INDIAN INFO EXCHANGE

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weather report

Kolkata Weather

17 °C | °F

Precipitation 10%

Humidity 53%

Wind 8 km/h

Mostly Sunny

Indian Indices

NIFTY 50		
25727.55	639.15	2.55
SENSEX		
83739.13	2,072.67	2.54
NIFTY BANK		
60041.30	1,422.30	2.43
NIFTY IT		
38611.75	537.60	1.41
BSE SMALLCAP		
46825.31	-1,050.74	-2.19

Gold Rates

Today gold price in Kolkata
1,53,930 1,41,100
»
Today gold price in Bangalore
1,53,930 1,41,100
»
Today gold price in India
1,53,930 (₹760) 1,41,100 (₹700)

WEDNESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2026. KOLKATA VOLUME 3 ISSUE 273 . PAGES-8 . RS : 4/- MORNING DAILY

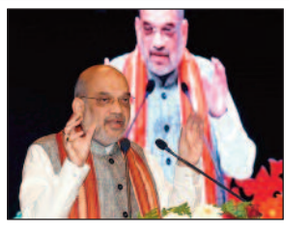
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Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, right, and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during the Budget Session of the Parliament, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

Jammu And Kashmir Chief Minister Welcomes US Tariffs Cut, Cautious On Oil

Staff Reporter, Srinagar, 3 February: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has welcomed the US' decision to lower tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent in exchange for a halt on the purchase of Russian crude. Abdullah said the tariffs - US President Donald Trump imposed a 50 per cent levy, including a 25 per cent 'penalty' for the purchase of Russian oil - were hurting India and Indian businesses, and will boost exports to that country, benefiting exporters who feared business losses. While speaking to reporters outside the Assembly building, Abdullah said the reason behind the tariff was clear. "The US President was unhappy with India's oil purchases from Russia," he said, though he, like other opposition leaders, questioned the manner of announcement. Confirmation of the deal was offered first by Trump on Truth Social after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister then followed up with an X post. He also wondered if the centre had worked out an alternate source of oil for a power-hungry nation and if that would translate into a hike in the prices of diesel, petrol, and other fuels. Trump said India had committed to buying oil from the US and, possibly, Venezuela. On that note top government sources told NDTV India will continue to buy crude oil from countries that are "not under sanctions" and that it had not purchased from Venezuela for that reason. Overall, however, Abdullah stressed reduced tariffs should boost exports. On targeting of Kashmiris in other states, he said he had urged his counterparts from other northern states, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, to stop harassment of students and traders. Moving on to sports, Abdullah blamed media hype for blurring the line between sports and politics, referring to Pakistan's decision to boycott a game against India at the 2026 T20 Cricket World Cup. "I have always said when sports and politics mix, this happens. We have stopped differentiating..." he said, calling for India-Pak cricket matches to be treated as 'normal' games. "When India plays against other countries no one notices," he said. He said he appreciated Uttarakhand acting swiftly and arresting those who had harassed and assaulted Kashmiri hawkers. However, similar incidents, he said continued in Himachal Pradesh, which is ruled by the Congress, an ally of the National Conference.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a press conference regarding the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

SIR 'victims' not being given opportunity to defend themselves: CM Mamata Banerjee

ANIKET NASKAR



New Delhi, 3 February: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday (February 3, 2026) alleged that the victims of Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls were not being given an opportunity to defend themselves and questioned the intent behind the conduct of SIR in states just ahead of Assembly elections. Addressing a press conference here with "victims" of the SIR process from Bengal, she said they represented many others who suffered due to the exercise. "People sitting behind us are all SIR victims. I could have brought lakhs of people here," Ms. Banerjee said at a press conference in Delhi. "They are not giving an opportunity to SIR victims to defend themselves," the TMC supremo alleged. On Monday (February 2, 2026), the Trinamool Congress chief and other leaders had taken some of these people to a meeting with the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the SIR issue, but Ms. Banerjee later walked out in protest, claiming that their delegation was "insulted". She also accused the Election Commission of acting at the BJP's behest. Questioning the timing of the SIR, Ms. Banerjee on Tuesday (February 3) asked why the exercise was being conducted on the eve of Assembly elections. She also questioned why the exercise was being conducted in only poll-bound States ruled by the Opposition and not in BJP-ruled Assam. "Out of four election-bound States, they're doing SIR in three States and not in BJP-ruled Assam," she said. "Why is SIR being done on the eve of the election. Is it possible to do it within 2-3 months without any planning," she asked. Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee earlier met the "victims" of the SIR exercise at Banga Bhawan in Chanakyapuri, and claimed they are genuine voters whose names were erased from the electoral rolls. Ms. Banerjee assured them all support and said this fight for their rights, dignity, and democratic voice will not stop until justice is delivered. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday asked why the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) was not being conducted in non-BJP states and also questioned why action should not be taken against the Election Commission (EC) over the exercise-related deaths. She alleged that the EC is acting as "BJP cadres". "We expect respect not disrespect from EC," , she said at a press conference along with the SIR-affected families in Banga Bhawan in Delhi. Banerjee, who arrived in Delhi after filing a plea in the Supreme Court against the EC over Special Intensive Revision (SIR), said Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar not only rudely behaved with her yesterday but also alleged that it was motivated and directed from "somewhere else" to misbehave with her. Complaining that the EC has not released pending funds of 2024 to the state till now, Banerjee asked why EC was not giving money to the SIR-affected families. She said many people had left behind notes holding EC responsible before taking their lives so why should the EC not take responsibility for these deaths.

40,000 Voters Deleted In My Constituency: WBCM Mamata Banerjee Attacks Poll Body

CHITTAJIT DUTTA



New Delhi, 3 February: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegations against the voter roll revision has grown sharper as elections in the state draw closer. This time, she has accused the Election Commission of deleting the names of voters willy-nilly, alleging that 40,000 names have been deleted in her constituency alone without a hearing. "In my constituency they have deleted 40,000 voters' names unilaterally... That so called Seema Khanna, who has a BJP mindset, is deleting names while sitting in EC office... Even a murderer gets a chance to defend himself," she said. "Seema Khanna's agency did it. They cannot do it, it is illegal. 58 lakh names have been unilaterally deleted," she added, echoing nephew Abhishek Banerjee. Accusing the BJP of appointing "micro-observers" illegally, she said "They don't have any position in the RP Act and they are BJP people who have been appointed through the back door". Then in a dramatic fashion, she called for those who have been shown as dead in the lists to raise their hands. "See, they are alive but as per Election Commission they are dead," she added. Alleging that the Commission is deleting names in the name of "logical discrepancy, she said even Nobel laureate Amartya Sen was summoned over the age of his mother. "I challenge them to fight us politically and democratically. Our organisation is strong, we know what is going on," she said. Questioning the motivation of the exercise again, she said, "I have no problem with SIR, but why do it on the eve of elections. Why not after elections?" "BJP will not come to power in Bengal. The people hate the BJP. The voters of BJP are going to vote for us," said the Bengal chief minister. "In my constituency they have deleted 40,000 voters, unilaterally. The EC is acting on the behest of the BJP." Neither the chief election commissioner nor any other member has yet replied to the charges levelled by Mamata. A source in the commission claimed the Trinamool representatives had used abusive and threatening language against the commission and the CEC, as well as other poll officials. A source in the commission said the poll panel had reiterated its demands from the Bengal government on the transfers of officials, action against errant officials, alleged hooliganism by Trinamool cadres, and the payment of a higher honorarium to the BLOs. "(The) CEC responded to her queries and explained (the) rule of law shall prevail and anybody taking law into their own hands shall be dealt with strictly as per the provisions of law and powers vested in the commission," the official said. The Samajwadi party chief and Kannauj MP Akhilesh Yadav, who had met Mamata recently at the state secretariat in Bengal.

PM Modi warns NDA MPs against complacency, links poll success to continuous work on ground

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday told NDA leaders that the coalition's electoral run has been driven by people-friendly policies and sustained ground work, while cautioning MPs against complacency despite recent victories. Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju, briefing reporters after the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting, said the prime minister reminded MPs that winning elections, be it parliamentary, assembly or local body polls, requires continued engagement with people and consistent delivery. At the meeting, Modi was felicitated by NDA leaders for the conclusion of trade deals with 39 countries.Referring to the India-US trade agreement, under which Washington will reduce reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent, Rijiju said the development has generated widespread interest."There is excitement among the MPs that these trade deals have been concluded under the leadership of PM. The trade deals have been signed with a total of 39 countries. This is historic. All these 39 countries are developed countries... This is historic. There has been a very good atmosphere in the country," he said.Shiv Sena MP Milind Deora said the prime minister addressed MPs on the government's approach across sectors. "PM Modi explained to all the MPs that the government works in favour of India, be it a trade deal or budget".He added, "The credit for the trade deal between India and America and India and



India-Europe goes to PM Modi. This has happened because of his determination. The trade deal will give benefits to small-scale businessmen."Rijiju said Modi also shared broad guidelines for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs on parliamentary conduct and welfare-related work."The prime minister said the NDA is winning one after another elections due to its good work. He said election can't be won without being on the ground. We have to be on the ground and do good work for the welfare of the people," Rijiju said. The meeting also marked the formal welcome of newly elected BJP president Nitin Nabin.MPs from BJP, TDP, JD(U), LJP (R), Shiv Sena, JD(S) and other NDA partners were present.Those who attended included defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah, health minister J. P. Nadda, Apna Dal leader and Union minister Anupriya Patel, NCP leader Praful Patel, Shiv Sena leader Shrikant Shinde, Rashtriya Lok Morcha leader Upendra Kushwaha, among others.

Adani case, Epstein files: Why Rahul Gandhi says PM Modi sold out farmers through US trade deal



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and has "sold out" the hard work of Indian farmers through the agreement. Addressing reporters in the Parliament House complex after he was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha while insisting on quoting from an article citing former Army chief M. M. Naravane's unpublished memoir, Rahul said it was the first time in history that the leader of the Opposition had not been allowed to speak on the President's address. "We need to understand why a trade deal stuck for about four months was suddenly finalised last evening," the Congress leader said, adding that "there was huge pressure on Prime Minister Modi".

Asked what kind of pressure he was referring to, Rahul alleged that there is a case against industrialist Gautam Adani in the US and that a lot more is yet to come in the Epstein files. He alleged that Prime Minister Modi "has been compromised" and said Indian farmers must understand that their hard work "as well as their blood and sweat" has been "sold out" through the India-US trade deal.He also claimed that the entire country had been "sold out"."Indian farmers must understand that PM Modi has sold out their hard work through trade deals with the US. PM Modi is scared. He agreed to deal under pressure," he said.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned till 3 pm on Tuesday amid a standoff over Rahul Gandhi's attempt to quote from the article during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.Rahul Gandhi cited the Speaker's ruling from Monday and authenticated a copy of the article as soon as he was allowed to speak. "I have authenticated it," he said, submitting a signed copy as required under parliamentary rules.To authenticate a document, a member has to submit a signed copy affirming that it is correct to the best of his knowledge. Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was chairing the House, asked Gandhi to table the document and said, "we will examine it and get back".

Tenneti asked him to table the document and said, "we will examine it and get back". With BJP MPs objecting to Rahul Gandhi raising the issue, Tenneti adjourned the House till 3 pm.Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi said, "A very important matter in the President's speech is a matter relating to national security. Our relationship between the Pakistanis, the Chinese, and us. There is a very important point in this article that I have authenticated. It speaks about the PM's reaction. Our President's address was about the path India has to take.

Inside Story: What PM Modi Told NDA MPs On India-US Trade Deal

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: In a closed-door meeting of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) parliamentary party, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about the implications of the newly announced India-US trade deal, sources said. The session, held amid ongoing parliamentary proceedings, saw PM Modi urge MPs to engage actively in legislative debates and to communicate government achievements directly to the public. PM Modi began by stressing the importance of parliamentary participation. He instructed all NDA MPs to maintain full attendance in the House and to contribute to discussions on key issues. "All MPs should be present in the House, take part in the discussion," he said, according to sources familiar with the meeting. He further directed them to reach out to constituents and highlight the key achievements of the recently presented 2026 Union Budget. Turning to the trade agreement with the United States, PM Modi described it as a milestone that had created a "better environment" for bilateral relations. He acknowledged the challenges faced during negotiations, noting that critics had voiced doubts but that the government had persisted with resolve. " "People were criticising but we kept courage," he said. "Patience paid off. I had said that the world order is changing. The trade deal itself stems from a phone conversation on Monday between PM Modi and US President Donald Trump. Under the



agreement, the US has agreed to lower its reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods from the current 25 per cent to 18 per cent, effective immediately. "Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal between the United States and India, whereby the United States will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent," the US president said on social media. In reciprocity, India has committed to reducing its tariffs and non-tariff barriers on US goods to zero. Trump added that New Delhi would purchase American products worth more than $500 billion, encompassing sectors such as energy, technology, agriculture, coal, and others. "India will likewise move forward to reduce their tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States, to zero," Trump said. He further said that PM Modi had pledged to buy American goods "at a much higher level," in addition to the over USD 500 billion in US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products.Modi expressed his satisfaction with the outcome in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump today. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," he wrote. "When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation," he added.

Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim Issues Strict Warning to Shut Dangerous Private Market

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 3 February : Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim has issued a stern warning to operators of a privately-run market deemed hazardous, calling for its immediate closure unless urgent remedial measures are implemented. The announcement comes amid growing concerns about structural hazards, fire safety violations, and risks to daily commuters and shoppers frequenting the bustling marketplace.



Speaking to the media, Mayor Hakim underscored the municipal administration's zero-tolerance stance on public endangerment. "The safety of citizens is non-negotiable," he stated firmly. "This market, in its current condition, poses serious threats. We have given clear instructions to the authorities: immediate action must be taken, or the premises will be sealed to prevent any unfortunate incident." According to city officials, the private market has long been under scrutiny for unsafe infrastructure, including dilapidated buildings, narrow passageways, and inadequate emergency exits. Fire safety audits have reportedly identified numerous violations, including blocked fire escapes, absence of proper firefighting equipment, and overcrowded vendor stalls. The convergence of these hazards in a high-footfall area has raised alarms about the potential for accidents, including fires, stampedes, or structural collapses.

Residents and shopkeepers have welcomed the mayor's intervention, expressing relief that the authorities are taking proactive steps. "We have been raising concerns for months," said a local shopkeeper. "It was only a matter of time before a serious accident occurred. We hope the administration's warning leads to real improvements in safety standards."

City engineers and municipal safety inspectors have been tasked with conducting a detailed assessment of the market. Their report will include structural integrity checks, crowd management evaluations, and fire compliance verification. Officials emphasized that the warning is not merely punitive but aims to ensure that necessary safety protocols are implemented without delay, safeguarding both vendors and the public.

Urban planning and safety experts note that private markets, while vital for local commerce, often operate in spaces that were not designed to handle large crowds or modern safety requirements. "In rapidly urbanizing cities like Kolkata, older market structures often fail to meet contemporary safety norms," said an urban safety consultant. "Proactive municipal oversight, combined with responsible management, is essential to prevent tragedies."

Mayor Hakim's directive also signals a broader municipal push to modernize public spaces and enforce stringent safety regulations. Over the past few months, the city has increased inspections of markets, shopping complexes, and high-density commercial zones to identify risks and implement corrective measures. This latest warning serves as a public reminder that compliance with safety standards is mandatory and that lapses will be met with immediate action.

The private market in question is a key commercial hub, frequented by hundreds of vendors and thousands of shoppers daily. Its temporary closure, if necessary, will impact local trade, but officials insist that public safety outweighs economic considerations. Contingency plans are reportedly being developed to relocate vendors temporarily while structural and safety improvements are carried out.

Local civic groups have expressed support for the mayor's firm approach, emphasizing that previous warnings and minor interventions have often been ignored. "Strong leadership is needed to enforce safety," said a community activist. "Mayor Hakim's warning is a clear message that the city will not compromise when citizens' lives are at stake."

The administration has also urged the market's management to cooperate fully with municipal authorities, implement recommended improvements, and ensure that emergency response protocols are functional. Failure to comply, the mayor emphasized, would leave the city with no choice but to shut down the market indefinitely. This development reflects Kolkata's ongoing efforts to balance urban commerce with public welfare.

Cigarette Price Manipulation Persists in Kolkata Despite Budget Measures

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 3 February : Kolkata continues to grapple with irregularities in cigarette pricing, as reports emerge that foul play in the tobacco market persists even after government-imposed budget measures aimed at regulating costs. Traders, consumers, and regulatory authorities have all expressed concern over the ongoing discrepancies, highlighting challenges in enforcement and the impact of such practices on both public health and market fairness.

Following the latest budget announcement, authorities had expected a correction in cigarette prices, with uniform tax slabs and regulatory oversight designed to curb arbitrary price inflation and ensure transparency in the retail sector. However, street-level observations and consumer reports suggest that some vendors continue to manipulate prices, offering certain brands at inflated rates while bypassing legal guidelines. This continued inconsistency has frustrated consumers and drawn attention to enforcement gaps in the city's tobacco market.

Market insiders indicate that the persistence of price manipulation is fueled by multiple factors, including black-market activities, selective stocking practices, and the lack of consistent monitoring at retail points. Certain high-demand brands are reportedly being sold at premiums far above their official retail price, while others are subjected to sudden discounts or promotional adjustments that confuse consumers and obscure true costs.

Public health advocates argue that such practices are particularly problematic because they undermine broader government efforts to regulate tobacco consumption. "When cigarette prices fluctuate unpredictably, it affects consumption patterns and can even encourage illegal trading," said a local health official. "Regulating prices is not just an economic issue; it is a public health priority, especially in a city like Kolkata where smoking rates remain high."

Consumers have voiced frustration over the ongoing inconsistencies. Many reported paying significantly different amounts for the same brands at nearby stores, reflecting a lack of accountability and transparency. Social media discussions have amplified these concerns, with residents sharing screenshots of price disparities, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement and consumer awareness campaigns.

Retailers, on the other hand, point to challenges in adhering to new budgetary norms. Many small-scale vendors claim that fluctuating wholesale prices and pressure from distributors leave them with little choice but to adjust retail costs dynamically. While some justify these adjustments as necessary for business survival, critics argue that such practices constitute deliberate exploitation of budgetary loopholes and legal gray areas.

The Kolkata Tobacco Control Authority, along with excise officials, has reportedly stepped up inspections in key commercial areas to address the problem. Raids and audits are being planned to identify vendors who engage in arbitrary price manipulation or fail to comply with statutory pricing norms. Authorities have emphasized that strict penalties, including fines and license suspensions, will be enforced to curb foul practices.

Experts also point out that the situation underscores broader structural issues in the tobacco supply chain. From manufacturer pricing to distributor practices, inconsistencies can propagate down to retail points, creating opportunities for unfair manipulation. Addressing this problem requires coordinated action across multiple levels of governance, including regulatory oversight, law enforcement, and industry accountability.

In addition to regulatory enforcement, consumer education is emerging as a critical tool in combating price manipulation. Awareness campaigns aimed at informing buyers of official pricing, legal rights, and reporting mechanisms can empower the public to resist exploitation. Local NGOs and health advocacy groups have called for a comprehensive approach combining monitoring, penalties, and public participation to restore order to the market.

Despite these efforts, the persistence of price foul play reflects the challenges of implementing policy in a complex urban marketplace. Kolkata's dense commercial networks, combined with high demand for cigarettes and limited enforcement personnel, make full compliance a daunting task. Nevertheless, authorities remain committed to ensuring that budgetary measures translate into tangible benefits for both consumers and public health objectives.

As Kolkata navigates these ongoing challenges, the situation highlights the delicate balance between regulation, market forces, and consumer protection. Until consistent enforcement and transparency are achieved, residents and officials alike will continue to grapple with the unpredictability and inequities of cigarette pricing in the city.

SAIL and RITES Sign MoU for diesel locomotive leasing and maintenance



Staff reporter, New Dlehi, 3 February : Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a Maharatna CPSE has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) , a Navratna CPSE to strengthen logistics and operational efficiency at plants and mines of SAIL.

SAIL runs a dedicated mini rail network within its plants and mines premises to ensure seamless transportation of inbound raw materials, in-process transfers and outbound finished products. The effective maintenance of its diesel locomotive fleet, supplemented by wet leased locos, is critical for sustaining operations and driving the envisaged expansion of capacity and future growth.

As Indian Railways accelerates its transition to electric locomotives, RITES continues to provide valuable expertise in diesel locomotive operations and maintenance, an area essential for sustaining SAIL's diesel fleet. With access to Indian Railways' facilities, spares and a pool of skilled manpower, RITES is well positioned to support SAIL's operational requirements and ensure reliability across its network.

The collaboration will enable both organizations to focus on their core competencies, optimize costs, enhance operational efficiencies and contribute to reducing carbon footprint. The MoU was signed by Shri P.K. Baisakhiya, Executive Director (Operations), SAIL and Shri Sandeep Jain, Executive Director (Technical Services), RITES, in the presence of senior officials from SAIL and RITES.

Golpark Firing: Police Identify Attackers Linked to Rival Gang Network

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 3 February : The recent firing incident at Golpark has been linked to a notorious criminal network, with authorities identifying the operation as orchestrated by Sona Pappu's close associates, Babusona and Satta Sanju. The attack, which sent shockwaves through the city, underscores the rising tension between rival gangs and highlights the challenges faced by law enforcement in containing organized crime.

Police sources revealed that preliminary investigations suggest the incident was a meticulously planned assault targeting individuals connected to Sona Pappu's adversaries. Babusona, reportedly Pappu's right-hand man, and Satta Sanju, identified as a key figure within the enemy faction, coordinated the attack, leveraging their network to execute the firing at a busy public location. Eyewitnesses described the scene as chaotic, with multiple shots fired in rapid succession, sparking panic among local residents and commuters.

Authorities confirmed that while there were injuries reported, timely intervention by law enforcement prevented fatalities. Emergency response teams arrived on the scene within minutes, controlling the situation and securing the area. Residents of Golpark expressed shock and fear, noting that such acts of violence in heavily populated zones endanger civilians and disrupt the sense of safety in the community.

Investigators have traced the roots of the confrontation to long-standing rivalries within the city's underworld. Sona Pappu, a figure with a reputation for exerting considerable influence, is alleged to have orchestrated retaliatory measures against opposition factions. Babusona's involvement, given his close association with Pappu, points to a coordinated effort rather than a spontaneous altercation. Meanwhile, Satta Sanju's role highlights the complexity of inter-gang dynamics, where loyalties and vendettas often dictate violent outcomes.

The Golpark incident has prompted heightened security measures in affected neighborhoods. Police patrols have increased, checkpoints established, and intelligence networks activated to prevent further clashes. Authorities are also examining potential links between the attack and previous gang-related incidents across the city, aiming to map the operational strategies of criminal networks and disrupt their activities systematically.

Experts on organized crime have noted that such high-profile attacks are symptomatic of escalating turf wars in urban centers, where criminal groups leverage firearms and other weapons to assert dominance. "Gang conflicts in densely populated cities pose a dual challenge," said a criminologist. "Not only is there a threat to rival factions, but innocent civilians often bear the brunt of these violent confrontations. Law enforcement must combine intelligence-led policing with community engagement to mitigate risks."

Local political and civic leaders have condemned the attack, calling for immediate action to ensure public safety. Community representatives have stressed the need for stricter monitoring of known gang members, enhanced surveillance, and rapid response capabilities to prevent similar incidents. Residents have also urged authorities to address underlying social factors that allow such networks to thrive, including unemployment, local territorial disputes, and the proliferation of illegal firearms.

Police officials indicated that they are reviewing CCTV footage, witness statements, and communication intercepts to identify all participants involved and bring them to justice. The investigation is ongoing, with authorities vowing to dismantle the network responsible and curtail further violence. Law enforcement emphasized that the operation is part of a broader strategy to restore law and order in areas affected by gang activity.

While the Golpark firing has sparked fear, it has also galvanized public attention on the dangers posed by organized crime in urban environments. Citizens and activists alike have called for comprehensive measures, combining preventive policing, legal action, and social interventions to reduce gang influence and safeguard neighborhoods.

Russia Launches Massive Assault on Ukraine with 70 Missiles and 450 Drones

Staff reporter, Moscow, 3 February: Russia launched a large-scale offensive against Ukraine, deploying 70 missiles and over 450 drones in coordinated strikes across multiple regions. The attack, described by Ukrainian authorities as unprecedented in scale, has heightened tensions and raised fears of further destruction amid an already volatile conflict zone.

Reports indicate that the missile strikes targeted both military installations and critical infrastructure, while swarms of drones were used for reconnaissance and tactical operations. Ukrainian defense forces confirmed that air defense systems were activated across affected regions, successfully intercepting a significant number of incoming projectiles. However, preliminary assessments suggest that several areas still suffered damage, particularly to power grids, transportation hubs, and industrial facilities.

Eyewitnesses in Kyiv and other major cities reported hearing multiple explosions throughout the day, with emergency services responding rapidly to fires, structural damage, and casualties. Hospitals and local authorities confirmed that while civilian casualties were limited due to timely warnings and evacuations, the psychological impact of the sustained bombardment has been profound. Citizens described scenes of panic and chaos, with families seeking shelter amid continuous alerts of further attacks.

Ukrainian military spokespeople emphasized the resilience of their defense systems, highlighting that advanced missile defense technology, including surface-to-air interceptors, played a crucial role in minimizing the impact. "Our forces successfully neutralized a majority of the incoming missiles and drones," said a senior official.



Today's Horoscope

ARIES : Today you will have an eye for beautiful and outlandish things. There is a possibility that you may even contemplate starting a business related to these things.

TAURUS : This day is meant for taking some time out from your busy schedule, and seeking some fun and relaxation. So says Ganesha. It is possible that you will be getting together.

GEMINI : You face a hectic and demanding day today. You will spend your entire day wondering how best to channelise your energy and enthusiasm.

CANCER: Lack of support from family members will disable your efforts. Children also disappoint you. Discord or difference of opinion in family is indicated. Beware of neighbours.

LEO : You will be filled with extra-ordinary self-confidence and will be able to take on huge risks. Sportspersons will be able to make a lot of progress in their fields.

VIRGO : There will be dirt on your shoulder today, so dust it off, says Ganesha, because every time you fall you will get up stronger than before.

LIBRA : Ganesha says the inner artist in you will come to the surface today and you will showcase your imagination powers too. You will be able to focus on topics of interest today.

SCORPIO : You may be in a mood to build castles in the air today, says Ganesha. You may be caught up in a whirlpool of thoughts and nostalgia.

SAGITTARIUS : Suddenly, you discover that you are fully dedicated to your family. Kith and kins form the crux of your life, says Ganesha. Showing your love and affection to your kids.

CAPRICORN : You can't bear the weight of the heavy work load any more. Very cleverly, you will complete your tasks and slowly but steadily you take the load off your shoulders.

AQUARIUS : You are talented, hard working, confident and down to earth. These four characteristics are the pillars of success. Now, it is time build the building.

PIECES : The day will be exceptional for working people as the planets seemed to be aligned perfectly, portends Ganesha. You will achieve all the expected results in the office and/or at work today.

Pakistan Faces Strategic Crunch as Demand for China-Developed JF-17 Fighter Jets Soars

Staff reporter, Washington, 3 February: Pakistan is confronting a significant defense dilemma as demand for its China-developed JF-17 fighter jets surges both domestically and internationally. The multi-role combat aircraft, co-produced by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and China's Chengdu Aircraft Corporation, has gained prominence for its affordability, versatility, and combat performance. However, the rising interest has placed pressure on Pakistan's production capacity, raising strategic and operational challenges for the country's military and defense sector.

The JF-17 Thunder, known for its advanced avionics, agility, and precision strike capabilities, has become a cornerstone of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) modernization program. With tensions persisting in South Asia, the aircraft serves as a cost-effective alternative to more expensive Western fighters, allowing Pakistan to bolster its air defense capabilities while maintaining financial sustainability. In recent years, the jet has been deployed extensively for border patrols, training exercises, and strategic deterrence missions.

Reports indicate that Pakistan has received heightened interest from several foreign buyers, including countries in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Defense analysts note that the JF-17's competitive pricing, low maintenance requirements, and adaptability to different combat scenarios have made it an attractive option for nations seeking to modernize their air forces without the prohibitive costs of Western or Russian fighter jets. Export demand, while a positive indicator for Pakistan's defense diplomacy, has created a production bottleneck that could strain the country's ability to meet both domestic and international commitments.

PAC, the primary production hub for JF-17 jets, has been scaling up its manufacturing lines, but experts warn that supply constraints remain a real challenge. "The surge in demand is unprecedented," said a defense analyst. "Pakistan must balance its own air force requirements with export obligations, all while ensuring quality control and technological upgrades. This is a critical test for its defense manufacturing infrastructure."

The situation also highlights the broader strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. The JF-17 program, initiated as a joint venture in the 1990s, represents one of the most successful defense collaborations between the two countries. China's technological support, coupled with Pakistan's growing manufacturing capabilities, has enabled the jet to achieve operational maturity and global competitiveness. Analysts argue that sustaining this momentum will require continued investment, research, and potential expansion of production facilities.

Domestically, the rising demand places Pakistan in a delicate position. While the PAF continues to prioritize fleet modernization, fulfilling international orders may necessitate careful scheduling and phased delivery to ensure national defense readiness is not compromised. Military strategists emphasize that the JF-17 remains a frontline asset for air defense, and any delays or resource reallocations must be managed meticulously to maintain operational effectiveness.The surge in global interest also positions Pakistan as a notable player in the international defense export market, offering both opportunities and challenges. Export revenues from the JF-17 program could provide significant financial benefits, support further technological upgrades, and strengthen Pakistan's strategic influence. Conversely, the pressure to scale production rapidly may expose limitations in industrial capacity, supply chain resilience, and workforce readiness.

Defense observers note that the crunch could accelerate Pakistan's plans for the advanced JF-17 Block III variant, which features enhanced radar systems, avionics, and weapon-carrying capabilities. The upgraded model is expected to boost operational effectiveness and meet higher international standards, potentially unlocking additional export opportunities while reinforcing domestic air superiority. Strategically, the JF-17's growing demand underscores the shifting dynamics in regional air power. With both India and Pakistan continually modernizing their air fleets, the ability to produce and deploy modern combat aircraft efficiently is a crucial determinant of military readiness and deterrence. The current production crunch serves as a reminder of the high stakes involved in defense preparedness and the competitive pressures of the global arms market.

Honey Irani Opens Up: "Success Changed Javed Akhtar, but the Heart Remains"



Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: Veteran screenwriter and actress Honey Irani recently shared candid reflections on the legendary lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar, offering a rare glimpse into how success and fame have shaped one of India's most celebrated literary figures. Speaking in an intimate conversation with media outlets, Irani acknowledged that while the heights of acclaim inevitably brought changes in Akhtar's personality and public demeanor, the essence of his artistry and compassion has endured. Honey Irani, who has been a part of the film industry for decades, highlighted the dual-edged nature of success. "When someone achieves immense recognition, it inevitably changes the way they see the world," she remarked. "Javed is no exception. Fame brings both opportunities and pressures, and it subtly alters perspectives. But beneath all that, his core – his intellect, his sensitivity, his generosity – remains unchanged." Irani's observations come at a time when the public is increasingly fascinated by the private lives of iconic figures, particularly those whose work has touched generations. Javed Akhtar, renowned for his poetic brilliance and socially conscious lyrics, has been lauded not only for his creative contributions but also for his thoughtful commentary on society and politics. Irani's reflections shed light on the human side of a man often mythologized for his literary genius. She also noted that while success introduced complexities into Akhtar's relationships and routines, it never compromised his commitment to the craft. "What changed was not the man's values, but the dynamics around him," she explained. "People's expectations, the glare of attention, the endless engagements – these are things that can shape anyone differently. But when it comes to creating, to writing, Javed remains the same passionate, observant, and eloquent soul we've always known." Industry colleagues and fans alike have responded warmly to Irani's insights, appreciating the nuanced perspective she brings. In an era where public personas are often conflated with private identities, her words serve as a reminder that even cultural icons experience the push and pull of fame, and that change in behavior does not necessarily erode the individual's essence. Irani also reflected on the broader implications of success within the film and literary world. She noted that recognition often comes with responsibilities and scrutiny that can affect personal and professional choices. "Being in the public eye is not just about accolades; it's about expectations, judgements, and the constant balancing act between personal integrity and public image," she said. "For someone like Javed, who has always valued truth and expression, that balancing act is especially delicate." Her comments provide a rare, behind-the-scenes view of one of Indian cinema's and literature's most respected figures. Akhtar's journey from a writer in modest beginnings to a household name has inspired countless aspiring poets, lyricists, and screenwriters. Honey Irani's reflections remind audiences that the man behind the verses – the humor, wisdom, and empathy that pervade his work – continues to thrive despite the changes wrought by fame. Moreover, Irani's candidness underscores the importance of viewing celebrated personalities with empathy. Success, she suggests, is not merely a reward but a transformative experience that shapes individuals in unexpected ways.

Bollywood star Sonam Kapoor Radiates Glow in Elegant White Dress, Flaunts Baby Bump

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: Bollywood star Sonam Kapoor once again captured hearts and headlines as she made a stunning public appearance, effortlessly flaunting her baby bump in an elegant white dress. Known for her impeccable style and fashion-forward choices, Kapoor's latest look has become the talk of the town, blending grace, glamour, and the joyous anticipation of motherhood.

The actress stepped out with a radiant glow, her ensemble carefully curated to highlight both comfort and chic sophistication. The white dress, flowing and ethereal, perfectly complemented her pregnancy silhouette, striking a balance between elegance and ease. Kapoor paired the outfit with subtle accessories and natural makeup, emphasizing her signature understated glamour that continues to set trends across the fashion and entertainment world.

Fans and media outlets were quick to celebrate the appearance, praising Kapoor for embracing her pregnancy with



confidence and style. Social media platforms lit up with comments, reposts, and admiration for her ability to seamlessly merge high-fashion sensibilities with the relatable beauty of expectant motherhood. The sight of Kapoor glowing in white has sparked conversations about maternity fashion, inspiring pregnant women to explore outfits that are both comfortable and stylish.

Industry insiders noted that Sonam Kapoor's appearance was more than a fashion statement; it represents a modern approach to celebrity pregnancy, where personal milestones are celebrated publicly with poise and positivity. Kapoor has consistently used her platform to redefine norms, whether it's advocating for body positivity, sustainability in fashion, or self-expression. Her baby bump reveal in a carefully chosen outfit continues that narrative, showcasing motherhood as a glamorous yet deeply personal journey.

Observers also highlighted the effortless confidence with which Kapoor carried herself. Pregnancy, often depicted as a period of transition and vulnerability, was presented here with empowerment and grace. The actress's body language, radiant smile, and stylish attire collectively conveyed a message of self-assured joy, celebrating life changes without compromising her public persona.

Fashion critics have noted that the choice of a white dress was particularly symbolic. White, often associated with purity, new beginnings, and serenity, mirrored the emotional journey of pregnancy while maintaining a contemporary and chic aesthetic. The flowing silhouette allowed freedom of movement, demonstrating that maternity fashion need not sacrifice style for comfort. Kapoor's ability to combine these elements has been lauded as a masterclass in modern celebrity fashion.

Beyond the fashion accolades, Kapoor's public appearance has also resonated with fans on a personal level. Admirers have praised her for sharing a glimpse of her maternity journey, bringing warmth and relatability to the glamorous world of Bollywood. The moment reinforces Kapoor's connection with her audience, reminding fans that amidst the glitz and glamour, life's intimate milestones can be celebrated with authenticity and style.

Analysts in the entertainment and fashion industries suggest that Kapoor's appearance will likely inspire a wave of maternity fashion trends, emphasizing elegance, simplicity, and comfort. Designers and brands may take cues from the look, creating collections that blend high fashion with practical needs for expecting mothers. Kapoor's influence thus extends beyond the red carpet, shaping the broader landscape of celebrity and consumer fashion culture.

The actress's choice to reveal her baby bump in such a public yet tasteful manner also reflects changing perceptions around pregnancy in popular media. Celebrities are increasingly challenging old-fashioned notions of privacy or concealment, embracing visibility as a platform to celebrate life events. Kapoor's appearance is a perfect example of how style, personal expression, and public celebration can converge beautifully.

Sonam Kapoor's latest public outing is more than just a fashion moment; it is a celebration of life, beauty, and transformation. Her radiant presence, showcased in an attractive white dress while proudly displaying her baby bump, has captivated audiences and set a new benchmark for celebrity maternity style. Kapoor continues to inspire, blending motherhood, fashion, and public persona into a harmonious, empowering narrative that resonates far beyond the red carpet.



Bollywood actor Aamir Khan flies a kite from the rooftop during his visit to the home of singer Arijit Singh, in Murshidabad district, West Bengal.

Mumbai Police Book 'Dhurandhar 2' Team Amid Controversy



Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: Mumbai Police have registered a formal case against the team behind the much-anticipated film Dhurandhar 2, triggering a wave of controversy in the city's entertainment circles. The legal action, reportedly initiated in response to allegations surrounding the film's content and promotional material, has cast a spotlight on the delicate balance between creative freedom and regulatory compliance in India's bustling film industry. Sources familiar with the matter revealed that the case was filed after complaints were lodged regarding certain scenes and dialogues in Dhurandhar 2, which critics claim could potentially hurt public sentiments. While the filmmakers maintain that the movie is a work of fiction intended purely for entertainment, authorities decided to intervene as a precautionary measure, registering an official First Information Report (FIR) to ensure a thorough investigation. The move has stirred significant discussion among film enthusiasts, industry experts, and legal analysts. Mumbai, often considered the heart of India's cinematic landscape, has witnessed similar controversies in the past, where creative expression collided with societal sensitivities. The FIR against Dhurandhar 2 underscores the ongoing challenges filmmakers face while navigating the fine line between artistic liberty and public accountability.

The production house behind Dhurandhar 2 responded swiftly, asserting that the film's content adheres to guidelines prescribed by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and does not intend to offend any community. Legal representatives emphasized that the team is fully cooperating with law enforcement authorities and expressed confidence that the matter will be resolved without impacting the film's release schedule. Industry insiders note that such legal entanglements, while disruptive, often bring heightened attention to films, inadvertently boosting public curiosity. Pre-release buzz, both positive and controversial, can drive box office interest, creating a paradoxical situation where scrutiny may translate into increased audience engagement. Dhurandhar 2, already a sequel to a successful original, now finds itself at the center of a storm that could amplify its visibility nationwide. Experts point out that this incident highlights the evolving challenges in India's entertainment sector, where filmmakers must contend with an increasingly vigilant regulatory environment and a public sensitive to cultural, political, or religious representations. Legal interventions like these serve as reminders that cinematic storytelling, while powerful, carries responsibility, particularly when addressing subjects that intersect with societal values. The FIR reportedly names several key members of the Dhurandhar 2 team, including producers and select creative heads. Mumbai Police have indicated that they are conducting a detailed inquiry into the complaints, examining promotional content, scripts, and other related material to determine whether the allegations hold merit. Authorities stressed that registering the case is a procedural necessity, ensuring that due process is followed and all parties have the opportunity to present their stance. Meanwhile, fans of the franchise have expressed divided reactions on social media. Some have voiced support for the filmmakers, praising the original film's action-packed storytelling and expressing confidence that the sequel will uphold the same standards. Others have called for careful scrutiny of content, emphasizing that artistic expression must coexist with respect for public sentiment. The debate reflects a broader discourse in India about censorship, freedom of expression, and the responsibilities of creators in the digital age. Legal analysts suggest that the Dhurandhar 2 case could set a precedent for how future cinematic projects are evaluated in Mumbai and across India. The outcome may influence how filmmakers approach sensitive themes, promotional strategies, and compliance with statutory regulations, potentially shaping industry practices for years to come. The Dhurandhar 2 team is expected to engage in consultations with legal and industry experts to ensure full adherence to procedural requirements. Observers note that while the FIR has introduced uncertainty, it is unlikely to halt the film's release entirely, provided the team cooperates and any required adjustments are made. The Mumbai Police's intervention serves as a stark reminder that even high-profile film projects are not immune to scrutiny. For the creators of Dhurandhar 2, the case represents both a challenge and an opportunity: to defend their creative choices, navigate legal processes prudently, and continue entertaining audiences while respecting the boundaries of societal norms.

Controversy Erupts as Ustara's Daughter Accuses 'Oromeo Hussain' Makers of False Portrayal

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: The entertainment world is abuzz with controversy following serious allegations made by the daughter of the late Ustara, who has publicly accused the makers of the film Oromeo Hussain of distorting her mother's life story. In a statement that has quickly gone viral, she claimed that the filmmakers misrepresented key aspects of Ustara's personal history, raising questions about the ethics of biographical storytelling in cinema. According to the accuser, the portrayal of her mother in Oromeo Hussain diverges significantly from reality, presenting events and relationships in ways she asserts are inaccurate and potentially damaging. She expressed deep concern that the narrative choices in the film could tarnish her mother's legacy, mislead audiences, and exploit personal family history for commercial gain. The statements have sparked widespread discussion on social media, with fans, critics, and fellow artists weighing in on the responsibilities of filmmakers when dealing with real-life figures. The makers of Oromeo Hussain have yet to issue a detailed response, though insiders suggest that the film was intended as a dramatized interpretation rather than a literal biography. Legal experts note that while creative liberties are common in biographical and historical films, allegations of false portrayal can escalate into formal disputes if the subjects or their families claim defamation or misrepresentation. The situation underscores the tension between artistic freedom and factual integrity, particularly in works that draw inspiration from real lives. Industry analysts point out that controversies of this nature can have dual effects. On one hand, they may generate negative publicity and legal complications, potentially affecting box office performance. On the other, such disputes often heighten public curiosity, driving audiences to theaters to witness the portrayal firsthand and form their own judgments. For Oromeo Hussain, the controversy has already amplified media attention, making the film one of the most talked-about projects in recent weeks. The debate surrounding the film also touches upon broader ethical considerations in the entertainment industry. As biopics, documentaries, and dramatized true stories gain popularity, filmmakers increasingly grapple with questions of consent, accuracy, and sensitivity. How much artistic license is acceptable before a portrayal becomes misleading or exploitative? The accusations from Ustara's daughter highlight the potential personal and emotional stakes involved when cinema intersects with real lives. Public reactions to the news have been polarized. Many fans have expressed sympathy for the family, emphasizing that respect for personal history should remain paramount. Others argue that films are inherently interpretive, and audiences understand that certain dramatizations are part of cinematic storytelling. The discourse reflects an ongoing tension in modern entertainment between creative license and moral responsibility. Legal professionals suggest that the daughter's claims, if pursued formally, could result in court proceedings that examine the film's content in detail. These proceedings may assess whether the portrayal was factually inaccurate, defamatory, or commercially exploitative. The filmmakers, meanwhile, may defend their work by citing disclaimers, creative interpretation, and the narrative intent of dramatization, emphasizing that the film does not purport to be a literal record of Ustara's life. The incident also highlights the evolving dynamics of celebrity, legacy, and media. As public interest in the personal lives of historical or contemporary figures grows, filmmakers and audiences alike are challenged to navigate the fine line between storytelling and truth. In an era where social media amplifies every statement, disputes like these quickly gain traction and become part of the cultural conversation. For now, Oromeo Hussain sits at the intersection of creativity and controversy, its narrative under scrutiny not just for entertainment value but for its ethical implications. The allegations by Ustara's daughter have added a layer of complexity that may influence public perception, critical reception, and even industry practices around biographical filmmaking. The unfolding saga serves as a reminder that cinema, while a powerful tool for storytelling, carries responsibilities that extend beyond box office success.

Amruta Khanvilkar on Acting in India: "The Only Way to Secure Good Roles Is to Produce or Direct"

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: Actor Amruta Khanvilkar has sparked a candid conversation about the realities of the Indian film industry, offering an unvarnished perspective on what it takes for actors to land meaningful and challenging roles. Speaking in a recent interview, the celebrated performer asserted that the most effective way for actors to shape their careers and access quality roles is by stepping behind the camera as producers or directors, thereby taking control of their artistic destiny.

Khanvilkar, who has carved a niche for herself with a versatile portfolio spanning commercial hits, critically acclaimed performances, and digital projects, stressed that relying solely on traditional casting processes often limits an actor's potential. "The system can be restrictive," she remarked, highlighting the challenges faced by performers in an industry where opportunities are often concentrated among a select few. Her commentary reflects a growing conversation among actors about the need to actively influence the types of stories being told and the characters they embody.

The actor elaborated that while talent and hard work remain essential, the ability to create one's own projects provides unparalleled freedom to explore nuanced roles that may not be readily offered. By producing or directing, actors can champion content that aligns with their vision, ensuring that creative risk-taking is rewarded rather than stifled by commercial considerations. For Khanvilkar, this approach is not merely a career strategy but a statement about artistic agency in an industry often defined by hierarchical structures and market-driven choices.

Her remarks also resonate with the evolving landscape of Indian cinema, where content-driven narratives and streaming platforms have expanded the possibilities for storytelling. The rise of web series, digital films, and independent productions has empowered actors to pursue projects outside the traditional studio system, allowing greater experimentation and innovation. By assuming creative leadership, performers like Khanvilkar can navigate these opportunities while shaping their own brand and career trajectory.

Khanvilkar's insights were underscored by her own professional journey, which demonstrates a willingness to balance mainstream success with experimental and socially relevant projects. From commercial dance numbers to intense dramatic roles, her career reflects a conscious effort to diversify her craft. Her call for actors to embrace production or direction is thus grounded in practical experience, highlighting how creative control can translate into both artistic fulfillment and long-term career sustainability.Industry insiders suggest that her perspective mirrors a broader shift among performers who recognize the limitations of passive participation in casting-driven ecosystems. By taking the reins, actors not only secure better roles for themselves but also contribute to a more diverse cinematic landscape, introducing stories and characters that might otherwise remain untold. This proactive approach is increasingly being seen as a hallmark of forward-thinking talent navigating a rapidly changing entertainment environment.

Khanvilkar's statements also carry implicit advice for aspiring actors: adaptability and entrepreneurship are as crucial as acting skills. The message is clear—success in contemporary cinema is not just about performing well in front of the camera but also about understanding the business of filmmaking, identifying opportunities, and creating platforms that allow for artistic expression.

While the industry continues to evolve, her candid observations remind audiences and professionals alike that the journey to meaningful roles is often shaped as much by initiative and leadership as by talent. By advocating for creative autonomy through production or direction, Khanvilkar encourages a culture where actors can influence storytelling, expand the scope of characters, and redefine success on their own terms.

Amruta Khanvilkar's reflections are both a critique of traditional pathways and a rallying cry for agency within the film world. For actors seeking to break free from conventional limitations, her advice offers a strategic blueprint: to create, to lead, and to take control of the narratives that define their careers.

Editorial

"Empty Promises or Fiscal Prudence? West Bengal's Budget Discontent Raises Hard Questions"

Budgets are more than financial statements; they are instruments of reassurance, symbols of partnership between the Union and the states, and declarations of national priorities. When a state as historically and economically significant as West Bengal emerges from the Union Budget discourse with the perception of having been sent back empty-handed, the issue transcends mere allocation. It enters the realm of federal balance, political trust, and developmental equity. The apparent absence of major announcements for West Bengal in the latest budget has sparked debate not only within the state's political corridors but also among economists and policy observers. For many, the concern is not just about numbers on paper but about the message those numbers convey. In a diverse federal structure like India's, where regional disparities remain a persistent challenge, the distribution of central resources carries immense symbolic weight. West Bengal is no peripheral player in the national story. With its strategic geographic location serving as a gateway to the Northeast and Southeast Asia, its dense population, cultural influence, and industrial potential, the state occupies a crucial position in India's economic architecture. Infrastructure expansion, port modernization, manufacturing incentives, and urban renewal projects could significantly accelerate growth not only within the state but across eastern India. When expectations for such initiatives go unmet, disappointment is perhaps inevitable. Supporters of the Union government may argue that budgets must operate within finite fiscal boundaries and cannot cater equally to every demand. National priorities often require investments that serve broader economic goals rather than region-specific aspirations. From this perspective, allocations toward nationwide infrastructure, digital transformation, and macroeconomic stability indirectly benefit all states, including those that may not receive headline-grabbing projects. Yet perception matters in politics as much as policy does. If a state repeatedly feels overlooked, the narrative of neglect can quickly harden into political reality. This is particularly sensitive in regions where the relationship between the state and the Centre is already marked by ideological divergence. Financial decisions, even when guided by technocratic reasoning, risk being interpreted through a partisan lens. At the heart of this debate lies the delicate spirit of cooperative federalism — the principle that India's progress depends on collaboration rather than competition between different tiers of government. A budget that appears uneven can strain that spirit, fostering suspicion where trust is essential. States are not mere administrative units; they are engines of growth whose success collectively shapes the nation's trajectory. West Bengal faces a complex developmental landscape. Urban congestion, employment generation, rural distress, and the need for industrial revitalization demand sustained investment. The state's youthful workforce seeks opportunities that match its aspirations, while traditional sectors require modernization to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global economy. Strategic central support could act as a catalyst, unlocking latent potential. However, the conversation should not be reduced to a simplistic narrative of deprivation. Fiscal responsibility requires scrutiny of how funds are utilized as much as how they are distributed. The effectiveness of state-level governance, project execution, and financial management inevitably influences the Centre's confidence in channeling large-scale investments. Accountability, therefore, must operate in both directions. There is also a broader philosophical question worth confronting: should development be driven primarily by central largesse, or should states cultivate self-sustaining growth models that reduce dependency? Ideally, the answer lies somewhere in between. A strong federation empowers states while ensuring that national resources help correct structural imbalances. Political rhetoric, though inevitable, often obscures this nuance. Charges of discrimination and counterclaims of fiscal discipline can generate headlines, but they do little to address the underlying developmental needs of citizens.

"The Silent Ledger:

Those the Union Budget Forgot"



The Union Budget arrives wrapped in anticipation, speculation, and political theatre. It is presented as a blueprint for the nation's economic journey — a promise of growth, stability, and opportunity. Yet beneath the grand announcements, tax revisions, infrastructure pushes, and fiscal targets lies a quieter question that often goes unanswered: who remains unseen in this elaborate financial script? For every sector that finds mention in the Finance Minister's speech, there are millions whose struggles rarely enter the official ledger. Budgets are not merely economic documents; they are moral statements of a government's priorities. They reveal whose aspirations matter most and whose anxieties can be deferred. While headline reforms often celebrate macroeconomic strength — rising GDP projections, investment corridors, digital expansion — the lived reality of large sections of the population frequently diverges from these optimistic narratives. Among those most persistently left out are the informal workers who form the backbone of India's economy. Street vendors, gig workers, domestic helpers, small artisans, and daily wage labourers contribute enormously to urban and rural productivity, yet their financial security remains fragile.

Without comprehensive social protection, predictable income, or meaningful pension frameworks, they continue to hover at the edge of economic vulnerability. When inflation rises, it is not an abstract statistic for them; it is the shrinking of a meal, the postponement of education, the quiet surrender of healthcare. The middle class, often described as the engine of consumption, also finds itself in an ambiguous position. While not destitute enough to qualify for welfare and not wealthy enough to absorb rising costs, this group frequently shoulders the burden of taxation without proportional relief. Escalating education expenses, healthcare costs, housing loans, and everyday inflation create a financial tightrope. Budget speeches may applaud their resilience, but applause does not ease EMIs or reduce school fees. Equally concerning is the agricultural sector beyond the narrow frame of subsidies and procurement policies. Small and marginal farmers continue to battle erratic weather patterns, fluctuating market prices, and mounting debt. Announcements about agri-tech, export potential, and credit expansion sound promising, yet implementation often determines whether these promises translate into real change. Without robust risk mitigation and assured income mechanisms, many farmers remain trapped in cycles of uncertainty.Youth unemployment presents another silent crisis. India's demographic dividend has long been celebrated as its greatest advantage, but dividends must be invested wisely to yield returns. Degrees alone cannot guarantee livelihoods in an economy where job creation sometimes struggles to match the pace of aspiration. Skill development initiatives, startup encouragement, and manufacturing pushes are steps in the right direction, yet the absence of large-scale, stable employment opportunities continues to shadow the optimism. Women, too, frequently inhabit the margins of fiscal planning. Despite growing participation in education and entrepreneurship, workforce engagement among women remains uneven. Affordable childcare, safer transportation, and targeted credit access could transform economic participation, yet these issues rarely command the urgency they deserve. Empowering women is not simply a social imperative; it is an economic multiplier capable of reshaping national productivity.Then there are the elderly and differently abled — citizens whose needs demand both sensitivity and structure. Rising medical costs and limited pension coverage can turn longevity into financial anxiety. A humane budget must look beyond productivity metrics and recognise dignity as a fiscal responsibility.Critics often argue that no budget can satisfy every constituency. That is undeniably true. Fiscal discipline requires trade-offs, and governments must balance growth with prudence. However, exclusion becomes troubling when it appears systemic rather than incidental. Economic expansion that bypasses broad sections of society risks deepening inequality, and inequality, left unchecked, can erode social cohesion.

The challenge, therefore, is not merely about allocating more funds but about reimagining inclusivity. Policies must move from symbolic gestures to structural reform. Direct benefit systems need refinement to avoid leakages while ensuring coverage. Public healthcare and education demand sustained investment, not episodic attention. Urban planning must account for migrant populations whose labour sustains city economies but whose living conditions often remain precarious. Transparency and accountability are equally vital. Grand schemes announced with flourish must be tracked with measurable outcomes. Citizens deserve clarity not just on how money is spent but on how lives are improved. After all, the success of a budget cannot be judged solely by market reactions or credit ratings; it must be measured in the quiet upliftment of households that begin to feel secure about tomorrow.

There is also a deeper philosophical question at play: what is the purpose of growth if it does not broaden opportunity? A nation's prosperity cannot rest comfortably alongside widespread precarity. When too many people feel excluded from the promise of progress, economic triumph risks becoming a statistic detached from social reality. The Union Budget remains an evolving instrument, shaped by political vision and economic constraint. It is neither flawless nor final. Yet each iteration offers a chance to widen the circle of inclusion. Listening to those who feel unheard — the worker without a contract, the farmer without assurance, the graduate without employment, the family balancing hope against rising costs — could transform the budget from a financial statement into a truly national covenant.

The strength of an economy lies not only in its numbers but in its fairness. A budget that remembers its forgotten citizens does more than distribute resources; it builds trust. And trust, far more than any fiscal surplus, is the foundation upon which enduring prosperity is built.

"Shadows of Surveillance: Why Public Anxiety Over SIR Cannot Be Dismissed"



Trust is the invisible thread that binds citizens to institutions. Once that thread begins to fray, even the most well-intentioned policy can become a source of fear rather than reassurance. The growing unease surrounding SIR has precisely this undertone — a sense among many people that something deeply consequential is unfolding without adequate clarity. These fears and anxieties are not products of paranoia or political exaggeration; they are rooted in legitimate questions about privacy, transparency, and the balance between security and freedom. Governments across the world increasingly rely on sophisticated data systems to streamline administration, curb fraud, and strengthen governance. In principle, such mechanisms promise efficiency and accountability. Yet history has repeatedly shown that when surveillance tools expand faster than the safeguards meant to regulate them, citizens begin to worry about how much of their lives are being quietly recorded, analysed, and possibly controlled.At the heart of the SIR debate lies a simple but profound concern: who watches the watchers? People are not merely apprehensive about technology itself; rather, they fear the absence of robust frameworks that guarantee their personal information will not be misused. Data, after all, is power. When vast quantities of personal details are collected and stored, the potential for both protection and exploitation grows simultaneously. For ordinary citizens, the anxiety is deeply personal. The thought that one's movements, communications, or financial patterns could be monitored evokes an unsettling loss of autonomy. Even if authorities insist that such systems exist solely to enhance national security or administrative precision, the psychological effect cannot be ignored. A society that feels constantly observed may gradually begin to censor itself — not by law, but by instinct.

This is not to argue that the state should abandon technological progress. On the contrary, modern governance demands innovation. Fraudulent welfare claims, identity theft, financial crimes, and threats to national security require tools capable of matching their sophistication. However, technological capability must always be accompanied by ethical restraint. Without clear guardrails, efficiency can drift into intrusion. Transparency, therefore, becomes the cornerstone of legitimacy. Citizens deserve to know what data is being collected, how it is stored, who has access to it, and under what circumstances it can be used. Vague assurances are rarely enough in an era where digital breaches and unauthorized data sharing have become global concerns. Trust flourishes not in secrecy but in openness. Another dimension that intensifies public worry is the possibility of errors within large data systems. Technology is often perceived as infallible, yet databases are only as accurate as the information fed into them. A mistaken entry, a mismatched identity, or an algorithmic flaw can have serious consequences — from denial of essential services to unwarranted scrutiny. For those with limited resources to challenge bureaucratic mistakes, such errors can feel like an invisible sentence.There is also the broader democratic principle at stake. Surveillance, even when justified in the name of security, must never overshadow civil liberties. Democracies distinguish themselves not merely by conducting elections but by preserving the dignity and freedom of their citizens. When people begin to fear that their private sphere is shrinking, it signals the need for immediate introspection. Importantly, public skepticism should not be interpreted as resistance to governance. Rather, it reflects a mature citizenry that understands the value of accountability. Questioning authority is not a threat to democracy; it is its lifeblood. Policies that affect millions must withstand scrutiny precisely because their impact is so far-reaching. What might ease these anxieties is a proactive approach from policymakers. Establishing independent oversight bodies, enacting strong data protection laws, and ensuring swift grievance redressal mechanisms could transform suspicion into confidence. Regular public disclosures about how such systems operate would further reinforce the message that power is being exercised responsibly.Equally vital is the role of dialogue. When governments engage openly with civil society, technology experts, and legal scholars, policies become more resilient. Consultation not only improves design but also signals respect for public intelligence. Silence, on the other hand, often breeds speculation — and speculation is fertile ground for fear. It is also worth remembering that trust, once lost, is painfully difficult to rebuild. Institutional credibility depends less on declarations and more on consistent conduct. Citizens are far more likely to accept transformative policies when they believe their rights are non-negotiable.The debate over SIR ultimately reflects a larger tension of our times: how to harness the power of data without diminishing human freedom. Progress should never demand the surrender of privacy as an unavoidable cost. Instead, the two must coexist within a carefully crafted legal and ethical architecture. Public fear is often dismissed as emotional, but emotions frequently signal deeper truths. They reveal the collective instinct of a society striving to protect its autonomy. Ignoring such sentiment would be shortsighted; addressing it with sincerity could strengthen democratic foundations.

"Power Beyond Borders: Reading the World Through the Soft Power Index"



Power in the twenty-first century is no longer measured solely by the size of armies or the depth of economic reserves. Increasingly, it is shaped by perception — by how nations inspire trust, admiration, and influence without coercion. The latest report by the independent research firm Brand Finance on the Global Soft Power Index serves as a compelling reminder that the true strength of a country often lies in the intangible realm of culture, credibility, diplomacy, and values. Soft power operates quietly yet profoundly. It is present when a country's universities attract global talent, when its films and music transcend linguistic barriers, when its technological innovations set international standards, and when its foreign policy reflects reliability rather than unpredictability. Unlike hard power, which commands attention through force, soft power invites cooperation. It builds partnerships rather than dependencies.

The Brand Finance report underscores a shifting global landscape in which reputation has become strategic currency. Nations are now competing not just for trade and investment but for global goodwill. In this contest, consistency matters as much as charisma. A single diplomatic misstep, domestic instability, or erosion of democratic norms can weaken carefully cultivated influence, while thoughtful leadership and cultural vibrancy can elevate a country's standing almost overnight. One of the most striking insights from the index is the growing importance of trust. In an era marked by geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, and information overload, countries perceived as stable and transparent naturally command greater respect. Investors gravitate toward predictability; students seek welcoming environments; tourists choose destinations that promise both safety and richness of experience. Trust, therefore, is not merely an ethical asset — it is an economic multiplier. The report also highlights how cultural expression continues to be a formidable ambassador. From cinema and literature to cuisine and sports, cultural exports often achieve what official diplomacy cannot. They humanize nations, turning abstract geopolitical entities into relatable societies. When people around the world consume a nation's culture, they form emotional connections that no treaty can replicate. Yet soft power is not static.

It demands continual nurturing. Countries that once dominated global perception can find their influence fading if they fail to adapt to changing expectations. Today's global citizen is more discerning, more connected, and more attentive to issues such as sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical governance. A nation's domestic conduct increasingly shapes its international image; the boundary between internal policy and external reputation has never been thinner. For emerging economies, the index offers both encouragement and caution. Rapid growth, technological advancement, and youthful demographics can significantly boost global appeal. However, economic momentum must be matched by institutional strength. The world watches not only how fast nations grow but how fairly that growth is distributed. Social harmony, rule of law, and respect for diversity all contribute to the architecture of soft power. Another noteworthy dimension is the role of digital influence. In the age of instant communication, narratives travel faster than ever before. Governments are no longer the sole authors of national identity; citizens, creators, and entrepreneurs collectively shape the global story. A viral innovation, a humanitarian gesture, or even the global success of a startup can enhance a country's prestige. Conversely, misinformation or social discord can tarnish it with equal speed.

Musk's $1.25 Trillion Vision: SpaceX Acquires xAI in Landmark Deal to Data Centres Beyond Earth



Elon Musk's SpaceX has announced the acquisition of his artificial intelligence venture xAI in a staggering $1.25 trillion deal. The historic transaction is being hailed as one of the most ambitious corporate consolidations ever attempted, bringing together rocket science and cutting-edge AI under a single strategic umbrella with a bold objective — building data centres in space.

The acquisition signals Musk's growing determination to control the full technological stack required for the next era of human innovation. By merging SpaceX's unmatched launch capabilities with xAI's rapidly evolving artificial intelligence infrastructure, the billionaire entrepreneur appears poised to push computing beyond the limits of Earth, where energy constraints, land scarcity, and environmental pressures increasingly challenge the expansion of traditional data facilities. Industry observers describe the deal as more than a financial milestone; it is a declaration of intent. Musk has long warned that the explosive demand for AI computing power could soon outstrip terrestrial resources. Massive data centres consume enormous amounts of electricity and water for cooling, drawing scrutiny from governments and environmental groups worldwide. Space-based data centres, powered by uninterrupted solar energy and cooled naturally by the vacuum of space, could offer a radical alternative.Sources familiar with the strategy suggest that SpaceX's Starship program will play a pivotal role in transporting the heavy infrastructure required to construct orbital computing hubs. Starship, designed to carry unprecedented payload volumes at dramatically lower costs, could make the once-fanciful idea of space data farms economically viable. If successful, the initiative could fundamentally transform how and where the world's data is processed.

The integration of xAI also positions Musk to compete more aggressively in the global AI race, currently dominated by tech giants investing billions into supercomputing clusters. Owning a dedicated launch provider gives Musk a logistical advantage few rivals can replicate. Analysts believe this vertical integration could accelerate innovation while reducing dependence on Earth-bound supply chains.

Financial markets reacted with astonishment as news of the $1.25 trillion valuation spread. While details of the transaction structure remain closely guarded, the scale alone underscores investor confidence in AI as the defining industry of the century. Some experts argue the merger could create the first truly interplanetary technology company — one capable of building intelligence systems not just for Earth, but for future human settlements on the Moon and Mars.

Yet the announcement has also sparked debate. Skeptics question the practicality of maintaining sensitive computing hardware in orbit, citing risks from radiation, space debris, and high deployment costs. Others warn that concentrating such immense technological power within a single corporate ecosystem could reshape competitive dynamics across the tech landscape.

Supporters, however, see the move as a natural progression of Musk's long-term philosophy. From reusable rockets to satellite internet, his ventures have repeatedly challenged conventional limits. Establishing data centres in space aligns with his broader vision of making humanity a multi-planetary species while ensuring that technological growth does not stall under Earth's physical constraints.

The deal may also have geopolitical implications. Nations increasingly view AI supremacy as critical to economic and military strength. A private company operating advanced computing infrastructure beyond national borders could introduce complex regulatory questions about jurisdiction, security, and data governance.

For SpaceX employees and engineers, the acquisition opens a new frontier of technical challenges. Designing servers capable of operating in microgravity, protecting electronics from cosmic radiation, and enabling ultra-fast communication with Earth will require breakthroughs across multiple scientific disciplines. But if history is any guide, Musk tends to pursue goals others deem improbable.

The boundaries between space exploration and digital intelligence are rapidly dissolving. What once belonged to speculative fiction is edging closer to engineering reality. Elon Musk has once again demonstrated a willingness to bet big on the future — a future where the engines of artificial intelligence may hum not in sprawling industrial parks, but silently above the planet, orbiting in the endless dark of space.

RBA Holds Steady: Australian Interest Rates Remain Unchanged Amid Economic Watchfulness

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) opted to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged in its latest policy decision, signaling a cautious approach as it navigates a delicate balance between containing inflation and supporting economic growth. The decision, widely anticipated by markets, reflects the central bank's careful calibration amid shifting domestic and global economic conditions.

SAIL and RITES Sign MoU for diesel locomotive leasing and maintenance



New Delhi: Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a Maharatna CPSE has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) , a Navratna CPSE to strengthen logistics and operational efficiency at plants and mines of SAIL.

SAIL runs a dedicated mini rail network within its plants and mines premises to ensure seamless transportation of inbound raw materials, in-process transfers and outbound finished products. The effective maintenance of its diesel locomotive fleet, supplemented by wet leased locos, is critical for sustaining operations and driving the envisaged expansion of capacity and future growth.

As Indian Railways accelerates its transition to electric locomotives, RITES continues to provide valuable expertise in diesel locomotive operations and maintenance, an area essential for sustaining SAIL's diesel fleet. With access to Indian Railways' facilities, spares and a pool of skilled manpower, RITES is well positioned to support SAIL's operational requirements and ensure reliability across its network. The collaboration will enable both organizations to focus on their core competencies, optimize costs, enhance operational efficiencies and contribute to reducing carbon footprint. The MoU was signed by Shri P.K. Baisakhiya, Executive Director (Operations), SAIL and Shri Sandeep Jain, Executive Director (Technical Services), RITES, in the presence of senior officials from SAIL and RITES.

Bulls Charge Ahead: Indian Markets End Strong as Nifty 50 Surges 255 Points

Indian equity markets closed on a buoyant note, with benchmark indices staging a powerful rally that reflected renewed investor confidence and broad-based buying across key sectors. The Nifty 50 climbed an impressive 255 points by the end of the trading session, signaling a decisive return of bullish sentiment after recent phases of volatility. The upbeat performance was mirrored by the Sensex, which also advanced sharply as investors poured money into heavyweight stocks. Market participants attributed the surge to a combination of positive global cues, steady domestic economic indicators, and sustained institutional inflows that helped lift the mood on Dalal Street.

From the opening bell, equities displayed strength, with traders positioning themselves aggressively in anticipation of continued economic resilience. Banking and financial stocks led the charge, benefiting from optimism around credit growth and stable asset quality. Analysts noted that strong fundamentals in the financial sector continue to act as a backbone for the broader market, encouraging both retail and institutional investors to increase exposure. Technology shares too found favour as expectations of steady global demand for digital services boosted confidence.

Rare Earth Rush: Stocks Soar as Trump Pushes Strategic Critical Minerals Stockpile

Global markets witnessed a sharp surge in rare earth and critical mineral stocks after U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled an ambitious plan to create a massive national stockpile of essential resources. The proposal, described by analysts as a strategic "mineral vault," is aimed at securing America's technological and defense future while reducing dependence on foreign supply chains.

The announcement triggered an immediate rally across companies involved in mining, processing, and refining rare earth elements — materials indispensable for manufacturing everything from electric vehicles and smartphones to advanced weapons systems and renewable energy infrastructure. Investors responded with enthusiasm, sensing the potential for long-term government-backed demand that could reshape the sector.Rare earth elements, despite their name, are relatively abundant but notoriously difficult and environmentally costly to extract and process. For decades, global supply has been dominated by a handful of producers, leaving major economies vulnerable to geopolitical tensions and trade disruptions. Trump's proposed stockpile appears designed to counter that vulnerability by ensuring the United States maintains a steady reserve of materials critical to national security. Market watchers say the move reflects a broader shift toward resource nationalism, as countries increasingly prioritize control over strategic commodities. The pandemic-era supply chain chaos and subsequent geopolitical conflicts exposed the risks of overreliance on overseas sources, prompting policymakers worldwide to rethink procurement strategies.

Under the proposed initiative, the U.S. government would aggressively purchase and store key minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth oxides, building a protective buffer against future shortages.

Name Change
I, Md Gofur Shaikh (Old Name) S/O–Abdul Hannan Shaikh residing at Vill-Polladanga , PO-Basudebkhali , PS-Berhampore , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742187 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Gofur Shaikh to Abdul Gofur Shaikh and henceforth I shall be known as Abdul Gofur Shaikh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Abdul Gofur Shaikh & Md Gofur Shaikh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, LABONI KHATUN (old name) W/O - LALCHAND KHAN residing at PA-HARPUR PO - DANGAPARA PS - ISLAMPUR DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN -742306. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from LABONI KHATUN (old name) to LABANI KHATUN (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as LABANI KHATUN (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 03/02/2026. LABANI KHATUN (new name) & LABONI KHATUN (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Arun Ghosh (old name) Son of Late Ajit Kumar Ghosh, residing at 68N, Purba Sinthee Road, South Dum Dum(M), Ghughudanga, North 24 Parganas Pin-700030, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Arun Kumar Ghosh (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 29/01/2026. Arun Ghosh (old name) and Arun Kumar Ghosh (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Rita Parekh (old name) wife of Mitesh Parekh, residing at 90A, Bakul Bagan Road, Kolkata – 700025, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Rita Mitesh Parekh (new name) as sworn before the Notary Public at Kolkata vide affidavit no. 26 dated 30/01/2026. Rita Parekh (old name) and Rita Mitesh Parekh (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Jabbar Sk (Old Name) S/O–Erad Sekh resident of Vill & Po-Sahajadpur , Ps-Berhampore , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742187 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Jabbar Sk to Abdul Jabbar and henceforth I shall be known as Abdul Jabbar (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidvit Berhampore court on 20/01/2026. My name Abdul Jabbar & Jabbar Sk both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, MEHEBUB MANDAL (old name) S/O - NASIRUDDIN MANDAL residing at CHAR MOKTARPUR PO - CHARMUKTARPUR PS -THANARPARA DIST - NADIA PIN -741152. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from MEHEBUB MANDAL (old name) to MEHEBUB SEKH (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as MEHEBUB SEKH (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 03/02/2026. MEHEBUB SEKH (new name) & MEHEBUB MANDAL (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (old name) Son of Late Nitai Charan Mukhopadhyay, residing at 89, D.D. Mondol Ghat Road, Dakshineswar, Kolkata-700076, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Asoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 28/01/2026. Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (old name) and Asoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I,MINOTI SADHKHAN (OLD NAM) D/O LATE SATYA NARAYAN SADHUKHAN , RESIDING AT , 30,BLOCK - A,FLAT - 12 ,RAMKRISHNA SAMADHI ROAD, KANKURGACHI KOLKATA - 700054, W.B, INDIA , HAVE CHANGED MY NAME AND SHALL HENCEFORTH BE KNOWN AS MINOTI SADHUKHAN (NEW NAME) , AS DECLARED BEFORE , NOTARY AT KOLKATA 03/02/26,MINOTI SADHUKHAN (NEW NAME) AND , MINOTI SADHKHAN (OLD NAME) BOTH ARE SAME AND IDENTICAL PERSON .

Name Change
I, Md Aiynal Hoque Biswas (Old Name) S/O–Najir Mondal resident of Vill-Krishnapur , Po & Ps-Lalgola , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742148 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Aiynal Hoque Biswas to Ainal Haque Biswas and henceforth I shall be known as Ainal Haque Biswas (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 03/02/2026. My name Ainal Haque Biswas & Md Aiynal Hoque Biswas both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Nasrin Khatun @ Nasrin Bibi, wife of Asadul Haque, resident of Vill: Hazipur, PO: Begunia, PS: Mallarpur, Birbhum, West Bengal, hereby declare that Asadul Haque is my husband. My actual name is Nasrin Khatun, which is recorded on my Aadhaar card. My nick name is Nasrin Bibi, which is recorded in my husband's Indian Army documents. Declare vide affidavit dated 03.02.2026 at the Rampurhat, Birbhum Notary Public Court that Nasrin Khatun and Nasrin Bibi are one and the same person.

Name Change
I, SUSMITA KUNDU, W/o Bikash Kundu, residing at Vill Nityananda Pally, P.O. Dogachia, P.S. Ashoknagar Dist North 24 Pgs. do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SUSMITA KUNDU to SUSMITA KUNDU DUTTA and henceforth I shall be known as SUSMITA KUNDU DUTTA in all purpose vide affidavit No 954 before the 1st class Judicial Magistrate at Barasat on 16/1/2026. SUSMITA KUNDU and SUSMITA KUNDU DUTTA both are the same and one identical person.

Name Change
I MOHAMMAD BADARE ALAM S/O MOHAMMAD ISLAM residing at 1st-Fr, Fl-1C, 16-A New Tangra Road, PS-Tangra, Dist-Kolkata-700046, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as MD BADRE ALAM as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 03/02/2026. MOHAMMAD BADARE ALAM and MD BADRE ALAM both are same and identical person.

Name Change
I, Anwra Bibi (Old Name) W/O–Lakhu Sk residing at Vill-Amitya , PO-Benipur , PS-Kandi , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742140 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Anwra Bibi to Anawara Bewa and henceforth I shall be known as Anawara Bewa (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Anawara Bewa & Anwra Bibi both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Sagar Sekh @ Sagar Sk, son of Asebbul Sekh, resident of Village: Hazipur, PO: Begunia, PS: Mallarpur, Birbhum, West Bengal, that Asadul Haque is my son. My actual name is Sagar Sekh, with a date of birth of 12.09.1955, as recorded in my Aadhaar and Voter ID cards. My nick name is Sagar Sk, with a date of birth of 01.01.1956, as recorded in my son's Indian Army documents. Declare vide affidavit dated 03.02.2026 at the Rampurhat, Birbhum, WB Notary Public Court that Sagar Sekh and Sagar Sk are one and the same person.

Name Change
I, NURUL ISLAM SHAIKH S/O - IUNUS SK residing at KANDIBANDHA PO - DURGAPUR PS - BERHAMPORE DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN -742187. West Bengal, do hereby declare that My wrong nami NURUL ISLAM SHAIKH (old name) and actual name is NUR ISLAM SK (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as NUR ISLAM SK (new name)in all purpose, vide an affidavit no (20AC 703957) swori before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 03/02/2026. (new name) NUR ISLAM SK & NURU ISLAM SHAIKH (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Santosh Jain (old name) S/o- Indra Chand Jain residing at Ward No 11, Badurtala, Pulkishore, Jiaganj, Jaiganj, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742123 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SANTOSH JAIN to SANTISH KUMAR JAIN and henceforth I shall be known as SANTISH KUMAR JAIN (new name) in all of purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 03/02/2026. SANTOSH JAIN (old name) and SANTOSH KUMAR JAIN (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Julekha Sekh (Old Name) W/O–Sabir Ali Sekh resident of Vill & Po-Barbakpur , Ps-Karimpur , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741165 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Julekha Sekh to Julekha Khatun and henceforth I shall be known as Julekha Khatun (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Julekha Khatun & Julekha Sekh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, NARAYAN CHANDRA DEBNATH S/o Lt. Rakhal Debnath residing at Vill.Taranipur, PO-Taranipur, PS-Gopalnagar, Dist-North 24 Parganas West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my actual name Narayan Chandra Debnath instead of Narayan Debnath and my wife's actual name Ashima Debnath instead of Asima Debnath, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. 1st Class Executive Magistrate at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated on 30/01/2026. Narayan Chandra Debnath and Narayan Debnath both are same and one identical person. Ashima Debnath and Asima Debnath both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md Sawkat Ali (Old Name) S/O–Ainal Haque Biswas resident of Vill-Krishnapur , Po & Ps-Lalgola , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742148 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Sawkat Ali to Sawkat Ali and henceforth I shall be known as Sawkat Ali (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 03/02/2026. My name Sawkat Ali & Md Sawkat Ali both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, TUHINA BIBI W/O-BODIUJJAMAN SHAIKH D/O - HAQUEDAR SK residing at KANDIBANDHA PO - DURGAPUR PS - BERHAMPORE DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN -742187. West Bengal, do hereby declare that My father wrong name is MD HAQDAR ALI (old name) and actual name is HAQUEDAR SK(new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as HAQUEDAR SK (new name)in all purpose, vide an affidavit no (20AC 703958) sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 03/02/2026. (new name) HAQUEDAR SK & MD HAQDAR ALI (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Kishor Ghosh my father's name (Old Name) Hori Pada Ghosh residing at Vill & PO-Kamalabari , PS-Englishbazar , Malda , West Bengal 732103 do hereby declared that I have changed my father's name from Hori Pada Ghosh to Haripada Ghosh and henceforth my father's shall be known as Haripada Ghosh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My father's name Haripada Ghosh & Hori Pada Ghosh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, ASIMA DEBNATH W/o Narayan Chandra Debnath residing at Vill.Taranipur, PO-Taranipur, PS-Gopalnagar, Dist-North 24 Parganas West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my husband's actual name Narayan Chandra Debnath instead of Narayan Debnath and my actual name Ashima Debnath instead of Asima Debnath, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. 1st Class Executive Magistrate at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated on 30/01/2026. Narayan Chandra Debnath and Narayan Debnath both are same and one identical person. Ashima Debnath and Asima Debnath both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Jalaluddin Sekh (Old Name) S/O–Siddik Biswas residing at Mahaldarpara, Rajput Teghari, PS-Raghunathganj , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742213 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Jalaluddin Sekh to Jalaluddin Sk and henceforth I shall be known as Jalaluddin Sk (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Jalaluddin Sk & Jalaluddin Sekh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Uchhara Sekh (Old Name) W/O–Nasiruddin Sekh residing at Vill & PO-Barbakpur , PS-Karimpur , Nadia , West Bengal 741165 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Uchhara Sekh to Uchhera Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Uchhera Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 02/02/2026. My name Uchhera Sekh & Uchhara Sekh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Julekha Sekh (Old Name) W/O–Sabir Ali Sekh resident of Vill & Po-Barbakpur , Ps-Karimpur , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741165 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Julekha Sekh to Julekha Khatun and henceforth I shall be known as Julekha Khatun (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Julekha Khatun & Julekha Sekh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md Sawkat Ali (Old Name) S/O–Ainal Haque Biswas resident of Vill-Krishnapur , Po & Ps-Lalgola , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742148 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Sawkat Ali to Sawkat Ali and henceforth I shall be known as Sawkat Ali (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 03/02/2026. My name Sawkat Ali & Md Sawkat Ali both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Anawara Bewa my husband's (Old Name) Latib Seikh residing at Vill-Amitya , PO-Benipur , PS-Kandi , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742140 do hereby declared that I have changed my husband's name from Latib Seikh to Lakhu Sk and henceforth my husband's shall be known as Lakhu Sk (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My husband's name Lakhu Sk & Latib Seikh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Nunnehaar (Old Name) W/O–Kalam Sk residing at Vill-Maraghati , PO-Bhattabati , PS-Nabagram , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742149 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Nunnehaar to Nurnehar Bibi and henceforth I shall be known as Nurnehar Bibi (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Nurnehar Bibi & Nunnehaar both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Maniruddin Mandal (Old Name) S/O–resident of Basudebpur , Raghunathganj , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742225 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Maniruddin Mandal to Md Maniruddin Mandal and henceforth I shall be known as Md Maniruddin Mandal (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 03/02/2026. My name Md Maniruddin Mandal & Maniruddin Mandal both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Nasir Ali Sekh (Old Name) S/O–Faratulla Sekh resident of Vill & Po-Barbakpur , Ps-Karimpur , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741165 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Nasir Ali Sekh to Nasiruddin Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Nasiruddin Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Nasiruddin Sekh & Nasir Ali Sekh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, MILAN MUKHERJEE S/o Santosh Mukherjee residing at Dangal Bonkati, P.O. Bankati, P.S. Kanksa, Dist: Paschim Bardhaman, Pin: 713148 West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my actual name MILAN MUKHERJEE instead of MILANBHAI MUKHERJEE, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Durgapur dated on 02/02/2026. MILANBHAI MUKHERJEE and MILAN MUKHERJEE all are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md Mohiuddin Kaji (Correct Name) S/O–Kaji Md Osi Uddin resident of Vill & PO-Gotistha , PS-Mongalkot , Purba Bardhaman , West Bengal 713131 do hereby declared that in my daughter's (name) document my name is wrongly written as Kaji Mohammad Mohiuddin (wrong name) but my actual name is Md Mohiuddin Kaji (Correct name) I shall be known as Md Mohiuddin Kaji (Correct name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Md Mohiuddin Kaji & Kaji Mohammad Mohiuddin both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md Mostafa Hossain Khan (Old Name) S/O–Ali Hossain Khan resident of Sargachi , Baninathpur , Beldanga , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin742134- do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Mostafa Hossain Khan to Mostafa Khan and henceforth I shall be known as Mostafa Khan (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 03/02/2026. My name Mostafa Khan & Md Mostafa Hossain Khan both are same and one identical person.

Office of the
Maheshpur Gram Panchayat
Birshibpur, Uluberia, Howrah.
e-mail: gpmahespur@yahoo.com

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

Encrypted electronic bids are hereby invited by the Pradhan on behalf of Maheshpur Gram Panchayat, Uluberia, Howrah from eligible bonafied contractors/agencies/ bidders vide NIT reference / memo no. **09/MGP, Dated: 02.02.2026** at the jurisdiction area of Maheshpur Gram Panchayat within Uluberia-I Block, Howrah, W.B. Online Published Date & Bid Submission Start Date is **05.02.2026 at 10.00** and Last date for the online receipt of Tender is **12.02.2026 at 16:00.** Details will be available at the website **https://wbtenders.gov.in**

Sd/-PRODHAN
Maheshpur Gram Panchayat
Uluberia, Howrah.

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India BOI
Relationship Beyond Banking

BANK OF INDIA
BEHALA BRANCH
391, Diamond Harbour Road,
Behala, Kolkata-700034

Ref. No. BHL/Adv/2025-26 **Dated: 08.12.2025**

From:
Bank of India:
Behala Branch,
391, Diamond Harbour Road, Behala, Kolkata-700034

To:
Mr Md Arif Sekh
Sekh Para,Mamudpur, West Bengal - 743355

Sir/Madam,

NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002

At the request made by you, the Bank's **Behala Branch** has granted to you credit limit for an aggregate amount of **Rs. 29,50,000**. We give hereunder details of credit facility granted by us and the amounts outstanding dues there under as on the date of notice:-

Nature of facility	Sanctioned Limit	Outstanding Dues
Cash Credit 402030150000003	Rs.10,00,000/-	Rs.1025639.81 (contractual dues upto.10.11.2025 and uncharged interest from 28.08.2025(Npa Date)
LAP 402062610000030	Rs.19,50,000/-	Rs.1902794.89 (contractual dues upto. 10.11.2025 and uncharged interest from 28.08.2025(Npa Date)

2. The aforesaid credit facility granted by the Bank are secured by the following assets/ securities:-

Nature of Security
Equitable Mortgage of Land measuring 15 Satak with 2 storied residential building measuring 3049 Sq Ft lying and situated under Mouza Harishankarpur, JL No 123/147,Touzi No 384 comprised in RS and LR Dag No 984 under RS Khatian No2887 corresponding to LR Khatian No 9340 within Magrahat Paschim Gram panchayat, PS Magrahat, Dist South 24 Parganas West Bengal in the name of Arif Sekh.

3. As you have defaulted in repayment of your dues to the Bank, we have classified your account as **Non-Performing Asset with effect from 28.08.2025** in accordance with the directions/guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India.
4. For the reasons stated above, we hereby give you notice under Section 13 (2) of the above noted Act and call upon you to discharge in full your liabilities to the Bank by paying sum of **Rs. 29,28,434.70 (contractual dues upto.10.11.2025 and uncharged interest from 28.08.2025(Npa Date) within a period of 60 days from the date of this notice,** failing which please note that we will entirely at your risks as to costs and consequences exercise the powers vested with the Bank under Section 13 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, against the secured assets mentioned above.
5. While we call upon you to discharge your liability as above by payment of the entire dues to the bank together with applicable interest, all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the bank till repayment and redeem the secured assets, with in the period mentioned above, please take important note that as per section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act, the right of redemption of secured assets will be available to you only till the date of publication of notice for public auction or inviting quotations or tender from public or private treaty for transfer by way of lease, assignment of sale of the secured assets.
6. The amounts realised from exercising the powers mentioned above, will firstly be applied in payment of all costs, charges and expenses which are incurred by us and/or any expenses incidental thereto, and secondly applied in discharge of the Bank's dues as mentioned above with contractual interest from the date of this notice till the date of actual realisation and the residual of the money, if any, after the Bank's entire dues are fully recovered, shall be paid to you.
7. If the said dues are not fully recovered with the proceeds realised in the course of exercise of the said powers against the secured assets, we reserve our right to proceed against you before Debts Recovery Tribunal/Courts for recovery of the balance amount due along with all costs etc. incidental thereto from you.
8. Please take note that as per Sub-Section (13) of the aforesaid Act, after receipt of this notice, you are restrained from transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of the secured assets referred to in this notice.
9. The undersigned is a duly authorised officer of the Bank to issue this notice and exercise powers under Section 13 aforesaid.
10. Needless to mention that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to the Bank.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/- Chief Manager & Authorised Officer
Bank of India, Behala Branch, Kolkata Zone

Date: 08.12.2025



BJP MLAs shout slogans during a protest against the alleged influence of the ruling TMC on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, outside Raj Bhavan in Kolkata.

Supreme Court Postpones Hearing of I-PAC Case, Next Week Now in Focus

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 3 February: The Supreme Court of India has postponed the much-anticipated hearing of the I-PAC case, pushing deliberations to next week amid procedural considerations and a packed judicial schedule. The development has drawn significant attention from political circles, legal analysts, and the media, as the case involves a high-profile consultancy accused of influencing electoral processes and campaign strategies across multiple states.



The postponement was announced at the outset of proceedings, with the bench citing the need for additional preparation and coordination among the parties involved. Legal representatives of I-PAC, as well as state agencies and concerned stakeholders, were present during the brief session, which set the stage for the rescheduled hearing. While no new arguments were presented on the day, the court indicated that the matter would be taken up in detail next week, allowing both sides to finalize documentation and submissions.

I-PAC, or the Indian Political Action Committee, has been under scrutiny for its role in designing campaign strategies, voter outreach programs, and digital influence operations for various political entities. Allegations brought before the Supreme Court suggest that some of these activities may have involved practices beyond the permissible legal framework, prompting calls for closer examination and transparency.

The postponement of the hearing has generated a mix of speculation and strategic recalibration among political observers. Analysts note that delays in high-profile cases often provide additional time for parties to strengthen arguments, prepare counter-evidence, and align legal strategies. “While the postponement may seem procedural, it gives both the complainants and I-PAC an opportunity to refine their submissions,” said a senior political analyst. “The eventual hearing is expected to be critical in determining the legal boundaries of political consultancy and campaign management in India.”

Observers also point out that the Supreme Court’s careful handling of the case reflects the sensitive nature of the allegations. Cases involving political influence, campaign funding, and electoral conduct require meticulous scrutiny, as decisions can have wide-ranging implications for democratic processes. By postponing the hearing, the court ensures that all parties have adequate time to present their arguments comprehensively and that the final verdict is based on thorough consideration.

Legal experts emphasize that the delay does not diminish the significance of the case but rather underscores the judiciary’s commitment to due process. “In matters of this magnitude, accuracy and fairness are paramount,” remarked a senior advocate familiar with the case. “The court’s decision to defer the hearing is a procedural measure to ensure that no aspect is overlooked and that both sides can present their perspectives fully.”

Political parties and campaign observers are closely monitoring the developments, recognizing that the Supreme Court’s eventual ruling could set a precedent for how consultancy firms operate within India’s electoral landscape. The case highlights the intersection of technology, strategy, and governance, raising questions about accountability, transparency, and the ethical boundaries of political influence.

Public interest in the case has surged, fueled by media coverage and social media discussions. Citizens, activists, and commentators are watching the proceedings for potential insights into campaign management practices, the role of private consultancies in politics, and the mechanisms available to ensure free and fair elections. The Supreme Court’s careful handling of the matter reinforces its role as a guardian of democratic principles and electoral integrity.

As attention now shifts to next week, all eyes will be on the bench and the parties involved, anticipating detailed arguments, evidence submissions, and the potential for landmark observations. The rescheduled hearing is expected to address not only the specific allegations against I-PAC but also broader questions regarding oversight, regulation, and legal frameworks governing political operations in the country.

For now, the postponement has added a layer of anticipation and preparation, signaling that the Supreme Court is approaching the matter with due diligence. Legal experts, political analysts, and the public alike are preparing for a hearing that could shape the contours of electoral consultancy in India for years to come.

The I-PAC case remains a focal point of national attention, reflecting the delicate balance between legal scrutiny, political practice, and democratic accountability. The coming week promises to bring clarity, debate, and potentially transformative judicial guidance on the role of private agencies in India’s vibrant political landscape.

SBI Officers Raid Asansol Businessman’s Home After Enormous Cash Discovery

Staff reporter, Bardhaman, 3 February: Officers from the State Bank of India (SBI) visited the residence of a prominent local businessman following the discovery of an unusually large sum of money during an Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe. The development has sparked intense speculation across the region, raising questions about financial irregularities and the mechanisms of wealth accumulation in the local business landscape.According to sources familiar with the investigation, the SBI officials arrived at the businessman’s residence as part of coordinated action triggered by the ED’s findings. The enormous cash, reportedly running into several crores, was unearthed during a detailed audit and subsequent inquiries by the central agency. While the precise figure remains undisclosed, officials indicated that the magnitude of the discovery warranted immediate scrutiny and banking intervention.

Eyewitnesses reported that the security measures around the residence were heightened as the SBI team conducted their verification and compliance procedures. The visit was carried out under strict procedural norms, including documentation and verification of financial records, cash holdings, and other assets. Local residents expressed a mixture of curiosity and concern, with the news quickly spreading across social media platforms and regional news outlets.While authorities are maintaining confidentiality regarding the ongoing investigation, preliminary reports suggest that the ED’s probe was initiated after suspicious transactions and unaccounted financial movements were flagged during routine audits. The discovery of such immense cash holdings outside standard banking channels has raised red flags about potential violations of the law, including tax evasion, money laundering, or other financial misdemeanors.

Industry observers note that such cases underscore the critical role of regulatory oversight and banking vigilance in maintaining financial integrity. The SBI’s proactive involvement reflects the importance of institutional coordination with investigative agencies to ensure that large, unaccounted sums of money do not bypass scrutiny. Analysts also highlighted that while high-value cash hoards are rare, they often signal deeper structural concerns in business practices or compliance adherence.The businessman at the center of the inquiry has yet to issue a public statement, and legal experts emphasize that the principle of presumed innocence applies until formal charges, if any, are established.

However, the public disclosure of the raid and the ED’s involvement has already created a ripple effect in Asansol’s commercial and social circles. Competitors, associates, and residents are closely monitoring developments, anticipating potential legal outcomes and the broader implications for business ethics in the region. Financial crime specialists suggest that cases like this highlight ongoing challenges in the Indian financial ecosystem, particularly regarding the detection and regulation of large cash holdings.

Bengal BJP Workers Grapple with Dilemma Amid Perceived Deprivation

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 3 February: Political tensions in West Bengal are reaching a new high as BJP workers find themselves navigating an atmosphere of uncertainty and frustration over what they describe as systemic deprivation in the state. Amid accusations of neglect and political marginalization, party workers are reportedly caught between grassroots expectations and the challenges of operating in a highly competitive and polarized political environment.

Sources within the party say that BJP cadres are expressing growing discontent over what they perceive as insufficient recognition, resources, and opportunities, both within the party hierarchy and in the larger political arena. “There is a sense that our efforts on the ground are not translating into tangible results or acknowledgment,” said one party worker, speaking on condition of anonymity. This sentiment reflects a broader unease among local cadres, who are often the first point of contact for constituents yet feel constrained by structural and political limitations.

The dilemma faced by BJP workers is multi-faceted. On one hand, they are committed to expanding the party’s influence in a state long dominated by regional political forces. On the other, they grapple with operational challenges, including limited access to party resources, constraints imposed by electoral dynamics, and the daunting task of engaging voters in constituencies historically aligned with rival parties. This tension has created an environment of uncertainty, prompting introspection and debate within the party ranks.

Political analysts note that the situation is not unusual in states where opposition parties attempt to consolidate influence against entrenched regional powers. “BJP’s organizational model relies heavily on local workers and grassroots mobilization,” said a senior political commentator. “When these workers feel neglected or deprived, it can affect morale, coordination, and overall campaign effectiveness. Addressing this perception is critical for sustaining momentum.”

The perception of deprivation among BJP workers is compounded by reports of uneven recognition and reward structures within the party. While some cadres receive visibility and strategic assignments, others claim to be sidelined despite long-standing contributions. This imbalance has intensified the sense of dilemma, as workers weigh loyalty to the party against personal expectations of acknowledgment and career growth.

The state’s political landscape further complicates the scenario. West Bengal remains fiercely competitive, with entrenched parties wielding strong local influence and maintaining loyal voter bases. BJP workers, often tasked with penetrating these strongholds, face both political resistance and societal pressures, making grassroots mobilization an uphill struggle. The challenge of balancing dedication, risk, and recognition has become a recurring theme in party discussions.

Party insiders report that leadership is aware of the concerns and is engaged in dialogue aimed at addressing grievances, improving communication, and streamlining resource allocation. Strategists emphasize the need to maintain morale and cohesion, highlighting the importance of motivating workers while ensuring strategic alignment with broader electoral goals. Experts suggest that transparent mechanisms for recognition and empowerment could alleviate dissatisfaction and bolster organizational strength.

The dilemma faced by BJP cadres is also reflective of larger questions about political engagement and representation in West Bengal. Local workers often serve as the backbone of party operations, yet their voices are sometimes overshadowed by strategic decisions made at the state or national level. Bridging this gap, analysts argue, is essential not only for party stability but also for effective democratic participation.

Social media discussions and local media coverage reveal that public perception of BJP workers’ challenges has gained traction, with commentators debating the implications of internal dissatisfaction for the party’s performance in upcoming elections. The narrative of “deprivation” has resonated with sections of the electorate, adding a layer of political complexity that party leadership must navigate carefully. As West Bengal continues to be a politically charged battleground, the BJP faces the task of reconciling grassroots concerns with broader strategic objectives.

SBSTC Launches New Pilgrimage Route: Direct Bus Service from Digha Jagannath Temple to Nabadwip Dham

Staff reporter, Nabadwip, 3 February: The South Bengal State Transport Corporation (SBSTC) has inaugurated a new bus service connecting the revered Digha Jagannath Temple to the spiritual town of Nabadwip Dham. The service promises to ease travel for thousands of pilgrims, offering a convenient, comfortable, and reliable transport option between two of Bengal’s most iconic religious destinations.

The launch ceremony, attended by local dignitaries, SBSTC officials, and temple representatives, marked a significant step in enhancing the region’s pilgrimage infrastructure. With Nabadwip Dham famed as the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Digha Jagannath Temple serving as a major spiritual hub for devotees along the coast, the direct bus route is expected to strengthen cultural and religious ties while supporting local tourism.

According to SBSTC authorities, the service will operate daily, with multiple departures designed to accommodate early morning and evening travelers. The buses are equipped with modern amenities, including comfortable seating, air conditioning, and safety features, reflecting SBSTC’s commitment to providing a premium travel experience. Officials emphasized that the route has been carefully planned to ensure smooth transit, minimal delays, and convenient access for devotees from surrounding towns and villages.

Pilgrims who attended the inaugural ride expressed enthusiasm and gratitude, noting that previously, travel between the two destinations involved multiple transfers and longer travel times. “This new direct service is a blessing for devotees like us,” said one passenger. “Now we can focus on our spiritual journey without worrying about complicated travel arrangements.”

The SBSTC launch aligns with broader government initiatives to promote religious tourism and regional connectivity. By linking two major spiritual centers, the route is expected to not only benefit devotees but also stimulate economic activity along the corridor. Hotels, eateries, local markets, and vendors near both Digha and Nabadwip Dham are likely to experience a boost in footfall, reflecting the multiplier effect of improved transportation networks.

Transportation analysts have noted that such pilgrim-focused services represent an innovative approach to public transit, combining social utility with economic development. Unlike conventional city or intercity routes, pilgrimage corridors require careful consideration of timing, capacity, and comfort, given the age diversity and volume of travelers. SBSTC’s initiative addresses these nuances, offering a model that other regions might emulate.

The bus service also highlights the integration of cultural heritage and modern infrastructure. By providing a seamless connection between Digha Jagannath Temple and Nabadwip Dham, SBSTC is enabling devotees to experience spiritual journeys more efficiently, encouraging greater participation in religious events, festivals, and rituals. Local authorities hope that increased accessibility will lead to higher footfall during major festivals such as Rath Yatra at Digha and Sankirtan celebrations in Nabadwip, further cementing the towns’ reputations as premier pilgrimage destinations.

In addition to enhancing travel convenience, SBSTC officials stressed that the service adheres to safety protocols, including GPS tracking, regular vehicle maintenance, and trained drivers, ensuring a secure journey for all passengers. The initiative represents a thoughtful blend of technology, operational efficiency, and cultural sensitivity.

Community leaders have praised the service, highlighting its role in fostering connectivity and social cohesion. With easier travel, families, students, and groups of devotees can plan joint trips, strengthening the sense of shared spiritual experience. The route is expected to attract not only local residents but also domestic tourists keen to explore Bengal’s religious heritage.

The Digha Jagannath Temple–Nabadwip Dham corridor stands poised to become a vital artery for spiritual tourism. By prioritizing comfort, reliability, and accessibility, SBSTC is setting a new benchmark for pilgrim transport services in West Bengal. The new bus service is more than just a transport initiative; it is a bridge connecting faith, culture, and community.

Tragic Accident in Bardhaman: Man Loses Life After Muffler Gets Caught in Oil Mill Machinery

Staff reporter, Bardhaman, 3 February: A shocking and tragic incident in Bardhaman has claimed the life of a local man after his muffler became entangled in an operational oil mill, highlighting the dangers associated with industrial workplaces and machinery safety. The unfortunate accident occurred at one of the town’s small-scale oil mills, sending shockwaves through the local community and raising urgent questions about workplace safety standards.

According to eyewitness accounts, the victim, whose identity is yet to be officially confirmed, was performing routine work when his muffler—a loose piece of clothing—was inadvertently caught in the mill’s rotating machinery. The powerful mechanical system, designed to crush seeds and extract oil, left the man trapped in a life-threatening situation. Despite immediate attempts by co-workers to rescue him, the severity of the incident left little time for intervention. Emergency responders were summoned, but the man succumbed to his injuries at the scene.Local residents described the scene as harrowing, with workers and bystanders visibly shaken by the suddenness and brutality of the accident. The incident drew a crowd, many of whom expressed grief and concern over the lack of safety precautions in such facilities. Families living nearby have voiced fears over the potential hazards of industrial operations in densely populated areas.

Authorities confirmed that the police and local regulatory officials have arrived at the site to conduct a preliminary investigation. While the full circumstances are still under review, early reports suggest that lapses in basic safety measures, such as the absence of protective guards and inadequate workplace safety protocols, may have contributed to the tragic outcome. Officials are collecting statements from workers and reviewing operational practices to determine whether negligence played a role.

Workplace safety experts emphasize that incidents like this are preventable with proper training, protective gear, and machinery safeguards. “Loose clothing, hair, or accessories near operating machinery can be extremely hazardous,” said an industrial safety consultant. “It is critical for workers to follow safety protocols and for employers to enforce strict compliance with protective measures.” The Bardhaman accident underscores the urgent need for awareness campaigns, safety audits, and stringent enforcement of labor regulations in small and medium-sized industrial setups.

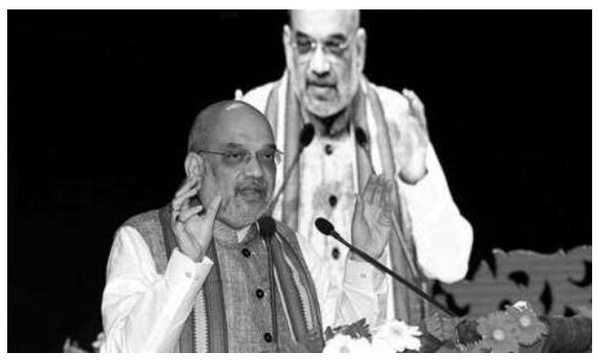
The tragedy has also sparked broader discussions about labor welfare in rural and semi-urban industries. Small-scale oil mills, while integral to local economies, often operate with minimal oversight, limited safety infrastructure, and a reliance on manual labor. Advocates argue that tragedies like this highlight systemic gaps that must be addressed to prevent further loss of life.Residents of Bardhaman have expressed shock and sorrow, noting that industrial accidents of this nature are rare but devastating when they occur. Local community leaders have called for immediate action, urging authorities to impose stricter safety checks, provide training to mill workers, and ensure that similar mishaps are avoided in the future. Some have proposed mandatory safety signage, protective clothing regulations, and routine inspections by labor departments to mitigate such risks.

The oil mill involved in the incident has been temporarily shut down for investigation, while authorities assess the equipment, operational procedures, and overall compliance with safety norms. Police are expected to file an official report, and if negligence is found, the management could face legal consequences under industrial safety and labor law provisions.

Meanwhile, the victim’s family is grappling with sudden grief, and local support groups are mobilizing to provide assistance. Community members have expressed solidarity, emphasizing the need to honor the deceased while demanding accountability and preventive measures to protect other workers.

This tragic incident in Bardhaman serves as a stark reminder of the inherent dangers present in industrial work and the critical importance of safety vigilance. The loss of life could have been avoided with proper precautions, training, and oversight, highlighting that industrial accidents are not merely personal tragedies but societal concerns that demand systemic attention.

US-India Trade Deal Will Pave Way For Stronger Ties: Home Minister Amit Shah



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the trade deal between the US and India will elevate strategic partnership between the two countries, paving the way for stronger trade ties and mutual growth. In a post on X, Shah said the deal will greatly benefit both nations and their people with business between India and US set to flourish further."A big day for India-US relations as the trade deal has been locked with a significantly reduced tariff of 18 per cent, paving the way for stronger trade ties and mutual growth," he said.

Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump for the "historic deal", Shah said it will "elevate our strategic partnership and greatly benefit both nations and their people. Business between India and US set to flourish further." India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from current 25 per cent, President Trump said on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Modi.

The prime minister said he was delighted that "Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent". "Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump today. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," PM Modi said.The prime minister said when two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits the people and "unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation".

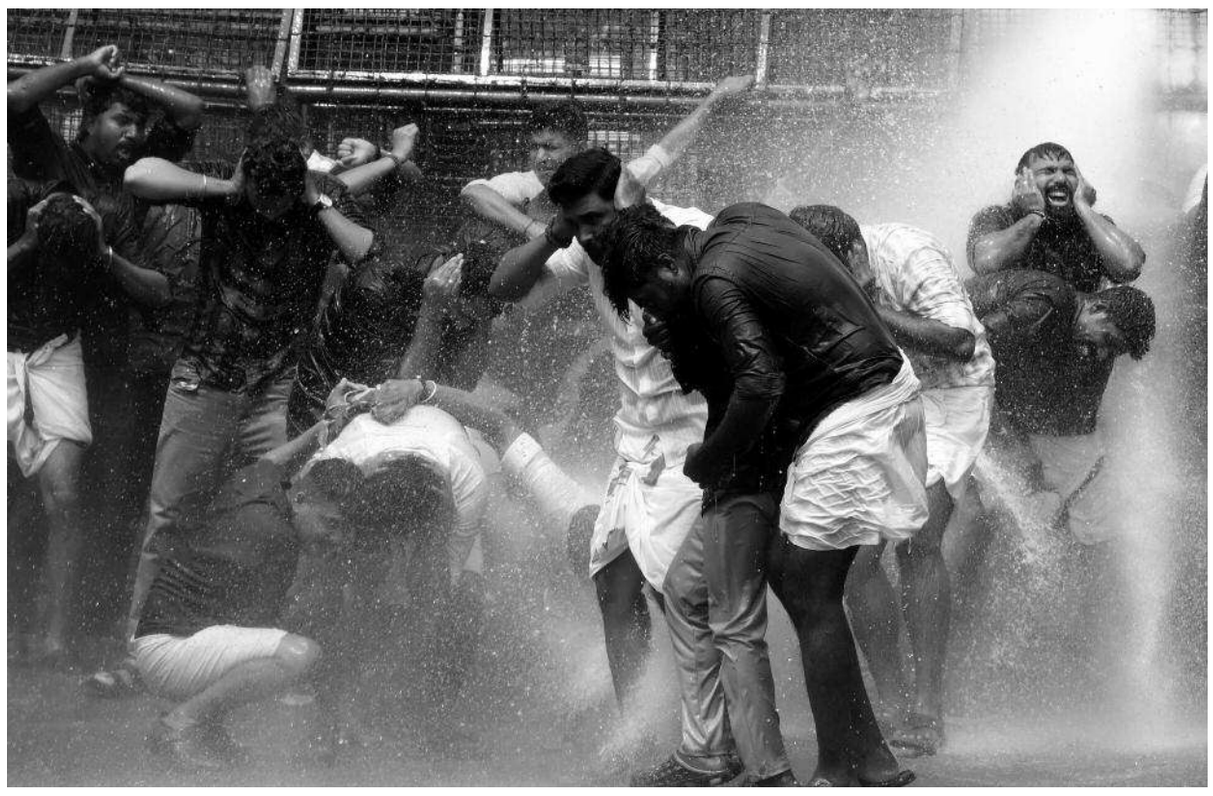
"President Trump's leadership is vital for global peace, stability, and prosperity. India fully supports his efforts for peace," he said on 'X'.PM Modi noted that he looked forward to working closely with Trump to take the bilateral partnership to unprecedented heights, without mentioning many of the other issues that figured in Trump's post on social media.Trump said India will move forward to reduce "tariffs and non tariff barriers" against the US to zero, adding New Delhi would buy American goods, including energy, worth more than USD 500 billion.

"Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal between the United States and India, whereby the United States will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent," the US president said on social media.

India will "likewise move forward to reduce their tariffs and non tariff barriers against the United States, to zero", he said.Trump said PM Modi also committed to buy American goods at much higher level, in addition to over USD 500 billion dollars of US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products. "Our amazing relationship with India will be even stronger going forward. Prime Minister Modi and I are two people that get things done something that cannot be said for most," he said.

In his remarks, Modi said, "When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation." "I look forward to working closely with him to take our partnership to unprecedented heights," he added.Trump said Modi and he also discussed ending the war between Russia and Ukraine."He agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela," the US president said.

"This will help end the war in Ukraine, which is taking place right now, with thousands of people dying each and every week," Trump said. Trump and Modi last spoke on phone in October 2025. The two leaders had agreed at a meeting in February last year to finalise the first tranche of a bilateral trade agreement by the autumn.Though the two sides held several rounds of negotiations, forward movement on the trade deal stalled after Trump imposed 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, including the 25 per cent punitive tariffs for India's procurement of Russian crude oil. The Modi-Trump phone talks came on a day External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar travelled to Washington DC.



Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha activists are seen after police use water cannons to disperse them during a march to the Kerala Legislative Assembly demanding the resignation of state Devaswom Minister V N Vasavan over the Sabarimala gold theft controversy, in Thiruvananthapuram, Tuesday.

Sunetra Pawar Didn't Believe Ajit Pawar News, Got Video Call From Crash Site



Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 3 February: The phone call that reached Sunetra Pawar on January 28 morning was brief, and initially impossible for her to accept. She was in Delhi when she was told that the aircraft carrying her husband, Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, had met with an accident near Baramati. At first, she believed someone was playing a cruel joke on her. Within minutes, the disbelief gave way to a live video call from the crash site.

What Sunetra Pawar saw on her phone screen -- the burning wreckage of a small jet near Baramati Airport -- confirmed what words could not. According to people present at the scene, the sight left her devastated. She broke down, realising that her husband, one of Maharashtra's most powerful political figures, was dead. From Delhi, she immediately left for Baramati.

Ajit Pawar's aircraft was scheduled to land at Baramati at 8:50 am. Staff from his office had already assembled at the airport to receive him. He had taken off from Mumbai earlier in the morning to address four political rallies across Pune district as part of campaigning for the February 5 zilla parishad elections.

Around 8:46 am, eyewitnesses at the airport noticed the aircraft descending in an unstable manner. Moments later, it plunged out of control and crashed close to the runway. Office staff and airport personnel rushed towards the site with an ambulance.

The aircraft burst into flames on impact. One eyewitness told investigators that the jet appeared "a bit unstable in the air" before exploding the moment it hit the ground. All five people on board were killed. Along with Ajit Pawar, the victims included his personal security officer Videep Jadhav, flight attendant Pinky Mali, pilot Sumit Kapoor, and co-pilot Shambhavi Pathak. Officials confirmed that two of the victims were crew members, while three were passengers.According to flight tracking data, the Learjet aircraft, operated by a Delhi-based private firm, took off from Mumbai at 8:10 am and disappeared from radar around 8:45 am. A police official said the crash occurred at approximately 8:50 am.

A senior official from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said there were five passengers on board, including Pawar, his personal security officer and an attendant, along with two crew members - the pilot in command and the first officer.The news of Ajit Pawar's death sent shockwaves across Maharashtra and beyond. Pawar, long regarded as one of the most influential leaders in the state, was at the centre of power in a coalition government and remained a key strategist within his party.

Condolences poured in from across the political spectrum. President Droupadi Murmu said Ajit Pawar would be remembered for his contribution to Maharashtra's development, particularly in the cooperative sector. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described him as a leader with a strong grassroots connection, calling his death untimely and deeply shocking.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Pawar's death was a personal loss not just for the National Democratic Alliance but for him personally. Both Modi and Shah spoke to Devendra Fadnavis to enquire about the incident.Fadnavis later told reporters that Pawar's death was "unbelievable" and that he had lost a close colleague and friend. He described Pawar as a people's leader with a deep understanding of Maharashtra's issues, adding that such leadership takes years to build.

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde called the incident sad and unfortunate, and said the aircraft accident would be thoroughly investigated.Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said that despite Ajit Pawar choosing a different political path by aligning with the BJP-led NDA, their personal relationship had remained intact.

The Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday claimed the BJP leadership was the "mastermind" behind NCP leader Sunetra Pawar taking oath as Maharashtra's deputy chief minister, just days after her husband Ajit Pawar's demise.

An editorial in the Sena (UBT) mouthpiece 'Saamana' also alleged that the BJP leadership and Nationalist Congress Party leaders Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel do not want the unification of the two NCP factions. Sunetra Pawar took oath as the state's first woman deputy CM on Saturday, barely three days after NCP leader Ajit Pawar and four others died in an air crash at Baramati in Pune district, inviting criticism from some quarters over the pace at which the development took place.

In WhatsApp Privacy Row, Chief Justice's "If Message Sent To Doctor..." Note

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: As the Supreme Court reprimanded Meta Tuesday - over WhatsApp's 2021 'take it or leave it' privacy policy - Chief Justice Surya Kant offered a personal anecdote to drive home the point."If a message is sent to a doctor on WhatsApp... that you are feeling under the weather... and the doctor sends some medicine prescriptions, immediately you start seeing ads..." the Chief Justice said, underlining the argument that Meta and WhatsApp surreptitiously share users' private data between themselves, and with other companies, for commercial purposes. And, in a sharp observation on that "exploitative" policy, the Chief Justice said, "We will not allow you to share a single digit of our data... if you can't follow our Constitution, leave India..."The court was hearing a plea regarding the privacy policy, specifically the company law tribunal order upholding the Competition Commission of India's Rs 213 crore fine.There was also a cross-appeal by the CCI about sharing of user data for advertising purposes, which the tribunal allowed after ruling there was no 'abuse of power' by the company. Calling the practice a "mockery of the Constitution", the court wanted to know how consent could be considered valid when users were forced to accept the policy. The court also raised questions about the efficacy of the 'opt-out' mechanism Meta and WhatsApp claimed was built into the system, noting that not everyone may understand the "crafty language" used. The court said it was of the opinion that consumers were being commercially exploited and described silent consumers as victims of the system with "no voice", i.e., the consent obtained by the companies in question was "manufactured consent."

Consulting With Parties On Impeaching Poll Body Chief Over SIR: Trinamool

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: The Trinamool Congress will speak to other parties to discuss the possibility of making a move to impeach Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar amid the bitter battle over the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in West Bengal, where the assembly elections will be held soon, party sources said today.

The announcement comes a day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the top three Election Commission officials had a standoff in the poll body's Delhi office.Confirming the development today, Trinamool MP Kalyan Banerjee told reporters that Gyanesh Kumar's manner of conducting the voter roll clean-up exercise was "incorrect".

"We are considering impeaching the Chief Election Commissioner because of the way he is conducting the SIR, which is incorrect and affects the voting rights of every citizen in the country," the MP told reporters in Delhi.

Earlier today, Mamata Banerjee held a press conference where she alleged the EC has been selectively using SIR to delete voters from assembly constituencies held by Trinamool MLAs.

"In assembly constituencies of BJP MLAs, the names of a maximum of 3,000 to 4,000 voters are deleted. But in constituencies held by Trinamool Congress MLAs, the number of voters deleted ranges between 40,000 and 1 lakh," Mamata Banerjee said.

"In my own constituency of Bhabanipur in South Kolkata, the names of 40,000 voters have already been deleted in the draft voters' list. Their final target is to delete one lakh names from Bhabanipur," she told reporters in Delhi.

She pressed on with her allegations, saying the EC "unilaterally deleted 58 lakh names in the draft voters' list without consulting electoral registration officers.

"The EC is indiscriminately issuing notice for hearing in the name of logical discrepancy. Even Nobel laureate and economist Amartya Sen was summoned for a hearing," Mamata Banerjee said.

US Cut Tariffs, So They Announced It 1st: Piyush Goyal On Opposition Attacks



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: The trade deal with the US that came through after many hiccups and months of negotiations is the "best in the neighbourhood", Commerce and Industry Minister minister Piyush Goyal said today. He also slammed the Opposion, especially Rahul Gandhi, for their criticism of the deal, questioning if the Congress leader resented the country's progress.

Goyal criticised Gandhi over claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had accepted the India-US trade deal under pressure. "Rahul Gandhi wants to mislead the public, he does not care about India's progress," the minister said.At a press conference in Delhi this evening, Goyal said, "Rahul Gandhi ko kya mirchi lagti hai? (What is Rahul Gandhi's problem)". The Leader of the Opposition Lok Sabha "will have to answer to the people about what he wants to achieve with his negative mentality," he said.

"I saw some opposition leaders asking, 'Why did Donald Trump announce the deal?' The US imposed reciprocal tariffs on India, so it should have announced the removal," he added.Earlier today, Rahul Gandhi had claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had signed the deal as he was "compromised" and "under pressure".

"Modiji is scared. Everyone saw that the trade deal was on hold for four months; nothing has changed... There is pressure on Narendra Modi ji, and the balloon of an image that he has created with thousands of crores can burst soon," Gandhi told reporters outside parliament complex after he was not allowed to raise the Ladakh issue in the house.Other opposition parties have described the deal as disproportionately beneficial to the US and not in India's interest.The deal was announced yesterday -- first by US President Donald Trump and then by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who thanked him.

While the fine print is yet to be made public, Trump, in a post on his social media account Truth Social, said India and the US have "agreed to a Trade Deal" under which the US will cut reciprocal tariff from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. This is one of the lowest tariffs the US has announced for competing economies and way lower than India's neighbours -- including China and Pakistan -- are paying. China is currently paying 37 per cent Bangladesh 20 per cent and Pakistan 19 per cent. Developed economies like the EU, Japan, South Korea, and the UK enjoy even lower rates.

Goyal said the deal will protect India's interests in the agriculture and dairy sector and will open new markets in labour-intensive sectors like textile, gems & jewellery, auto components, engineering goods, and other MSME sectors.While Trump claimed that the deal will be accompanied by India putting a stop to the purchase of Russian oil, neither India nor the US has issued any details on when it would come into effect.

The India-US trade deal announced by President Donald Trump and confirmed by PM Narendra Modi has sparked debate in New Delhi, as ministers praise its benefits while key figures across politics and industry seek clarity on its real impact, specific tariff changes, and how promises on Russian oil, agriculture, and massive import targets will play out in practice.

India-US Trade Deal "Will Strengthen Make In India Endeavours": External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday welcomed the India-US trade agreement, saying it will spur growth in both economies and strengthen the country's 'Make in India' endeavours.

Jaishankar, who is on a three-day visit to the US to attend a Washington-led ministerial meeting on critical minerals supply chain, said he "welcomed the announcements on bilateral trade".

India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a post on 'X', Jaishankar said, "This will create more jobs, spur growth and promote innovation in both economies. It will strengthen 'Make in India' endeavors and encourage trusted technology ties." "The opportunities in our economic engagement are truly vast and we are confident of realizing them. A robust economic relationship is the strongest foundation for our strategic partnership," the external affairs minister added.

Following the trade agreement announcement, PM Modi said he was delighted that "Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent".

"Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump today. Delighted that



Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," PM Modi said.

He said when two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits the people and "unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation"."President Trump's leadership is vital for global peace, stability, and prosperity. India fully supports his efforts for peace," PM Modi said on 'X'.

US President Trump said India will move forward to reduce "tariffs and non tariff barriers" against the US to zero, adding New Delhi would buy American goods, including energy, worth more than USD 500 billion.

"Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal between the United States and India, whereby the United States will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent," the US president said on social media. India will "likewise move forward to reduce their tariffs and non tariff barriers against the United States, to zero", he said.

US President Trump said PM Modi also committed to buy American goods at much higher level, in addition to over USD 500 billion dollars of US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products. "Our amazing relationship with India will be even stronger going forward. Prime Minister Modi and I are two people that get things done something that cannot be said for most," he said.

US President Trump said PM Modi and he also discussed ending the war between Russia and Ukraine."He agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela," the US president said.

"This will help end the war in Ukraine, which is taking place right now, with thousands of people dying each and every week," US President Trump said.The PM Modi-US President Trump phone talks came on a day EAM Jaishankar travelled to Washington DC. India has now lower tariff compared to competing export economies, officials said. They cited 19 per cent American tariffs on Indonesia, 20 per cent on Vietnam, 20 per cent on Bangladesh and 34 per cent on China.

Urging the need to strengthen international cooperation to combat the "global scourge" of terrorism, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Saturday said that zero-tolerance for terrorism must be an uncompromising universal norm. In his opening remarks at the 2nd India Arab Foreign Ministers meeting in the capital, EAM Jaishankar asserted that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations remains a common threat in both the regions.

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Carlos Alcaraz of Spain holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup the morning after defeating Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship, in Melbourne, Australia.

Setback For Desperate Pakistan In Battle With ICC, Other Boards Clear Stance

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Desperate to find international support in its decision to boycott the high-profile February 15 World Cup fixture against India, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) reached out to several other member boards, sources have told NDTV. The results, however, have been sobering, with not a single cricket board backing Pakistan's stance. The PCB is yet to even make formal contact with the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding the boycott, despite the Pakistan government's public announcement via social media. This lack of official communication has left the PCB in a state of increasing isolation, drifting further away from the very community it depends on for survival.

Sources have confirmed that the feedback from other international boards to the PCB has been blunt. The general consensus is that Pakistan has no locus standi, or legal standing, in this matter. The boycott, framed by the PCB as a show of solidarity with Bangladesh after the latter was removed from the tournament, is being viewed as a manufactured crisis.Member boards have highlighted several contradictions that undermine Pakistan's intent behind the move. Pakistan's youth team recently played against India in the U19 World Cup without any protest or mention of a boycott.

In a glaringly inconsistent display, the Pakistan Women's A team is still



scheduled to play India A on the same day (15 February) with no plans to withdraw from the Rising Stars Asia Cup 2026 match in Bangkok.Since the Men's World Cup match is scheduled for Colombo, Sri Lanka, a neutral venue, the "security concerns" cited by Bangladesh regarding travel to India have no logical application to Pakistan's situation.

With no allies in the boardroom and the ICC already warning of "long-term sanctions" for Pakistan's own cricket ecosystem, the PCB's gamble has left it on sticky ground. Other boards have reportedly reminded the PCB that "selective participation" is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event. Instead of leading a movement, the PCB now finds itself cornered, facing the prospect of massive financial penalties (estimated at over $38 million), the forfeiture of crucial World Cup points, and potential suspension. There still remains some time for Pakistan to implement a course correction. If not, the days of total financial ruin might not be far off.

The Pakistan government sent shockwaves across the global cricketing spectrum last Sunday when it barred its team from taking the field against India in the T20 World Cup 2026 match on February 15. Though the Pakistan government cleared its team's path to participate in the biennial event, it also announced a solitary 'boycott' of India in the match, a move that has been labelled as a decision of 'solidarity' with Bangladesh, who were booted out of the tournament by the International Cricket Council (ICC). Since Bangladesh were shown the exit door by the ICC, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has been flirting with the idea of boycotting the entire tournament. However, in the end, the country's government decided to skip just one match, against India. But, is this 'selective boycott' allowed by the ICC? We take a look at the rules set by the sport's top governing body.

Technically, Pakistan can skip just one match in the tournament. There's no ICC regulation preventing that from happening. However, ICC does have strict rules in place to ensure that teams doing so aren't let off without serious consequences.If Pakistan follows through with the announced boycott of the February 15 match against India, here is how the ICC rules and playing conditions would likely apply:

Sunil Gavaskar predicts a Pak U-turn in 'four-five days' as ICC sanctions loom



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Sunil Gavaskar has taken a dig at Pakistan's decision to boycott their match against India in the T20 World Cup, suggesting that, much like their retired cricketers who frequently reverse decisions, the Pakistan Cricket Board could also be forced into a U-turn under pressure from voices within the game, both globally and domestically.Speaking to AajTak, the former India captain took a swipe at Pakistan, making an indirect jab at the likes of Shahid Afridi, who repeatedly announced retirements only to reverse them.

"I think in the next four or five days, when reactions start pouring in from across the world and even from their former players, there is a possibility that Pakistan will change their stance," Gavaskar said. The decision comes after PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi — who also serves as interior minister — threatened to boycott the T20 World Cup in solidarity with Bangladesh, who were replaced by Scotland in the tournament.

"What's new in this? We all know Pakistan cricketers retire and then, four days later, take back their retirement, saying 'our fans told us to play more'. This might happen again. What's the problem with making U-turns in your decisions? There's no issue, as far as I know."

Gavaskar also warned Pakistan of sanctions to be imposed by the ICC. "If Pakistan does not have a valid reason to justify withdrawing from the big match against India, or if they cannot show grounds for breaching the contract, then action will be taken by the ICC Board," he said.

Pakistan T20 captain Salman Agha said in Lahore on Sunday that they were merely following the PCB's instructions. "That is not our decision. We can't do anything. What our government, our (PCB) chairman say, we have do that," Agha said.

The Pakistan government has decided that its national cricket team will participate in the T20 World Cup 2026, but the side will boycott its match against India.

Pakistan were scheduled to face the Suryakumar Yadav-led side in Colombo on February 15. The country announced its decision on Sunday. It has come following the International Cricket Council's verdict on the Bangladesh issue.

Talks on way out of boycott maze: ICC awaits formal communication from PCB

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Backroom channel discussions between the International Cricket Council, its various stakeholders and the Pakistan Cricket Board were held right through Monday to break the deadlock arising out of the Pakistan government's decision to boycott the T20 World Cup group match against India in Colombo on February 15.

Sources told that the ICC hasn't yet informed its board members of any emergent meeting. No formal communication has also been sent by the PCB to the ICC on its decision to forfeit the high-profile clash. A social media post isn't treated as a valid document to convene an emergent meeting.

The Pakistan government's statement on X didn't specify any reason for the decision. "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan Cricket Team to participate in the ICC World T20 2026, however, the Pakistan Cricket Team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February 2026 against India," the post on Sunday evening said.

Sanctions to be imposed on the PCB, if they stick to their decision to not play against India, have to be cleared by the ICC board. The board comprises 16 members



— 12 full members and three Associate nations, besides the ICC chair Jay Shah. Chief executive Sanjog Gupta also attends the board meetings, but he doesn't have any vote.

The ICC had issued a strongly-worded statement late on Sunday itself saying it "expects the PCB to explore a mutually acceptable resolution, which protects the interests of all stakeholders," and won't allow selective participation.

"While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule.

"ICC tournaments are built on sporting integrity, competitiveness, consistency and fairness, and selective participation undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions."

The Pakistan squad landed in Colombo on Monday afternoon and will play their first match against the Netherlands on Saturday.If Pakistan end up not playing the match against India, they are likely to face strong sanctions from the ICC, which could include a suspension.

Several stakeholders, including the broadcasters, are staring at a huge loss since the lucrative fixture generates huge revenue. The broadcaster pays ₹138.70 crore approximately for a World Cup match. The BCCI though is not reading much into it and has already made arrangements for the team to fly to Colombo after their match in New Delhi on February 12.

Thakur, Jaiswal back for Mumbai's Ranji quarter-final against Karnataka

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 3 February: Shardul Thakur will be back as captain and Yashasvi Jaiswal as opener for Mumbai's Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Karnataka starting February 6.The pair had not played the second half of the Ranji Trophy, which restarted after the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy. Thakur captained Mumbai in the October-November leg while Jaiswal was playing the multi-format series against South Africa.

Mumbai qualified into the quarterfinals comfortably with 33 points, the highest in Group D and the second-highest among all teams. They won four, drew three and lost none. They were being led by Siddhesh Lad, who has scored five centuries this season, in Thakur's absence. Mumbai, as group toppers, have home advantage at the Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai. Karnataka, their opponents, qualified as runner-up of Group B on the last day of the league stage. They are being led by an in-form Devdutt Padikkal. Mumbai are chasing a 43rd Ranji Trophy title, having last won in 2023-24. Karnataka, the competition's second-most successful team, are looking for a ninth.

Left-handed opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal will play for Mumbai in their Ranji Trophy 2025-26 quarterfinal match. 42-time Ranji champions Mumbai are scheduled to take on Karnataka in the



fourth quarterfinal of the ongoing Ranji Trophy season from February 6 to 9. 24-year-old Jaiswal, who is India's highest-ranked Test batter, is not part of India's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 squad. He last played a competitive match on January 6, 2026, for Mumbai in the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025-26 against Himachal Pradesh in Jaipur. Back from a long injury layoff, Shardul Thakur will lead Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Karnataka, with Yashasvi Jaiswal named in the 16-member squad.

Jaiswal, who missed the final two group-stage fixtures, had informed the Mumbai Cricket Association of his availability for the knockout phase. The Sanjay Patil-led selection committee subsequently included the India opener in the squad. Mumbai's fast-bowling attack looks formidable, featuring Tushar Deshpande, Omkar Tarmale and Mohit Avasthi, and will be further strengthened by Thakur's return. Mumbai will enjoy home conditions. The batting unit will be led by Siddhesh Lad, the team's leading run-scorer this season. Lad has amassed 737 runs from nine innings, including five centuries, and will have support from Sarfaraz Khan, Musheer Khan and Jaiswal. Mumbai was without Jaiswal for a large part of the season due to international commitments and a bout of acute gastroenteritis, which also kept him out of the early stages of the Vijay Hazare Trophy. With the Wankhede Stadium set to host T20 World Cup matches from February 7, the quarterfinal will be played at the MCA-BKC ground from February 6 to 10.

Skipper Shardul Thakur and India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal on Monday returned to the Mumbai squad for the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Karnataka to be played here from February 6. Mumbai had topped the Elite Group D with four wins and three draws while Karnataka made it to the last eight with a thrilling victory against Punjab in their Group A match. The quarterfinal between Mumbai and Karnataka will be played at the MCA-BKC Ground here from February 6 to 10 as the iconic Wankhede Stadium will be hosting the T20 World Cup matches from February 7. It will be a second appearance for Jaiswal for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy this season after he played in the clash against Rajasthan in the first round.

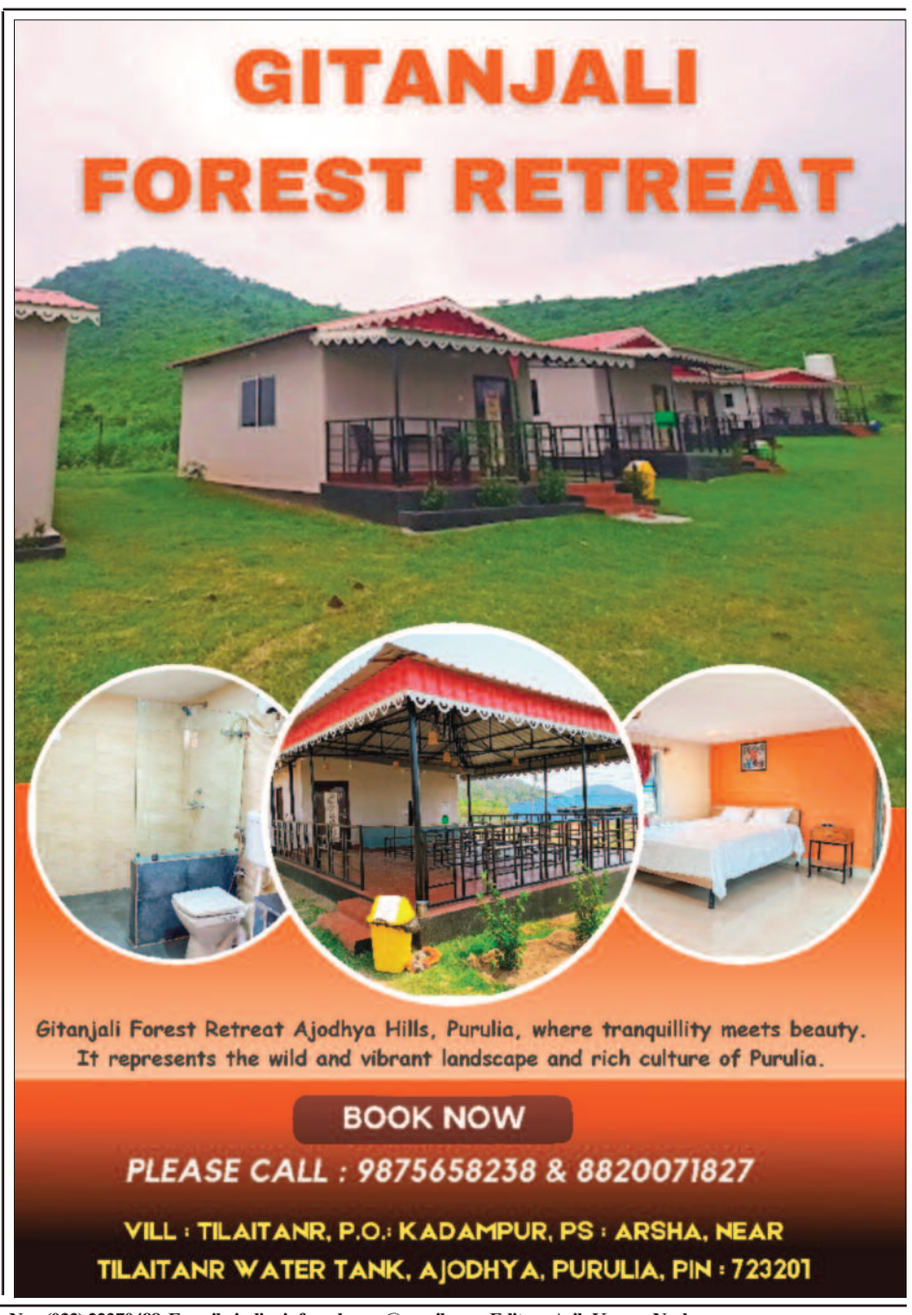
Transfer rumors, news: Could Cristiano Ronaldo return to Manchester United?

Staff Reporter, Riyadh, 3 February: - Interest in Cristiano Ronaldo is already heating up in Europe and MLS, according to TEAMtalk. Ronaldo, 40, refused to play for Al Nassr in the Saudi Pro League side's 1-0 win over Al Riyadh, as sources told ESPN he is unhappy about the way the league conducted the Karim Benzema transfer to Al Hilal. The Manchester Evening News has linked the Portugal international with a return to Manchester United, while several other big clubs in Europe are willing to reshape their sporting projects to sign him. - Arsenal, Manchester City and Chelsea are all interested in Newcastle United midfielder Sandro Tonali, according to The Sun. Mikel Arteta is a big admirer of the Italy international and wants to pair him with Declan Rice in the Gunners' midfield. The Gunners were even alerted to a possible move on deadline day, but it went nowhere. City boss Pep Guardiola is also a big fan of the 25-year-old and his Magpies teammate Tino Livramento, while Chelsea are monitoring Tonali. However, he and his wife are reported to be happy in the North East and he isn't actively looking for an exit. - Marcus Rashford has no intention of returning to Manchester United when his loan spell at Barcelona expires this summer, according to The Mirror. The Blaugrana have an option to permanently sign him for €30 million and the 28-year-old wants his future sorted before the 2026 World Cup begins. United's interim head coach Michael Carrick would try to persuade the Red Devils academy graduate to stay if he becomes head coach full-time, but



Rashford has already told Barca that he wants to stay at Camp Nou and would find another club instead of returning to Old Trafford if an agreement isn't reached. - Bayern Munich are in advanced talks to sign Charlotte FC and U.S. U20 winger Nimfasha Berchimas, as reported by The Athletic. The two clubs didn't have to worry about Germany's transfer deadline as they are working on a pre-agreed deal for the summer, as Berchimas only turns 18 at the end of this month so can't be registered for a German club yet.

There could be another U.S. youth international moving to Europe in the summer, as Tom Bogert reports that Aston Villa and Atletico Madrid are showing a strong interest in 18-year-old Real Salt Lake striker Zavier Gozo. - Juventus will make a move to sign Randal Kolo Muani from Paris Saint-Germain in the summer after the striker stayed on loan at Tottenham Hotspur this January, as reported by Calciomercato. Juve tried until the very end of the transfer window to bring back the 27-year-old, who also wanted a return to the Serie A giants, but Spurs insisted on keeping the France international as they couldn't find an affordable alternative. It will take at least €50 million to sign him permanently, but Juve will need to seal a departure for Loïs Openda to meet that figure. The Saudi Pro League witnessed an unprecedented standoff as Cristiano Ronaldo opted to sit out of Al Nassr's 1-0 victory against Al Riyadh on Monday. The absence of the top goalscorer in the world wasn't down to injury or workload but rather the transfer of his former Real Madrid teammate, Karim Benzema, from Al Ittihad to Al Nassr. It has been reported that Ronaldo deliberately missed the match as a mark of protest against the league's hierarchy. Ronaldo's frustration is reportedly directed at the Public Investment Fund (PIF), the sovereign wealth fund that holds controlling stakes in Saudi Arabia's "Big Four" clubs. The Portuguese star is reportedly fuming with what he calls 'lack of competitive parity', specifically regarding the lavish reinforcements provided to Al Hilal. The fact that Al-Hilal, league leaders in the Saudi Pro League, successfully secured Benzema on a free transfer to bolster an already dominant squad featuring Darwin Nunez and Theo Hernandez, etc., says it all about the sort of transfer business that goes on in the league. Al Nassr, on the other hand, concluded their winter window on a quiet note, with the club only signing 21-year-old Iraqi midfielder Hayder Abdulkareem.



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