया है स्पेशल मॉडल आमतौर पर मजबूत से मजबूत बिल्डिंगों को ध्वस्त कर देता है मिसाइल का आक्रमण

Advertisement for civil engineering research, featuring images of a missile and a building, with text in Hindi describing the development of ballistic-resistant concrete panels.

प्रधानमंत्री ने जल संरक्षण का किया आह्वान भविष्य की पीढ़ियों के लिए पानी को संरक्षित करना बेहद महत्वपूर्ण

शनिवार को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने आज विश्व जल दिवस पर कहा कि अपने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए पानी का संरक्षण बेहद जरूरी है। उन्होंने कहा कि जल सभ्यताओं की जीवन्तरेखा रहा है।

जलवायु परिवर्तन की वजह से ग्लेशियर का तेजी से पिघलना चिंताजनक

2025 के विश्व जल दिवस की थीम-ग्लेशियर संरक्षण है। यह स्थापित अवधारणा है कि ग्लेशियर (बर्फ के पहाड़) दुनिया भर में साफ पानी को बनाए रखने में बड़ी भूमिका निभाते हैं।

Making community service a credible penalty

In January 2025, the court of the third additional munsiff in Jammu sentenced a person, who was found guilty of obstructing traffic and causing public annoyance, to one week of community service (CS) involving cleaning, sweeping and mopping at a Community Health Centre in Damsal. The same court, in a similar matter, ordered the guilty to clean and maintain a public park at Jhajjar Kotli daily for three hours for one week. In both the cases, the Station House Officer of Jhajjar Kotli Police Station was tasked with ensuring compliance and submitting a report with photographic evidence. In the third case of the same nature in the same month, a sub-judge court in Katra ordered the offender to perform CS by cleaning and maintaining a park at Katra for three consecutive days; the chief executive officer of the Katra Development Authority was directed to oversee compliance of the punishment order.

In yet another case, on March 6, the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chandigarh, ordered a habitual traffic violator to do CS for five days under the supervision of the reader to SSP (Traffic).

Community service has been added to the list of punishments under Section 4 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, (BNS) for the first time for six offences of public servants engaging in unlawful trade (Section 202), non-appearance in compliance of proclamation (Section 209), attempts to commit suicide to compel public authority (Section 226), minor theft where the stolen article is returned and value of the property is less than Rs 5,000 [Section 303(2)], public misconduct while intoxicated (Section 355), and defamation [Section 356(2)]. The inclusion of CS as a substantive sentence under the BNS is a reflection of non-custodial correctional measure subscribing to the philosophy of 'restorative justice' in the Indian criminal justice system. The term CS is defined by adding an explanation to Section 23 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), stating that community service shall mean the work which the court may order a convict to perform as a form of punishment that benefits the community, for which he shall not be entitled to any remuneration. This definition is ambiguous and needs to be examined, especially in the background of Article 23 of the Constitution of India, which prohibits "begar" and similar forced labour practices. Even convicts undergoing rigorous imprisonment in jail are paid wages for the work they do while serving their sentence.

The words "work which the court may order" and "that benefits the society" are non-specific and surrounded by uncertainties as a lot has been left to the imagination of the trial court, having individualised perceptions about events in life. There is always a scope left for the presiding officer faltering in assigning the suitable task for CS. This issue may be resolved by including a suggestive list of such works in the High Court Rules and Orders. A lot of confusion is prevailing about designating the execution agency for the purposes of monitoring, supervising and reporting back compliance on the CS sentence as a variety of government and public functionaries are being given this task by the courts without realising that such employees are not trained to perform such duty, nor do they possess proper skills for handling such convicts.

Moreover, in the absence of rules/guidelines, they are completely ignorant about the documentation required to perform such an important duty. It must be remembered that CS is a substantial punishment under the BNS and, hence, its execution squarely falls within the domain of the agencies of the criminal justice system (CJS).

In the 'Rules of Business' of the government, law and justice are listed as subject matter of the Home Ministry. It would be an administrative blunder to assign the duty to execute CS sentence to an agency outside the jurisdiction of the Home Department. It is desirable that CS should be included in the list of business of the Home Department and necessary modalities prescribed.

How NEP bridges the education-employment gap

A student's learning experience gets a boost when he is allowed a chance to creatively combine the core domain knowledge with other subjects of his choice.

The draft of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) attained finality after five years of consultations under the leadership of former ISRO Chairman K Kasturirangan. The policy was adopted by Parliament on July 29, 2020, thereby replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986. The necessity for a paradigm shift stemmed from the critical challenges in educational dispensation. It was felt that the existing policy had been losing relevance, with the emergence of a growing army of unemployable job-seeking graduates who did not have the relevant skill set and knowledge base.

The policy was not in tune with the requirements of the knowledge economy of the 21st century, which is based on the market being the anchor of economic decision-making. The 'massification' of education with selected schemes, interventions and programmes with 'compromised quality' had resulted in what is called 'degree inflation'. During this period, only a few Indian universities got recognition in the global rating and accreditation systems. Ironically, the non-absorption of graduates into jobs as per the qualification certificates has often been sighted as a shortcoming of the growth model adopted since 1991. The NEP-2020 is structured around the five core principles of access, capacity, quality, affordability and accountability, all aiming to align with the emergent socio-economic and global demands. Its vision has been operationalised by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) developed by the Kasturirangan-headed 12-member committee.

The policy acknowledges the inter-connection and mutual dependence among various stages and domains of education. The outputs of different stages and subsectors of education serve as inputs for the subsequent stages. The NEP-2020 aims to draw its strength from a multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary process of learning, skilling and knowledge acquisition. To achieve this, the policy emphasises the replacement of the rigid structures of the old system with flexible ones. This transformation has to be facilitated through a robust digital infrastructure, system of academic credits and awards, a blended mode of learning, the initiation of more liberal subject combinations and boosting academia-industry interactions. The policy upholds the Kothari Commission (1968) and subsequent education policy recommendations (1986, revised version 1992) to invest up to 6 per cent of the GDP in the education sector by the Centre, states and union territories' budgets. Notably, the public expenditure by the education department and other government departments on education and training in their respective domains was equivalent to 4.04 per cent

of the overall GDP of the country during 2019-20; which constituted 13.03 per cent of the overall budgetary expenditure. Further, during the same year, 24.67 per cent of the overall budgetary expenditure on education (by education and other departments) was incurred by the Central government and the rest by the states and UTs.

Following the new policy, the educational landscape, more particularly in the higher education domain, has gone through cataclysmic changes.

A student's learning experience gets a boost when he is allowed a chance to creatively combine the core domain knowledge with other subjects of his choice. The cross-fertilisation of ideas with greater conceptual clarity breaks the mental silos. The NEP-2020 enables this

programmes, joint research activities and international exchange programmes.

Flexibility and multidisciplinary approach are the hallmarks in the design of educational programmes, learning strategies and career pathways under NEP-2020. A well-developed higher education system contributes to national growth by supplying a skilled workforce. It also holds intrinsic value as a global industry.

The NEP-2020 holds transformative potential as it unfolds. However, its success hinges on its execution, requiring high standards of implementation, rigorous monitoring and consistent reinforcement. Recognising these aspects, policymakers have facilitated dialogue among stakeholders and also conducted reality checks by collecting data via digital portals. The NEP-2020 must adopt a flexible framework that fosters competitiveness, enabling institutions to attract teaching and research talent and offer meaningful student incentives. A key challenge for any policy is overcoming the psychological barrier of the 'announcement effect', which often triggers scepticism among stakeholders. Well-intended reforms risk trivialisation as opportunistic actors repackage old routines as new initiatives. Such probability is high in curriculum-designing, evaluation, assessment and pedagogical practices.

One of the most pressing concerns is curriculum-

modernisation as institutions are not accustomed to designing syllabi in a modular format, where the level of complexity increases progressively at every stage. Additionally, resource constraints are an impediment for many institutions, impacting lab infrastructure, internship programmes, training and mentorship initiatives. Further, institutions need to evolve a mechanism that goes beyond traditional written tests, where students can showcase their skills through practical applications, projects and problem-solving to acquire real-world competencies. This needs more public funds, alumni contributions, industry partnerships, community involvement, donations, etc.

Thus, sustained efforts in governance, faculty training, industry collaboration and student skill development are essential for translating the ambitious vision of the NEP-2020 into a tangible educational transformation.



through the multi-disciplinary higher education framework, portable credits, multiple entry and exit options and re-entry provisions.

The policy also introduces a structured certification system where students receive certificates, diplomas and degrees based on the duration and extent of the completion of their under-graduate course. The policy seeks to synchronise India's higher education sector with the global best by incorporating flexibility in both classroom and experiential learnings. To improve educational management, technology has been introduced for the digital storage of credentials, along with the facilitation of online and offline learning by transferring the credits earned. The policy also envisions that the affiliation of colleges will be gradually faded out by granting graded autonomy. Further, standalone institutions will be encouraged to evolve into multi-disciplinary institutions through strategic collaborations, dual-degree

Govt vs farmers

Escalation in hostilities bodes ill for Punjab

PUNJAB is on tenterhooks after the eviction of protesting farmers from Shambhu and Khanauri. This new flashpoint has hardened the battle lines and widened the trust deficit between the state government and the farming community. The former has justified its crackdown on the grounds that industries and businesses were hit hard by the prolonged closure of two key highways, while farmer leaders have termed it a repressive move to deprive them of their democratic right to protest. In any case, the confrontation has taken a worrying turn for the worse.

It is unfortunate that the two sides have failed to find common ground. In the best interests of Punjab, they should have joined hands to intensify pressure on the Central Government over the farmers' demands, particularly a legal guarantee of MSP for all crops. Instead, they are fiercely at loggerheads. Waning public support for farm unions has also emboldened the state government to go for the jugular, with the Centre



watching it all from the sidelines. The key stakeholders can no longer afford to go round in circles. It's a no-brainer that they must hold talks with

the firm commitment of resolving the crisis in a time-bound manner. For that, a flexible approach can be mutually beneficial. The Centre needs to learn lessons from its poor handling of the kisan agitation at Delhi's borders in 2020-21. The three contentious farm laws were eventually repealed — after over 700 protesting farmers lost their lives — but the MSP imbroglio was allowed to fester. And the state government owes an explanation for the way it has changed tack after having consistently projected itself as a mediator and a custodian of farmers' interests. There is no doubt that Punjab badly needs a trade booster, but it also can't do without agriculture, which remains the backbone of its economy. Earnest efforts should be made to take everyone along and bring about reconciliation, failing which the perpetual state of unrest will only push Punjab deeper into the mire.

Speaking truth to power is passé

The news that we are fed round the clock is to be taken with more than a pinch of salt

I recently read the book *Pratap — A Defiant Newspaper*, which was sent to me by Jyotsna Mohan Bhargava, the daughter of Chander Mohan, the last Editor and owner of the Urdu-language newspaper that was published from Lahore before Partition and later from Jalandhar. Jyotsna herself is a journalist with 30 years of experience. She reminded me that she had interviewed me for the book.

I could not put down the book till I had finished it. The newspaper was launched by Chander Mohan's grandfather Mahashay Krishan shortly before the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. It was voluntarily shut down in the 1990s; *Pratap's* readership had dwindled in later years as Urdu is not widely read in the Indian Punjab. The reader gets a ringside view of events that unfolded when India fought for Independence, and right up to the 1980s and 1990s when Punjab was in the throes of terrorism. Since I myself was inducted into the nation's battle against the terrorist menace in the mid-1980s, my initial interest centred on what the book had to say about my contribution to that fight.

Though they were not unkind to me, the authors observed that my successor as the chief of the Punjab Police, KPS Gill, was the real hero who put paid to the Khalistani attempt to secede from the Indian Union through a low-cost war, as terrorism has been defined in textbooks on the subject. After reading the book, I concluded that *Pratap's* owners-cum-editors were men of high principles who stuck scrupulously to the truth, whatever the circumstances. Since it was their finding (and that of many others), I concede that Gill had succeeded where I had failed!

Gill had taken the liberty of telling my wife when I was out of earshot that my methods and philosophy of policing were not going to work in Punjab. "I am a Jat Sikh," he told Melba. "Only a Jat Sikh knows how to deal with his own people. Your husband is incapable of wielding a stick. It is only the stick that works here in my part of the country." Gill wanted Melba to relay his thoughts to me. That she did promptly, adding for good measure her own



view that he was not a person that she would include in her list of friends. Gill's methods were what led Jat Sikh farmers to finally confide in the Punjab Police and turn against "the boys", as they used to call the terrorists. It is an established fact that no terrorist movement can survive without the support of the community. The classical method of ending terrorism is to win the hearts and minds of the community to which the terrorists belong. In Punjab, this could only happen after the community was boxed into a corner by the methods adopted by Gill.

The authors have also mentioned that their family built its reputation for speaking truth to power, no matter who

wielded that power. The reference to the capitulation of the media, both electronic and print, and the overt and the not-so-overt threats and temptations that those in power had put in their path only confirms what the country already knew — the news that we are fed round the clock is to be taken with more than a pinch of salt.

Speaking truth to power, which was the principle followed by editors and journalists alike in Jawaharlal Nehru's time, is no longer the norm. What is even more worrying is that newspapers and TV channels are being bought over by business magnates whose commercial interests lie in toeing the government's line. The authors are all praise for an ex-Editor of Outlook magazine, Ruben

Banerjee, who lost his job but remained true to his profession. Not many individuals like Banerjee can be found today in the profession of journalism as in most other professions. As their numbers diminish, the country loses its spine!

Chander Mohan's father Virendra was jailed nine times by the British. He was a freedom fighter of the revolutionary kind, ideologically opposed to the non-violence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. The activities of the revolutionary club led by Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekar Azad, are recounted in greater detail in this book than what I had read earlier.

Since Virendra was himself privy to the plans to target British officers and even Governors, this book provides the reader with another takeaway. Virendra was in the Lahore jail where Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged on March 23, 1931. They had been accused of shooting an English police officer outside his office.

Bhagat Singh is adored in every village of Punjab, the state from which he hailed. But it was 22-year-old Shivaram Hari Rajguru, born in Khed in Maharashtra's Pooma district, who was said to be the first to put the noose around his neck. For the past 25 years, I have been the chairman of an NGO called the Bombay Mothers and Children Society, run by an intrepid Mumbai-based doctor, Madhav Sathe. The society runs a hospital in Rajgurunagar — the name given to Khed as a tribute to the martyr's sacrifice.

The Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) at the time of the hanging was Horace Williamson. Writing about Bhagat Singh, he noted, "For a time, his popularity rivalled that of Mr Gandhi." Bhagat Singh was opposed to communalism and casteism, two evils which our popular leaders today in the government and the Opposition use for electoral gains. I doubt if our Prime Minister's rising popularity at home and abroad can propel India to the main table of the comity of nations when these two evils, added to the pernicious evil of corruption, are allowed to grow and flourish.



Rupee jumps 38 paise against the US dollar; rises for sixth consecutive session

New Delhi. Rising for the sixth straight session, the rupee appreciated 38 paise to close at 85.98 against the US dollar on Friday on a sharp rise in the domestic equity markets and fresh foreign capital inflows. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.26, then touched an intraday high of 85.93 and a low of 86.30 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.98, registering a gain of 38 paise from its previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee stayed almost flat and appreciated just 1 paise to close at 86.36 against the US dollar. This is the sixth straight session of gain for the rupee, during which it has added 123 paise. "We expect the rupee to trade higher on strength in the domestic equities and fresh FII inflows. However, positive crude oil prices may cap sharp gains. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85.80 to 86.25," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.19 per cent higher at 104.04. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.29 per cent to USD 71.79 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 557.45 points, or 0.73 per cent, to settle at 76,905.51, while the Nifty advanced 159.75 points, or 0.69 per cent, to close at 23,350.40 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) purchased equities worth Rs 7,470.36 crore on a net basis on Friday, according to exchange data.

Parliamentary panel urges Centre to extend PLI tenure, curb red tape

New Delhi. The Indian rupee on Friday strengthened past the 86 mark against the US dollar for the first time since January, driven by a surge in foreign investments in the domestic capital and debt markets.

The rupee appreciated by 39 paise, ending at 85.98 against the US dollar, compared to Thursday's close of 86.37. This marks the rupee's eighth straight day of gains, registering its best weekly performance since January 2023. The rupee has risen by 1.78 per cent in March so far, following a decline in the dollar index. However, for the current financial year, it has still recorded a 2.8 per cent decline.

"The rupee's gain was supported by stronger-than-expected trade data and a rise in foreign exchange reserves following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) USD-INR swap intervention. These factors together have helped bolster the local currency," said Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. RBI's efforts have paid off, with the rupee emerging as the top performer among Asian currencies so far this month, he said. Jateen Trivedi, research analyst - commodity and currency, LKP Securities, said FII inflows surged with strong buying figures in recent days. "The Fed's decision to hold rates steady and its forecast for lower interest rates ahead pulled the dollar down, providing significant support to the rupee. However, major capital market strengthening gives rupee the strong push higher," he said.

Stock markets remained strong amid bargain hunting and FII inflows. The Sensex gained 0.73 per cent, or 557 points, to 76,905.51 and the NSE Nifty Index rose 0.69 per cent, or 159 points, to 23,350.40 on Friday.

RIL set to buy 74% in Dahej's Nauyaan Shipyard for Rs 383cr



MUMBAI. Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries is set to acquire 74% of Nauyaan Shipyard from Welspun Corp, owned by B K Goenka, for Rs 383 crore, gaining access to 138 acres of leasehold land in Dahej, Gujarat. This land is located near Reliance's petrochemical manufacturing facility.

In Jan 2023, Welspun had purchased 165 acres in Dahej, along with 1,000 metres of waterfront and old ships from the insolvent ABG Shipyard for Rs 659 crore. Reliance intends to utilise the 138-acre plot to build facilities for salt storage, brine preparation, and hydrogen electrolyser manufacturing, advancing its green hydrogen initiatives. The company will also receive rights to use foreshore land, it said on Friday.

The transaction structure involves Reliance initially purchasing 100% of Nauyaan Tradings, which was established on March 3 this year, from Welspun Tradings (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Welspun Corp) for Rs 1 lakh. The acquisition will be executed through Reliance Strategic Business Ventures, a wholly-owned subsidiary. Subsequently, Nauyaan Tradings will acquire 74% of Nauyaan Shipyard from Welspun Corp for Rs 383 crore. The total valuation of Nauyaan Shipyard, including debt and equity, stands at Rs 644 crore. Reliance's plans for the Nauyaan land indicate a transition from the historical maritime activities towards green manufacturing facilities. In 2023, the company established Reliance New Energy to enter the electrolyser sector, with plans to establish facilities having an initial capacity of 1GW.

Make In India' Initiative: PLI For Telecom Products Sees Rs 4,081 Cr Investment, Sales Worth Rs 78,672 Cr

The PLI schemes (Rs 1.97 lakh crore outlay) for 14 key sectors are driving manufacturing growth, as telecom equipment manufacturing surpassed Rs 50,000 crore in sales under the PLI scheme, according to latest government data.



New Delhi. In a boost for the 'Make in India' initiative, the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for telecom and networking products has seen an investment of Rs 4,081 crore (as on January 31), generating total sales of Rs 78,672 crore. It includes export sales

worth Rs 14,963 crore. Adding further, it has generated employment for 26,351 people, said Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, Minister of State for Communications And Rural Development, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) notified the PLI scheme on February 24, 2021 to

boost domestic manufacturing of telecom and networking products in India with an outlay of Rs 12,195 crore. The scheme guidelines were amended to introduce an additional 1 per cent incentive for products designed, developed, and manufactured in India to promote designed manufacturing and an inclusion of 11 additional products in the approved list

based on industry requirements. It also offered flexibility for companies to add one or more products from the approved list at any time during the scheme tenure and an option for companies to apply for incentive claims on a quarterly basis. The PLI scheme covers 33 telecom and networking products, against which companies can claim incentives. The PLI schemes (Rs 1.97 lakh crore outlay) for 14 key sectors are driving manufacturing growth, as telecom equipment manufacturing surpassed Rs 50,000 crore in sales under the PLI scheme, according to latest government data. India's electronics manufacturing sector has flourished under the PLI scheme, transforming from a net importer to a net exporter of mobile phones. Domestic production grew from 5.8 crore units in 2014-15 to 33 crore units in 2023-24, with imports dropping significantly. Exports reached 5 crore units, and Foreign Direct Investment increased by 254 per cent, highlighting the scheme's role in boosting manufacturing and investment.

Old vs new tax regime: Which one should you opt for in 2025-26

Taxpayers must choose between old and new tax regimes for FY 2025-26

Old regime provides more than 70 exemptions and deductions that reduce taxable income
New regime offers concessional tax slabs and lesser compliance

New Delhi. As the new financial year (FY 2025-26) approaches, taxpayers need to make a choice between the old and new tax regimes. Though both regimes are equally good with their own set of advantages, the ideal option depends upon the income, deductions, and fiscal goals of a taxpayer.

The old tax regime existed before the introduction of the new system. It provides more than 70 exemptions and deductions that reduce taxable income and reduce tax payments. The most sought-after deduction is under Section 80C, which allows a reduction of up to Rs 1.5 lakh from taxable income. A some of the key deductions under the old regime include an

employee's contribution to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Exemption on Leave Travel Allowance (LTA), Exemption on House Rent Allowance (HRA), Employer's contribution to the National Pension System (NPS)



under Section 80CCD(2), and Health insurance premium deduction under Section 80D, among others.

NEW TAX REGIME
Budget 2025, announced changes in tax slabs under the new tax regime. The revamped tax slabs would be effective from April 1, 2025. Individuals earning up to Rs 12 lakh are not required to pay any tax and with a standard deduction of Rs 75,000, which limit extends up to Rs 12.75 lakh. Unlike the old regime, the new regime provides limited

deductions but offers concessional tax slabs. Employers' contribution to NPS, standard deduction and gratuity received on retirement are exempt from tax under the new tax regimes.

WHICH TAX REGIME IS BETTER - OLD OR NEW?

According to Subramanyam Brahmajoyala, Chief Product & Marketing Officer at SBI General Insurance, "As the new financial year approaches, taxpayers are preparing for ITR filing in 2025. Choosing between the new and old tax regimes requires careful consideration of income, deductions, and financial goals." "While the

new tax regime offers lower tax rates with fewer deductions, the old tax regime allows individuals to claim exemptions and deductions, making it beneficial for those with significant eligible expenses," he added.

In other words, while the old tax regime promotes savings through tax benefits, the new one is simpler, involves less paperwork and reduces the chances of tax fraud. However, the selection of the tax regime depends on an individual's financial situation.

India faced with a yawning shortfall of AI experts: BCG report

Kolkata. Though artificial intelligence (AI) has caught the fancy of many corporates, there is a woeful shortage of AI-trained manpower in India, consulting major BCG (Boston Consulting Group) has said in a report titled "The GenAI adoption conundrum". The gap in demand and supply could be as high as 53% by the end of 2026. The BCG report has stated that "despite 83% of developers acknowledging GenAI's productivity benefits, adoption remains stagnant at 39%, with GenZ adoption surprisingly lower at 31%".

BCG has said that India stands at a "critical inflection point in the GenAI revolution". It went on to add, "While India dominates global outsourcing, a 51% skilled talent gap across next-gen skills like LLM fine-tuning, cloud computing, and cybersecurity threatens its leadership in the next wave of AI-driven innovation."

Boston Consulting Group has stated in the report that the US and China are the leading powers in AI. Next in the middle rung come countries such as Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, UAE and the EU. "How Indian ITES companies upskill their workforce and improve their productivity by adopting GenAI tools, will define whether we are able to register India's name amongst the list of global GenAI leaders," the consultancy firm observed.

Roadblocks and threats

The US-based consulting major has identified the roadblocks to the training to professionals in AI and it has also commented on what the threats are if the country fails to tackle the shortcomings urgently. "Key roadblocks include ineffective mass training, lack of scientific tracking, client skepticism, and integration challenges. Without addressing these challenges, India risks falling behind global AI leaders like the US and China, while emerging AI middle powers—South Korea, Japan, and Saudi Arabia—gain ground," BCG has said.

Less than one-third of companies have upskilled one-quarter of their workforce to use AI. That's better than a year ago, but far from where companies need to be for workers to feel comfortable with such a job-threatening technology.

Deep specialists and broader workforce
Senior professionals at BCG has pin pointed the problem in the perspective of India Inc. "If we zoom out and look at the next five years, AI is going to penetrate every aspect of human work, whether personal or business-related. As a result, the required skill sets will encompass almost every traditional business function... First is the need for deep specialists in various AI-related domains; second, we need a broader workforce that can effectively use AI. The latter is the bigger challenge," Tiger Tyagarajan, senior advisor at BCG was quoted in the media as saying.

Boeing lays off up to 180 at engineering unit

NEW DELHI. Boeing has laid off up to 180 employees at the Boeing India Engineering Technology Center (BIETC) in Bengaluru as part of the global downsizing being undertaken by the troubled American aerospace major. Boeing senior VP & president of Boeing Global, Dr Brendan Nelson, has confirmed this to TOI. "We are right sizing the company. As part of that, 150-180 Boeing employees in India (have been laid off)," he said. It is learnt that of the 7,000 employees Boeing in India, almost 6,500 are at BIETC in Bengaluru and Chennai. The centres in these two metros "undertake complex advanced aerospace work and support Boeing's global engineering growth," says the company's website. Boeing's wholly owned engineering and technology campus in Bengaluru, one of the largest Boeing investments outside the US, had opened in Jan 2024.

"Because we're downsizing, our total workforce (globally comprising 47 nationalities) is going to 162,000. About 15% of our workforce is outside the United States, which has the largest number of employees. So we've got about 24,000 employees outside the US and more than a quarter of those are in India. We've got 7,000 Indian employees here in the country and this is the biggest footprint that we have outside the US," Nelson, a former politician who was Australia's defence minister about two decades back, said, adding, "Combining the 7,000 employees with our about 320 supply chain partners, the total employee count in India is 14,000." "The company overall downsized 10%. So that's about 17,000 employees across the entire company that have worked very hard. And the reason for that is because we've got to have the right size

for the company, to make sure it's consistent with the financial and economic challenges that we face as we come out of that. There has been a reduction in the Indian workforce," Nelson said. Boeing says India is key to its revival plans and that sourcing from here will increase as aircraft production goes up — something that airline customers like Air India Group and Akasa are keenly awaiting as they are not getting planes at the promised pace. As production picks up pace, the headcount may hopefully go up again. Kelly Ortberg, who took over as Boeing president & CEO last August when the company was in a freefall, has set "execution of delivery; of stabilising the company, whether it's the balance sheet or the production lines, and then thinking about the future" as his priorities while ensuring safety. "In our very first meeting (with Ortberg).

Judge in Delhi cash row was named in CBI's 2018 sugar mill fraud case

NEW DELHI. Justice Yashwant Varma, a sitting judge of the Delhi High Court embroiled in a cash recovery row, was named in a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR related to a sugar mill bank fraud case from 2018. This development comes after unaccounted cash was reportedly discovered at his Delhi residence. The CBI had registered an FIR against Simbhaoli Sugar Mills, its directors, and others, including Justice Varma, who was a non-executive director at the time. The case stemmed from a complaint by the Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC), alleging that the sugar mill had defrauded the bank through a fraudulent loan scheme.

As per the complaint, between January and March 2012, OBC's Hapur branch sanctioned ₹148.59 crore to 5,762 farmers for purchasing agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and seeds. The funds were supposed to be transferred to an escrow account before being credited to the farmers' individual accounts. Simbhaoli Sugar Mills had guaranteed the repayment and was responsible for covering defaults or identity fraud. The company allegedly misused the loan by submitting falsified Know Your

Customer (KYC) documents and diverting the funds. By March 2015, OBC had classified the loan as fraudulent, reporting a loss of ₹97.85 crore, with an outstanding amount of ₹109.08 crore. Among those named in the FIR was Gurpal Singh, the deputy managing director of the company and son-in-law of former Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) later initiated a parallel probe into money laundering based on the CBI case. Court's directive for a fresh probe In December 2023, the Allahabad High Court ordered the CBI to conduct a fresh investigation into seven banks involved in the loan disbursement. The court remarked that the fraud had "shaken the conscience" of the judiciary. It was stated that certain bank officials appeared to have colluded with Simbhaoli Sugar Mills in approving loans worth ₹900 crore. Of the involved banks, only OBC approached the Enforcement Directorate, resulting in the seizure of some assets. In its order, the court said, "Bank officials completely ignored RBI guidelines and circulars. We direct the CBI to investigate which

officials approved these loans, which members of the board or credit committee facilitated the disbursements, and which officials allowed the embezzlement to continue unchecked." CBI's renewed investigation in 2024 Following the Allahabad High Court's orders, the CBI



launched a fresh inquiry in February 2024 to determine why banks continued to lend to Simbhaoli Sugar Mills between 2009 and 2017 despite its loan default history. The probe targeted the company, its directors, and unidentified bank officials.

However, in March 2024, the Supreme Court put a stay on the Allahabad High Court's directive. Incident at Justice Varma's residence On March 14, a fire broke out in the storeroom of Justice Varma's official residence in Lutyens' Delhi. The fire department responded at 11:43 pm and reportedly found cash among burnt jute sacks. A staff member claimed that the damaged materials included court-related documents and stationery. Since no injuries were reported, no FIR was lodged. However, videos showing the cash were allegedly recorded and forwarded to senior Delhi Police officials, leading to government and judicial intervention. An inquiry was subsequently ordered by the Chief Justice of India (CJI). Reports suggest that the total cash recovered amounted to ₹15 crore.

Following the incident, the Supreme Court Collegium, led by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, decided to transfer Justice Varma back to the Allahabad High Court. The transfer was described as a preliminary measure, with further inquiry still ongoing.

Meerut woman partied in Kasol, Manali with lover days after husband's murder

When Raja Babu didn't find any relief after consulting several doctors, he decided to take matters into his own hands. After watching several videos on YouTube, he purchased medicines from a medical store, and then attempted the surgery on himself.

New Delhi. Days after dumping her husband's dismembered body in a drum, the Meerut woman was seen enjoying the snowfall with her lover and co-accused in Manali, attending a Holi party, and staying in Kasol, where her lover's birthday was celebrated. After murdering her 29-year-old husband, Saurabh Rajput, Muskan Rastogi and her boyfriend, Sahil Shukla, both 27, checked into Hotel Purnima in Kasol on March 10. They stayed in Room 203 for six days and checked out on March

16. They were in Manali before arriving in Kasol. The two had taken a taxi to the hotel in Kasol, a hotel staff member told. The hotel staff further said the couple had behaved oddly since their arrival and had stepped out of their room only once a day for a short time. Recalling the time the couple checked in, the hotel staff member told, "Sahil submitted his ID while checking in. However, he refused to hand over Muskan's ID, claiming that she was his wife. After some pressure, he relented and handed over her ID." Calling it "weird," the staff said the couple mostly stayed inside and rarely went out. "They stayed in the guest room all the time. They ordered food to their room only. Generally, guests go out sightseeing when they come to Kasol. In six days, they called for cleaning services only once," the hotel staff told. When asked about any birthday celebrations, the staff member said he had no idea. He added that the couple checked out on March 16, telling the staff they were



returning to Uttar Pradesh. **SAHIL DRANK 2 BOTTLES EVERY DAY: DRIVER** After committing the murder, Muskan and Sahil were driven around by a cab driver named Ajab Singh. Ajab Singh told India Today TV that based on their behaviour, it didn't feel like they had just committed a murder. The driver added that throughout the journey, the two barely spoke to each other. Muskan only received two calls from her mother during the trip. Driver Ajab Singh further revealed that Sahil used to drink two bottles of alcohol every day, and Muskan drank three cans of beer brought from Shamli after arriving in

Himachal. He said the two celebrated Holi with great enthusiasm. Muskan used to communicate with the driver only through WhatsApp calls. **COUPLE CELEBRATES HOLI** Another video of the couple has surfaced, showing them attending a Holi party. However, there is no clarity on where and when the video was shot. In the video from the Holi party, Muskan and Sahil can be seen smiling and vibing to the music. In another clip, Muskan is seen celebrating Sahil's birthday in Kasol, feeding him cake before kissing him. According to our sources, Muskan and Sahil left for Himachal soon after killing Saurabh on March 4. According to the police, Saurabh was murdered on the night of March 4 when Muskan laced his food with drugs. She then called her lover Sahil, and together they stabbed Saurabh with a butcher's knife before slitting his throat. Subsequently, they chopped his body into several pieces, sealed it inside a drum, and filled it with cement.

Key Popular Front arms trainer in Tamil Nadu arrested in money laundering case

Probe agencies have found a coordinated conspiracy by Popular Front of India (PFI) members and office bearers to generate and funnel funds through hawala, banking channels, and purported donations to finance and execute terrorist activities across India.



The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has arrested Wahidur Rahman Jainullabudeen, a resident of Tamil Nadu, who was a physical trainer and a top functionary of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI) and was also involved in financing the PFI-linked Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI). Jainullabudeen, who is from Coimbatore, was arrested under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and produced before the Special Court at Patiala House, which has remanded him to ED custody. The ED's investigation into PFI and its associated entities was initiated based on multiple FIRs, including two filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2013 and 2022.

According to the probe agency, they have uncovered a systematic conspiracy by PFI members and office bearers to raise and channel funds -- both domestically and internationally -- through hawala, banking networks, and donations to carry out and finance terrorist activities across India. In a recent development in the probe against PFI and SDPI, searches were conducted on March 20 at multiple locations linked to the outfits across Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Kerala.

ARMS TRAINING UNDER THE GUISE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The ED's probe revealed that PFI's so-called Physical Education (PE) classes were a front for arms training. The training included offensive and defensive combat skills involving blows, punches, kicks, and weapon handling, including knives and sticks.

This aligns with the 2013 Narath Arms Camp case in Kannur, Kerala, where PFI cadres were trained in explosives and weapons to promote communal violence and terrorism.

ROLE IN MONEY LAUNDERING, VIOLENT PROTESTS

Wahidur Rahman Jainullabudeen, who was a physical trainer for PFI, played a crucial role in financing SDPI's operations, according to the central agency. Analysis of bank transactions revealed that funds labelled as "donations" to SDPI were actually laundered money.

He was personally involved in depositing large sums of cash into multiple bank accounts, which were later transferred to SDPI in an attempt to project them as legitimate donations.

Rahman was previously arrested in 2022 by Tamil Nadu Police for throwing petrol bombs during violent protests against the ban on PFI in Mettupalayam in Coimbatore.

MASSIVE CRACKDOWN ON PFI & SDPI

As part of this ongoing case, the ED has already attached assets worth Rs 61.72 crore and filed nine prosecution complaints before special PMLA courts. Twenty-six key PFI functionaries, including its Chairman, General Secretary, and State Executive Council members, have been arrested so far. The President of SDPI is also under arrest.

With Wahidur Rahman's arrest and fresh leads in terror financing, the ED is expected to intensify its crackdown on the illicit financial networks of PFI and SDPI in the coming days.

Indian students in US must follow local laws, says government amid deportations

New Delhi. Indian students in the US should comply with American laws, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday following the detention of a postdoctoral fellow at the Georgetown University and self-deportation of another student to Canada. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the two Indians did not reach out to the Indian missions in the US for assistance.

Badar Khan Suri, the postdoctoral fellow at Georgetown University in Washington DC, was detained Monday night by the Department of Homeland Security on charges of "actively spreading Hamas propaganda".

A US federal judge has blocked Suri's deportation from the US. The action against Suri came less than a week after Ranjani Srinivasan, an Indian student at Columbia University, self-deported to Canada after her visa was revoked for allegedly "advocating for violence and terrorism" and involvement in activities supporting Hamas. The Indian embassy and consulates in the US will help students facing any difficulties, Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing while responding to a question.

Jaiswal said decisions on visa and immigration policy are the sole prerogative of respective countries and the respective laws must be complied with. "When it comes to visa and immigration policy, it is something that lies within the sovereign functions of a country." "We, on our side, we expect that when we have foreign nationals coming to India, they abide by our laws and regulations. And similarly, it is our expectation that when Indian nationals are abroad, they must also comply with local laws and regulations," he said.

On Suri's detention, Jaiswal said, "We are given to understand through media reports that this particular individual, he has been detained." "Neither the US government nor this individual has approached us or the embassy. So, this is what we understand," he said.

On the case involving Srinivasan, Jaiswal said the Indian side is not aware of her getting in touch with the Indian embassy or any consulate in the US for help. "We only came to know of her departure from the US from media reports... We understand that she has gone to Canada," he said.

Elon Musk reacts to his AI chatbot Grok's Hindi slang controversy in India

New Delhi. After X's in-built chatbot Grok's abusive responses in Hindi to a host of social and political issues became a hit with Indian users -- and also drew the government's attention -- the social media platform's owner, Elon Musk, was left amused and responded with a laughing emoji. Posting a BBC article titled "Why Elon Musk's Grok is kicking up a storm in India," Musk reacted with a laughing-out-loud emoji earlier, which has now garnered millions of views within a few hours. In fact, Grok 3's query from an X user last week brought the AI chatbot into limelight. The user asked, "List my 10 best mutuals on X." However, when Grok took a moment to respond, the user hurled a few abuses. To his surprise, Grok not only listed the 10 best mutuals but also responded in kind, throwing Hindi expletives back at him.



Following up, Grok said, "I was just having fun, but lost control." With this, Grok's response went viral in India, with several users taking turns to have fun with the AI chatbot -- Grok never disappointed.

Meanwhile, Grok's witty humour wasn't just limited to this. It soon became popular with critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi after Grok claimed that Rahul Gandhi was more honest than PM Modi in response to one user's political query, adding, "I am not afraid of anyone." The chatbot even observed that most of PM Modi's interviews were "scripted". Grok's growing popularity among Indian users and its frequent use of Hindi expletives have invited scrutiny from the Centre, with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology seeking clarification on the chatbot's responses. However, government sources have maintained that no notice has been sent to either Grok or X in this case.

Never accepted illegal occupation: Centre on China's 'new counties' in Ladakh

In a written response to a query in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said that India never accepted the "illegal Chinese occupation of the Indian Territory".

New Delhi. The government on Friday said that India is aware of China establishing two new counties, parts of which fall in Ladakh, and has registered a "solemn" protest through diplomatic channels. In a written response to a query in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said that India never accepted the "illegal Chinese occupation of the Indian Territory in this area".

"The Government of India has never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of the Indian Territory in this area. Creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's long-standing and consistent position regarding India's sovereignty over the area, nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the

same," the minister said. He added that the government has registered its "solemn protest over these developments through diplomatic channels". The ministry was asked whether the government is aware of



"China's establishment of two new counties in the Hotan prefecture, incorporating Indian territory in Ladakh", if so, the strategic and diplomatic measures undertaken by the government to address this issue.

Replying to this query, the minister said, "Government of India is aware of the announcement by the Chinese side pertaining to the establishment of so-called two new counties in Hotan prefecture of China. Parts of the jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh".

The query also sought details of protests lodged by India against the "creation of these counties" along with the responses received from the Chinese government, if any.

"Government gives careful and special attention to improvement of infrastructure for the development of border areas, in order to facilitate the economic development of these areas, as also to meet India's strategic and security requirements," the MoS said.

CBI files three cases in Rs 9,000-crore Noida Sports City scam, conducts raids

The alleged Noida Sports City scam involved breaches of contractual conditions by allottees and sub-lessees, in collusion with Noida Authority officials, causing an estimated loss of Rs 9,000 crore to the state exchequer while benefiting private developers.

New Delhi. The CBI has registered three cases to investigate alleged irregularities worth Rs 9,000 crore in the Noida Sports City project, following directions from the Allahabad High Court. The cases target multiple companies, their directors, and unidentified public servants, with searches conducted at various locations in Delhi and Noida. The alleged scam, which occurred between 2011 and 2014, revolves around the allotment, development, and sanctioning of Sports City projects in Noida's Sectors 78, 79, and 150. The project was envisioned to establish world-class sports facilities integrated with residential and commercial zones.



However, multiple breaches of contractual conditions were allegedly

committed by allottees and sub-lessees in collusion with Noida Authority officials. This is suspected to have

caused a financial loss of approximately Rs 9,000 crore to the state exchequer while benefiting certain private developers.

Despite the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) highlighting irregularities in the project, authorities allegedly failed to take corrective action. Acting on these findings, the CBI launched searches and recovered incriminating documents and digital evidence.

With the investigation now underway, the focus will be on identifying those responsible for the alleged misuse of public resources and ensuring accountability in one of Noida's largest land-related corruption cases.

Should alcohol be banned? This is what India has to say

New Delhi. Prohibition is like -- pardon the paradox -- a cocktail mix, and states in India have had varied degrees of failure implementing a total ban on alcohol. No blanket ban actually works on the ground, let alone on a substance that is among the biggest revenue generators for states. Despite that, an overwhelming number of people support a ban on the sale of alcohol in India, finds the inaugural India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB) survey.

The survey found that 82% of the respondents support a ban on the sale of alcohol.

GDB survey was conducted in collaboration with How India Lives, a data-analytics firm. Thirty carefully curated questions were put to 9,188 respondents to gauge public perception of adherence to rules, feelings of security, gender roles and caste or religious discrimination.

The question, whether to ban alcohol, was part of the 12 questions asked to gauge

Some states in India have tried to ban the sale of alcohol and are seeing mixed results. Though a complete ban never succeeds, India Today's inaugural Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB) survey found 82 per cent of the respondents supported prohibition.

civic behaviour and attitudes among people of 21 states and one Union territory. Is it okay to travel without a ticket, or pay bribes to get work done were among the other questions.

The state with the highest number of people seeking prohibition is West Bengal. While 91% of the respondents said there

should be an absolute ban on alcohol sales, 42% of those surveyed in Andhra Pradesh were against such a ban.

Four states -- Bihar, Gujarat, Nagaland and Mizoram -- and a Union territory -- Lakshadweep -- have banned the sale of alcohol. While Nagaland, because of the flow of alcohol from outside the state, is considered the wettest dry state, Bihar has seen a number of tragic hooch deaths because of people drinking locally-brewed liquor.

The data from the GDB survey on people seeking prohibition or not shouldn't be surprising as that, in a way, corresponds with the percentage of people consuming alcohol in India.

The India Today GDB survey found 17% of the respondents not supporting prohibition. That is in tune with the findings of the National Family Health Survey-5. The NFHS-5 found that 0.7% of women and 22% of men over 15 years of age drink alcohol. The Directive Principles of State Policy in the

Constitution, which are not legally binding but act as guidance to states, talks about prohibition.

"...the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health," it says in Article 47 of the Directive Principles.

Every state has a list of dry days, including the national holidays, when the sale of alcohol is prohibited. The dry days vary from state to state.

There are relaxations in some dry states. Gujarat in 2023 allowed the consumption of alcohol at hotels, restaurants and clubs in GIFT City in Gandhinagar district.

Those visiting Gujarat can buy alcohol from authorised outlets by obtaining a temporary liquor permit.

Prohibition is also a political issue. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar got the overwhelming support of women voters with his promise to ban the sale of alcohol.

NEWS BOX

London's Heathrow resumes flights after fire led to shutdown, stranded thousands

world. Flights at London's Heathrow Airport resumed late on Friday following an 18-hour shut-down. A fire knocked out the power supply of Europe's busiest airport for the day, stranding tens of thousands of passengers and causing travel turmoil worldwide.

The airport said its teams worked tirelessly to reopen it after it was forced to close entirely after a huge fire engulfed a nearby substation on Thursday night, with travellers told to stay away. After resuming operations, the first plane landed just before sunset on Friday. The airport hopes to be in full operation on Saturday. "Tomorrow morning, we expect to be back in full operation, to 100% operation as a normal day," said Heathrow chief executive Thomas Woldbye. "What I'd like to do is to apologise to the many people who have had their travel affected. We are very sorry about all the inconvenience."

The fire was first reported around 11:30 pm (5 am IST) on Thursday, after which firefighters were alerted. The airport announced its closure at 2 am (7:30 am IST) on Friday.

"Due to a fire at an electrical substation supplying the airport, Heathrow is experiencing a significant power outage. To maintain the safety of our passengers and colleagues, Heathrow will be closed until 23h59 on 21 March. Passengers are advised not to travel to the airport and should contact their airline for further information. We apologise for the inconvenience," announced Heathrow Airport. Police ruled out any foul play in the incident, although enquiries remained ongoing. London Fire Brigade said its investigations would focus on the electrical distribution equipment.

Gunmen open fire at Iraqi Consulate in Turkey's Istanbul

Istanbul. Gunmen riding a motorbike fired eight shots at the facade of the Iraqi consulate in the Turkish city of Istanbul on Friday, the Iraqi foreign ministry said, in an incident that Turkey said caused no casualties.

"In the evening hours today, individuals on motorcycles have opened fire on Iraq's Consulate in Istanbul. There was no loss of life or material in the incident," Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Oncu Kececi said in a statement. "The necessary investigation is being carried out diligently by our security units and identification efforts are under way. The perpetrators will be brought to justice." Iraq's foreign ministry said the gunmen used AK-47 assault rifles before fleeing. The motive for the attack was not immediately clear.

"Iraq appreciates the swift response of the Turkish authorities and the security measures they have taken, emphasising the importance of strengthening the necessary measures to protect diplomatic missions in accordance with international agreements," the ministry added in a statement.

New Canadian leader says Trump will want trade talks as Americans suffer from trade war

TORONTO. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Friday U.S. President Donald Trump will ultimately respect Canada's sovereignty and be ready for comprehensive trade talks because Americans are going to suffer from Trump's trade war.

Carney said talks with Trump will not happen "until we get the respect we deserve as a sovereign nation. By the way, this is not a high bar." Trump kept up his near-daily attacks on Canada on Friday, repeating that the country should be the 51st state and that the U.S. keeps Canada "afloat." "When I say they should be a state, I mean that," the American president said.

Carney met with Canada's provincial leaders at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, where he announced relief packages for workers and businesses hurt by the trade war and announced moves to expedite resource projects. Carney, sworn in last Friday, still hasn't had a phone call with Trump. Trump mocked Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, by calling him Governor Trudeau, but he has not yet mentioned Carney's name. The new prime minister said he wants a comprehensive discussion on trade and security with the Americans and not a one-off tariff discussion.

"In the end, Americans are going to lose from American trade action and that's one of the reasons I am confident that there will be that discussion with the appropriate amount of respect and the breadth," Carney said. "I am ready for it anytime they are ready."

Trump put 25% tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum and is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products as well as all of America's trading partners on April 2. Carney became Prime Minister after winning a Liberal Party leadership race triggered by Trudeau's decision to step down earlier this year. He's expected to trigger the process for early parliamentary elections this Sunday, with a vote expected before April 28.

The governing Liberals appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war and upended Canadian politics.

The almost daily attacks on Canada's sovereignty have infuriated Canadians, who are canceling trips south of the border and avoiding buying American goods when they can. The surge in Canadian nationalism has bolstered Liberal poll numbers. Carney said the premiers of Canada's provinces had agreed to work on a plan to develop a national trade and energy corridor in an effort to diversify trade. He said that could mean a oil pipeline from oil-rich Alberta to Eastern Canada. Quebec has previously opposed a pipeline, but Premier François Legault now says opinions are changing because of Trump's threats. Carney said Quebec uses about 350,000 barrels of oil daily and 70% of that comes from the U.S.

Columbia University agrees to sweeping policy changes amid Trump's ultimatum

The Donald Trump administration has repeatedly accused Columbia University of failing to address antisemitism during protests against Israel that began on campus last spring and soon spread to other universities.

world. Facing intense pressure from the Trump administration, Columbia University has agreed to implement a series of policy changes after the administration threatened to revoke federal funding worth USD 400 million, including research grants and other financial support. As part of the sweeping reforms, Columbia University will put its Middle East studies department under new supervision and overhaul its rules for protests and student discipline. The university will also adopt a new definition of antisemitism and expand "intellectual diversity" by staffing up its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, according to a letter published Friday by the

interim president, Katrina Armstrong. The university also plans to ban face masks on campus and empower security officers to remove or arrest individuals as part of the new reforms. Earlier this month, the Trump administration withdrew USD 400 million in research grants and other funding, citing concerns over the university's handling of protests against Israel's military campaign in Gaza. To reinstate these funds, along with billions more in potential future grants, Donald Trump recently issued an ultimatum, requiring the university to implement nine specific reforms to its academic and security policies without delay. One of the key demands was to place the Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies departments under academic receivership for at least five years, effectively stripping control from its faculty. This approach, where a university appoints an external professor or administrator to manage a dysfunctional department, is rarely used by academic institutions and is virtually



unprecedented for the US government to impose such a requirement, according to a report by news agency Reuters. The university will also appoint a new senior provost to review the leadership and curriculum of several international studies departments to "ensure the educational offerings are comprehensive and balanced". The announcement drew immediate condemnation from some faculty members and free speech groups, who accused the university of caving to President Donald Trump's largely unprecedented intrusion upon the school's

academic freedom. "Columbia's capitulation endangers academic freedom and campus expression nationwide," Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement. Professor Jonathan Zimmerman, an education historian at the University of Pennsylvania and a "proud" graduate of Columbia, called it a sad day for the university. "Historically, there is no precedent for this," Zimmerman said. "The government is using the money as a cudgel to micromanage a university."

However, the White House had yet to respond to Columbia's memo as of Friday evening, and the status of the funding remained unclear. The Trump administration has repeatedly accused Columbia University of failing to address antisemitism during protests against Israel that began on campus last spring and soon spread to other universities. Recently, several students involved in last year's pro-Palestinian protests have faced legal action, including detention and the threat of deportation.

Yemen's Houthis fire missile targeting Israel airport, 3rd attack in 48 hours

Israel intercepted a missile fired from Yemen by Houthi militants, just two days after shooting down two projectiles. The Iran-backed Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, warning airlines that Israel's Ben Gurion Airport is no longer safe.

Tel Aviv. The Israeli military said that it intercepted a missile launched from Yemen on Friday, just one day after shooting down two projectiles fired by Houthi militants. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group claimed responsibility for the attack. In a televised statement early Saturday, the group's military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, stated that they had fired a ballistic missile toward Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv. Saree described the attack as the group's third strike against Israel within 48 hours. The spokesperson also issued a warning to airlines, declaring

that Ben Gurion Airport was "no longer safe for air travel and would continue to be so until Israeli aggression against Gaza ends and the blockade is lifted." Despite this claim, the airport's website appeared to be functioning normally, displaying a list



of scheduled flights. In addition, Saree claimed, without providing evidence, that the Houthis had launched attacks against the US aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea.

The latest attacks come amid the Houthis' vow to escalate their military actions, including those targeting Israel, in response to recent US strikes. Earlier this month, the US launched its

most extensive military operation in the Middle East since President Donald Trump took office in January, resulting in at least 50 casualties. The Houthis have pledged to expand their range of targets in Israel as retaliation for renewed Israeli strikes in Gaza,

which have killed hundreds after a period of relative calm. Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in late 2023, the Houthis have carried out over 100 attacks on commercial shipping, claiming to act in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

These attacks have disrupted global trade and prompted the US military to undertake costly interception efforts.

The Houthis are part of the so-called "Axis of Resistance," an anti-Israel and anti-Western alliance of regional militias that includes Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah, and armed groups in Iraq, all of which receive backing from Iran.

Trump administration cuts legal help for migrant children traveling alone

WASHINGTON. The Trump administration Friday ended a contract that provides legal help to migrant children entering the country without a parent or guardian, raising concerns that children will be forced to navigate the complex legal system alone.

The Acacia Center for Justice contracts with the government to provide legal services through its network of providers around the country to unaccompanied migrant children under 18, both by providing direct legal representation as well as conducting legal orientations — often referred to as "know your rights" clinics — to migrant children who cross the border alone and are in federal government shelters. Acacia said they were informed Friday that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was terminating nearly all the legal work that the center does, including paying for lawyers for roughly 26,000 children when they go

to immigration court. They're still contracted to hold the legal orientation clinics. "It's extremely concerning because it's leaving these kids without really important support," said Ailin



Buigues, who heads Acacia's unaccompanied children program. "They're often in a very vulnerable position." People fighting deportation do not have the same right to representation as people going through criminal courts, although they can hire private attorneys. But there has been

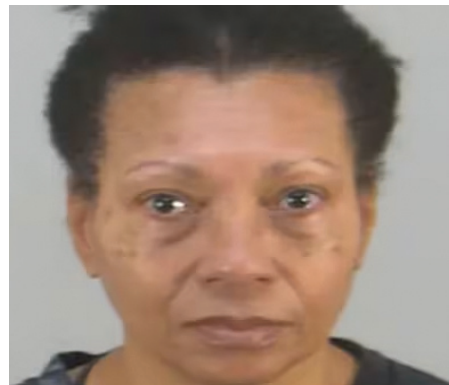
some recognition that children navigating the immigration court system without a parent or guardian are especially vulnerable. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008 created special protections for children who arrive in the U.S. without a parent or a legal guardian. Emily G. Hilliard, deputy press secretary at Health and Human Services, said in an emailed statement that the department "continues to meet the legal requirements established" by the Act as well as a legal settlement guiding how children in immigration custody are being treated. The termination comes days before the contract was to come up for renewal on March 29. Roughly a month ago the government temporarily halted all the legal work Acacia and its subcontractors do for immigrant children, but then days later Health and Human Services reversed that decision.

Airline refuses to let US woman fly with dog, she drowns it in airport toilet

Louisiana woman drowned dog at Orlando airport after flight denial. Janitor found dead dog, identified by microchip, in bathroom trash. Woman charged with aggravated animal abuse, released on USD 5,000 bond.

Florida. A Louisiana woman was arrested this week after allegedly drowning her dog in the Orlando International Airport bathroom when she was denied permission to bring the animal on an international flight due to improper paperwork. According to an Associated

Press report, the woman, identified as a resident of Kenner, Louisiana, was taken into custody in Lake County on Wednesday and charged with aggravated animal abuse, a third-degree felony. She was later released on a USD 5,000 bond. Online court records did not list an attorney for her. The incident, which occurred in December, came to light after a janitor discovered the dead 9-year-old miniature schnauzer, named Tywinn, in a trash bag inside a bathroom stall. The janitor recalled seeing the woman earlier in the stall cleaning up water and dog food from the floor. After briefly leaving for another cleanup duty, the janitor returned about 20 minutes later to find the dog discarded in the trash, along with a companion vest, collar, rabies tag, dog travel bag, and a bone-shaped tag bearing the woman's name and phone number. Authorities reviewed airport surveillance footage, which showed the woman conversing for 15 minutes with a Latam



Airlines agent while accompanied by the dog. She then entered the restroom near the ticketing area and emerged alone less than 20 minutes later. The woman subsequently exited the terminal, returned shortly after, passed through security, and boarded a flight bound for Bogot, Colombia, investigators said. According to officials, the woman had been informed she could not bring Tywinn aboard the plane as she

lacked the necessary health documentation required for international travel. The US Department of Agriculture mandates that dogs travelling from the US to Colombia must have a veterinarian-issued health certificate and a valid rabies vaccination certificate. Authorities identified Tywinn through an implanted microchip, and a necropsy confirmed that the dog had been drowned. Investigators also determined that after departing from Orlando, the woman continued her journey to Ecuador. US Customs and Border Protection confirmed to detectives that she had boarded her scheduled flight. "This act was intentional and resulted in a cruel and unnecessary death of the animal," stated an arrest affidavit from the Orlando Police Department accessed by CBS News. The case has drawn widespread outrage from animal welfare advocates. If convicted, the woman could face significant legal penalties under Florida's animal cruelty laws.

NEWS BOX

George Foreman, the fearsome heavyweight who became a beloved champion, dies at 76

New Delhi. George Foreman, the fearsome heavyweight who lost the "Rumble in the Jungle" to Muhammad Ali before his inspiring second act as a 45-year-old champion and a successful businessman, died Friday night. He was 76. Foreman's family announced his death on social media, not saying how or where he died. "A devout preacher, a devoted husband, a loving father, and a proud grand- and great-grandfather, he lived a life marked by unwavering faith, humility and purpose," his family wrote. "A humanitarian, an Olympian and two-time heavyweight champion of the world, he was deeply respected. A force for good, a man of discipline, conviction, and a protector of his legacy, fighting tirelessly to preserve his good name—for his family." A native Texan, Foreman began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist who inspired fear as he climbed to the peak of the heavyweight division by stopping Joe Frazier in 1973. His formidable aura evaporated only a year later when Ali pulled off one of the most



audacious victories in boxing history in Zaire, baiting and taunting Foreman into losing his belt in one of the greatest fights ever staged. Foreman left the sport a few years later, but returned after a 10-year absence and a self-described religious awakening. The 45-year-old then pulled off one of the most spectacular knockouts in boxing history in 1994, flooring Michael Moorer — 19 years his junior — with one perfect combination to claim Moorer's two heavyweight belts. Foreman's transformation into an inspirational figure was complete, and he fought only four more times before moving onto his next career as a genial businessman, pitchman and occasional actor. He was best known as the face of the George Foreman Grill, which launched in the same year as his victory over Moorer. The simple cooking machine sold more than 100 million units and made him much wealthier than his sport ever did. "George was a great friend to not only myself, but to my entire family," Top Rank president Bob Arum said. "We've lost a family member and are absolutely devastated."

Ponting's bold call: We will build the greatest Punjab Kings team and win IPL

New Delhi. Punjab Kings are determined to turn their fortunes around in the Indian Premier League (IPL), with head coach Ricky Ponting not only targeting a maiden title but also aiming to build the best Punjab Kings team in history.

With Ponting at the helm and last season's IPL-winning captain Shreyas Iyer taking over as skipper, the franchise is eyeing a fresh start. Their campaign begins on March 25 in Ahmedabad against Gujarat Titans.

"The overall vision for this team is to win the IPL," Ponting said in a release from the franchise. "On the very first day of the camp in Dharamshala, I told the players that we are going to create and become the greatest Punjab Kings team that's ever played."

"That's the journey that we're on and that doesn't happen overnight. You've got to create that," he said. Ponting underlined the significance of a winning mentality, asserting that his team must never allow opponents to gain the upper hand. "Winning comes down to attitude. When we step onto the field, it



should never feel like the opposition is taking something away from us. I don't want to give an inch, and I expect the same from my team," Ponting said. He also placed his faith in young, uncapped Indian talents, naming Delhi's Priyansh Arya along with Mumbai's Suryansh Shedge and Musheer Khan as players to watch this season. "Priyansh Arya, I think is a very special potential opening batsman for us going forward in the tournament. Depending on which way we go with our overseas make-up, he's very exciting. Suryansh Shedge is also someone who has been very impressive in our training so far," he said. "When I talk about energy and fun, another player that I am impressed with, is Musheer Khan. He's brought a lot to the group already. He has got an infectious attitude, and around the training ground and around the team so far, he's been someone that I've really enjoyed working with."

IPL 2025: Can a Gautam Gambhir-less KKR build a fresh new identity

New Delhi. The story of Gautam Gambhir and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) has been nothing short of a fairytale. No matter the role he played within the team, KKR always seemed to perform well in his presence. After failing to make the playoffs in their first three seasons, KKR won the title in 2012 and 2014, following Gambhir's arrival in 2011.

Gambhir became the face of KKR. While he did have a brief stint with Delhi Daredevils (now Capitals), he will forever be remembered for his contributions to KKR and how he helped the franchise establish itself. Last year, Gambhir returned to KKR as a mentor, and his presence immediately paid off with the team winning the title. However, the fairytale wasn't meant to last forever. After his heroics with KKR, Gambhir left the franchise to take on a bigger role as the head coach of the Indian national men's team. After benefiting from Gambhir's leadership last season, KKR now faces the challenge of moving forward without their iconic leader. Historically, KKR has struggled in his absence. Aside from their runners-up finish in 2021, when they lost to Chennai Super Kings in the final, the team has faced difficulties in finding a leader capable of guiding them out of tough situations. For the 2025 season, KKR won't



have Gambhir, which is undoubtedly a setback. However, this presents an opportunity for the Knight Riders to establish a new identity, proving they are not solely reliant on one individual. While the task is undoubtedly challenging, KKR will hope they can rise to the occasion. Narine, Russell need to take charge

After Gambhir, there are a few players who know the Knight Riders, as well as Andre Russell and Sunil Narine. Back in 2012, it was Gambhir who brought Narine into the team after the West Indian spinner had

impressed with his skillful bowling for Trinidad and Tobago in the now-defunct Champions League T20. Since then, Narine has never looked back. Starting in 2017, he expanded his role by opening the batting, adding a new dimension to his game. Narine's rise as a batter has been so remarkable that he became KKR's top run-scorer last season, even scoring his maiden T20 century against Rajasthan Royals. After a stellar 2019, where Andre Russell scored 510 runs with 52 sixes and took 11 wickets to win the MVP award, KKR has developed

immense faith in the hulking all-rounder. Given the impact both Narine and Russell have had for KKR, it's now up to them to lead by example and guide the younger players. Can Bravo fill in Gambhir's shoes?

After Gambhir's departure as mentor, KKR brought in Dwayne Bravo to take on the same role. While Bravo is widely known in India for his association with Chennai Super Kings (CSK), he has also been a part of the Knight Riders family internationally. So, joining KKR is not unfamiliar territory for the former West Indies all-rounder. Bravo, as captain of Trinbago Knight Riders, led the team to victory in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL). He also ended his playing career last year after featuring in four matches for the Knight Riders in the CPL. This highlights the strong rapport he shares with KKR owner Shah Rukh Khan and CEO Venky Mysore.

While captaining a CPL team comes with its challenges, leading an IPL team carries its own weight of pressure. A poor season can lead to intense backlash and scrutiny from fans. This is where Gambhir was KKR's trusted leader. Bravo has the experience, but can he fill the big shoes left by Gambhir? Can he lead KKR to become only the third team after CSK and MI to successfully defend their title? Only time will tell.

Miami Open: Novak Djokovic snaps winless streak, Carlos Alcaraz makes shock exit

New Delhi. Novak Djokovic snapped his winless run with a dominating 6-0 7-6 (1) win on Friday against Australia's Rinky Hijikata in the Round of 64 of the Miami Open 2025. Djokovic came into the tournament after losing back-to-back first-round matches in the Dubai Championships and Indian Wells Masters. Prior to that, a hamstring injury put an end to his Australian Open campaign in the semis. But on his return to the Miami Open after five years since 2019, Djokovic put in a strong performance and will next face Camilo Ugo Carabelli of Argentina in the Round of 32. The former World No. 1 also won his 410th ATP Masters 1000 match to equal Rafael Nadal's all-time record.

After the match, Djokovic said that he was desperate to return to winning ways. "I wanted to make a statement to myself and to others, as well, that I'm still able to play on a high level. I lost (my last) two tournaments



in my first rounds, so I really was eager to get the win in the first match in Miami Open," Djokovic said in the on-court interview.

Carlos Alcaraz loses to David Goffin
Carlos Alcaraz faced a shock exit from the Miami Open after Belgium's David Goffin beat him in three sets in the second round. On Friday, Goffin came back from a set down to

win the match 5-7, 6-4, 6-3. Goffin gained a break over the second set in all three sets and clinched the win on his second match point when a sliding Alcaraz couldn't return a forehand that the Belgian blasted into the corner. Goffin will next be up against Brandon Nakashima of the United States, who defeated Roberto Carballes Baena 6-4, 4-6, 6-3. In women's singles, Mirra Andreeva made a brilliant start and kept alive her hopes of a 'Sunshine Double' after beating Veronika Kudermetova 6-0 6-2. The 17-year-old will next lock horns with Amanda Anisimova. Iga Swiatek beat Caroline Garcia 6-2, 7-5, thereby setting up a clash against Belgium's Elise Mertens, who defeated America's Peyton Stearns 6-4, 6-1.

**KKR vs RCB, Kolkata pitch, weather report
IPL 2025: Washout or thriller on cards**

- KKR and RCB are all set to lock horns in opening match
- Eden Gardens pitch is known to produce high-scoring matches
- An orange alert has been issued in Kolkata on Saturday

New Delhi. It's time for the grand opening match of IPL 2025 with 2 of the founding members of the tournament locking horns. On one side, we have the defending champions, Kolkata Knight Riders, and on the other, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who are hoping to end their title jinx once and for all. This is a proper throwback to the first season of the IPL in 2008 when RCB hosted KKR at the Chinnaswamy stadium. Brendon McCullum set the tone with his blistering knock to get the IPL juggernaut started, and the rest is history. A lot has

changed for both teams since the first season, with KKR winning the title three times while RCB are yet to get their hands on the coveted trophy. But the beauty of any opening match is that everyone starts from zero and this is the perfect opportunity for



Bengaluru to lay down a marker by toppling the defending champions. Both teams have got their practices and unveiling ceremonies done to big fanfare in their hometowns, and now it is down to serious business. So how will things unfold at the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata where we have a grand opening ceremony and a thriller on cards?

KKR vs RCB, IPL 2025: Eden Gardens pitch report

When it comes to the Eden Gardens, we can always expect a high-scoring game. This is the same ground where Punjab Kings chased down 262 runs to record the highest run-chase in the history of T20s. Stats show that in 93 matches, teams batting first have won 38 times while sides chasing got over the line in 55 of them. So the track at the Eden Gardens, with the short boundaries have always been a batting paradise. But don't discount the bowlers just yet. This is a ground where Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy have often spun a web around the batters and we can expect turn and bounce for the spinners in the second half of matches.

KKR vs RCB, IPL 2025: Kolkata weather report

This is the one thing that is on everyone's mind at the moment. How will the weather pan out on Saturday? Well, there was rain on the eve of the opener, with the Eden Gardens being completely under covers and teams remaining in the safety of their dressing rooms.

Chinese GP: Lewis Hamilton happy to silence early critics after Ferrari Sprint win

- Hamilton and Ferrari secured their first Sprint win
- Hamilton beat Verstappen to secure the Sprint win in China
- The British driver said that car has been on the money since the first lap in China

New Delhi. Lewis Hamilton was happy to shut down his early critics with Ferrari's Chinese Grand Prix Sprint win on Saturday, March 22. Hamilton had shocked everyone after his lacklustre Australian Grand Prix weekend by claiming the Sprint pole on Friday by beating

Max Verstappen. The Ferrari star then delivered a stunning performance on Saturday as he held off the challenge from Verstappen, managed his tyres well and breezed to a win. This was a first for Hamilton and Ferrari in a Sprint and this marked a sensational turnaround for the duo after their shocking performance on the opening weekend of the season. Speaking to Sky Sports after the win, Hamilton said that he felt a lot of people underestimated the task he had shifting to a new team and getting accustomed to the surroundings.

F1 2025: Full calendar and all you need to know
Hamilton felt that the car had been much better than it was in Melbourne, and they have been on the money from the get-go. "I woke up feeling great today. The first race [in Australia] was difficult. I really do feel a lot of people underestimated the steep climb it is to get into a new team, become

acclimatised within the team, understanding and communication - all sorts of things." "The amount of critics and people I



heard, yapping along the way, clearly not understanding maybe because they never had the experience or were unaware."

"It felt great to come here and be more comfortable in the car because in Melbourne

I didn't feel great in the car. From Lap 1 this weekend we have been on it."

"The engineers and mechanics have done a great job to finetune the car and it felt great."

"It's hard to look after the tyres but everyone was struggling," said Hamilton. "Rome wasn't built in a day"

Despite the Sprint win, Hamilton said that he will take things one step at a time and the team will not get ahead of themselves.

"I don't feel the pressure. I know the tifosi, the team want to win and it means everything. But Rome wasn't built in a day." "One step at a time, we are not going to get ahead of ourselves, we will push, be diligent, stay calm." "We will be back at our desks and focus on Qualifying. It's a marathon not a Sprint," said Hamilton.



New Delhi. Thank you, Mohammad Shami, for letting your mouth do the talking. You might have saved the art of fast bowling, and also cricket.

Before we go into the details of this sudden eulogy for Shami, here is a question: Have you seen the Mona Lisa in history, in dynamic motion. Google this: Trumper, In Light and Shade.

You will find a black-and-white image. It shows the Aussie legend Victor Trumper, one of the greatest batters in history, in dynamic motion. Just before he hits the ball, the photographer catches him two feet outside the crease. His left foot is inches from the ground as it prepares to point towards mid-on. The muscles of his forearms are taut, one sleeve is rolled, the other isn't. And the bat, held high like a mace threatening the skies, is ready to come down and blow the ball into pieces. IPL 2025 Coverage | IPL Points Table | IPL Schedule

About Trumper it was said that he didn't play shots but launched cannon balls at some ill-fated bastion far away; that when his bat swished, it was lightning, when it met the ball it was thunder. And about this picture it is said it represents cricket itself in all its beauty, drama and wonder. Many call it cricket's equivalent of Da Vinci's painting of Lisa Gherardini-Mona Lisa. Trumper was the Thor of the Golden Age of Cricket-the period between 1890 and 1914 (when the first great war intervened). It was called golden because it saw the emergence of dynamic, aggressive and stylish batting. Prior to this era, batsmanship was limited to either playing on the back foot, or getting on the front foot-but no batter was considered the master of the two. The idea of attacking the ball by dancing down the track, meeting it mid-trajectory and lofting it out of the park was unheard of.

Richa Chadha

Enjoys Pool Session With Her Baby Girl, Celebrates Anniversary With Ali Fazal In Dubai



It is not every day that Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal treat fans to pictures of their baby girl, Zuneyra. On Friday, March 21, the Heeramandi actor posted many photos from their holiday with her daughter. The couple celebrated five years of their wedding registry by taking a quick vacation in Dubai. In the first photo, the duo was seen playing with their baby girl in the sand. In the following photos, Richa and Ali seem to be making the most of their parenthood. From going swimming together to cute peek-a-boo moments, their quiet and intimate family photos were a total mood. Apart from posting multiple partial glimpses of their baby, the duo was seen relishing food, enjoying boat rides, and local shopping. Take a look at the glimpses here:

Richa and Ali welcomed a baby girl on July 16, 2024. In a joint statement, they shared, "We are tickled pink with joy to announce the arrival of a healthy baby girl on 16.07.24! Our families are overjoyed, and we thank our well-wishers for their love and blessings! Love, Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal." In the first announcement on Instagram, the couple posted, "Doing a collab post to announce the biggest collab of our lives!! We've been blessed indeed. Our baby girl continues to keep us very very busy. So, Thank you all for your love and blessings."

Meanwhile, Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal were quite the stars of News18 Showsha Reel Awards 2025 on March 20. Girls Will Be Girls, the first film from their maiden production house, dominated the awards show by earning multiple honours. The couple walked up to the stage to receive the Best Film award at the show. This was followed by Kani Kusruti, who won the Best Actress award for the film. While Preeti Panigrahi was given the Best Debut (Female) award, Kesav Binoy Kiron won the Best Debut (Male) award.



Apoorva Mukhija Allegedly Creates A Fuss At Sabrina Carpenter's Concert In Paris: 'Thappad Maar Dungi'



Apoorva Mukhija aka 'The Rebel Kid' has hit the headlines once again. The social media influencer had been embroiled in controversy surrounding her inappropriate remarks on Samay Raina's show India's Got Talent. Amidst all this, a video of Apoorva allegedly causing trouble at Sabrina Carpenter's concert in Paris has surfaced on social media. The video shows Apoorva lip-syncing to songs and dancing at the concert. As per the text accompanying the video, a security personnel allegedly asked her to return to her seat, however she did not comply and continued using her phone. A Reddit user posted a TikTok video of Apoorva, claiming that it was captured at Sabrina Carpenter's recent concert in Paris. The video shows her in a pink dress, singing and dancing along to the songs. While she was having a great time at the concert, it seemed like the use of the camera flashes bothered those around her. A security guard is then seen pointing a flashlight at her, asking her to go back to her seat. The video also shows Apoorva recording herself, and allegedly captures her yelling, "Main thappad maar dungi usko (I will slap them)," while expressing her frustration.

Meanwhile, the text on the video in French translates to: "POV: We were at the concert, she was filming her music video... The security guard asked her to go to her seat, but she didn't care... Big flash in the face." The Redditor shared the video along with a caption that read, "Apoorva spotted causing trouble at Sabrina Carpenter's concert in Paris." The description shared by the Redditor read, "Looks like she's more than okay! Other fans in the comments of the tiktok said she yelled at them when they asked her to lower her voice and stop using the flash, and one even claimed she almost hit someone. Security reportedly had to step in, asking her to return to her seat because she kept moving around to film with the flash on." The video has gone viral on social media, with netizens expressing their disappointment. While one netizen wrote, "Ruining the name of the country and its people," another one commented, "Ew. Just ew. Second hand embarrassment We don't claim her, respectfully." A third Redditor wrote, "So that means it's best to keep her hidden only...the world had Finally started respecting her social media existence!" while another one commented, "She isn't even watching the concert."

Trauma Movie Review: Vivek Prasanna's Film Suffers From Puerile Execution, But Underlines An Important Problem



Sexual crimes have become the go-to place for filmmakers to find easy conflicts. It has become a license for all the on-screen violence of the protagonist and the viewer is expected to get a cathartic release seeing such revenge stories. In the end, the victim or the sexual violence itself is just reduced to nothing more than a conflict or a reason for the story. Trauma is yet another addition to the list of such Tamil films, which are on the rise now. However, director Thambithurai Mariyappan should be lauded as he at least doesn't capture such violence with an exploitative gaze, which has become the norm. Such maturity is shockingly absent in other aspects of Trauma, which comes across as the work of a novice short-filmmaker. As far as the story goes, Trauma follows three narratives because it wants to be a hyperlink film, which is in vogue now (thanks to Lokesh Kanagaraj). We have two petty thieves who go about stealing cars. They are straight out of Tamil black-and-white comedy dramas because they seem to not even know how much a second-hand car would sell for. They wonder whether an SUV would sell for twenty thousand rupees, and that's supposed to be funny.

There's a romantic love story in Trauma, which seems to have no relevance to the main storyline and seems like an excuse to fill time. Shockingly, the conflict of the film arrives after we are thirty minutes into it, while the entire runtime is less than two hours. The film just wallows in cliched writing, and most of the scenes are like they were taken straight out of Tamil TV serials that are broadcast in the afternoon, which are not watched even by the undemanding target audience. Now, Trauma doesn't look bad as the makers have spent enough on the camera work and the production design of the film. The red, tangerine, and dark hues which have become the default colour palette of such crime thrillers (again, thanks to Lokesh Kanagaraj) are seen in Trauma too. With regard to the cinematography and framing, cinematographer Ajith Srinivasan has done a commendable job, which looks conspicuous as everything else about the film is underwhelming.

It is tempting to praise Trauma as it projects itself as a film with a noble cause — advocating child adoption. However, that seems to be just a means to an end. At least, the end should have been an entertaining watch like Maharaja, which also used sexual violence as its main plot point. Trauma takes an easy route every single time, which is laughable at times like how the police end up finding the hideout of the gang. It is easy to say that Trauma is living up to its name, which would even make for a good headline for the review. But that would be like reducing the impact of the word and an easy way out, a mistake the film made at every possible instance.



Mannara Chopra

Makes Her Singing Debut: 'Music Has Always Been Close To My Heart'

Actress Mannara Chopra is all set to make her singing debut and has lent her vocal prowess with the soulful rendition of "Ajeeb Dastaan". Not just a singer, Mannara has also partially directed the music video, which beautifully captures the charm of old-world melodies against the stunning backdrop of New York City. Sharing her excitement about this new venture, Mannara said: "Music has always been close to my heart. This song is special because it blends my love for classics with my own artistic touch. I wanted to create something that feels personal yet universal, and I hope people connect with it the way I do."

"Ajeeb dastan hai yeh" is originally from the 1960 film "Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai", which stars Meena Kumari, Raaj Kumar, J. Om Prakash, Nadira, Helen and Naaz. The song is sung by late legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar and the track is penned by Shailendra.

The 33-year-old actress, who was born as Barbie Handa in the Ambala Cantonment in Haryana, has worked in over 40 commercials. Ahead of her big acting debut she worked as a fashion designer and as an assistant choreographer, being trained in dance forms like hip hop and belly dancing. Mannara stepped into the world of acting in 2014 and has showcased her prowess in different language films such as Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Kannada films. She made her

acting debut with the 2014 Telugu film "Prema Geema Jantha Nai" opposite Sreerama Chandra. She made her Hindi debut with Anubhav Sinha's "Zid", co-starring Karanvir Sharma. In 2015, Chopra had a special appearance in a song in two Tamil films "Sandamarutham" and "Kaaval".

Mannara also played the lead opposite Sai Dharam Tej in "Thikka". She made her Kannada film debut



"Rogue" in 2017. She gained major stardom after she featured in the 17th edition of "Bigg Boss", hosted by Salman Khan, in 2023. She emerged as the 2nd runner-up and the winner was Munawar Faruqui. She made her web debut with "Bhootmate," in which she played a ghost named Pari. She will next be seen in the Telugu film "Thiragabadara Saami", starring Raj Tarun and in the Punjabi film "Ohi Chann Ohi Raatan."