



The Researchers'

NEWS BOX

Will asteroid 2024 YR4 hit earth in 2032? Experts reveal how they monitor its path

World. The threat of a newly discovered asteroid has risen slightly in the past few weeks, as the world's telescopes rush to track its course. But the chance of an impact is still quite slim. New calculations suggest there's a 2% chance the space rock 2024 YR4 will smack Earth in 2032. This also means there's a 98% chance it will safely pass our planet. The odds of a strike will almost certainly continue to go up and down as the asteroid's path around the sun is better understood, and astronomers said there's a good chance the risk likely will drop to zero. NASA and the European Space Agency's Webb Space Telescope will observe this near-Earth asteroid in March before the object disappears from view. Once that happens, scientists will have to wait until 2028 when it passes our way again.

What's an asteroid?

Asteroids are space rocks orbiting the sun that are considerably smaller than planets. Scientists believe they're the leftovers from the solar system's formation 4.6 billion years ago. There are so many asteroids orbiting between Mars and Jupiter — millions of them — that this region is known as the main asteroid belt. They sometimes get pushed out of the belt and can end up all over the place — like this one.

How do scientists track potentially dangerous asteroids?

A telescope in Chile discovered the asteroid 2024 YR4 in December. It's estimated to be 130 feet to 300 feet (40 meters to 90 meters) across. Observations by the Webb telescope should provide a more precise measurement, according to NASA.

NASA and the European Space Agency initially put the odds of a strike at just over 1%. By Thursday, it had risen to roughly 2%. NASA describes that as still "extremely low." Until scientists have a better understanding of the asteroid's path around the sun, they caution the odds will continue to fluctuate — and quite possibly fall to zero. "You don't have to be worried about anything. It's a curiosity," said Larry Denneau, senior software engineer with the University of Hawaii's asteroid impact alert system that first spotted the asteroid. "Don't panic. Let the process play out, and we'll have a for-sure answer."

Chinese Cargo Ship Runs Aground Off Russia's Sakhalin, No Spill Reported

Moscow. The governor of Russia's Pacific island region of Sakhalin has declared an emergency after a Chinese cargo ship ran aground off its southwest coast.

There was no danger to the crew of the An Yang 2, which is carrying coal and heavy fuel oil, Gov. Valery Limarenko said in a post on Telegram on Sunday. Russia's emergency ministry said 20 crew were aboard. Limarenko said that no fuel spillage was recorded, but local authorities had to be prepared for any scenario. Bad weather has prevented access by rescue teams to the bulk carrier, which is stranded in shallow waters off Sakhalin's Nevelsky district, he added.

TRENDING NOW

Regional authorities said they were preparing to pump fuel out of the damaged vessel, marooned some 200 meters (650 feet) offshore.

Earlier this year, hundreds of volunteers in southwestern Russia spent weeks trying to contain a massive fuel oil spill from two storm-stricken tankers in the Kerch Strait near Crimea. The Sakhalin region, which is located in Russia's Far East, comprises a large island of the same name and the four Kuril Islands, the subject of a decades-long territorial dispute between Russia and Japan that has prevented

Crypto Kingpin Alexander Vinnik Returns To Moscow In Russia-US Prisoner Swap



Washington, United States. The United States has released Russian cryptocurrency kingpin Alexander Vinnik, as part of an exchange deal that saw Moscow free US teacher Marc Fogel, a senior US official said Thursday. The official told AFP that Vinnik, who pleaded guilty in May 2024 to conspiracy to commit money laundering, "was handed over to Russian officials." US President Donald Trump's government has hailed the prisoner exchange as a positive sign for diplomacy between the two countries and for possible negotiations over an end to the Ukraine war.

Trump's overtures to Putin in particular have caused alarm in Europe, which has viewed Russia as a major threat since the invasion of Ukraine.

Trump revealed Wednesday he expected to meet Putin in Saudi Arabia for Ukraine peace talks, in a sudden thaw in relations. Vinnik was extradited to the United States from Greece in August 2022, hours after he had been released from a French jail. He was the operator of BTC-e, one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges that processed more than \$9 billion in transactions, according to US court documents. The US Justice Department had previously called the exchange "one of the primary ways by which cyber criminals around the world transferred, laundered, and stored the criminal proceeds of their illegal activities."

Trump Begins Firing Probationary Staff In A Move To Shrink Federal Work Force

Washington, United States. US President Donald Trump's administration has reportedly begun laying off probationary employees as it moves to the next stage of its plans to aggressively shrink the federal workforce. More than 200,000 recently hired federal workers are currently serving out their probationary period, according to the most recently available government data. The Trump administration directed agency heads to terminate most trial and probationary staff, who have fewer civil service protections, US media reported Thursday. An employee who was laid off from her job at the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) told AFP on condition of anonymity that she had been fired during a video call to which close to 100 employees had been invited. The employee, and several other participants, were still serving out their probationary periods. All were told they were being let go for performance purposes. Shortly after the call ended, the



employee received a letter from acting OPM director Charles Ezell confirming she had been fired. Her access was cut off less than an hour later. Spokespeople for OPM

and the White House press offices did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Thursday's actions follow a White House push -- led by OPM -- to

shrink the number of government workers by offering them eight months' pay to resign. The email with the resignation offer, titled "Fork in the Road," also noted that those who did not accept risked being let go in future cuts. More than 65,000 federal employees accepted the buyout offer from OPM, the White House said. One employee at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who spoke with AFP, reported accepting the OPM's offer to resign out of concern of otherwise being fired. "This was my dream job," said the employee, who was not on probation but who had been at HUD for less time -- and thus had less job security -- than many other colleagues. "It just became very clear to me that the writing is on the wall," the employee said. "I might as well take the best cushion I have to put myself in the best situation to take the time I need to find a new position."

US State Department halts plan to buy \$400M worth of armored vehicles from Musk's Tesla

FORT LAUDERDALE. The US State Department had been in talks with Elon Musk's Tesla company to buy armored electric vehicles, but the plans have been put on hold by the Trump administration after reports emerged about a potential \$400 million purchase. A State Department spokesperson said the electric car company owned by Musk, who has become President Donald Trump's billionaire adviser aiming to dismantle agencies and downsize the federal workforce, was the only one that expressed interest back in May 2024, when Joe Biden was president. While it was in its planning phases, the deal with Tesla was forecast to be the largest contract of the year. It shows how some of Musk's wealth has come and was still expected to come from taxpayers before the plans were put on hold. His companies obtain hundreds of

millions of dollars each year in contracts. SpaceX has secured nearly \$20 billion in federal funds since 2008 to ferry astronauts and satellites into space. And Tesla had already received \$41.9 million from the US government,



including payment for vehicles provided to some US embassies. No government contract had been given to Tesla or any other manufacturer to produce armored electric vehicles for the Department of State, the agency

said. The Biden administration had tasked the State Department to gather information from potential suppliers to buy these vehicles in September. An official request for bids was to be released in May, according to State Department data from December. But that solicitation is now on hold with no plans to issue it, the State Department said. After reports emerged about the plans to buy from Tesla, the State Department changed the data entry on its expected contracts forecast for fiscal year 2025 late Wednesday. The State Department said it should have been entered into the system as a generic "electric vehicle manufacturer," but there is at least another entry for a different purchase that continues to list a company—German car manufacturer BMW.

30 Injured As Car Rams Into Them In Germany, Afghan Asylum Seeker Arrested

Munich, Germany. Police arrested an Afghan asylum seeker at the scene of what German leaders labelled a car ramming "attack" Thursday that wounded 30 people, some seriously, in the southern city of Munich. The carnage came on the eve of an international security conference in the Bavarian city and amid a heated debate in Germany on immigration ahead of February 23 elections following similar attacks. The Mini Cooper car barreled into a trade union demonstration, leaving victims and their belongings scattered. Shoes, glasses and an infant stroller were left in the street. Munich mayor Dieter Reiter said a number of people were being treated for severe injuries and were in a "life-threatening condition".

Media reported that children were among the victims. Police fired a shot at the battered car and detained the driver, a 24-year-old Afghan asylum seeker who was identified by German media as Farhad N. Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned the "awful" attack and promised severe consequences. "From my point of view it is quite clear: this attacker cannot count on any mercy, he

must be punished and he must leave the country," Scholz told reporters.

The latest injuries followed a deadly car rampage at a Christmas market in the eastern city of Magdeburg in December. Alexa Graef, a witness, said she saw the car drive into the crowd, "which looked deliberate". "I hope it's the last time I see anything like that," said Graef, whose office overlooks the junction where the car struck. Police inspected the cream-coloured car, leading sniffer dogs around the Mini and said the Afghan suspect, who lived in Munich, was arrested at the scene. The authorities have "indications of an extremist motive" and the investigation had been handed over to the regional prosecutor's office, police added.

News outlet Der Spiegel, citing security sources, reported that the man was believed to have posted Islamist content online before the attack.

The suspect was said to have arrived in Germany in 2016 at the height of the mass migrant influx to Europe. His asylum request was rejected by German authorities but he found work and was able to remain legally in the country, according to officials. Bavaria

state premier Markus Soeder told journalists that the incident was "just terrible". "This is not the first incident... we must show determination that something will change in Germany," said Soeder, whose CSU party is allied with the conservative CDU at the national level.

Inflamed debate
The CDU/CSU alliance, which polls suggest is on track to win this month's election, has called for tougher curbs on immigration after the recent attacks. Under pressure even before the election was called, Scholz's government had moved to make asylum rules stricter and speed up deportations, including to Afghanistan. Visiting Munich after the attack, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser vowed to do everything possible to ensure more deportations to Afghanistan while acknowledging it was a "very difficult country". In August the German government sent back the first Afghans to their home country since the Taliban government's return to power in 2021. It had faced pressure then following a deadly knife attack allegedly committed by a Syrian man.

Trump Offers To Help End India-China Border Dispute. Centre Says This

Washington. India has asserted that it would follow a bilateral approach to resolve its border disputes with China after President Donald Trump offered to mediate an end to the "border skirmishes". The President's offer came after he held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House. During a joint news conference with PM Modi, President Trump noted that the skirmishes were quite violent - and that he would like to help. "I look at India, I do see the skirmishes on the border, which are quite vicious, and I guess they continue to go on. If I could be of help, I'd love to help because that should be stopped. That's been going on for a long time and it's quite violent. It's quite violent," said the Republican leader who returned as President of the US last month.

Less than an hour later, the government turned down the offer saying India has always adopted a bilateral approach in such cases. Providing a round-up of the PM's US visit to the media, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said, "Whatever issues we have with any of our neighbours, we have always adopted a bilateral approach to dealing with these issues." Trump had



offered to mediate between India-China and even India-Pakistan in the past, but the government had turned down such offers. The US leader has been trying to position himself as a global peacemaker as he seeks to play a role in quelling geopolitical conflicts across the globe with a focus on Russia-Ukraine and the Middle East.

The Foreign Secretary also responded to Trump's offer to provide India with fifth-generation F-35 stealth fighter jets, saying that this is still at the stage of proposal and formal talks haven't started. In his press briefing, Mr Misri also spoke about tariffs - a key economic weapon used by Mr Trump to weed off trade inequalities.

Hours before he met PM Modi, Trump unleashed reciprocal tariffs for all countries in a tit-for-tat trade policy.

Mr Misri said the issue came up several times during their discussion and the two leaders shared their perspectives. "What's more remarkable is the fact that we have a way forward on this issue in terms of the undertaking to discuss or start discussions on a bilateral trading agreement, and this may actually be a very good opportunity to take forward something and conclude something which was actually foreseen in the first Trump administration," said the Foreign Secretary. Under the previous Trump regime, Indian and US officials had worked on a trade deal to be signed during PM Modi's 2020 US visit but were unable to finalise it. The talks for the bilateral trade agreement would be restarted with the deadline being the fall of 2025, according to the India-US joint statement released Thursday evening.

"So we are looking at the next seven to eight months to get this done, and today, in a sense, both teams have got the instructions or the indications from the highest levels to start engaging on this," said Mr Misri.

Modi Refutes Discussing Adani Allegations with Trump, Rahul Alleges Cover-Up of Corruption

RNS: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has denied any discussion with US President Donald Trump regarding the bribery allegations against billionaire Gautam Adani.

Responding to a journalist's query about whether the issue was raised during his meeting with Trump at the White House, Modi emphasized that such personal matters are not typically addressed by national leaders.

He stated, "First of all, India is a democratic country, and as per our tradition and culture, we consider the entire world as our family. I consider every Indian as my family." Modi further added, "The premiers of two countries never meet and talk for all these personal matters." Trump did not comment on the issue during the press conference.

The allegations against Adani, the chairman of the Adani Group, surfaced in November last year, before Trump



assumed office. The US government charged Adani with bribery and fraud in a multi-billion-dollar scheme involving Indian officials. Adani and several executives of his company, including his nephew Sagar Adani, were accused of paying \$265 million in bribes to secure contracts for his renewable energy company. It was also claimed that Adani met with

Indian officials to discuss the alleged bribery scheme. The Adani Group has denied all allegations, calling them "baseless" and stressing that the charges remain as allegations. The company has vowed to pursue all legal options to clear its name. As stated by the US Department of Justice, "the charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendants

are presumed innocent unless proven guilty." Meanwhile, opposition leaders, including Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, have criticized Modi for allegedly covering up the matter. Gandhi accused the Prime Minister of failing to address Adani's alleged corruption, after Modi stated that such issues were not part of his discussions with Trump.

Government Cracks Down on Tax-Evading SNK Pan Masala Group



by Sunil Bajpai

Kanpur: The government's ongoing crackdown on tax evasion has led to the discovery of land documents and records of fraudulent companies during raids on SNK Pan Masala Group and its affiliates. Raids were conducted at 47 locations across the country, uncovering undeclared properties worth billions in cities including Kannauj, Farrukhabad, Noida, Delhi, Mumbai, and Goa. In addition, approximately 12 crore rupees in cash were recovered from the residence of the group's chairman in Swaroop Na-

gar, with further cash found during raids in Kannauj. A note-counting machine was also seized. The raids are expected to continue for two to three more days. Forensic experts from Delhi and Mumbai are analyzing electronic devices found at the premises, revealing that some crucial data was deleted. Early investigations have exposed over 50 crores in tax evasion and more than 100 bogus companies linked to the group. This follows several previous raids on the SNK Pan Masala Group, which have previously uncovered significant tax evasion.

JPMorgan Chase Starts 2025 Layoffs; Meta Cuts Jobs While Boosting AI Hiring



New York: JPMorgan Chase has commenced notifying employees about upcoming job cuts as part of its planned downsizing for 2025, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Reports from Barron's reveal that managers at JPMorgan Chase have started informing workers about the layoffs, which will affect fewer than 1,000 employees in February. Additional cuts are scheduled for mid-March, May, June, August, and September.

In a statement to Reuters, a JPMorgan spokesperson emphasized, "We regularly review our business needs and adjust our staffing accordingly. We continue to hire in many areas and work hard to redeploy impacted employees... This is part of our regular management of the business and impacts a very small number of employees."

As of the end of 2024, JPMorgan employed 317,233 individuals, and the layoffs will impact roughly 0.3% of its workforce. Despite these cuts, the banking sector has seen improved operating conditions, with JPMorgan—the largest U.S. lender by assets—reporting its highest-ever annual profit in 2024.

In a separate development, Meta is also planning to implement another round of company-wide layoffs, but is simultaneously ramping up its hiring of machine learning engineers, according to an internal memo.

The memo stated that layoffs would begin at 5 a.m. local time in most countries, including the U.S., but employees in Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands will be exempt due to local labor regulations. Notifications for workers in other countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa will be sent between February 11 and February 18, as reported by Reuters.

Trump Approves Extradition of 26/11 Mumbai Attack Suspect Tahawwur Rana to India



RNS: US President Donald Trump announced that the United States has approved the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a key suspect in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, to India. Speaking during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US, Trump described Rana as "one of the very evil people of the world" involved in the horrific attacks that claimed 166 lives in Mumbai.

Rana, a Canadian citizen of Pakistani origin, had unsuccessfully challenged his extradition in US courts, and the US Supreme Court recently cleared the way for his transfer to India. The accused is currently held in a high-security prison in the United States.

Rana was linked to David Coleman Headley, the Pakistani-American member of the terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), who played a pivotal role in orchestrating the attacks. The coordinated assaults, which took place over four days starting November 26, 2008, involved shootings and bombings across key Mumbai locations, including the Taj Hotel, Oberoi Trident, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. The attacks were among the deadliest in India, leaving at least 174 people dead, including nine attackers.

India has long sought Rana's extradition to face justice for his involvement in the attacks, which prompted widespread global outrage.

BSNL Posts Rs 262 Crore Profit in Q3

New Delhi: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has registered a profit of 262 crore rupees in the third quarter of 2024-25. This achievement is a testament to the government's commitment to strengthening public sector enterprises and ensuring robust, affordable, and accessible telecom services for all. Speaking to the media in New Delhi, Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said that, for the first time in 17 years, BSNL has posted a profit on a quarterly basis.

Jharkhand Teacher Unions Applaud Proposal to Raise Retirement Age, Demand Pending Reforms



Ranchi: Amin Ahmed, Central General Secretary of Jharkhand Rajya Urdu Shikshak Sangh and State Convenor of Jharkhand Pradesh Sanyakut Shikshak Morcha, has welcomed Education Minister Ramdas Soren's initiative to consider raising the retirement age for state teachers from 60 to 62 years.

Ahmed stated that various teacher unions, including Rashtriya Shikshak Mahasangh, Jharkhand State Urdu Teachers' Union, and Jharkhand State Primary Teachers' Union, have been protesting for the past two years, urging the government to address several pending issues. These include the demand for an increase in the retirement age, which has already been raised to 62 years for state employees in Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Andhra Pradesh, and to 65 years for Madhya Pradesh teachers.

In an open letter to the Education Minister, Ahmed stressed the need to fulfill teachers' legitimate demands to maintain public trust in the government. He also pointed out that while teachers remain excluded from the promotion and MACP (Modified Assured Career Progression) benefits, other state employees receive these regularly. This disparity, Ahmed argued, has left teachers feeling unjustly treated, especially those appointed before 2006, who have not received the upgraded pay scale recommended by the Sixth Pay Commission.

Furthermore, Ahmed called for reforms in the home district transfer policy to facilitate local teacher placement, ensuring that students are taught in their native language. He also urged the government to reduce NGO interference in education and reaffirm the role of teachers in strengthening the state's educational system.

Mahakumbh in Prayagraj Sets World Record with Over 50 Crore Devotees

Prayagraj: The Mahakumbh in Prayagraj has created history by becoming the first event in the world where more than 50 crore people are direct participants.

Over 50 crore 4 lakh devotees have taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam so far, with 90 lakh devotees taking the holy dip today till 6 pm.

The Uttar Pradesh government said that this participation marks the largest congregation in human history for any religious, cultural, or social event.

The UP government noted that nations like the United States of America, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, and Bangladesh all have smaller populations than those who have immersed themselves in the sacred waters at the Mahakumbh.

IIT-ISM Team Innovates Low-Cost Carbon Capture Technology; Wins National Award

New Delhi: A team of students from IIT (ISM) Dhanbad has made a groundbreaking advancement in environmental sustainability. They have developed a revolutionary material, nitrogen-doped multilayer graphene nanopowder, capable of capturing carbon dioxide from industrial emissions and converting it into valuable chemicals. This innovation holds significant promise for both reducing the carbon footprint and generating valuable resources for various industries. The process involves capturing CO2 from factory chimneys and transforming it into formaldehyde, a chemical widely used in industries such as chemicals, paints, medical supplies, and plywood. The team plans to further explore the potential of converting formaldehyde into ethanol and methanol, offering additional benefits for industrial applications while contributing to the fight against global warming. Currently, the material used to capture carbon dioxide, typically sourced from the United States, costs lakhs of rupees per gram. However, the IIT



ISM team has developed a more efficient and affordable version of this material, reducing the cost to just Rs100-200 per gram. The development of this cost-effective solution presents a significant step forward in carbon capture technology, making it more accessible to industries and offering a potential solution to environmental concerns. The team's achievement was recognized at the prestigious Pan-India IIT Hackathon of the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI), held as part of India Energy Week 2025. The team secured the first prize for their innovative work, which was awarded by the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, along with Shri

Pankaj Jain, Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, during the closing ceremony at Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in Delhi. The award-winning team consists of Sayantika Thandar (M.Tech, Chemical), Riya Jaisawal (M.Tech, Chemical), Mohammad Faheem (B.Tech, Chemical), and Md. Modasir Ashraf (B.Tech, Chemical). Under the guidance of Prof. Ejaz Ahmad from the Department of Chemical Engineering, the students developed a patented process that uses bamboo powder to produce the nitrogen-doped multilayer graphene nanopowder, making it an eco-friendly and sustainable option for CO2 adsorption and conversion. The graphene nanopow-

der boasts a porous, layered structure ideal for trapping CO2, providing a low-cost, green alternative for energy and environmental applications worldwide. This breakthrough has the potential to revolutionize carbon capture technologies and contribute to reducing the adverse effects of industrial emissions on the environment.

The hackathon, focused on Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) and cost-effective renewable energy, saw participation from top IITs, including Bombay, Delhi, Guwahati, Kharagpur, Madras, and Roorkee. Prof. Ejaz Ahmad praised the IIT (ISM) Dhanbad team's innovative spirit, emphasizing how their research aligns with India's energy transition goals. This win adds to IIT (ISM) Dhanbad's growing reputation for technological innovation and sustainable solutions. Their cost-effective material, produced using bamboo biomass, offers an affordable alternative to foreign carbon capture technologies, potentially making it accessible to industries across India.

NCTE to Reintroduce One-Year B.Ed and M.Ed Programs Starting 2026-27

New Delhi: The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has announced the reintroduction of one-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Master of Education (M.Ed) programs, starting in the 2026-27 academic year. This decision follows the extension of these courses to two years in 2014 and aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the University Grants Com-

mission's qualifications framework. NCTE Chairman Pankaj Arora explained that the revamped programs aim to offer a more efficient route for aspiring educators. The one-year M.Ed will be full-time, with a two-year part-time version available for working professionals. The move addresses under-enrollment and dissatisfaction with the previous two-year

M.Ed, which failed to meet the evolving needs of the profession. The one-year B.Ed will require a four-year undergraduate degree or a postgraduate qualification, while those with a three-year degree can still pursue the two-year option. Four specializations will be offered: foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary school levels. In addition, the Inte-

grated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), launched in 2023-24, will be regularly offered starting in 2025-26, with specializations in Yoga, Physical Education, Sanskrit, and Art Education. The reintroduction of the one-year programs aims to enhance teacher education and provide greater flexibility in training the next generation of educators.

Elon Musk Gifts PM Modi 'Space Relic' from Starship Rocket, Sparks Online Buzz

Washington DC: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received a unique gift from Elon Musk, sparking widespread speculation online. Reports indicate that the world's richest man presented Modi with a piece of the world's largest and most powerful rocket.

A photograph circulating on social media shows the 'space relic,' inscribed with the words, "Starship Flight Test 5, October 13, 2024."

This gift is believed to be a heat shield tile from SpaceX's Starship rocket, part of its fifth flight test conducted in October 2024.

The gesture has captured attention on X (formerly Twitter), where several users have referred to the gift as a 'space relic.' One user humorously remarked, "When many people are burning with jealousy, you need a heat shield," while another said, "Giving space relics should become mainstream gifting culture now."



In return, Prime Minister Modi presented Musk and his family with a collection of books, including Rabindranath Tagore's The Crescent Moon, The Great RK Narayan Collection, and Pandit Vishnu Sharma's Panchatantra. Notably, the Starship Flight Test 5 was a breakthrough

for SpaceX, marking the first successful mid-air catch of a 232-foot rocket booster using 'Mechazilla,' a pair of chopstick-like arms. The test also showcased the possibility of reusing and relaunching rockets within a short timeframe of 30 to 60 minutes. The flight ended with the

Starship rocket splashing down in the Indian Ocean, after testing key reusability technologies. These efforts are part of SpaceX's preparation for its long-term goal of a manned mission to Mars, which Musk envisions as humanity's next step toward interplanetary habitation.

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F-35 jets, Stryker vehicles, engine deal Defence ties take off at PM-Trump meet

New Delhi. The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump at the White House saw India and the US firming up key deals, including the sale of F-35 fighter jets to India and a renewed commitment to expanding defence cooperation.

"America plays an important role in India's defence preparedness as strategic and trusted partners, we are moving forward actively towards joint development, joint production and transfer of technology in the times to come... new technologies and equipment will enhance our capacities," PM Modi said at a joint press briefing.

10-YEAR DEFENCE PACT

A major highlight of the joint statement was the plan to sign a new ten-year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership. This agreement aims to strengthen bilateral defence ties amid evolving



security challenges, reinforcing both nations' commitment to closer cooperation.

- ▶ **US to sell F-35 jets, expand defence cooperation with India**
- ▶ **10-year defence pact to strengthen bilateral ties**
- ▶ **New technology transfers to streamline defence trade**

The meeting between PM Modi and US President Donald Trump saw the two sides agreeing to ramp up defence ties for more efficient arms transfer and procurement, and laying the framework for a stronger, technology-driven partnership.

increasing integration of US defence systems into India's military, including aircraft like:

- C-130J Super Hercules
- C-17 Globemaster III
- P-8I Poseidon
- CH-47F Chinook
- MH-60R Seahawk
- AH-64E Apache

To further bolster India's firepower and surveillance capabilities, the US will expand sales of Harpoon anti-airship missiles, M777 howitzers, and MQ-9B drones. Both sides also announced new procurements and co-production agreements. India is set to acquire Javelin anti-tank guided missiles, Stryker infantry combat vehicles, and six additional P-8I maritime patrol aircraft to enhance surveillance in the Indian Ocean.

"Starting this year, we'll be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars," Trump said.

Shashi Tharoor's praise for PM after Trump meet: Encouraging, concerns addressed

New Delhi. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Friday called the outcome of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-stakes meeting with US President Donald Trump "encouraging," saying that several major concerns had been addressed. PM Modi, on a two-day visit to the US, met Trump at the White House on Thursday. Their discussions, covering trade, defence, and immigration, came just hours after Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs. There was good news for the US-India strategic partnership, from the extradition of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Rana to an offer of F-35 fighter jets. Tharoor, a key opposition leader, acknowledged the meeting as promising. With the shadow of tariffs over the talks, the Congress leader said it was a positive sign that both sides had agreed to engage in negotiations, which are expected to conclude by autumn this year.

"I think that's a very good outcome because otherwise, the fear was there might be some hasty decisions made in Washington which would have affected our exports," he said. "This way, there is time to discuss and negotiate."

On illegal immigration, Tharoor backed PM Modi's stance but asserted that the treatment of undocumented Indian migrants deported from the US should have been addressed. He was alluding to widespread outrage over reports that deportees were flown back in handcuffs and leg restraints.

Addressing a joint press briefing after the meeting with Trump, PM Modi said New Delhi and Washington were on the same page when it came to illegal immigrants, and reaffirmed India's readiness to accept deported Indian nationals. "Anybody who enters another country illegally, they have absolutely no right to be in that country," PM Modi said. "The only thing missing was the manner in which they were sent back. Otherwise, his stand was absolutely correct."



BJP seeks L-G help over renaming of Delhi CMO X handle

NEW DELHI. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva has condemned AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal for allegedly renaming official 'CMO Delhi' handle on X to 'Arvind Kejriwal At Work'.

Sachdeva alleged that the account, which was created and expanded using public funds, was improperly converted into Kejriwal's personal handle.

He accused Kejriwal of a history of scams during his tenure, including ration card fraud, the 'sheesh mahal' scandal and the liquor policy scam. He also criticised the misuse of government funds for appointing party workers as government employees. Now, he claimed,

Kejriwal's digital move was a new form of "digital loot." "It would not be an exaggeration to say that as soon as his corrupt government collapsed, Arvind Kejriwal has also become a digital looter," Sachdeva said. The BJP chief called on LG VK Saxena to seek a report from the Delhi government's IT and social media departments regarding the renaming of the "CMO Delhi" handle for personal use. He demanded that the misuse of public resources be stopped immediately.

Sachdeva pointed out that millions of people followed the "CMO Delhi" handle, assuming it was the official account of the Chief Minister. He



claimed that this move not only misused government resources but also jeopardized citizens' private information, warranting legal action against Kejriwal.

"By orchestrating this digital heist, Arvind Kejriwal has not only misused government resources but also compromised peoples' private

information, for which he must face legal action," he said. "It is unlikely that any outgoing Chief Minister in the country has ever done something like this," he added.

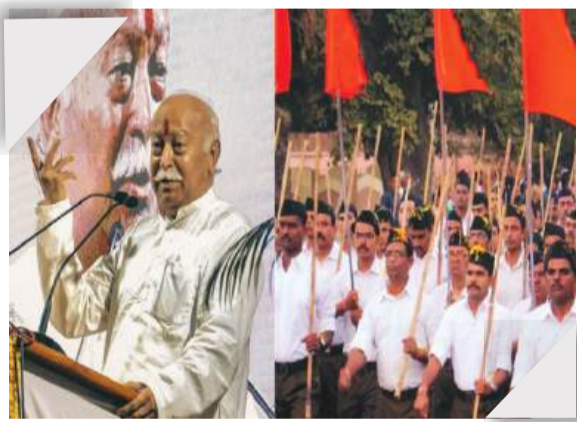
Meanwhile, newly elected BJP MLA Vijender Gupta said the truth about Kejriwal was coming out. He charged in a post on X that the AAP removed the video from the official YouTube channel of the Delhi government. "Kejriwal has made a futile attempt to hide his failures by removing old videos of assembly sessions and government programmes from the official YouTube channel of the Delhi government," he said.

RSS gets High Court nod for rally after Bengal government denies: Keep sound low

The West Bengal government had denied permission for RSS rally in Burdwan, following which the organisation moved the Calcutta High Court.

- ▶ **Calcutta HC allows RSS rally with low sound in Bengal**
- ▶ **RSS moved court after state denied microphone use**
- ▶ **Rally on Feb 16 amid ongoing board exams**

New Delhi. The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted permission to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to hold rally in West Bengal, saying that the "sound should be kept low." The order comes a day after the RSS moved the High Court after the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government denied them permission to use the public address system at the



Sarsangchalak Bhagwat's public meeting in Burdwan.

The court said the rally should be conducted in a manner that does not cause inconvenience to the examinees and ensure the sound is kept to the

minimum level. The Jan Sabha of Mohan Bhagwat is scheduled for February 16.

The district administration had earlier denied permission for the use of microphone in the said public meeting, citing the ongoing Madhyamik examinations in the state.

Justice Amrita Sinha said that since it is a Sunday and the event will last only 1 hour and 15 minutes, the court does not think that it will cause inconvenience to anyone. It has been ordered to be conducted peacefully and the sound should be kept as low as possible.

The High Court's ruling comes as a big setback for the state government as it had denied permission to use the public address system or loudspeakers at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) grounds. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) government had cited the ongoing Class 10 board examinations in the state.

Lalu Prasad patronised criminals when in power in Bihar, alleges brother-in-law Subash Yadav

Patna. Subash Yadav, brother-in-law of RJD chief Lalu Prasad, created a flutter in Bihar's political circles after he accused Lalu of patronising criminals and striking deal with kidnappers at CM's official residence during RJD rule in Bihar. Subash made allegations against RJD supremo at a time when focus of the country is on the assembly elections due in October-November. Moreover, Subash's outburst came on the day when Lalu claimed before media persons that he would not allow BJP to form the next government in the state. To buttress his point, Subash cited the case of kidnapping of a close relative of Shankar Prasad Tekriwal, then finance minister in Rabri Devi government, from Katihar in 2001. Subash claimed that Prem Chand Gupta, a close confidant of Lalu, struck the deal with kidnappers for the captive's release. It is stated that Tekriwal, four-term MLA, had resigned over the issue.

"Yah sach hai ki corruption aur apaharan ke jariye bahut kuchh hota tha (It's true that many things happened through corruption and kidnapping)," Subash, former MP, alleged. Elaborating the case further, Subash said that Zakir Hussain Khan, then RJD MLA from Forbesganj, was pressurised by former Siwan MP Mohammad Shahabuddin, to get Tekriwal's relative released from kidnappers. He added that Zakir told him that he had nothing to do with the kidnapping of Tekriwal's relative. "Lalu ji played the role of a mediator and Prem Chand Gupta struck deal with kidnappers," he alleged.

Reacting to Subash's allegations, RJD spokesperson Mritunjay Tiwari said that the former was making accusations against Lalu ji out of his personal vendetta. "What Subash has done is an open secret," he added.

Subash and his elder brother Anirudh Prasad Yadav alias Sadhu Yadav were blamed for wrongdoing and patronising criminals during RJD rule, called 'Jungle raj'. Sources said that Subash's son is eyeing for a ticket from Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) in upcoming assembly elections. Assembly polls are likely to be held in October-November this year.



Delhi Chief Minister's oath likely on February 19 or 20, 15 MLAs shortlisted

The Delhi Chief Minister's oath-taking ceremony is likely to be held on February 19 or 20, according to government sources.



New Delhi. The swearing-in ceremony of the new Chief Minister of Delhi is likely to be held on February 19 or 20, according to government sources. The legislative party meeting may happen on February 17 or 18. Preparations for government formation in Delhi are likely to intensify after Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's arrival in New Delhi late on Friday. A meeting will be held between PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President JP Nadda, and other top BJP leaders to discuss the matter. Out of 48 MLAs, 15 names were shortlisted, and from them, nine will be selected for the Chief Minister, ministers, and Speaker positions.

The BJP returned to power in Delhi, ending its 27-year-long wait as it secured 48 seats in the 70-member Assembly, as Delhi counted the votes on Saturday. AAP, which has been ruling the city for a decade, managed to win 22 seats, while its key leaders, including party chief Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, faced defeats.

The BJP, which approached the election without announcing a Chief Ministerial face, has started high-level meetings to decide the head of government, with five leaders emerging as key contenders.

Parvesh Verma, who emerged as a giant killer by defeating Kejriwal in the New Delhi seat, leads the list of potential Chief Ministerial faces in Delhi. Vijender Gupta, a senior BJP leader who has served as the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Satish Upadhyay, a key Brahmin face who previously served as the state president, Ashish Sood, the general secretary of the Delhi BJP who enjoys close relations with central leaders, and Jitendra Mahajan, a strong RSS hand from the Vaishya community, are other contenders.

- ▶ **Preparations for government formation in Delhi to intensify post PM's return**
- ▶ **Legislative meeting may be on February 17 or 18**
- ▶ **15 MLAs have been shortlisted for key positions**

Pulwama marked a shift in war against terror

On a winding stretch of the Jammu-Srinagar highway, a convoy of 78 vehicles carrying 2,500 CRPF personnel was making its way to Srinagar on February 14, 2019. Among them were 40 bravehearts of the 76th CRPF Battalion. Unnoticed by the troops, a Mahindra Scorpio packed with 200 kg of explosives, driven by 22-year-old Adil Ahmad Dar — a suicide bomber from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) — rammed into one of the buses. The explosion killed 40 soldiers, marking one of the deadliest attacks on Indian security forces in decades. This was not the first time that India faced such brutality. The 2016 Pathankot airbase attack, the 2018 Uri terror strike and the horrific 26/11 Mumbai attacks were all grim reminders of Pakistan's proxy war against India.

However, Pulwama became the inflection point that tested India's strategic patience. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement after the attack reflected the nation's resolve: "Security forces have been given full freedom to choose the time and place for the future course of action. Terrorists have made a big mistake and will pay a heavy price." The Pulwama attack forced India to rethink its counterterrorism strategy. For decades, Pakistan had waged a proxy war, bleeding India with "a thousand cuts." While diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan globally were initiated, the national leadership, including the military, believed a stronger response was necessary. The challenge was to act decisively despite the nuclear dynamics between the two nations. India had to move beyond reactive approaches, overcoming bureaucratic inertia, intelligence gaps and predictable military response. Addressing the root causes of radicalisation in Jammu and Kashmir and transforming governance in the region became critical. The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in August 2019 was a watershed moment. It revoked J&K's special status, extended the jurisdiction of Central agencies, and allowed them to target terror funding, money-laundering and other activities that fuelled terrorism. The state was also bifurcated into two union territories — Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh — further integrating the region with the rest of the country. India's desire for a proactive counterterrorism strategy has often been hindered by several barriers. First, geopolitical constraints, including Pakistan's alleged support for militant groups and the nuclear deterrence dynamics, have historically limited India's options. Second, intelligence gaps — due to inadequate human intelligence, poor coordination and technological limitations — have made pre-empting attacks difficult. Third, legal and institutional hurdles, such as delays in implementing counterterrorism laws and reforms, have slowed progress. For instance, the proposal for a National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) after the 26/11 attacks remains stuck in bureaucratic red-tape. Finally, anti-India propaganda fuelled by Pakistan and supported by internal actors, like the Hurriyat Conference, and underground workers has complicated efforts to balance public demand for swift retaliation with long-term strategic goals. Post 2014, India began to adopt a more assertive approach. Surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC) in 2016 and 2019 demonstrated India's willingness to use military force. Diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan and designate terrorists gained momentum. However, Pulwama demanded an even stronger response. On February 26, 2019, the Indian Air Force conducted airstrikes on a JeM training camp in Balakot, Pakistan. This marked the first use of air power against Pakistan since 1971 and signalled a significant shift in India's strategy. The strikes, which killed hundreds of terrorists, effectively called Pakistan's nuclear bluff and raised the threshold for India's response to terrorism. Pakistan retaliated with airstrikes on Indian military targets, leading to a dogfight in which India lost a MiG-21 Bison and its pilot. Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was captured, but not before he had shot down a much superior aircraft in terms of capability, the F-16 of the Pakistani Air Force.

Balancing conservation and livelihoods in HP's forests

The HP govt must demonstrate the political will to implement the Forest Rights Act effectively to safeguard livelihoods and justice for those facing eviction.

The longstanding issue of forest land occupation for agriculture and habitation in Himachal Pradesh remains unresolved. In its order on July 17, 2024, the Shimla High Court stated that encroachments on forest land cannot be regularised by the state government without approval from the Central government under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. Following this, a series of eviction orders were issued.

In Himachal Pradesh, where two-thirds of the geographical area is classified as forest land and 90 per cent of the population resides in rural areas surrounded by forests, the dependence of communities on forest resources for survival and livelihoods is undeniable.

With agricultural land comprising only about 10 per cent of the total area and the average landholding size being less than one hectare, access to land remains a critical issue.

Under the Land Regularisation Policy of 2002, approximately 1.67 lakh families applied to legalise their occupation of forest land. Additionally, land settlement records indicate a significant number of unauthorised occupations. For example, during the 1989 land settlement in Spiti, over 1,200 cases of najayaz kabza (unauthorised occupation) were recorded, representing nearly 50 per cent of the total households. To address the situation, the state government decided to intervene in the Godavaram case pending before the Supreme Court of India — a move that is only partially welcome.

While some aspects of this intervention align with the interests of the affected communities, concerns remain regarding the true intent and effectiveness of the government's approach in protecting the people who are facing eviction. The government's decision to approach the Supreme Court to exclude the allottable pool and certain other land categories from the definition of forests is a crucial step. If the state secures relief, it could facilitate the allocation of land to landless families and those displaced by natural disasters. When implemented effectively, this move could help address land scarcity and support the vulnerable communities in need of rehabilitation. However, the proposal to de-reserve certain land categories should not rely solely on revenue records. It must also include an assessment of the actual physical and ecological status of the land.

It will be necessary to present a well-founded argument, demonstrating that this will not cause any harm to the existing forest areas and that it will prevent new conflicts and ecological impacts. This requires a cautious approach as the Supreme Court, in its order from February last year, ruled that the definition of "forest" would continue to have a broad and all-encompassing meaning, including 1.97 lakh square km of undeclared forest land.

The government's other decision to get the permission of the Supreme Court to conduct a forest settlement under



the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA), appears unnecessary. The Central government has already enacted the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, the very purpose of which was to address the anomalies of the settlement processes under the IFA. It explicitly acknowledges the failure, terming it as a "historical injustice" to forest-dependent communities. We don't need to reinvent the wheel to settle the rights under the IFA. Instead of seeking the suspension of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, to conduct the forest settlement process under the IFA, 1927, the focus should be on the proper implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, which was specifically designed to recognise and safeguard the rights of forest dwellers.

Forests in India are governed by the Indian Forest Act and the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA). Seeking forest settlement solely under the IFA will not fully serve the purpose. In Himachal Pradesh, many national parks and wildlife sanctuaries were declared without properly settling the rights of the forest-dependent communities. The case of settling 53 habitation rights in the Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary, Dalhousie (Chamba), under the FRA highlights this issue. To address such historical oversight,

the state government must advocate for the recognition of the rights provided under the Forest Rights Act, which applies to all types of forest land. The government must demonstrate the political will to implement the FRA effectively to safeguard livelihoods and justice for those facing eviction. It should first intervene in the high court, where it is already a party, and request time for the FRA implementation to protect the eligible right-holders from eviction. Delaying action under the pretext of the Supreme Court intervention, while neglecting the available legal recourse, merely shifts responsibility and leaves the vulnerable communities without protection or justice. The rights of people and forest conservation must go hand in hand. A well-balanced approach — one that safeguards livelihoods while ensuring communities take responsibility for conserving the natural resources they depend on — can be achieved through the legal framework provided by the Forest Rights Act.

This will help uphold both the rights of the forest dwellers and the integrity of the forests. The government must act now to not only protect the rights of those who rely on forests for their survival but also uphold justice and sustainability in forest governance.

Defence conundrum

Cutting down on imports a big challenge

IT's intriguing that India continues to be the world's biggest arms importer despite the Modi government's consistent emphasis on self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) and indigenous production in the defence sector. In his address at the ongoing Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the evolving global security scenario demanded innovative approaches and stronger partnerships. But is greater strategic collaboration helping India become a global powerhouse of defence research, development and innovation? Or is it making the country more dependent on foreign manufacturers? These questions need to be addressed with an open mind by the Centre as well as the top brass of the defence forces.

The government's resolve to cut down on arms imports and boost exports is being put to the test by US President Donald Trump. He is insistent that India should buy more US-made security equipment. Trump,



who is set to host Prime Minister Modi, wants a 'fair' trading relationship with New Delhi. And he has made no bones about his zealotry to introduce new tariffs on steel and aluminium imports into the US, a move

that could hit many Indian companies. India, which is keen on co-production of Stryker combat vehicles and fighter jet engines, needs to ensure that such deals are not skewed in favour of the US. Russia's preoccupation with the Ukraine war has prompted India to rely less on its traditional defence partner and focus more on acquisitions from Western nations in a bid to diversify supplies. Transfer of technology is a prerequisite for bolstering domestic production in the long run, but some Western firms have shown reluctance on this count. The Defence Minister has asserted that India does not believe in transactional relationships or imposing solutions. However, the same cannot be said with confidence about the country's top partners. New Delhi must judiciously prioritise its strategic interests, striking a balance between indigenous capacity-building and its 'Make for the world' aspirations.

ISRO's indigenous thrust gets a fillip

Equipped with re-ignition capability, cryogenic engine set to power spacecraft on ambitious missions

On February 7, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully tested the re-ignition of the made-in-India CE20 cryogenic engine in space-like vacuum conditions at the ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. This is another remarkable milestone in ISRO's saga of indigenous cryogenic technology. Most of us turn off the motor while driving down a slope and let gravity accelerate us downward. We restart the engine and continue driving as we approach the foothill. Similarly, to place satellites in various orbits or for intricate interplanetary missions, we must turn on the cryogenic engine mid-flight, after a period of days or months. For example, a lander mission to Mars will require the engine to be turned on after roughly 10 months. Currently, ISRO has only one engine, the Liquid Apogee Motor, which can be re-ignited and powered by liquid fuel.

In the trial, the upgraded CE20-U engine worked as planned under fuel tank pressure conditions expected to prevail while restarting mid-flight. ISRO will make additional alterations and perform step-by-step trials before rolling out the CE20-U engine for the next-generation launch vehicle. When released, pressurised air exits a balloon, thus propelling it in the opposite direction. This illustrates the basic rocket principle, known as Newton's third law. Likewise, if hot gas can be generated and released from a nozzle, the rocket can be made to propel forward in the opposite direction. Combustion requires fuel and oxygen, which are referred to as propellants. Rocket propellants are of three types: solid, liquid and gaseous. Instead of a solid propellant, one might utilise kerosene and a suitable oxidiser as fuel. This is a liquid propellant rocket. Solids and liquids are less voluminous than gases. In normal temperature and pressure, the amount of water in its vapour stage will take up 16 times the space it would

take in its liquid state. As a result, gaseous fuels must be cooled to liquefy them before they can be used as rocket fuel. That is cryogenic fuel. The term 'cryo' means ice-cold or chilled. Cryogenics is the science and technology of substances at temperatures below -153°C, the boiling point of methane. The most common cryogenic propellants are hydrogen liquefied at -253°C as fuel and oxygen liquefied at -183°C as oxidiser. When liquefied hydrogen and liquefied oxygen combine, they are highly reactive and produce steam. The lighter the gas, the lesser the energy required to accelerate it. As hydrogen is the lightest of the atoms, we can use it as fuel and liquid oxygen as an oxidiser to achieve more thrust per kilogramme of fuel, making it ideal for space travel. Cryogenic rockets are critical for deep space missions such as lunar landings and interplanetary probes and for putting larger payloads into geostationary orbit 36,000 km above earth's surface. The US, Russia, Japan, India, France and China are the only countries operating cryogenic rocket engines. These engines are used only in the upper stage of the vehicle and operate beyond the earth's atmosphere after the vehicle has entered space. According to international consensus, anything more than 100 km beyond the earth's surface is considered space. If cryogenics are more efficient, why not use them immediately at liftoff? The high efficiency of cryogenic engines is not suitable for the initial launch stages, where more raw power is required to overcome gravity.

Once the red light turns green, you try to go as fast as possible. You need fuel with good pickup. However, while driving long distances on a motorway, a fuel-efficient engine benefits your wallet and the environment. Petrol vehicles have a higher initial pickup than diesel cars, but the latter have more pulling power

and mileage. Similarly, the launch vehicle must overcome inertia, climb into the sky, race against gravity's gripping hands and then overcome atmospheric drag. Solid or liquid fuel with a powerful thrust is the best option. However, once there is no atmospheric resistance in space, the vehicle is already propelling, and a fuel-efficient engine provides superior mileage. The Soviets and the Americans fought to create more efficient launch vehicles capable of putting



heavier spacecraft into orbit, reaching the moon, and undertaking interplanetary travel. The RL10, which debuted in 1963, was the first cryogenic rocket engine built in the US. It was utilised in the Saturn 1 rocket during the early stages of the Apollo moon landing mission and still powers US launch vehicles.

The Soviets designed the RD-56, also known as the 11D56, at about the same time in 1964. They shifted their focus from fully cryogenic to semi-cryogenic, developing the powerful RD-180, which used liquid

kerosene and liquefied oxygen as launch propellants. In parallel, the Soviets developed a better-designed cryogenic engine, the KVD-1, that was sold to India.

By the 1990s, ISRO was looking for cryogenic technology and had initially approached Japan and the US. The engines were far too pricey. Meanwhile, the Soviets were eager not only to sell their KVD-1 engines but also to transfer knowledge, allowing ISRO to manufacture and produce its own cryogenic engines at a significantly lower cost than that quoted by US corporations.

In the following months, the Soviet Union collapsed and the US exerted pressure on Russia not to export the technology, claiming that India might use it as a nuclear missile. The argument was flimsy because missiles must be ready for launch in seconds, while cryogenic engines require at least 24 hours of fuelling. It was a hypocritical irony because the US came forward only months ago to sell engines at significantly higher prices. The Russians honoured their word and delivered six engines, but they could not impart technology due to the American embargo. Slapped with the ban, ISRO learnt from the six engines and created its own cryogenic engine, CE20. The Indian design is not a replica, as the Russian engines are staged combustion engines, but the made-in-India CE20 are gas-generator cycle engines. After years of hard labour, the CE20-powered LVM3 launch vehicle delivered the GSAT-19 into geostationary transfer orbit on June 5, 2017. The engine was fitted in the Chandrayaan 2 and 3 launch vehicles. The human-rated engine will assist Indian astronauts in reaching orbit during the Gaganyaan expedition. With re-ignition capability, the CE20 engine will power Indian spacecraft on ambitious interplanetary missions.

NEWS BOX

Kylian Mbappe returns to France squad for Nations League quarter-final: Deschamps

New Delhi. France head coach Didier Deschamps has confirmed that Real Madrid star forward Kylian Mbappe will return to the national team squad for their upcoming UEFA Nations League quarterfinal clash against Croatia in March. The French captain was left out of France's Nations League group-stage matches in November, but his recent resurgence in form at Real Madrid has earned him a recall. Mbappe's highly anticipated move to Real Madrid initially got off to a slow start, leading Deschamps to give him time to adjust before ultimately omitting him from France's matches against Italy and Israel. However, speaking at a recent press conference, Deschamps stated that the forward's return was fully justified given his improving performances. "Of course, he (Mbappe) will be there. Why wouldn't he be?" Deschamps said. Yes, for very specific



reasons (leaving him out in November) But he will be there, if nothing happens to him between now and then. He is very attached to the French team, even if he has had a complicated personal period. He has found all his means and, inevitably, it shows in his game, and in his head too," he added. With 48 goals in 86 international appearances, Mbappe remains France's most potent attacking option. Despite his initial struggles in Madrid, the 26-year-old has gradually regained form, scoring 23 goals in 35 matches across all competitions this season. His impact was further highlighted in Real Madrid's recent UEFA Champions League Round of 16 first-leg victory over Manchester City, where he netted a crucial goal. Mbappe's return to the France squad comes at a crucial time as Les Bleus aim to secure a place in the Nations League semifinals.

Calvin Kattar aiming to finish 'unfinished business' in UFC featherweight division

New Delhi. For Calvin Kattar, the last few years have been tough. Once a top contender in the UFC's featherweight division and having an incredibly close fight with Max Holloway, the Boston Finisher looked to continue his dream run in the weightclass. However, losses to Josh Emmett and Arnold Allen derailed his momentum. The Allen fight saw Kattar suffer an ACL injury, which put him out of action for 8 months. Upon his return, the Boston Finisher faced Aljamain Sterling but faced defeat once again. Despite the various setbacks, Kattar remains confident that he can still make a comeback and be a contender once again for the title. But standing in front of him is the up



and coming Youssef Zalal, who is on a 3-fight winning streak in the division. Speaking to [Indiatoday.in](#) ahead of his fight at UFC Fight Night 251, Kattar opened up on his unfinished business in the featherweight division, overcoming adversities and what he is hoping to do in the Zalal fight.

Excerpts from interview with Calvin Kattar [India Today](#): Last year has been pretty tough for you with the ACL injury and your loss in the barn burner with Max Holloway. How were you able to keep yourself focused? Kattar: Setbacks only motivate me more, so it's just how I respond to things. The last few years have been a push, but I'm ready to go and get my hand raised come Saturday. [India Today](#): Your opponent, Youssef, recently said he's not taking you lightly despite what's happened recently, because he knows how much you've done in this division. What's your take on that?

Kattar: That's smart because I'm not taking him lightly either. I don't take anyone lightly that steps across from me in the octagon. They've done enough to get to that point, and they deserve my respect. So I'm definitely not taking him lightly. It's going to make for a hell of a co-main event, and I'm excited to go out there and do what I need to do to get my hand raised.

IPL teams' involvement will not affect Pakistan players in Hundred: ECB chief executive

Indian Premier League's involvement in the Hundred would not affect the participation of Pakistani players in the tournament, said ECB chief executive Richard Gould. 4 IPL teams recently bought stakes in the competition.



New Delhi. England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould said that there will be no impact on the participation of Pakistan players in the upcoming seasons of the Hundred now that Indian Premier League team owners have bought franchises in the tournament. Four IPL franchises won bids to buy stakes in 4 Hundred teams. Mumbai Indians, Lucknow

SuperGiants, SunRisers Hyderabad, and Delhi Capitals placed the winning bids and bought Oval Invincibles, London Spirit, Northern Superchargers, and Southern Brave, respectively. With IPL teams buying four franchises in the tournament, it continued the trend of IPL expanding its reach across the world. IPL teams have stakes in the CPL, SA20, and even the MLC.

According to an ESPNcricinfo report, the exposure of Pakistan players to IPL-owned teams has been limited over the last few years. Asked about this ahead of the 5th edition of the tournament, ECB chief executive Gould stressed that, in the Hundred, the involvement of top Pakistan players will not decrease in the next few years. We're aware of that in other regions,"

Gould told ESPNcricinfo about Pakistan players' limited exposure in IPL-owned teams in other tournaments; "but that won't be happening here," he added. The ECB chief executive also said that while the league would like to have Indian players in the competition, they understood the BCCI's firm stand on not allowing contracted cricketers to play outside the country. Recently, players like Dinesh Karthik and Unmukt Chand have played in franchise leagues outside of India, but that came after they quit Indian cricket. "In terms of availability of Indian players, that is not factored into our plans. The BCCI's position has been very clear. At some point, we'd love to see Indian players come and play in England. We currently see them, obviously, in bilaterals and actually quite a lot in county cricket. But that's not something that we have predetermined through this process," Gould said. The Hundred's 5th season is set to start on August 5, with the final scheduled to be played on 31st of the same month. The tournament will start on the very next day after the conclusion of India's 5-match Test tour of England.

PAK vs NZ, final: Pakistan eye tri-series title in Champions Trophy opener rehearsal

New Delhi. Pakistan will look to assess their strength at home before the Champions Trophy, and they have a great opportunity to do so when they take on New Zealand in the ODI tri-series final at the National Stadium on Friday, February 14. The hosts appeared down and out after being hammered by the Black Caps in the series opener in Lahore. However, they secured a place in the final with a record-breaking chase of 353 against South Africa on Wednesday in Karachi. For both Pakistan and New Zealand, this final serves as the perfect dress rehearsal ahead of their high-stakes Champions Trophy opener. The two teams will meet at the same venue for their Group A clash on 19 February.

Pakistan must have breathed a sigh of relief after their emphatic victory over South Africa, as failing to reach the ODI tri-series final at home would have intensified scrutiny on the team. That win reinforced their status as serious contenders for the Champions Trophy. If they can overcome a well-drilled New Zealand side on Friday, they will head



into the eight-team tournament as one of the favourites. Pakistan appeared overly reliant on Fakhar Zaman at the top of the order after Saim Ayub was ruled out due to injury. Fakhar's 69-ball 84 was the lone bright spot in their unsuccessful chase of 331 against New Zealand, with the team limping to 250 after his dismissal. However, in their record chase against South Africa, Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha stole the show. Both batters struck centuries, sharing a remarkable 260-run partnership that signalled the middle order's readiness for the challenges ahead.

CAN BABAR DELIVER A BIG KNOCK?

Pakistan will be hoping for a substantial contribution from former captain Babar Azam. While he has been consistently chipping in, the lack of a big score has been a point of concern.

Confirming that Babar will continue to open in Saim's absence, captain Rizwan backed his teammate to regain peak form soon. Pakistan will be hoping that the star batter rises to the occasion in the final.

"What's the issue with Babar Azam? He has achieved so much that people expect him to score a hundred in every match. He has built a big reputation. But if you look at him objectively, he is still making valuable contributions," Rizwan told the press in Karachi on Thursday, 13 February. Facing New Zealand's well-balanced bowling attack is the ideal test for Pakistan before the Champions Trophy. At the same time, Pakistan will want their bowlers, especially the pace spearheads -- Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah -- to strike form before the big tournament.

Diego Schwartzman fights tears as home crowd bids emotional farewell

New Delhi. Argentine tennis star Diego Schwartzman could not hold back his tears as he received an emotional farewell from his home crowd in Buenos Aires. The stadium erupted with chants of his name ahead of the final point of his career before he was knocked out in the second round of the Argentina Open. Schwartzman, a former Top 10 player, bowed out with a straight-sets defeat to Spain's Pedro Martinez, 2-6, 2-6, but the moment was about much more than the match itself—it was a heartfelt goodbye to a beloved national icon. The 32-year-old had announced in May last year that he would retire from professional tennis in Buenos Aires, making his final appearance at the Argentina Open all the more special. The home crowd showered him with immense support, creating an unforgettable atmosphere in the stands. Argentine tennis greats Gabriela Sabatini and Guillermo Coria were present to witness Schwartzman's farewell match, further



highlighting his impact on the country's tennis history. "Something a lot of people spoke about was my height, 170 centimetres. I didn't like that during my career, because many times when I was playing good tournaments, everyone was asking me how I did it and how I was going to win the next match," Schwartzman said. "I had to work so hard off the court so that my opponents did not feel I had less power or my movements

were shorter or anything. For sure, I know that height is a very important thing when playing tennis. But more than 50 per cent of the way you win matches comes from what you do away from the court," he added. Spanish legend Rafael Nadal also sent a heartfelt message to Schwartzman, congratulating him on a remarkable career and acknowledging his contributions to the sport. Throughout his time on the ATP Tour, Schwartzman gained admiration not just for his skill but also for his determination and resilience. "Congratulations Diego Schwartzman on your great race! You have been a great example of struggle and overcoming and I am glad that we have shared so many moments on the circuit. Enjoy your next stage!" Nadal said. Standing at just 5'7", Schwartzman defied the odds in a sport often dominated by taller players. His peak came in 2020 when he reached a career-high world ranking of No. 8, proving himself as one of the most consistent and



Australia in the Champions Trophy 2025, also made two changes in the bowling line-up. Left-arm pacer Ben Dwarshuis and young leg-spinner Tanveer Sangha were named for their second and third ODI appearances, respectively. The bowling pair replaced fast bowlers Spencer Johnson and Nathan Ellis in the second game, with the visitors expecting spin to take over in the final match of the series. It meant that Hardie, Sean Abbott, and swing-bowler Dwarshuis were the only pace options in the side, while Australia brought in a host of full-time and part-time spinners in Adam Zampa, Tanveer Sangha, Matthew Short, Travis Head, and Glenn Maxwell. Australia is grouped with England, Afghanistan, and South Africa in the Champions Trophy. Barring England, who only have Adil Rashid as a full-time spinner in their line-up, Australia will face well-recognized spinners in the rest of their matches.

Rachin Ravindra few more steps away from being fit: New Zealand coach Gary Stead

New Zealand head coach Gary Stead confirmed that Rachin Ravindra is still recovering from his facial injury, raising concerns over his availability for the Champions Trophy opener against Pakistan on February 19.

New Delhi. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead has revealed that star batter Rachin Ravindra is yet to regain full fitness after sustaining an injury during the first match against Pakistan in the ongoing Tri-Nation Series. While Ravindra recently took part in a brief net session, Stead emphasised that his recovery remains a slow and cautious process. Speaking to the BlackCaps' social media page ahead of their Tri-Series final

against Pakistan on February 14, Stead provided a fresh update on Ravindra's condition. He mentioned that the young all-rounder is still dealing with headaches but is gradually improving. The team management is closely monitoring his progress, especially with the Champions Trophy approaching, where New Zealand will face co-hosts Pakistan in the tournament opener on February 19.

"Rachin obviously got that nasty blow in Lahore to the forehead. The pleasing thing is he's progressing well. So, we are following HIA protocols at the moment. He's had a headache for a few days, but that's subsiding, which is really good news. He hit a few balls tonight for the first time, which is good. But there's still a few more steps for him to go through before he will be considered fit for play," Stead said.

Rachin Ravindra's horror injury Ravindra suffered the injury in a freak incident



during the 38th over of Pakistan's innings. Positioned at deep square leg, he misjudged a high sweep shot from Khushdil Shah and was struck directly on the face. The impact caused profuse bleeding near his eye, and he was immediately taken off the field, with the

team's physio covering his face with a towel to stop the heavy bleeding.

Apart from Ravindra, Stead also provided an update on experienced pacer Lockie Ferguson, who injured his hamstring during the ILT20. Unlike Ravindra, Ferguson is making steady progress and has been actively participating in net sessions, increasing his chances of featuring in the Champions Trophy. "And Lockie has been out there. He has had a couple of bowls since he has been here, so the intensity was up a little bit more tonight. Pleased with how he's tracking and certainly will look to have him playing in one of the next two games," Stead added. Before beginning their Champions Trophy campaign, New Zealand will play a warm-up match against Afghanistan on February 16 at the National Stadium in Karachi. The team will be hoping for positive updates on Ravindra's fitness as they prepare for the marquee tournament.

Ananya Panday

Is Missing Her 'Little Koala' Nephew River, Mom Alanna Panday Reacts

Ananya Panday's cousin, social media influencer Alanna Panday, welcomed her first child, River, with husband Ivor McCray in July 2024. Since then, the Call Me Bae actress has fully embraced her role as a masi, cherishing every moment with her little munchkin. However, today feels different as she dearly misses her "little koala," who is currently vacationing in Alaska with his parents. The 26-year-old posted a series of pictures with baby River on her Instagram account, which perfectly captured their adorable bond. In the first image, Ananya held her nephew in one arm and hilariously tried to mimic his exact facial expression. The next slide showed the 8-month-old sleeping peacefully on his dotting aunt's lap. The most endearing moment, however, was a clip in which baby River could be seen falling asleep as Ananya held him close to her heart.

In another picture, Ananya, dressed in a striking blue hoodie, was seen cradling her baby nephew carefully in her arms while the little one gazed at the camera. Two other images showcased River sleeping peacefully with his maasi just beside him. The caption of the post read: "Missing my little koala baby nephew River." It also featured a crying face and a red heart emoji. She posted the pictures with Audrey Hepburn's song Moon River.

Ananya's endearing post received many sweet reactions from her Insta family as well as the Panday family. River's mother, Alanna commented, "The video of him falling asleep on your lap." On the other hand, Ananya's aunt Deanne Panday wrote, "Awwwwwww, I miss him too a lot." Meanwhile, the actress' mother, Bhavana Pandey, reacted to the pictures, saying, "Too cute."

Speaking of Ananya's work front, the actress who made her debut in 2019 with Karan Johar's Student of the Year 2, was last seen in Vikramaditya Motwane's screenlife thriller CTRL. Starring Vihaan Samat, the film highlighted the issue of technological advancement and the dangers of artificial intelligence.

As of now, the 26-year-old actress has Chand Mera Dil starring Lakshya, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri opposite Kartik Aaryan and an untitled film with Akshay Kumar and R Madhavan. She is also busy filming the second season of the comedy-drama Call Me Bae.



Kapil Sharma Was Not Making Losses After Fight With Sunil Grover, Rajiv Thakur Recalls Their Fight



Rajiv Thakur has opened up about Kapil Sharma's infamous fight with Sunil Grover. Thakur, who was also a part of The Great Indian Kapil Show, recently shared his thoughts on Kapil's equation with Sunil and claimed that the two really enjoy working together.

"Who doesn't fight? If their fight was so serious, how are they still mingling and shooting together today? Money can make you work together, but if you observe the atmosphere on set, you'll see they genuinely enjoy each other's company," Rajiv told Siddharth Kannan recently, as quoted by Pinkvilla.

The actor-comedian further claimed that neither Kapil nor Sunil struggled with regard to their respective careers after fighting with each other. "When Sunil wasn't on the show, Kapil wasn't facing losses, and vice versa. You can't fake this camaraderie," he added.

Why Did Kapil Sharma And Sunil Grover Fight?

Kapil Sharma and Sunil Grover's fight is not a secret. Grover became a household name with his fictional characters Gutthi and Dr Mashoor Gulati in Comedy Nights With Kapil and The Kapil Sharma Show respectively. However, he had an ugly fight with Kapil in 2018 while they were returning from a show in Australia. They got into a heated argument following which Sunil stopped working with Kapil.

Kapil and Sunil were not on talking terms for six years. However, they reunited last year for the former's The Great Indian Kapil Show.

In March 2024, Sunil opened up about his fight with Kapil and joked that it was "a publicity stunt" they did for Netflix long before the streaming giant set foot in India.

"We were seated on the flight and we learnt that Netflix was coming to India. So, kuch aisa ho ke (acha) publicity stunt ho," Sunil said, poking fun at his and Kapil's fight. Sunil even joked that Netflix India had called them to ask what could be done and thus, this idea came to them.

Ankita Lokhande Slams Rozlyn Khan For Claims About Hina Khan's Cancer: 'That Is So Cheap'



Ankita Lokhande has lashed out at Rozlyn Khan for accusing Hina Khan of using cancer as a publicity stunt. Recently, Ankita took to her Instagram stories, shared a video of Rozlyn from one of her recent interviews and expressed disappointment with her claims. She called Rozlyn's allegations "cheap" and asked Hina to stay strong.

"How could someone think so low my goodness.. That's so cheap !! Ur kind information madam this girl Hina is fighting the cancer with such bravery and I'm saying because I know that and Vikki met her few days back in the hospital where she was taking her chemotherapy where Rocky was with her and literally Vikki said this to me that he was in tears to see her!! Hina u r strong and our sherkhan. And not easy for u or anyone who's facing this !! God bless u girl! This shall too pass @realhinakhan," Ankita wrote.

Recently, Rozlyn Khan has been making several allegations against Hina Khan. While Rozlyn is a stage four cancer survivor, Hina is currently fighting her stage three breast cancer.

Previously, in an interview with News18 Showsha, Rozlyn accused Hina of spreading misinformation and said, "15 hours of mastectomy is impossible. She is exaggerating it. My surgery was 8 to 10 hours long because I was at stage four and my 16 lymph nodes were removed. It was a major surgery. In fact, she (Hina Khan) only said her surgery went for 15 hours. Which surgery is she talking about? She did not give details if it was MRM or what?"

Rozlyn Khan then made a big allegation and accused Hina Khan of using her cancer treatment as a publicity stunt. "She talks about herself rather than talking about the treatments she is taking. She is keeping everything in the dark. I doubt if she is at stage 3. Every interview or byte she gives only moves it around herself or her bravery." However, Hina Khan has not reacted to Rozlyn's claims as of now.

Vicky Kaushal

Rashmika Mandanna

Seek Blessings At Golden Temple Ahead Of Chhaava Release

Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna have been busy with the promotions of their upcoming film 'Chhaava'. After they dazzled Mumbaikars with their appearance at Chitra Cinema in Mumbai yesterday, the Chhaava actors have now arrived in Amritsar. As soon as they landed in the city, they visited the Golden Temple. Videos and pictures from their visit to the holy site are going viral on social media. Videos that have surfaced on social media show Rashmika Mandanna in a wheelchair, Vicky Kaushal walks next to her as they make their way to the Golden Temple. Rashmika was seen in a fuchsia pink ethnic suit, and a matching organza dupatta that covered her head. Meanwhile, Vicky wore a white kurta pajama, and covered his head with an orange scarf. Vicky was seen helping his co-actor as they entered the temple premises. Another set of pictures that have surfaced on social media show them posing with folded hands. Check out the pictures and videos below!



Vicky Kaushal also shared several pictures from their Golden Temple visit. He wrote, "There's something about #SriHarmandirSahib! The peace, the divinity, the power of prayer. As we bring #Chhaava to the world, I hope it reflects even a fraction of the strength and devotion this sacred place inspires. Rabb meher bakshe. Satnam Waheguru."

Meanwhile, a few hours ago, Rashmika Mandanna shared a picture with Vicky as they both arrived in Amritsar. They were both seen wearing Chhaava t-shirts. "Amritsar...Ki haal aaaa!!!!" wrote the actress, expressing her excitement for the promotional event in the city. Several videos from Chhaava Mumbai promotions on 9th Feb also surfaced on social media. Rashmika, who suffered a leg injury in January, informed the paparazzi that her injured leg is better now. As she joined Vicky for the promotional event in Mumbai, the latter urged the crowd to welcome her in true 'Dadar style'. He announced that he hasn't come for the promotion alone today, and that Rashmika has specially joined him from Hyderabad.

