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Ajit Pawar's plane crashes during landing, Deputy Chief Minister Pawar and 6 others killed

Agency, Mumbai



Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar died in a plane crash that occurred on Wednesday morning in Baramati, Maharashtra. The accident happened during landing at Baramati airport. Pictures and videos from the accident site showed the aircraft completely damaged and burnt. A total of five people died in this accident. These include Ajit Pawar, his bodyguard Videep Jadhav, flight attendant Pinky Mali, pilot Captain Sumit Kapoor, and Captain Shambhavi Pathak. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated that the Learjet 45 (VT-SSK) aircraft crashed-landed at Baramati Airport this morning. There were five people on board the aircraft, including Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, two other people (a PSO and an attendant), and two crew members. According

to initial information, no one on board the aircraft survived the accident. It is being said that Ajit Pawar had four public meetings scheduled in Baramati on Wednesday in view of the Zilla Parishad elections. He had left Mumbai for Baramati to attend these programs. The plane crashed while it was in the process of landing in Baramati. The aircraft in which Ajit Pawar was traveling was a Bombardier Learjet-45. According to eyewitnesses, the plane was first seen descending, then suddenly became uncontrollable and crashed into the ground, followed by a loud explosion. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, while speaking to the media, said that he was deeply saddened by the news of the death of a grassroots leader, my friend and colleague, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, in a plane crash. I have lost a strong and kind-hearted friend. This is a personal loss for me, which can never be compensated. This incident is extremely painful for Maharashtra. I pay my heartfelt tribute to Ajitdada. We are all with him and the Nationalist Congress Party family in their grief. Ajit Pawar was born on July 22, 1959, in Deolali Pravara in Ahmednagar

Prime Minister and Home Minister express grief over the death of Maharashtra's Ajit Pawar

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have expressed their condolences on the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash that occurred this morning in Baramati, Maharashtra. Both leaders described him as a leader of the common people on the social media platform X. Sharing a picture with Ajit Pawar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he was deeply saddened by the plane crash in Baramati. He extended his condolences to all the families who lost their loved ones in the accident and prayed for strength and courage for them during this time of profound grief.

President, Gadkari, Kharge, Rahul Gandhi express grief over Ajit Pawar's death

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, along with several other leaders, have expressed grief over the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash in Baramati this morning. The leaders described it as an irreparable loss not only for Maharashtra but also for the country's politics. President Droupadi Murmu wrote on X that the news of the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and several others in a plane crash in Baramati is extremely saddening.

district. Popularly known as 'Dada' in political circles, Ajit Pawar was known for his straightforwardness and strong administrative abilities.

India's Message on Terrorism: Response Will Be Firm and Decisive: President

Agency, New Delhi

Addressing a joint session of Parliament on Wednesday, President Droupadi Murmu said that India has proven that it uses its power with responsibility and discretion. She said that the world witnessed the valor and prowess of the Indian Army during Operation Sindoora, and the government has given a clear message that any terrorist attack on India will be met with a firm and decisive response. Referring to the national heritage, the President said that the past year was memorable as a celebration of India's rapid development and heritage. Programs were organized across the country to mark the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram, and tributes were paid to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. She mentioned the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Patel, and the birth centenary celebrations of the Ujjwala Yojana.



of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika, saying that such events inspire national unity and the new generation. Emphasizing social justice, President Murmu said that Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a strong advocate of equality and social justice. The Constitution also inspires us to ensure that every citizen receives their full rights without discrimination. She said that the government is committed to true social justice, and as a result, more than 250 million people have been lifted out of poverty in the last decade. The President informed that four crore permanent houses have been built for the poor in the last ten years, of which 32 lakh houses were provided in the last year alone. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, tap water has been provided to 125 million households in five years. More than 100 million families have received LPG connections through the Ujjwala Yojana.

Brief News

Nature's terrifying fury in Sonamarg: Massive avalanche hits near hotel area



Srinagar: A terrifying video of an avalanche from Sonamarg, a famous tourist destination in Jammu and Kashmir, has surfaced, raising concerns about safety and disaster management. A massive avalanche suddenly cascaded down the mountains above the hotel zone in Sonamarg, located in the Ganderbal district of central Kashmir. The entire incident was captured on a CCTV camera, showing how the cloud of snow engulfed the entire area within seconds. The video footage clearly shows a large amount of snow rapidly sliding down from the high mountain peaks. In just a few moments, it spreads like a giant white cloud, causing panic in the surrounding areas. Fortunately, there have been no reports of any loss of life or property in this terrifying incident. The local administration and disaster management agencies breathed a sigh of relief,

Supreme Court takes a tough stance on acid attacks, says government should amend laws for stricter punishment and property confiscation

New Delhi: Expressing deep concern over the increasing incidents of acid attacks in the country, the Supreme Court has strongly advocated for extraordinary punitive measures against the perpetrators. The apex court on Tuesday clearly suggested to the central government that it seriously consider amending the law to prevent heinous crimes like acid attacks. The court believes that these cases should be dealt with as strictly as dowry death cases, where the burden of proving innocence rests with the accused. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice R Mahadevan, and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made these observations while hearing a public interest litigation. The court said that unless the punishment is painful for the accused, it will be difficult to curb such crimes in society. The bench emphatically stated that there should be no room for the concept of reformatory punishment in such crimes. The court questioned why the property of such criminals cannot be confiscated.

Ayurveda needs to increase the use of modern technology and AI: PM

Agency, New Delhi

President's address clearly outlines India's development journey and future direction: Prime Minister



New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday praised the President's address to both Houses of Parliament at the start of the Budget Session, calling it comprehensive, inspiring, and visionary. The President's address reflects India's remarkable development journey in recent years and also sets a clear direction for the future. The Prime Minister said on the social media platform 'X' that the President's address holds special significance in parliamentary traditions as it outlines the policy resolutions that will guide the country's development journey in the coming months. He expressed confidence that the address will prove to be a guiding light in taking the country forward on the path of progress.

said that Ayurveda has never been limited to any one era or region, but has always shown the way to understand life, maintain balance, and establish harmony with nature in every age. He informed that today Arya Vaidya Sala manufactures more than 600 Ayurvedic medicines and its hospitals in India and abroad are treating patients from more than 60 countries.

Amendments to Uniform Consent Guidelines Notified Under Air and Water Pollution Control Laws

Agency, New Delhi



The Central Government has made significant amendments to the uniform consent guidelines notified under the air and water pollution control laws. These changes aim to simplify the process of obtaining environmental clearances for industries, reduce delays, and strengthen environmental compliance. This amendment will bring uniformity to the process of granting, rejecting, or revoking Consent to Establish (CTE) and Consent to Operate (CTO) guidelines issued last year. These guidelines ensure uniformity, transparency, and accountability

also reduced the approval timeline for red category industries from 120 days to 90 days. In addition, environmental auditors registered under the Environmental Audit Rules, 2025, have also been permitted to conduct inspections and compliance verification. The Ministry stated that, providing relief to micro and small industries, the Consent to Establish will be deemed approved based on a self-certified application for units located in notified industrial areas. The revised guidelines now prioritize site-specific environmental assessments instead of strict standards such as minimum distance criteria.

Debate on Constitutional Validity of UGC's Equality Regulations, Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Plea

Agency, New Delhi

Rahul Diwan, mentioned the petition before Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant. Yadav urged the court to hear the matter urgently, arguing that the implementation of the regulations would lead to discrimination and that the issue required immediate judicial scrutiny. Responding to his request, Chief Justice Kant agreed to consider fixing an early date for the hearing and asked



the lawyers to rectify any defects in the petition so that the matter could be listed. Diwan's petition is one of at least three challenges to the 2026 regulations that have reached the Supreme Court. These regulations were notified by the UGC on January 13, replacing the 2012 framework. One of the other petitions has been filed by Mrityunjay Tiwari, a post-doctoral researcher at Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh. Another petition was filed on Tuesday morning by advocate Vineet Jindal. The court proceedings took place against the backdrop of a wider national debate on the new equality regulations notified by the UGC. These regulations mandate the establishment of Equal Opportunity Centres and Equality Committees in universities, colleges, and recognized institutions to address discrimination complaints and promote inclusion.

Both Houses of Parliament adjourned after paying tribute to deceased former members and the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Agency, New Delhi

After the conclusion of the President's address on Wednesday, both Houses of Parliament adjourned for the day after paying tribute to deceased former members and the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh. In the Lok Sabha, tribute was also paid to former member and Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ajit Pawar. After placing a copy of the President's address in both Houses, a condolence message was read out. At the



beginning of the Lok Sabha proceedings, condolences were expressed on the death of Mahashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who died in a plane crash, and then tributes were paid to the deceased former members, Shalini Patil, Bhanu Prakash, Satyendra Nath Brahma, Choudhury, Suresh Kalmadi, and Kabindra Purkayasha. Later, tribute was paid to the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Khaleda Zia. After the tributes were paid, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned the House proceedings until 11 am on Thursday.

India has reached the top in global politics, a development that Europe welcomes: Von der Leyen

Agency, New Delhi

New Delhi: A dinner was hosted at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday in honor of European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. During the dinner, Ursula von der Leyen said that India has reached the top in global politics, a development that Europe welcomes. President Droupadi Murmu said that in this era of global uncertainty, India and Europe share similar thoughts and perspectives. We believe that global challenges can only be addressed through collective efforts. Several dignitaries, including Prime Minister Modi, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, attended the special dinner.



Surprised US calls agreement a major benefit for India

New Delhi: The long-awaited free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) has created a new stir on the global stage. Reacting to this historic deal, the US has called it extremely beneficial for India. US representative Greer said in his official statement that India has gained significantly from this agreement. According to him, this agreement will not only give India wider access to European markets, but will also create new and greater opportunities for immigration and employment in Europe for Indian citizens. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and European Council President António Luis Santos da Costa formally announced the completion of the agreement during a joint press briefing in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Banka Hosts One-Day Job Fair, 475 Candidates Provisionally Selected

Correspondent.DN

Banka: A one-day job fair and career guidance event was successfully organized by the District Employment Exchange, Banka, under the Department of Youth, Employment and Skill Development. The main objective of this fair was to provide employment opportunities to candidates in the private sector. The job fair was inaugurated by Mr. Upendra Singh, Deputy Development Commissioner, Banka. Mr. Shambhu Nath Sudhakar, Deputy Director (Employment), Bhagalpur Division, Bhagalpur, Mr. Mohd. Tausif Qayam, Assistant Director (Employment), Sub-Regional Employment Exchange, Bhagalpur, the District Planning Officer,



Banka, and the Principal of Government ITI, Banka, were present at the job fair. The Deputy Development Commissioner stated that

hundreds of employment opportunities are being created in the district through this job fair. The Deputy Director (Employment) expressed his pleasure at the availability of local employment opportunities at the job fair. 25 certificates were distributed under the Skilled Youth Program during the fair. A total of 25 employers from the private sector participated in the job fair with more than 1000 vacancies. A total of 1386 resumes were received by the employers, out of which 475 candidates were provisionally selected. Additionally, 768 candidates received guidance from a total of 7 government stalls. The job fair was conducted by Mr. Aditya Prakash, District Employment Officer, Banka, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, Young Professional, Banka, the District Skill Manager, Banka, and the staff of the District Employment Exchange, Banka.

Ensure 100% Discharge of Electoral Responsibilities by All Departments: Deputy Commissioner

Correspondent.DN

Godda: A review meeting was convened by the District Magistrate-cum-Deputy Commissioner, Godda, Ms. Anjali Yadav, IAS, with senior officers and nodal officers of various departments at the Collectorate auditorium to ensure the successful conduct of the Municipal (General) Elections 2026.* During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner discussed in detail all the processes related to nomination, scrutiny, withdrawal of nominations, symbol allocation, polling, and counting of votes. She also directed all departments

- District administration active regarding Municipal (General) Elections 2026.
- Ensure 100% discharge of electoral responsibilities: Deputy Commissioner
- Strictly adhere to the guidelines of the Election Commission: Deputy Commissioner

to ensure the correct, timely, and error-free execution of their respective electoral responsibilities. She stated that negligence at any level in the election process will not be tolerated. The Deputy



Commissioner instructed the senior/nodal officers of all departments to coordinate with their subordinate officers and staff, share the election work plan, and ensure a clear division of responsibilities. She also directed all departments to work in a fully active

Bhagalpur Gears Up for Intermediate Annual Exam 2026, 59 Centers Finalized

Correspondent.DN

Bhagalpur: A meeting regarding the Intermediate Annual Theory Examination 2026 was held at the Review Building in Bhagalpur, chaired by District Magistrate Dr. Nawal Kishore Chaudhary, IAS. The meeting was held with all center superintendents and magistrates to ensure the successful conduct of the Intermediate Annual Theory Examination-2026, which will be held from February 2nd to February 13th, 2026. A total of 59 examination centers have been set up in Bhagalpur district. 40 centers are in the Sadar subdivision, 10 in the Naugachhia subdivision, and 9 in the Kalahgaon subdivision. Candidates will be allowed entry until 9:00 AM for the first shift and until 1:30 PM for the



second shift. Entry will be prohibited after these times.

No one except the center superintendent will be allowed to carry a mobile phone at the examination center. The use of photocopy machines, copiers, duplicators, etc., will be prohibited at the examination center during the examination period. Also, all gates other than the main entrance, such as side gates or additional gates located at the back

of the examination center, will be kept closed from 8:00 AM until the end of the examination, and movement through these gates will be restricted. All candidates appearing for the examination will be prohibited from wearing shoes and socks at the examination center during the examination period. Candidates will only be allowed to enter the examination center wearing slippers. During the Intermediate

Examination 2026, a maximum of two candidates will be seated on one bench in the examination hall. The control room for the Intermediate Examination 2026 will be operational at the meeting hall located in the Sub-Divisional Office, Sadar Bhagalpur premises (Telephone number - 0641-2402082).

The officer in charge of the District Control Room, Ms. Bandana Kumari, Sub-Divisional Welfare Officer, Bhagalpur, Mobile No. 8210396477, will be in senior charge and will work under her direction. Devraj Kumar, Instructor at ITI, Bhagalpur, Mobile: 7739144987, and Mr. Shashi Kumar, Senior Cooperative Extension Officer, Bhagalpur, Mobile: 8877977265, will be working on this project.

Commissioner approves construction of PCC road and drain from Mujahidpur Ultapul to Jarlahee Road via Pakiza Chowk

Correspondent.DN

Bhagalpur: The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Urban Development Scheme, an ambitious scheme launched by the Urban Development and Housing Department of the Government of Bihar, aims to transform the urban areas of the state and improve the living standards of its citizens. For the financial year 2025-26, the Divisional Commissioner of Bhagalpur, Mr. Avnish Kumar Singh, IAS, has granted administrative approval for a project worth 2,29,47,700/- (Two crore twenty-nine lakh forty-seven thousand seven



hundred rupees) for the construction of a PCC road and drain from Mujahidpur Ultapul to Jarlahee Road via Pakiza Chowk in Ward No. 40 of the Bhagalpur Municipal Corporation area, for the improvement of basic infrastructure. The Divisional Commissioner of Bhagalpur has directed the executing

Regarding the Municipal (General) Elections 2026, the District Election Officer (Municipality) cum Deputy Commissioner of Jamtara, Mr. Ravi Anand, IAS, held a press conference and informed the print and electronic media representatives of the district about the election process

Correspondent.DN

Jamtara: The Model Code of Conduct has been implemented with immediate effect in both municipal areas of the district following the announcement of the elections by the State Election Commission. The District Administration, Jamtara, is committed to conducting peaceful, fair, and fearless elections - Deputy Commissioner. Voting will be held on February 23rd for both municipal bodies of the district, Mihijam and Jamtara; counting of votes will be held on February 27th. The election process will be conducted using ballot papers; light pink ballot papers will be used for the Chairman's post and white ballot papers for the Ward Councillors. A press conference was organized in the Collectorate auditorium under the chairmanship of the District Election Officer (Municipality) cum Deputy Commissioner of Jamtara, Mr. Ravi Anand, IAS, to inform the print and electronic media representatives of the district about the election process for the Municipal (General) Elections 2026. During the press conference, the District Election Officer (Municipality), Mr. Ravi Anand, IAS, provided detailed information about the election schedule for the Municipal (General) Elections 2026 to all media



representatives. He said that the election schedule was released yesterday, January 27th, by the State Election Commission, and the Model Code of Conduct is effective immediately in both the Jamtara Nagar Panchayat and Mihijam Nagar Parishad areas of the district. In the district, the voting process will be conducted at 39 polling stations for a total of 20 wards of Mihijam Nagar Parishad (Category B), where a total of 37056 voters (18611 men, 18442 women, and 3 third gender) will exercise their right to vote. Similarly, the voting process will be conducted at 28 polling stations for a total of 16 wards of Jamtara Nagar Panchayat, where a total of 26467 voters (13165 men and 13302 women) will exercise their right to vote. The Deputy Commissioner said that all preparations have been completed to conduct the municipal general elections in the district in a fair, fearless, and peaceful environment. The Deputy Commissioner briefed the media on the election process. Addressing the press conference, the Deputy Commissioner said that according to the election schedule issued by the State Election Commission, the election notification was published today, January 28, 2026, at 11:00 AM. The dates for filing nominations are from January 29, 2026 (Thursday) to February 4, 2026 (Wednesday), on every working day

(excluding holidays) from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The scrutiny of nominations will be conducted on February 5, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is February 6, 2026, while the date for allocation of election symbols is February 7, 2026. The polling date is February 23, 2026 (from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM), and the counting of votes will begin on February 27, 2026, at 8:00 AM. Direct election for the posts of Chairman and Ward Councilor on a non-party basis, and indirect election for the post of Vice-Chairman District Election Officer (Municipality) Mr. Ravi Anand, IAS, further stated that the direct election for the posts of Chairman and Ward Councilor in the municipal body will be held on a non-party basis, and the election for the post of Vice-Chairman (unreserved) will be indirect. He informed that the post of Chairman for Mihijam Municipal Council (Category B) and Jamtara Nagar Panchayat is reserved for women. Voters will be able to cast their votes using voter ID cards issued by the Election Commission of India and alternative documents. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the final voter list for the municipal elections has been prepared by dividing the voter list, which was finalized on August 27, 2024 (with July 1, 2024)

mode. During the meeting, instructions were given to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the State Election Commission. She said that conducting fair, transparent, and peaceful elections is the top priority of the district administration. The meeting was attended by Deputy Development Commissioner Mr. Deepak Kumar Dubey, IAS, Additional Collector, Godda Ms. Premlata Murmu, Deputy Election Officer-cum-Sub-Divisional Officer Godda Mr. Baidyanath Oraon, District Nazir-cum-District Supply Officer Mr. Avinash Purnendu, District Transport Officer, Godda Ms. Kanchan Kumari Bhudolia, Municipal Administrator-cum-District Public Relations Officer Mr. Arvind Prasad Agarwal, Block Development Officer of Sadar Block Mr. Dayanand Jaiswal, Block Development Officers of the concerned blocks, and other officers. that the NOTA (None of the Above) option is not available in this election. 13 Committees Have Been Formed The Deputy Commissioner said that a total of 13 committees have been formed for the successful conduct of the municipal general elections, namely Personnel, Ballot Papers and Ballot Boxes, Materials, Transport, Law and Order and Code of Conduct, Observers, Training, Media, Election Expenditure Monitoring, Information Technology, Control Room, Helpline Public Grievance and Municipal Election Committee. Senior, nodal and in-charge officers and personnel have been deputed to these committees. Information Provided on Returning Officers for Each Municipality During the press conference, the Deputy Commissioner informed that for the post of Chairman and Ward Councillor's post, it is Rs. 6 lakh and for the Ward Councillor's post, it is Rs. 1.5 lakh. Similarly, in Jamtara Nagar Panchayat, the expenditure limit for the Chairman's post is Rs. 5 lakh and for the Ward Councillor's post, it is Rs. 1 lakh. He also mentioned that the Returning Officer, Jamtara, has been nominated as the Assistant Returning Officer and Mr. Satyaprakash, District Land Acquisition Officer, has been nominated as the Assistant Returning Officer. In addition, for Ward Councillors (Ward No. 09 to 16), Mr. Prem Kumar Das, Block Development Officer, Fathapur, has been nominated as the Returning Officer and Mr. Vimal Kumar, Assistant Engineer, Special Division, has been nominated as the Assistant Returning Officer. For the post of Chairman of Jamtara Nagar Panchayat will be held in the Additional Collector's office (ground floor of the Collectorate building), while the nomination process for the Ward Councilor posts will be held in the hall located to the left of the NIC office (first floor of the Collectorate). Similarly, the nomination process for the post of Chairman of Mihijam Nagar Parishad will be held in the office of the Deputy Election Officer, Jamtara (ground floor of the Collectorate building). The nomination process for Ward Councilors of Ward Numbers 01 to 07 will be held in the office of the District Land Acquisition Officer Mr. Satyaprakash, District Supply Officer Mr. Qayyum Ansari, Assistant Returning Officer cum Block Development Officer, and the nomination process for

District Election Officer-cum-Deputy Commissioner Mrs. R. Ronita and Superintendent of Police Mr. Manish Toppo jointly held a press conference to share complete information with the media regarding the Municipal (General) Elections – 2026

Khunti: A joint press conference was organized today at the Collectorate auditorium by District Election Officer-cum-Deputy Commissioner Mrs. R. Ronita and Superintendent of Police Mr. Manish Toppo regarding the Municipal (General) Elections – 2026. During the press conference, all necessary information related to the elections was shared with media representatives. On this occasion, District Election Officer-cum-Deputy Commissioner Mrs. R. Ronita informed that the State Election Commission, Jharkhand, Ranchi, has announced the election schedule for the Municipal (General) Elections – 2026 on January 27, 2026. According to the announced schedule, various dates have been fixed for the election process, including nomination filing, dates for scrutiny of nominations (11:00 AM to 3:00 PM): February 5, 2026 (Thursday) Date for withdrawal of candidature (11:00 AM to 3:00 PM): February 6, 2026 (Friday) Date for allocation of election symbols (11:00 AM to 3:00 PM): February 7, 2026 (Saturday) Date on which polling will be held, if necessary (7:00 AM to 5:00 PM): February

EUreka! India seals landmark trade deal

New Delhi, Agency: India and the European Union on Tuesday agreed to significantly deepen their strategic partnership, concluding the negotiations on the long-awaited Free Trade Agreement and signing the first-ever overarching Security and Defence Partnership pact at the 16th India-EU Summit in New Delhi.

The summit capped a high-profile state visit by European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who were chief guests at India's 77th Republic Day celebrations - the first time EU leaders have been accorded the honour. They were accompanied by a senior delegation, including EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic.

Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, co-chairing the summit with Costa and von der Leyen, said the outcomes reflected the "maturity and ambition" of the India-EU ties, rooted in shared democratic values and a common commitment to a rules-based international order.

"...India has concluded the largest FTA in its history. It is a happy coincidence that on

the 27th day of the month, India is entering into this FTA with the 27-member states of the European Union," Modi said during a joint press conference. He said this historic agreement would facilitate easier access for our farmers and small enterprises to European markets, create new opportunities in manufacturing, and further strengthen

cooperation across our services sectors. The centrepiece of the summit was the successful conclusion of negotiations on the India-EU FTA, described by both sides as a historic milestone. The deal is expected to boost bilateral trade and investment, strengthen diversified supply chains and support sustainable and inclusive growth at a time of global economic uncertainty.

Alongside the FTA, the two sides signed an India-EU Security and Defence Partnership pact, their first comprehensive framework covering cooperation in maritime security, defence industry and technology, cyber and hybrid threats, space and counter-terrorism. Negotiations were also launched on the Security of Information Agreement to facilitate the exchange of classified information.

Nipah under control in Bengal, says Centre as Thailand, Nepal step up screening

NEW DELHI, Agency: The Union health ministry on Tuesday clarified that the Nipah virus situation in West Bengal is under control, with only two confirmed cases reported since December last year, even as Thailand and Nepal tightened health screening of passengers arriving from India as a precautionary measure. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said reports from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) show no additional Nipah Virus Disease cases beyond the two confirmed infections.

Despite the limited case count, neighbouring countries have moved to heighten vigilance. Thailand has begun screening passengers at three international airports receiving flights from West Bengal, while Nepal has initiated checks at Kathmandu airport and major land border points with India.



Nipah virus is a rare but highly fatal zoonotic infection that spreads from animals to humans and through close human contact. Naturally harboured by fruit bats (flying foxes), the virus can cause symptoms ranging from fever and respiratory illness to acute encephalitis, with a case fatality rate of 40-75%. There is no specific antiviral treatment or licensed vaccine, making early detection and strict infection control critical. The World Health Organization classifies Nipah as a priority pathogen due to its epidemic potential.

A century in uniform: Chandigarh girl carries 4 generations of Army service to Kartavya Path

CHANDIGARH, Agency

A fourth-generation Army officer from Chandigarh, carrying a family legacy that stretches from the cavalry of the British Indian Army to post-Independence gallantry and modern-day integrated warfare, was among the commanding faces of this year's Republic Day parade. Captain Samira Zeenat Buttar, from Chandigarh's Sector 36 led the Integrated Operational Centre tableau themed on Operation Sindoos on Kartavya Path, a role that brought together her recent commissioning, a rare multi-decorated military lineage, and a contemporary operational showcase at the national ceremony.

Commissioned into the

Indian Army in 2021, Captain Buttar represents a rare continuity of service across four generations. Her great-grandfather served with the 4th Hodson's Horse in the British Indian Army. Her grandfather, Brigadier Sampuran Singh, then a Lieutenant Colonel, earned

the uncommon distinction of being awarded both the Mahavir Chakra and the Vir Chakra for his role in the 1965 Indo-Pak war. He later raised the 19 Punjab Regiment and remained in service until he passed away in 1971 due to battle casualties sustained during the 1965 conflict.

The lineage continued with her father, Sarbjit Singh, an officer of the 18 Mechanised Infantry. Captain Buttar is the only child in the family and the fourth successive generation to wear the uniform.

She credits her early grounding in discipline to her schooling. "As a boarding school student, I knew no other way of life than discipline," Captain Buttar said. "Routine, structure and accountability were part of everyday life, and that shaped how I approached responsibility."

At the Republic Day parade, Captain Buttar led the Integrated Operational Centre tableau, which depicted coordinated planning and operational control.



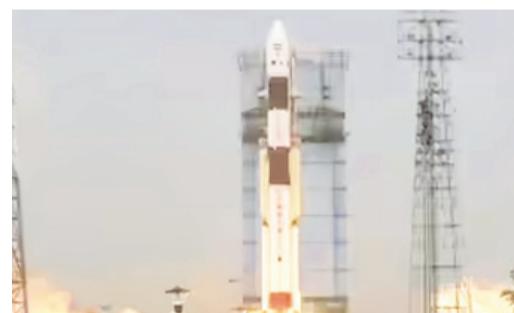
Why 2026 could be India's private space take-off year

BENGALURU, Agency: India was to ring in its 2026 space calendar with a launch that quietly captured the direction the sector is now taking. The PSLV-C62, carrying a clear private sector imprint, however, failed on Jan 12. Notwithstanding that setback, 2026 is still shaping up as the year when India's private sector can show results in orbit.

Just eight days after the PSLV mission, the country's first Earth Observation Satellite System (EOSS) under PPP saw a key milestone with the signing of a concession agreement that allows the winning consortium to finally begin work on ground, four months after it won the project from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE)

The agreement was between IN-SPACE and Allied Orbits - the special purpose vehicle (SPV) created by the consortium of Pixxel Space, Piersight Space, SatSure Analytics India, and Dhruva Space - at the former's office in Bengaluru.

TOI reported earlier in Aug 2025



that the Pixxel-led consortium had won the project through a "zero-bid". While the concession agreement was to be signed within three months, delay in processes saw it signed on Jan 20.

The project will create a constellation of 12 satellites, data from which will be used for applications ranging from climate change monitoring and disaster response to agriculture, infrastructure planning, maritime operations, and national security, where there are huge gaps so far as having eyes in the sky is concerned.

The consortium will implement the

project through Allied Orbits. "As part of the project, PierSight will build synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellites, Pixxel will build hyperspectral & high resolution optical satellite, SatSure will make multispectral satellites and Dhruva will develop ground stations," Gaurav Seth, Piersight CEO and co-founder told TOI.

Pixxel CEO Awais Ahmed told TOI that their firm was "implementing 60% of the project and investing the same amount to boot."

"Of the 12 satellites, seven will come from Pixxel, three from SatSure and two from PierSight," Awais said, adding that Pixxel will build two types of satellites: Five of them will be ultra high-res submeter satellite and two will be hyperspectral satellites.

Over the next four to five years, the consortium is expected to invest more than Rs 1,200 crore to create the 12-satellite constellation in low-Earth orbit. The project is designed to enhance India's data sovereignty and reduce dependence on foreign imagery.

Wet spell in north-west India to continue till Feb 2



NEW DELHI, Agency: An active western disturbance is prevailing over the region and a fresh western disturbance is expected from the night of January 30, which are likely to bring in light to moderate rainfall and snowfall at many places likely over the Western Himalayan region and the adjoining plains of north-west India till February 2.

Fairly widespread rain is expected at many places in Haryana and Punjab on January 28 and February 1, while on other

days, only a few places in these states may receive rain, according to the India Meteorological Department. Moderate rains were experienced at many places on January 27. Over the past 24 hours, light to moderate rain was experienced at some places in Punjab. These included Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Kapurthala districts to the north and Barnala, Sangrur and Mansa districts in the south. In Haryana, only Jind and Mahendergarh districts received rain.

Centre turns down Opposition's demand to restore MGNREGA

NEW DELHI, Agency: The government on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's demands for the restoration of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and discussion on the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls during the Budget session of Parliament.

At an all-party meeting held ahead of the session, Opposition parties demanded structured discussions on a range of issues, including the restoration of the UPA-era MGNREGA, the SIR and the alleged vote theft.

The government, however,



refused to accede to the Opposition's demands, making it clear that the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission

Parliament.:

According to sources, the government indicated in the meeting that the Budget was the primary agenda of the upcoming session and members were free to raise other issues during the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's address to both Houses of Parliament.

President Droupadi Murmu will address both the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday, the first day of the Budget session. On January 29, the economic survey will be released, while Parliament will not function on January 30. The Budget will be presented by Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. On February 2 and 3, the discussion on the motion of thanks will take place, while the Budget will be discussed on February 4 and 5. The first half of the Budget session will be from January 28 to February 13, while the second phase will take place from March 9 to April 2. There will be 30 sittings during the session.

The all-party meeting, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, was attended by several senior ministers, including Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, along with floor leaders of various political parties from

both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

Later, speaking to the media, Rijiju said as per parliamentary rules, discussions during the Budget session should primarily revolve around the Budget.

"Many members raised several issues during the meeting. We have noted them. We have informed members that various issues can be raised during the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address and also during the Budget discussions. Since this is a Budget session, the main focus will remain on the Budget," he said.

Chandigarh issues advisory after hoax bomb threats, urges schools to stay calm



Chandigarh, Agency:

Following a series of hoax bomb threats that led to the evacuation of several schools, the Chandigarh Administration on Wednesday issued an advisory urging educational institutions to remain calm and avoid creating unnecessary panic.

The administration directed all schools to immediately inform the police upon receiving any threatening email, message, or call, so that action can be taken in

accordance with established safety protocols. It cautioned schools against announcing holidays or shutting down operations without verified information, stating that such decisions could lead to avoidable anxiety among students, parents, and the general public.

Emphasising the need for vigilance, the advisory asked school authorities to continue regular academic activities while remaining alert to any suspicious communication.

Ashok Gautam

Friends! Gone are the days when Laila loved Majnu. Gone are the days when Heer loved Ranjha. Gone are the days when Shiri loved Farhad. Now Heer loves Facebook. Now Laila loves Facebook. Now Shiri loves Facebook. So why should Majnu needlessly fall in love with Laila? Instead of loving Laila, he too has fallen in love with Facebook. Farhad has abandoned Shiri and

started loving Facebook. Ranjha has also abandoned Heer and started loving Facebook. Now everyone knows that Facebook is the eternal love of today. Facebook is a ship; whoever boards it will cross the ocean. Last night, when my eyes and breathing became tired from munching on Facebook, I had to take a sleeping pill and pretend to be asleep. I had just left my phone aside when Indra Dev appeared before me! Exactly

the same as I have him hanging on the wall behind the senior officer's chair in the Water Power Department office. He refrained from sitting in front of the Sahib. Then, once again, I wondered whether the gods had created us or we had created them? Let it die friends! Who made whom? Why waste the precious time you have got in life on Facebook by getting into this mess. After all, since our birth,

everyone here is making each other. Instead of making their own future, the son is making the father. In the temple, the priest is making God instead of making his own life. Leaving aside the office work, the subordinate is making his boss. If you waste your precious time thinking about making someone else, then the precious time spent on roaming on Facebook will be wasted. Facebook life is priceless, it is not available again and

again. As soon as Indra Dev came in front of me, the first question he asked was, 'Brother! Has it snowed?' 'What do you mean?' 'What do you mean? I just saw thousands of Facebook statues. All of them are covered in snow!' 'If you saw it on Facebook, it must have snowed,' I said casually, and he was impressed by my patience and seriousness. 'But I'm not aware that I've ordered snow in your city.' 'Sir! These days, depart-

ment heads have no idea. They just sit in their chairs, dozing off, trying to fit their pieces here and there. And the people under them do the work.' 'What do you mean?' He was a little annoyed by the lie. What I mean, Sir, is that today's era is not the era of duty. It is the era of Facebook. Today's era is not the era of truth. It is the era of Facebook. Today's era is not the era of morality. It is the era of Facebook.

Editorial**'We the people of India...'**

India's 77th Republic Day has passed. A national festival, a national celebration, and a day of national pride have also passed. You must have seen on TV the parade on the 'Path of Duty' in the capital, Delhi, demonstrating India's strategic, cultural, artistic, spiritual, and territorial sovereignty. How diverse, vast, united, and indivisible is India! It was also practically 'Constitution Day,' because our Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950. This date is also historic, because on January 26, 1930, our revolutionary, freedom-fighting ancestors and the then Congress party declared 'Purna Swarajya.' The white, British government was warned that India now needed independence. Our Constitution, at 146,385 words, is the most comprehensive and comprehensive document ever written, and therefore unprecedented and unique. The Constitution grants equal rights to all citizens of the country. 'We the People of India...' includes the Ambanis, Adanis, and Tatas, as well as the humble, nameless, poor, common man. The Constitution cannot be violated, disregarded, or ignored. Doing so is a cognizable and punishable offense. The Constitution is the nation. The Constitution can be interpreted differently, as an exception, but its fundamental spirit and spirit remain the same: "We the people of India...the people of a sovereign, democratic, secular, socialist India..." Hypocrisy, opposition, and fanaticism could have been avoided on such a national festival. Attempts to mislead the nation by waving a pseudocopy of the Constitution have ultimately

Budget 2026-27 forecasts

Industry participants identified innovation and research and development, support for export-oriented sectors, job creation, and infrastructure development as top priorities for the upcoming budget. Those surveyed also identified geopolitical risks, job creation, and export competitiveness as key challenges for fiscal year 2027. The new tax regime for 2025-26 exempted annual income up to ₹12 lakh from tax, providing significant relief to the common man. Many announcements from the previous budget in the agricultural sector remain unimplemented. Last year, agriculture was described as the primary engine of the economy. The Kisan Credit Card loan limit was increased from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh...

Dr. Varinder Bhatia

On February 1st, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the 2026-27 Budget in Parliament, marking her ninth consecutive budget. Significantly, this time the budget will be presented on a Sunday, a rare occurrence in recent years. Last year, the government provided significant relief to the common people by exempting incomes up to ₹12 lakh from tax, and this time expectations are even higher. On the government's advice, the Honorable President has summoned both houses of Parliament for the Budget Session. This session will begin on January 28th and continue until April 2nd. The session will be held in two parts: the first from January 28th to February 13th, and the second from March 9th to April 2nd. In addition to the budget, several important discussions and the passage of several significant bills are expected during this period. She holds the record for presenting more budgets than other prominent figures. In previous budgets, she has taken numerous steps to strengthen the economy. Will this budget



also play a significant role in shaping the country's economic direction this time? The country's economic situation is expected to pick up momentum in 2026-27. The Union Budget for the fiscal year 2026-27 is expected to continue its emphasis on capital expenditure, fiscal discipline, and reforms that support economic growth. Job creation and skill development are likely to be given top priority in the upcoming Union Budget. The government's goal will be to create more employment opportunities for youth and strengthen skill training. The budget is also expected to focus on enhancing the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector. Support, especially for small and export-oriented industries, may be increased. The government is also likely to provide coordinated support to the agricultural sector to strengthen the rural economy. Furthermore, special attention may be given to promoting research and development and innovation, thereby supporting long-term economic growth. The budget is also expected to take significant steps to reduce regulations and further improve ease of doing business. Gross tax revenue is projected to grow at a rate of 9.6% in fiscal year 2027. This growth is roughly in line with the projected nominal GDP growth of 10.1%, but will be lower than previous averages. Pressure on indirect taxes is likely to persist. Nevertheless, increased excise duty rates on tobacco products, effective February 2026, are expected to provide some support to excise

duty collections. On the non-tax revenue front, higher dividends from the Reserve Bank of India have provided significant relief to the government in fiscal year 2026. Non-tax revenue is expected to exceed budget estimates in the current fiscal year. However, the dividend from the RBI is projected to decline to ₹2-2.5 lakh crore in FY2027, from ₹2.7 lakh crore in FY2026. Capital expenditure remains a key pillar of the central government's growth strategy. After registering a robust 28.2% growth in the first eight months of FY2026, capital expenditure is projected to increase by 10% to ₹12.3 lakh crore in FY2027. Expenditure quality is also expected to remain strong, with the ratio of capital expenditure to revenue expenditure projected to be around 0.3 in both FY2026 and 2027. However, revenue expenditure growth has been sluggish so far in FY2026, partly due to expenditure rationalization measures. It is estimated that revenue expenditure may be cut by approximately ₹1.7 lakh crore in FY2026, which will help contain the fiscal deficit.

India considers Central Asia as its 'extended neighbourhood', a gateway to Eurasia. In the 21st century, it is essential for a developing country like India to further strengthen its relations with Central Asian countries. Although India currently lacks direct geographical connectivity to this region, Himachal Pradesh has historically been connected to it. Even today, Himachal Pradesh's intellectuals and researchers can play a significant role in strengthening India-Central Asia relations. Furthermore, the strategic importance of Leh-Ladakh is immense, multifaceted, and strategically crucial for Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh not only serves as a strong and reliable logistical base for the Ladakh region, but also plays a crucial role in maintaining security, military movement, supply chains, and strategic balance in the sensitive border areas adjoining China and Pakistan. Geographically located in the Himalayan region, Himachal Pradesh serves as a natural protective shield on India's northwestern borders.

Youth participation in international relations

Dr. Karam Singh Thakur

Ironically, the number of high-level international studies centers in Himachal Pradesh is limited, and even these centers are not sufficiently developing the ideological and diplomatic thinking that would be helpful in policymaking in accordance with the changing global geopolitical landscape. However, it is an undeniable truth that global geopolitical events directly impact not just countries but also their states. In the context of a small, mountainous state like Himachal Pradesh, there is a prevalent perception that its youth are confined to their villages, streets, or towns. The primary reason behind this is that the state lacks a strong ideological or academic institution dedicated to high-level study and research in political science and international relations. Although Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, and Himachal Pradesh Central University, Dharamshala, have departments of political science, they have yet to produce

notable researchers or analysts in the field of international politics and global diplomacy. Currently, the Himachal Pradesh government, with the slogan of "system change," is establishing several new educational, economic, and administrative dimensions in the state, which are important steps towards realizing the vision of a self-reliant Himachal. Establishing a new high-level Department of Political Science and International Relations at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University, Mandi, could prove extremely beneficial not only for the state but also for the nation. By placing a special emphasis on the study of soft power, this center could work to understand the cultural, social, and ideological capabilities of Himachal Pradesh and India and elevate them to the policy-making level. While hard power is primarily based on economic and military resources, in this era of information technology, nations and states can also exert their effective presence through soft power. The concept of an independent and strong nation is possible only through the balanced use of hard power and soft power, which is now called "smart power." This is essential for maintaining one's dominance at the national and international levels and protecting the paramount interests of the people. If we consider the study of soft power in the context of Himachal Pradesh, the state's rich civilization, culture, traditions, and unique geographical location can establish its identity globally. Unfortunately, no institution in the state has yet been successful in conducting concrete research on Himachal's soft power and presenting authentic data to the government. No comprehensive and systematic study has been conducted in this area. The need of the hour is to provide Himachal Pradesh's soft power with a national and international platform. Furthermore, Himachal Pradesh shares international borders with China and Tibet through the Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts. India's relations with these regions have often been sensitive. While Himachal Pradesh relies on the central government for strategic policymaking, it must also develop its own clear policy and ideological perspective to provide the central government with realistic, ground-level information. No other state understands these border areas as closely as Himachal, yet the state lacks high-level researchers and a recognized institution to do so. History bears witness that Himachal Pradesh has been an important "corridor" for trade and cultural interaction between Central Asia and Tibet since ancient times. Despite the rugged Himalayan geography, Kullu, Shimla, and Kinnaur remained connected to the Silk Road network via the Hindustan-Tibet Route (Shipki La) and the Leh-Manali Route (Baralacha La). These routes not only facilitated the trade of pashmina, silk, and spices, but also facilitated the widespread dissemination of Buddhism and art. Even today, passes like Shipki La retain their historical significance for border trade and strategic purposes.

India's textiles exports to EU can quickly grow from USD 7 billion to USD 30-40 billion due to FTA: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, Agency: Indian textile industry is set to benefit from the India-EU FTA with exports and has potential to grow from USD 7 billion to USD 30-40 billion very quickly, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday, noting that this could generate 6-7 million jobs in the labour-intensive sector.

Goyal, who addressed a joint press conference here after India-EU FTA was finalized, said the two sides agreeing to key initiatives across domains is a statement of deep partnership and the strategic intent.

He referred to queries about Bangladesh having a huge lead over India in terms of garment exports to EU and said the neighbouring coun-

try, has zero duty access being a least developed country (LDC), and was able to capture USD 30 billion out of the USD 250 billion textiles market of the European Union.

He indicated that once the FTA comes into force, India will be on par with Bangladesh in terms of duties.

"First of all, in terms of job creation, most of us here are aware that the textile industry in India is the second largest job creator after agriculture, with nearly 40 million jobs being created in the textile sector. India exports about USD 7 billion worth of textiles and garments to the EU every year, and the duty rates are anywhere up to 12% on the goods that we export to the EU," he said.

"...the press used to always ask us, why is Bangladesh able to export



USD 30 billion worth of textiles, and India is such a small player? Because Bangladesh, being a least developed country, LDC, had zero duty access, and they were able to capture 30 bil-

lion out of the 250 billion dollar market of the European Union in textiles alone.

Now, we see before our eyes a potential to grow from 7 billion to at least 30-40 billion very quickly. If we add this kind of business only in the textile sector alone, we are looking at close to 6-7 million jobs coming into that sector.

So it has tremendous potential. The sectoral gains in various areas, particularly in the labour-intensive areas, give us tremendous potential for job creation in India," he added.

Piyush Goyal highlighted the unprecedented access Indian goods will have once the FTA is implemented.

"This agreement covers almost 99 per cent of the total exports that

are sent from India to the European Union and about 97 per cent plus of the total exports from EU to India," Goyal stated.

He noted that while India's current footprint in the European market is modest--accounting for roughly 1.5 per cent of goods imports and 2.5 per cent of services imports--the new deal provides a launchpad for exponential growth.

Goyal emphasised that areas with "very serious labour interest," such as textiles, apparels, home decor, and furnishing, will receive "duty free access from day one." While the agreement slashes tariffs, both sides are also addressing modern regulatory challenges, specifically the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Potential for India to emerge as global hub for chemicals manufacturing: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, Agency: The finalisation of the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is expected to transform India into a global manufacturing hub for the chemicals sector, according to Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal. The Minister highlighted that the strategic trade pact will unlock significant opportunities for domestic production and international supply chain integration.

Goyal shared details of a high-level meeting on X, stating, "Delighted to welcome and hold an in-depth discussion with the global board of @BASF, led by Dr. Markus Kamieth on the historic day of the #IndiaEUTradeDeal. We deliberated on the vast



opportunities India offers, driven by a robust and growing domestic market, a skilled workforce, and a young, aspirational nation. We also discussed our complementary strengths, BASF's operations in India, and the potential for India to emerge as a global hub for chemicals manufacturing." Apart from chemicals, the textile industry is pro-

jected to see a substantial surge in exports, with the potential to grow from the current USD 7 billion to approximately USD 30-40 billion. Goyal, who addressed a joint press conference here after India-EU FTA was finalised on Tuesday, said the two sides agreeing to key initiatives across domains is a statement of deep partnership

and the strategic intent.

He referred to queries about Bangladesh having a huge lead over India in terms of garment exports to EU and said the neighbouring country, has zero duty access being a least developed country (LDC), and was able to capture USD 30 billion out of the USD 250 billion textiles market of the European Union. He indicated that once the FTA comes into force, India will be on par with Bangladesh in terms of duties.

"First of all, in terms of job creation, most of us here are aware that the textile industry in India is the second largest job creator after agriculture, with nearly 40 million jobs being created in the textile sector.

Aiming self-reliance in 75% tech categories within 4 yrs: Vaishnaw

New Delhi, Agency: The government is aiming to make high-tech small chips of 3-nanometre nodes -- used in products like modern smartphones and computers -- by 2032, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

The minister said the government will focus on six categories of chips -- compute, radio frequency (RF), networking, power, sensor, and memory -- under the second phase of Design-Linked Incentive Scheme that will allow compmediaes in the country to have major control on developing 70-75 per cent technology products.

"The level of 2032 is to reach 3-nanometer chips manufacturing and design. Design, of course, we are doing even today. But manufacturing we should reach 3 nanometer," the minister said,



after meeting with 24 chip design firms that have been selected under the Design-Linked Incentive Scheme.

The minister said the government now intends to scale up the programme, with a target of enabling at least 50 fabless semiconductor compmediaes in the country in the next phase.

The DLI Scheme aims to accelerate domestic chip design capabilities by supporting startups and compmediaes across categories.

Teradyne Robotics to Host 'ElevateX 2026' in Bengaluru on February 10

Bengaluru, Agency: Universal Robots | Mobile Industrial Robots, part of Teradyne Robotics, has announced 'ElevateX 2026', its flagship industry engagement scheduled to take place on February 10, 2026, in Bengaluru.

Positioned as a strategic platform for industry dialogue and ecosystem collaboration, 'ElevateX 2026' will bring together senior industry leaders, technology experts, startups, system integrators, and media to examine the expanding role of collaborative automation across manufacturing, logistics, and emerging sectors. The event will focus on how flexible, scalable, and human-centric automation is reshaping productivity and competitiveness in modern industrial environments.

'ElevateX 2026' will feature leadership interactions, curated discussions, and live engagements offering practical insights into

real-world automation adoption. The agenda will also include focused round-table conversations with industry and startup leaders, fostering the exchange of perspectives on innovation, adoption challenges, and the future of automation-led growth within the broader Teradyne Robotics ecosystem. Automation is entering a decisive phase, where intelligence, flexibility, and human-centric design are increasingly influencing how businesses grow and compete. In India, the shift from pilot projects to scaled adoption is becoming evident across enterprises and startups alike.

ElevateX 2026 is being positioned as a platform to bring the ecosystem together - fostering the exchange of perspectives, challenging conventional thinking, and exploring how collaborative and intelligent automation can convert ambition into measurable, real-world impact.

EU trade pact to unlock USD 23 trillion market for Indian MSMEs: PHDCCI

New Delhi, Agency: The newly concluded India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is set to unlock significant business opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), marking a major transition in the country's economic landscape.

According to Ranjeet Mehta, CEO and Secretary General of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), the agreement provides Indian industries with a gateway to a massive USD 23 trillion economy.

The trade pact covers 27 countries within the European Union and is expected to act as a vital buffer for smaller businesses. Speaking to media, Dr Mehta said, "India-EU deal is a pivotal economic milestone. This opens the door for Indian industries to reach around a USD 23 trillion. The EU consists of around 27 countries. I think that this will open even bigger business opportunities for our



MSMEs, especially the MSMEs who have been hit hardest by the US tariffs." Key labour-intensive sectors are poised to lead the growth under this new framework. The agreement focuses on providing relief and expansion for traditional export categories that have recently faced global trade headwinds. "Sectors like textiles, apparel, gems and jewellery. These sectors will definitely be benefited by this. And this will also open up doors for employment opportunities in our country," Mehta stated. He noted that

the combined population of India and the EU exceeds 2 billion people, representing approximately 25 per cent of the world economy.

The deal also emphasises deep structural integration between the two regions, particularly in technical fields. Mehta explained that the partnership is "integrating in the global value chain, especially in sectors like logistics and manufacturing."

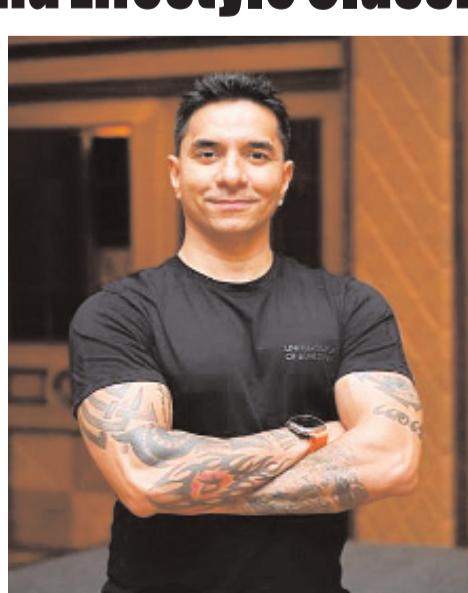
He further added that the industry expects substantial technological integration and increased investment into the Indian economy, describing the agreement as a "win-win situation for both the EU and India." Recent data from the PHDCCI SME index reinforces this optimistic outlook for the manufacturing sector. A survey conducted with industry members and manufacturing units indicates a robust trajectory for domestic production. "I think that this shows the robust growth in manufacturing.

Bharat Nutrition and Lifestyle Classroom by Team Luke Goes Live on Republic Day, Free for All

Mumbai, Agency: Luke Coutinho, Foundational Medicine and Lifestyle Expert, and Team Luke announced the release of the Bharat Nutrition and Lifestyle Classroom on the 26th of January, 2026. This is an exclusive Republic Day special, with a structured classroom session designed for children across India, free of cost and accessible to every home, school and community.

Created in support of the Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji's vision of a healthier Bharat, the classroom brings a simple belief to life: when lifestyle education reaches children at the grassroots level, it strengthens families, schools and the nation.

How it All Began: The Story



Behind the Bharat Nutrition and Lifestyle Initiatives

Reflecting on the origin of the initiative, Luke, a Wellness Champion for the Hon. Prime Minister's Fit India Movement, shares, "At the end of February 2025, after a long day of consults, I received a call from our Hon. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi Ji's office. It wasn't routine; we were asked to create a Bharat-inspired dish and lifestyle guidelines aligned with the national vision for a healthier Bharat. In that moment, it didn't feel like work. It was a responsibility." That call set in motion a clear national intent, amplified at NXT Conclave 2025, where Luke was invited by Shri Kartikeya Sharma, Hon. Member of the Rajya Sabha and Founder of the ITV Media Network, to create a Bharat-inspired dish and lifestyle framework aligned with the Hon. Prime Minister's vision. The NXT Conclave brought together 20+ global leaders and changemakers, and Luke was honoured to be the only keynote speaker in the health and wellness category, addressing the importance of lifestyle and preventive care for our nation.

On 28th February 2025, the Bharat Dish and Lifestyle Plan was unveiled at the NXT Conclave and later shared widely in English and 5+ Indian languages. Built to be simple, familiar, and deeply rooted in Bharat, it included millet khichdi and sattu kadhi, traditional foods, daily lifestyle foundations, and 100+ recipes, anchored by the message: Made in India. Heal in India.

During the same time, Luke also had the opportunity to visit Anganwadi centres and witness Poshan Abhiyaan at the grassroots. The 24-language Poshan Tracker reinforced a truth the team carried forward: lasting health begins early, with children.

From a Bharat-inspired Plan to a Nation-wide Education Mission

On 1st March 2025, Luke met our Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. His message to Luke was clear: "If we are to build a healthier Bharat, then we must begin with children and start at the very grassroots, because they are our future."

Beyond the boundary: Bangladesh's withdrawal and the price of defiance:

New Delhi, Agency: When principle collided with power, and a nation's cricket paid the cost.

There are moments in cricket when the scorecard becomes irrelevant, when the contest is no longer between bat and ball but between principle and power.

Bangladesh's decision to withdraw from the forthcoming World Cup is one such moment - a decision shaped

The story did not begin with a fixture list or a security advisory. It began quietly, with the removal of Mustafizur Rahman from the Kolkata Knight Riders squad. Official explanations were sparse, wrapped in familiar administrative language that concealed more than it clarified. In Dhaka, the decision was not interpreted as routine. It was seen as political, punitive, and symbolic. And in cricket, symbolism carries weight long after press statements have faded.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) responded not with diplomacy, but with defiance. It announced that their team would not play World Cup matches in India, citing concerns over player safety. Perhaps those concerns were genuinely held; perhaps they were also a shield for protest. The truth may lie somewhere in between. But the larger reality was clear: cricket had once again been drawn into a con-



flict not of its making. Pakistan soon aligned itself with Bangladesh's stance, offering support that was as political as it was fraternal. The issue was placed before the ICC board - that modern chamber where ideals often sit uncomfortably beside interests. When the vote was taken, only two boards supported Bangladesh's request for accommodation. The message was unambiguous: conform to the tournament structure, or withdraw. The BCB chose withdrawal.

The consequences of that choice will not be symbolic. They will be tangible and lasting. Financial loss will follow. Influence within ICC

corridors will diminish. Future tour negotiations will occur with reduced leverage. In the contemporary cricket economy, moral victories do not pay broadcast rights, and isolation carries a heavy cost.

There is an uncomfortable truth that must be acknowledged without evasion. India today is the financial heartbeat of world cricket. Its market sustains the game's prosperity; its commercial gravity shapes global decision-making. With financial power comes influence, and with influence comes compliance. Boards often align not out of conviction, but necessity. It is neither noble nor ignoble. It is simply the ecosystem in which modern cricket exists.

In such an environment, smaller boards must calculate with care. The BCB, in allowing emotion to override pragmatism, may have exposed its own cricketers to the harshest outcome. It is the player, not the administrator, who loses the World Cup stage. It is the supporter, not the politician, who loses the joy.

There is, too, a quiet historical irony in this episode. Asian cricket was once peripheral to power. Decisions were shaped in London and Melbourne with scant regard for voices from Karachi, Colombo, or Kolkata. Tours were dictated, influence rationed, and respect unevenly distributed.

Asian teams were often treated as guests in a game they played with equal passion.

That era has passed. The axis of power has shifted. The financial centre of gravity has moved eastward. The circle has turned full. Those once excluded sit at the centre of authority; those once dominant must now negotiate. But power, wherever it resides, rarely behaves gently.

The sadness here is not that Bangladesh chose to take a stand. Institutions must, at times, defend their dignity. The sadness lies in the absence of foresight. Courage, when unaccompanied by strategy, can become self-inflicted damage.

One cannot help but think

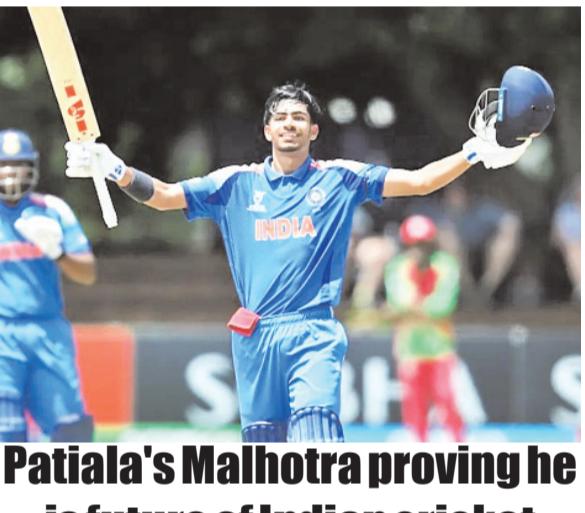
of the Bangladeshi cricketer - the young batter practicing late into the evening in Mirpur, dreaming of a World Cup hundred; the fast bowler pushing through exhaustion with hopes of hearing his anthem on the grandest stage. Those dreams do not belong to boardrooms. They belong to the field. And it is on that field that the loss will be most keenly felt.

Cricket has always claimed a higher calling. It speaks of spirit, honour, and the idea that the game is greater than any one player or nation. Yet it is also shaped by economics, influence, and governance. These realities coexist uneasily, colliding most visibly in moments such as this.

Bangladesh's absence will be recorded in administrative minutes and debated endlessly across studios and columns. But its deeper meaning lies elsewhere. It stands as a reminder that in modern cricket, principle must walk alongside pragmatism; and that protest without preparation can cost a generation its opportunity.

History will decide whether the BCB acted with courage or miscalculation. For now, the silence created by their absence will speak loudly enough.

And the game, as it always does, will move on - perhaps diminished, certainly reflective, but enduring.



Patiala's Malhotra proving he is future of Indian cricket

New Delhi, Agency: As Vihann Malhotra walked out to bat during the India-Zimbabwe match of the U19 World Cup in Bulawayo, back home in Patiala, his mother started to pray. As always, she could not watch her son play. His father, on his way back from Chandigarh, parked his car by the roadside and watched his young son score a brilliant century.

Vihann smashed 109 off 107 balls, with seven boundaries, and earned his second Player of the Match award in the tournament. In India's clash against Bangladesh earlier in the tournament, Vihann, who is also a capable off-spinner, had produced a stunning performance with the ball.

Earlier, Vihann was the highest run-scorer in India's recent U19 tour of England. Malhotra compiled 520 runs as India defeated England 3-2 in the five-match Youth ODI series, while both the Youth Tests were drawn.

The 18-year-old southpaw, who has been consistently scoring runs for Punjab in the domestic circuit, recently bagged a contract of Rs 30 lakh with the Royal Challengers Bangalore.

"I want to be among the best in India and be part of the Indian team. It will take sheer hard work, but I am willing to put all my energy and efforts into it," Vihann had said just before leaving for the World Cup.

"It is a real team effort": Sophie Devine after Gujarat Giants' secure thrilling win

Vadodara, Agency: Sophie Devine, who picked up a four-wicket haul in Gujarat Giants' thrilling win over the Delhi Capitals in the ongoing WPL, said that it was a team effort to defend the target.

Devine, who won the Player of the Match award, praised Beth Mooney, who scored a crucial half-century that helped Gujarat Giants post a competitive target.

"Got absolutely pumped in one of

those overs and brought them back in. Tried to stay calm and keep it as simple as possible (in the 20th over). Really important when you come in as overseas players to leave your ego at the door and actually ask for help. At the start, you spend a lot of time getting volume (of training) in. Very important that you stay fresh (physically and mentally) and ensure you are 100 per cent on game day. Been awesome to



share the dressing room. Beth Mooney was outstanding. Anushka Sharma again was fantastic. It is a real team effort," Devine said, according to ESPNcricinfo.

bowlers kept their plan simple.

"It is a bit of a rollercoaster. We are in the entertainment industry at the end of the day, and we entertain. Did our job with that, but my heart rate was going through the roof in that last over. For us bowlers, we need to keep it simple. When you overcomplicate it, it does not work. Our two left-arm spinners did that really well today. You need to stay consistent," Devine said.



Australian Open: Rybakina stuns Swiatek, reaches semi-finals:

Melbourne, Agency: Fifth seed Elena Rybakina entered the semi-finals of the Australian Open 2026 on Wednesday. She defeated six-time Grand Slam champion and second seed Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-1 in the quarter-final match.

The first set was tough in this match played at Melbourne Park, but Rybakina completely dominated the second set and won. The 28-year-old Rybakina is in the race to win the Australian Open title for the first time and now she will face Jessica Pegula or Amanda Anisimova in the semi-finals.

After the match, Rybakina said,

"I'm very happy with this win. We know each other's games well, and I tried to remain aggressive. In the first set, neither of our first serves was very effective, so we tried to put pressure on the second. In the second set, I played more freely, my serve was better, and that made the difference."

Swiatek started the match aggressively, breaking Rybakina's serve in the first game. However, she couldn't maintain the lead and immediately lost the break. Both players held their serves after that. Rybakina capitalized on a major lapse by Swiatek in the final game of the first set to win the set, which took nearly an hour to win.

Ananya Panday Shares Mirror Selfie, Fans Spot Salman-Karisma Photo in Vanity Van



Bollywood actress Ananya Panday shared a mirror selfie from her vanity van on Tuesday. The selfie gave fans a glimpse into her personal vanity space and also revealed that she is currently recovering from an injury. In the photo shared on her social media account, the actress is seen wearing a grey oversized hoodie and has her arm in a sling, indicating that she has been injured. She added a sticker on the picture that read, "Got nazar (evil eye) in 2026."

What caught everyone's attention was Ananya's vanity mirror, which was decorated with posters and cut-outs of Bollywood stars Karisma Kapoor and Salman Khan. Like many kids from the 80s and 90s who used to put up posters of their favorite stars before the era of the internet and social media, Ananya's mirror also featured pictures of Karisma Kapoor and Salman Khan.

Armaan Malik Extends Best Wishes on Arijit Singh's Retirement, Calls His Contribution to Singing Exceptional



Singer Arijit Singh, who has delivered many hit songs for films like Barfi, Jagga Jasoos, Ludo, and Metro In Dino, has said goodbye to playback singing. The singer has taken this decision after giving several successful songs in his career. Now, fellow singer Armaan Malik has shared his thoughts on Arijit's decision. Respecting Arijit Singh's decision, Armaan Malik extended his heartfelt wishes for the journey ahead. Arijit Singh's voice has been an inspiration for many, and Armaan Malik is one of them. Reacting to Arijit's retirement, Armaan wrote on the social media platform X:

"The soul itself understands when it is time to change paths, because what lies ahead is no longer fulfilling its highest purpose."



Anupam Kher Thrilled to Meet Rohit Sharma, Calls Him a Real Hero

Anupam Kher shared on Instagram that during a shoot, he was accidentally taken to the wrong vanity van, where he met Rohit Sharma and his wife Ritika. This unexpected meeting turned out to be very special and memorable for him.

Actor Anupam Kher shared a heartwarming post about his sudden meeting with former Indian cricket team captain Rohit Sharma. Anupam said that Rohit is very special to him and that he considers him a real hero. Posting on Instagram, Anupam revealed that during a shoot, he was mistakenly taken to the wrong vanity van, where he saw Rohit Sharma and his wife Ritika. This meeting became extremely special and memorable for him.

Anupam Kher wrote, "This morning at the shoot-

ing location, there were many vanity vans parked. By mistake, I was taken to the wrong van and who do I see in front of me? The greatest — Rohit Sharma! My favorite cricketer and his beautiful, supportive wife Ritika. I love Rohit! Of course, for his incredible abilities as a great player. But I love his personality just as much." He further said that we often give titles to our heroes in films and sports, and they truly deserve them. But after seeing Rohit both on and off the field, one can easily say that he is very real.

Role of an Army Officer's Wife A different experience, a mix of strength and fear: Chitrangada Singh

Actress Chitrangada Singh will be seen playing the role of an army officer's wife in her upcoming film Battle of Galwan. While preparing for this role, she deeply understood the strength of women from military families and their inner emotional fears. Chitrangada said that this character helped her feel the struggles of her mother and many such women more closely.

Being the daughter of an

Indian Army officer, Chitrangada was already familiar with uniforms, frequent transfers, and a disciplined lifestyle. However, after meeting army wives and listening to their stories for the film, she said, "My father was in the army, so hearing such stories was normal for me. But playing the role of an army wife is a completely different experience. When I met those women, I understood the mix of my

mother's silence, pride, and worry."

She further added, "These women carry both strength and fear within them every day. In this role, I tried to show not just courage or a smile, but also that feeling where, despite heartbreak, you learn to hold yourself together." In the film, she will be seen as a symbol of Indian women who stand firmly behind soldiers in uniform.



One Year, Many Roles: From Acting Debut to World Tour, Munawar Faruqui Reflects on His Birthday

Actor Munawar Faruqui, who is celebrating his birthday today, is not in the mood for a grand party this time. Instead of a big celebration, Munawar has decided to spend his special day simply with his closest friends and family. After a continuously busy and successful year, he has chosen to take a short break from his tight schedule and begin the new year of his life with his loved ones.

On the professional front, the past year has been quite eventful for Munawar. He made his acting debut with First Copy, which received a strong response from audiences, and later its second season was also released. Along with acting, Munawar also completed his first international stand-up world tour, where he performed in several countries.

In addition to this, he was seen hosting popular reality shows such as Pati Patni Aur Panga, The Society Season 1, and Hafta Vasooli.

Recalling the past year, Munawar said he is extremely grateful for the love and support he received from audiences across different platforms. He shared, "The past year has been very special and extremely busy for me. Doing my first acting project with First Copy and receiving so much love for both its seasons, and then taking my stand-up comedy to my first international world tour — all of this has been full of learning and growth for me."



Taha Shah Badussha Shares an Emotional

Note, Expresses Gratitude for Fans' Unwavering Love

Heeramandi and Paro star Taha Shah Badussha recently shared a deeply emotional and heart-touching post on social media, in which he thanked his fans for standing by him throughout his journey. Shared along with a candid photograph, the reflective caption touched many hearts, as Taha beautifully expressed that his journey has never truly been a solo one.

In his note, Taha wrote,

"I never walked this journey alone, because it was never just mine to begin with."

These words written by Taha Shah Badussha immediately resonated with

his fans. Not just that, he also mentioned moments from his campus visits, writing that the echo of applause, selfies, and faces filled with excitement remind him of his younger self — full of hope, a little restless, but not ready to give up on his dreams. According to Taha, such moments make him realize that his dream is no longer just his own.

He further wrote,

"What was once a single person's dream has today become the dream of many. The dreams are the same, only the timeline is different."

Through these words, he simply and beautifully expressed the shared struggles and aspirations that exist between him and his fans.



Not Words, but Emotions Will Speak in Aditi Rao Hydari's Gandhi Talks

Aditi Rao Hydari is taking one of the most unconventional steps of her career with her upcoming film Gandhi Talks. It is a silent film with no dialogues, where the story moves forward entirely through emotions and performances.

Aditi is not among those actresses who chase trends. She has always chosen films where acting and storytelling are given more importance. Gandhi Talks is a part of that same mindset. In this film, Aditi will be seen portraying her character without spoken words, using only her expressions, eyes, and emotions. In a silent film, an actor has nowhere to hide, and Aditi appears to be embracing this challenge with complete confidence.

