

## HOLY DIP

# PM MODI TAKES HOLY DIP At Maha Kumbh, Offers Prayers Watched By Vast Crowds

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a 'holy dip' in the sangam, the confluence of three rivers - the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati - in Prayagraj, where the Maha Kumbh is being held, on Wednesday morning. Wearing a bright saffron jacket and blue trackpants, and holding 'rudraksha' beads, Mr Modi chanted prayers as he took several full body dips in the river waters.

Earlier today he took a boat tour of the sangam with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Apart from the gathering of lakhs of Hindu devotees from around the world, the Kumbh this year made headlines for a tragic stampede exactly seven days ago in which 30 people were killed. Prime Minister Modi said he was "blessed" to take this 'holy dip', calling it a "moment of divine connection". "Like the tens of millions who took part, I was also filled with a spirit of devotion," he said.

"The 'snan', or the 'holy dip', at the 'sangam' is a moment of divine connection. May Maa Ganga bless all with peace, wisdom, good health, and harmony," he said in a post on X. Visuals showed the near bank crowded with thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of people thronging and jostling with each other to catch a glimpse of the Prime Minister.

Mr Modi visits the Maha Kumbh as the national capital votes in a critical Assembly election; the Prime Minister's BJP is bidding to stop the ruling AAP of Arvind Kejriwal from claiming a third successive term and, to a much lesser extent, analysts say, ward off the Congress' challenge. This morning, before setting out for his 'holy dip', the Prime Minister posted on X encouraging Delhi voters to exercise their rights. "I urge the voters here to participate in this festival of democracy with full enthusiasm and cast their valuable vote," he wrote in Hindi. The PM is the second high-profile figure from the BJP to take a 'holy dip' this Kumbh; last week, two days before the stampede, Home Minister Amit Shah and his family also paid their respects. Visuals showed the near bank crowded with thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of people thronging and jostling with each other to catch a glimpse of the Prime Minister. Mr Modi visits the Maha Kumbh as the national capital votes in a critical Assembly election; the Prime Minister's BJP is bidding to stop the ruling AAP of Arvind Kejriwal from claiming a third successive term and, to a much lesser extent, analysts say, ward off the Congress' challenge.



## DELHI ELECTIONS

# Delhi Assembly Election 2025: 'AAP-da' FOR ARVIND KEJRIWAL ? Delhi Exit Polls Predict Rout

**TOTAL SEATS - 70** | **RESULTS - 8 FEBRUARY**  
**MAJORITY - 36**

**Diary Times Desk :** Will the just-concluded assembly elections spell the end of the dream run by Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party in the national capital? A overwhelming majority of exit polls -- eight out of 10 -- appear to think so, with two giving the party a chance and one tentatively giving it half a chance. Matrise has predicted an outer margin of 37 seats for AAP -- two more than the halfway mark of 35 in the 70-member assembly. Two others -- WeePreside and Mind Brink -- have predicted a third term for Mr Kejriwal's party. The rest are predicting a change of guard -- suggesting that the people of Delhi have shifted their allegiance from AAP to the BJP -- their favourite 20 years ago. An aggregate predicts 30 of Delhi's 70 seats for AAP and 39 for the BJP. Most pollsters have kept the Congress in the fringes -- the maximum number of seats predicted for the party is just three.

AAP has rejected the predictions by exit poll agencies. "This is our fourth election, and every time exit polls did not show AAP forming the government in Delhi. Arvind Kejriwal has worked for the people of Delhi. We will see the results in favour of the Aam Aadmi Party and we will form the government," AAP leader Sushil Gupta told news agency ANI. While exit polls do not always get it right, in the last two elections in Delhi, they had correctly predicted a victory for AAP, though falling short of the massive mandate the party had received. They even got it right in Punjab, the second state AAP won.



## Himachal News: Case filed against Pradhan and brother of former Zilla Parishad member for selling government cement

## Himachal: Electricity employees will protest against the government from Hamirpur, demand withdrawal of the decision to abolish 700 posts

**Diary Times Desk :** An FIR has been lodged against the Panchayat Pradhan, who had rigged the purchase of apple saplings worth Rs 1.20 crore in Sanwal Panchayat, for rigging government cement by making fake bills. A case has also been registered against the brother of the former Zilla Parishad. It is alleged that both of them hatched a conspiracy to sell government cement worth Rs 1.40 lakh by making fake bills. According to the police, on January 31, a truck left for Sanwal from the Tisa store of Civil Supply with 276 bags of government cement. But the truck was taken towards Chamba instead of Sanwal. Government cement also started being unloaded from the truck at a private store three kilometers away from Tisa. Before the cement could be stolen, the police caught the driver. When the police asked the driver to show the bill, he could not show the government bill. During investigation, the police found out that cement was given to the Civil Supply store without any demand from the Panchayat. Whereas, after the cement was released on February 1, the Panchayat Pradhan reached the Civil Supply store with a false demand. According to the rules, only the person with whom the Panchayat has a contract goes to collect the cement. But in this case, the Panchayat Pradhan and the brother of the former Zilla Parishad member flouted the rules and hatched a conspiracy to embezzle the government cement. After thoroughly investigating all the aspects, the police have registered a case against Sanwal Panchayat Pradhan Mohan Lal and Kewal Krishna. Now the police is trying to find out how the government cement was issued on a fake bill.

**Diary Times Desk :** The employees of the state electricity board will blow the bugle of struggle against the Congress government from Hamirpur on February 11. On Wednesday, a protest was held outside the electricity board headquarters Kumar House in the capital Shimla and a demand was raised to withdraw the decision to abolish 700 posts. Expressing anger over the restoration of the old pension scheme, no new recruitments and not getting the pending financial benefits, the joint front of employees, pensioners and engineers warned to intensify the agitation in the entire state. During the lunch break on Wednesday, while doing a symbolic protest, the convener of the United Front Lokesh Thakur and co-convener Hiralal Verma said that tampering with the structure of the electricity board will not be tolerated.

## Himachal News: CM launches 'Clean City-Prosperous City' initiative and 'One State One Portal', nine services will be available

## YOUR HOROSCOPE



**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu launched the ambitious program of the Urban Development Department, Clean City-Prosperous City Initiative and Citizen Service Portal. Under the One State One Portal initiative, the Citizen Service Portal will be available on the [citizenservice.hp.gov.in](http://citizenservice.hp.gov.in) platform. Now 9 essential services will be provided online in urban bodies, out of which 7 services are designed according to the needs of the citizens and two for the management of urban local bodies. Through this, many public services including business license, property tax management, grievance redressal, booking of community places will be available online to the people. In the coming time, 45 services will be provided through this platform. The CM said in a program organized by the Urban Development Department at Peterhof that the objective of launching the Citizen Service Portal under the One State-One Portal initiative is to provide an integrated end-to-end online solution in all urban local bodies of the state. Under the Clean City-Prosperous City program, various initiatives will be taken for cleanliness, environmental protection and waste management in urban local bodies. CM said that garbage IDs of 2 lakh 82 thousand households in urban areas will be created for garbage collection and bill issuance through Citizen Seva Portal. In future, all these registered units will be provided digital identity plates.

## Himachal News: Student commits suicide by hanging herself in Shimla, suicide note not found at the spot; Police engaged in investigation

**Diary Times Desk :** A student committed suicide by hanging herself in Mehli area of the capital Shimla. The deceased student was living with her sister in her house in Mehli. The deceased student was still studying. According to information received from the police, the deceased was at home with her sister on Tuesday night. While her mother had gone to Delhi for a family wedding. It is being told that she was a bit upset throughout the day, but she did not tell anyone about it. At around 10 pm, she was walking in her balcony. After a while, when her sister called her in the room, there was no response. After this, when the sister went to the balcony, she saw that her sister had committed suicide by hanging herself with a stall made of iron angle.

### Aries

Today you will get relief from all your problems due to sudden financial gain. Employed people may be fired from the job due to heavy arguments with colleagues in the workplace. Due to financial gain for business people, you can invest in a new business. There may be difficulty in walking due to nerve pain problems.

### Taurus

Today you should take all important decisions of your career thoughtfully. Employed people may have to get scolded by their boss due to being hasty in the workplace. People doing business should thank God for getting financial benefits from the advice of their spouse. Due to irritation in the eyes, you should consult an ophthalmologist.

### Gemini

Today, you should take special care while traveling. Employed people should solve small mistakes happening in their projects in time in the workplace. Businessmen should focus on teamwork, otherwise, due to increased stress, business will suffer losses. Asthma patients may have to face difficulties due to problems.

### Cancer

Today, special guests will arrive in your family due to a religious event. Respect in the family will increase if employed people are honored by senior officers in their workplace. People doing business should discuss with a financial advisor before investing in any particular scheme due to financial gain. Kidney patients should immediately consult a specialist doctor.

### Leo

Today you should take special control over your speech and behavior. Performance will improve due to improvement in training of employed people. People doing business may face increased difficulties in business due to arguments with business partners. High BP and cholesterol problems will increase the problems of your spouse.

### Virgo

Today you will get success as your long pending legal proceedings will come in your favor. Employed people may get a salary increase due to completing their projects in time in their workplace. People doing business should make a budget and spend the money in order to get financial benefits. Old diseases of elders in the house may emerge.

### Libra

Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employed people will get a chance to work with senior officers due to advancement in their professional field. People doing business may have to take a loan from the bank due to heavy losses. Problems like leg pain and headache may bother you.

### Scorpio

Today you should pay special attention to worship. Employed people may have to face mental problems due to extra workload in the workplace. People doing business should avoid exchanging money with any unknown person today. There may be difficulty in walking due to nerve pain problems.

### Sagittarius

Today you can invest especially in land and buildings. Employed people may have to travel long distances due to office work, due to which your health may deteriorate. Due to financial gains, business people can invest in the stock market with the help of a financial advisor. Paralysis patients should immediately consult a doctor in case of any problem.

### Capricorn

Today, you should offer water to Lord Shiva to avoid difficulties. A heated argument with HR in the workplace will spoil your whole day. People doing business may have to travel abroad in connection with business expansion. As the problem of foot pain increases, you must consult a specialist doctor.

### Aquarius

Today your interest in creative work will especially increase. Employed people may have to face some problems due to the start of a new job in the workplace. People doing business will get financial gain due to some special offer, your financial condition will be strengthened. Wait.

### Pisces

Today is going to be a challenging day for you. Employed people may be given an important project by their boss to handle important projects in the workplace. People doing business should control their speech and behavior with their customers. If the skin of the body becomes dry,





## Himachal Cabinet Meeting: Himachal Pradesh Cabinet meeting on 13th, decision may be taken on the dates of budget session

**Diary Times Desk :** The meeting of the Himachal Pradesh Cabinet will be held on 13 February at 11 am in the State Secretariat. A decision can be taken in the meeting on fixing the dates of the budget session. The budget session can be held in the last week of February or the first week of March. Apart from this, a decision can also be taken in the state cabinet meeting regarding merging schools with fewer children. Many other important decisions can also be taken in the meeting to be chaired by Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu.



## Himachal Tourism: Foreign tourists reduced by 90 percent due to Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Hamas war, the figures will surprise you

**Diary Times Desk :** Due to the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas war, there has been a huge decline in the number of foreign tourists in Kullu Valley. The number of foreign tourists has decreased by 90 percent at major tourist destinations like Kasol, Manali and Banjar in Parvati Valley. Especially after 2021, only a few tourists were seen in Manali and Banjar Valley along with Kasol in Parvati Valley, which was the first choice of foreigners. The record decrease in foreign tourists has affected not only Kullu but also the economy of entire Himachal Pradesh and the country. Earlier the reason for this was believed to be Covid-19, which badly affected the tourism business in 2020 and 2021. After this, the Russia-Ukraine war affected the arrival of foreigners to India. After the Israel-Hamas war broke out in 2023, thousands of Israeli tourists returned to their country, which further reduced the number of tourists. According to the data, about 4.49 lakh foreign tourists visited Kullu between 2016 and 2019, while this number has come down to only 26,000 from 2021 to 2024. This decline has caused severe damage to the tourism business of Kullu-Manali, Manikaran, Kasol, Tirthan and Banjar Valley. Tourism businessmen Gajendra Thakur, Rajendra Prakash and Vijay Sood said that a large number of foreign tourists used to come to Kullu, Kasol and Manali, but after 2020 there has been a huge decline in it.

## Shimla Winter Carnival: Himachali folk artists of Winter Carnival are roaming around for money

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachali folk artists who entertained the audience with their voice and dance in the Shimla Winter Carnival held at the historic Ridge Ground are now running around for their money. Even after a month, their money has not been released. On the other hand, the Municipal Corporation says that there is no shortage of money. This money is to be released from the treasury. As soon as the money is received, it will be distributed among the artists. Shimla Winter Carnival was celebrated from 24 December to 8 January. In this, many Bollywood and Punjabi singers along with more than 25 Himachali folk artists also performed. How much money is to be given to which artist for this has already been decided. According to local artists, the Municipal Corporation has paid most of the money to Bollywood and Punjabi artists. But Himachali folk artists have not been given a single penny yet.

## Sports News: Himachal won three gold medals in Taekwondo, showed strength in the competition held in Hyderabad

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal performed brilliantly and won three gold medals in the National Poomse Taekwondo Championship. The competition was organized by the Taekwondo Federation of India (TFI) in Hyderabad, Telangana from 28 to 31 January. In the championship, senior male and female players from all states showed their strength in different categories. Shimla Police Department's Taekwondo coach and constable Kamal Kishore won the first gold medal in the Senior Under-50 age group Poomse Individual category. This is his fourth national medal. Ghanshyam Bhardwaj won the second gold medal in the Senior Poomse Individual Special-Deaf category. Ghanshyam is working as a data entry operator in the state's Digital Technology and Governance Department. The third gold medal was won by Rajpal, Kamal Kishore and Ghanshyam Bhardwaj in the Senior Team Poomse competition in the men's Under-50 age group team. The gold medal winners were welcomed at the Ridge ground on their return to Shimla.

## Himachal Pradesh: Consumers in Himachal Pradesh can get mustard and refined oil from the depot from this day

**Diary Times Desk :** Ration card consumers of Himachal will now get refined oil along with mustard oil in the depot. The state government has issued a supply order for mustard oil. Now the formalities for the tender of refined oil are being completed. The government believes that consumers should be given one liter of mustard and one refined oil per ration card as before. Apart from this, oil has to be given to consumers as per demand in wedding ceremonies and other events. Due to this, the tender for refined oil is being done by the Food Supply Corporation. There are 19.5 lakh ration card consumers in Himachal. The government is providing them two liters of oil, three pulses (Malka, Mash and Dal Chana), sugar and one kg of salt on subsidy. The central government is providing flour and rice. It is worth mentioning that consumers are not getting mustard oil in the depot for the last three months.

## Himachal News: 33 coins weighing 247 grams were found in the stomach of a person in Himachal Pradesh, he is suffering from this disease

**Diary Times Desk :** Doctors in a private hospital in Ghumarvi city have removed 33 coins of 300 rupees from the stomach of a 33-year-old mentally ill youth through surgery. The weight of these coins was found to be 247 grams. The family members brought the youth to the hospital on January 31 after he complained of stomach pain. Doctors conducted several tests on the patient, but could not find the exact cause of stomach pain. After that, endoscopy was done, which revealed that a large number of coins were deposited in the youth's stomach. After this, the operation was conducted under the leadership of doctor Ankush. During the operation, 33 coins of two, ten and twenty rupees were removed. Dr. Ankush said that this was a challenging case. The coins were spread in the patient. The condition of the coins was detected with the help of CR in the operation theater and the coins were removed after a three-hour operation. Doctor Ankush said that the youth is suffering from a mental disease called schizophrenia. In this, the person loses touch with reality.

## Himachal News: 19-year-old Chamba resident arrested for extorting Rs 4.84 lakh by posing as fake CBI officer

**Diary Times Desk :** A fraudster extorted Rs 4.84 lakh by posing as a CBI officer. On the complaint, the district cyber cell arrested the fraudster from Chamba (Himachal Pradesh) on Monday. The accused has been identified as Amit Kumar (19), a resident of village Chamba Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. District Deputy Commissioner of Police Ankit Singh said that on August 12, 2024, a man complained of sextortion in Dwarka Cyber Cell. He told that an unknown girl had made a WhatsApp video call to him. He talked to her for five to six seconds. Then the phone got disconnected. The next day a WhatsApp audio call came. The caller introduced himself as CBI.

## Nepal puts an end to solo expeditions on Mt Everest, other 8000m peaks

**Agencies :** The Nepal government has formally ended solo expeditions on Mt Everest and other mountain peaks above 8,000 metres by making one mountain guide mandatory for two climbers, according to revised mountaineering regulations. The sixth amendment to the Mountaineering Regulation came into force on Tuesday after it was published in the Nepal Gazette, the government's official publication. The revised regulations require a high-altitude support staff or mountain guide to be assigned for every two climbers for peaks above 8,000 metres, including the 8,849 metres tall Mt Everest. For other mountains, the rule requires at least one guide per group, according to a notice published in the Nepal Gazette. Under the previous rule, one mountain guide was sufficient for a group of climbers scaling mountains above 8,000 metres.

## Shabbir wants CID probe into BRS regime's Intensive Household Survey

**Agencies :** Advisor to Telangana government (SC, ST, OBC & Minorities) Mohammed Ali Shabbir has urged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to order a CB-CID inquiry into alleged irregularities in the Intensive Household Survey (IHS) conducted in 2014 by the then TRS (now BRS) government. In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister on Wednesday, Mr. Shabbir Ali highlighted that a document titled 'Samagra Kutumba Survey (SKS)' or 'IHS-2014' is circulating with misleading information regarding the population of various castes, including SCs, STs, and BCs. He expressed concern that the figures from this survey were never officially released but were selectively leaked to the media, distorting caste demographics. The survey, conducted on August 19, 2014, reportedly involved nearly four lakh government employees, including police personnel, for data collection. However, Mr. Shabbir Ali pointed out several irregularities, including the voluntary nature of data collection to avoid legal scrutiny and the absence of legal notification under the 'Collection of Statistics Act, 2008'. He stated that personal details, including Aadhaar numbers, ration card details, bank information, LPG connections, and vehicle registrations, were collected across eight broad areas covering 94 items. Despite an expenditure of ₹100 crore on the survey, the results were never tabled before the Assembly. He raised suspicions of financial misappropriation.

## AAP rejects exit polls for underestimating its performance in Delhi, BJP says hint at change



**Agencies :** The AAP rejected the exit poll results for the Delhi Assembly election on Wednesday, saying the pollsters have "historically" underestimated its performance, while the BJP termed the predictions an assertion of people's urge for change. As voting for the 70-member Delhi Assembly concluded at 6 pm on Wednesday, most exit polls predicted an edge to the BJP over the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). AAP's national spokesperson Reena Gupta told PTI that exit polls have historically underestimated the Arvind Kejriwal-led party but in actual results, the party gains several times more than these projections. "You look at any exit poll -- whether in 2013, 2015 or 2020 -- the AAP was always shown getting a smaller number of seats. But it got a greater number of seats in the actual results," Gupta said. She claimed that the people of Delhi have voted for the AAP in large numbers and asserted that the party is going to register a "historic" victory, with Kejriwal becoming the chief minister for a fourth time.

## Six non-BJP ruled states seek immediate withdrawal of UGC draft regulations

**Agencies :** A conclave of Higher Education Ministers, representing six non-BJP ruled states on Wednesday demanded that the Centre should immediately withdraw the UGC draft regulations citing various 'flaws'. On the invitation of Karnataka, State Education Ministers of Kerala (R Bindu), Tamil Nadu (Govi Cheziaan) and Himachal Pradesh (Rohit Thakur) participated, while Telangana was represented by IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu and Jharkhand by MLA Sudivya Kumar in the one-day conclave held in Bengaluru. Addressing journalists after the event, Karnataka Higher Education Minister M C Sudhakar said it was also decided unanimously that UGC must engage in a collaborative consultative process with all the states when framing these regulations. Many states, including the allies of the BJP, have pointed out the various 'flaws' in the draft of the University Grants Commission (Minimum Qualification for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff.

## Prayagraj's IAS Officer Chandra Mohan Garg's Miyawaki Transformation for a Sustainable Future

**Agencies :** In a remarkable environmental initiative, IAS officer Chandra Mohan Garg has led the transformation of over 55,800 square meters of urban land in Prayagraj into lush, vibrant green spaces. Utilizing the Miyawaki method, a Japanese technique that accelerates the growth of dense forests, the project has been nothing short of revolutionary. With 1.2 lakh trees planted, the project addresses multiple environmental concerns, including air pollution, biodiversity loss, and the city's preparedness for the massive influx of visitors expected at the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025. Chandra Mohan Garg, serving as the District Magistrate of Prayagraj, recognized the need for substantial environmental changes, particularly in reducing pollution and improving the city's green cover. He proposed a large-scale afforestation project to create green spaces throughout the city, with a focus on using the Miyawaki technique to transform urban.

## Manipur CM Biren Singh, senior ministers, BJP MLAs rush to Delhi

**Agencies :** Hours after Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh left for the National Capital to meet Central leaders, three senior state ministers and four BJP MLAs also rushed to Delhi on a chartered flight on Wednesday evening, officials said. The CM was likely to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss a wide range of issues, including the security situation in the state, they said. According to officials, PWD minister Govindas Konthouam, forest and environment minister Thongam Biswajit, and consumer affairs minister L Susindro Meitei took a chartered flight in the evening. They are accompanied by four BJP MLAs — Karam Shyam, Sanasam Premchandra, Kh Ibomcha, and Sapam Kunjakeshwar (Keba), officials added. While Govindas said he was "going to Uttar Pradesh," Biswajit claimed that he was going to attend a function at the Kumbh Mela. CM is likely to meet Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss wide range of issues, including security situation in the state.

## Delhi Assembly election 2025: 58.27% voter turnout recorded in Delhi; exit polls predict BJP win

**Agencies :** Voting concluded for the high-octane Delhi Assembly polls at 6 p.m. with a 58.7% voter turnout. All 70 Assembly constituencies voted in a single phase today with a total of 13,766 polling stations set up at 2,696 polling locations. According to the Delhi CEO, the voter turnout recorded at the closing of booths is 58.27% across Delhi. The highest voter turnout in Mustafabad is 69%. Lowest was recorded in Karol Bagh 47.40% Most exit polls on Wednesday predicted an edge for the BJP over the ruling AAP in the Delhi assembly polls, while the Congress was projected to make no significant gains. The Election Commission will announce the official results after the counting of on February 8. A paid holiday was declared for employees in both government and private sectors. Uttar Pradesh and Haryana also announced a paid holiday due to the elections in the National Capital. There are 699 candidates in the fray, with the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress fielding 70 candidates each, while the Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded 68 candidates, giving two seats to its allies — JD(U) and LJP. In the national capital's seat of power — New Delhi constituency — where AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is fighting to retain his seat, the BJP and Congress have fielded sons of former Chief Ministers Parvesh Sahib Singh and Sandeep Dikshit, respectively.





## Elon Musk is serving as a 'special government employee,' White House says

**Agencies :** Elon Musk is officially serving under President Donald Trump as a special government employee, according to a White House official. That designation means Musk – the billionaire tech entrepreneur who has been a force within the new Trump administration – is not a volunteer but also not a full-time federal employee. According to a Justice Department summary, a special government employee is “anyone who works, or is expected to work, for the government for 130 days or less in a 365-day period.” Musk is not being paid, a person familiar with his employment told CNN. Musk has a top secret security clearance, an official familiar with the matter tells CNN. Musk, who is the world’s richest man and became an ardent supporter of Trump’s during the campaign, has an office on the White House campus. Within weeks of Trump taking office, Musk has shown he has a broad mandate to carry out his government efficiency initiative known as DOGE. On Monday, Trump confirmed Musk has access to the Treasury Department’s critical payment system, which sends out money on behalf of the entire federal government. Federal unions and others on Monday sued the Treasury Department over the access.

## Reports that US–Israel will blow Iran into smithereens exaggerated: Trump

**Agencies :** As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the United States, President Donald Trump has refuted reports suggesting that Washington is working in cahoots with the Jewish nation to “blow Iran into smithereens”. Dismissing the claims, Trump clarified that such speculation is “greatly exaggerated”. “Reports that the United States, working in conjunction with Israel, is going to blow Iran into smithereens ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED. I would much prefer a Verified Nuclear Peace Agreement, which will let Iran peacefully grow and prosper,” he said. Netanyahu visited the White House on Tuesday, with the latter becoming the first foreign leader to visit the Oval Office since Trump took office as President on January 20. Calling the Republican the “greatest friend” his country.

## IAEA chief warns of nuclear risk from Russia attacks on Ukraine power grids

**Agencies :** The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog has sounded the alarm about the continued risk of nuclear accidents as a result of Russia’s attacks on Ukraine’s power grid. Rafael Grossi, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief, arrived in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Tuesday and warned of dire consequences not just from direct hits on power plants, but from strikes on substations and other infrastructure that can cause disruptions to the overall energy system. “I’m at Kyivska electrical substation – an important part of Ukraine’s power grid essential for nuclear safety,” Grossi wrote on X, after inspecting an electricity distribution substation. “A nuclear accident can result from a direct attack on a plant, but also from power supply disruption.” Moscow has constantly bombarded Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, including substations, throughout its three-year invasion, although it has avoided direct strikes on Ukraine’s nuclear plants. Grossi posted pictures of his visit to the substation alongside Energy Minister German Galushchenko, as well as his tour of what appeared to be defences against Russian strikes.



## Argentina says it will pull out of World Health Organization, mirroring Trump’s move last month



**Agencies :** Argentina has announced it will pull out of the World Health Organization (WHO), mirroring a similar move by US President Donald Trump last month. “President (Javier) Milei instructed (foreign minister) Gerardo Werthein to withdraw Argentina’s participation in the World Health Organization,” presidential spokesperson Manuel Adorni said at a news conference on Wednesday. “We Argentinians will not allow an international organization to intervene in our sovereignty, much less in our health,” he added. Trump, whom Milei considers an ideological ally, announced on his first day back in the White House in January he is withdrawing the United States from the WHO, drawing criticism from public health experts. Adorni said Argentina’s decision was based on “profound differences regarding... health management, especially during the pandemic that... led us to the longest lockdown in human history and a lack of independence in the face of the political influence of some states.” A statement later released from Argentina’s presidential office accused WHO of causing.

## EU Chief Calls For Reassessment Of Ties With China Because Of THIS Reason

**Agencies :** European Union Chief Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday outlined the need to reconsider the EU’s relationship with China. She also highlighted the growing imbalances and risks in the country’s economic ties. As both mark 50 years of diplomatic relations, Leyen acknowledged China’s role as a trading partner. However, she noted, “there is room to engage constructively with China and find solutions in our mutual interest.” While delivering a speech at the EU Ambassadors Conference 2025, Von Der Leyen said, “This global engagement is more important than ever in today’s world. So we need to be ready to work with all major players. This will be an intense year in our relationship with China, as we mark half a century of diplomatic relations. You have heard me say many times that our relationship with China.

## Could Canada really stop oil flow to the US in response to Trump tariffs?

**Agencies :** A major trade war between the United States and Canada has been averted after US President Donald Trump agreed to hold off on imposing a 25 percent tariff for 30 days. But anger has erupted in Canada, with people calling for a boycott of US products, and some even calling to stop the export of oil to the country’s southern neighbour. However, blocking crude oil flow to the US could inflict an enormous economic cost on Canada, which pumps nearly all of its crude oil to the US via a network of pipelines. Moreover, it would take some time for Canada to diversify its exports after decades of close trade ties cemented by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which Trump renegotiated during his first term in office from 2017 to 2021. Hence, in theory, Canada could stop the flow of oil into the US as leverage to get Trump to back down on the tariff threats. But doing so would disrupt crude supply to refineries in Canada’s east as the pipelines pass through the US territory. The main caveat is how Canada’s pipeline infrastructure is laid. It begins in western Canada, where most of the oil is produced, but has to pass through the US to reach the eastern side of Canada.

## Hundreds of women raped, burnt alive in Congo jailbreak amid rebel conflict

**Agencies :** Hundreds of women inmates in Munzenze prison of Congo’s Goma were reportedly burnt alive after being raped during the chaos after Rwanda-backed rebel groups entered the Congolese city last week, leading to a surge in human rights violation. Rwanda-backed M23 rebels last week captured regional capital Goma in an anarchic and mineral-rich part of Democratic Republic of Congo, where millions were killed and displaced in wars of 1996–1997 and 1998–2003. Among human rights violation the conflict has led to, summary executions, bombing of displacement camps are some, along with reports of gang rapes and other sexual violence, according to UN rights office (OHCHR). Hundreds of female inmates were attacked in their wing inside Goma’s Munzenze prison during a mass jailbreak, according to a senior UN official cited in a report by The Guardian. As per Vivian van de Perre, the deputy head of the UN peacekeeping force based in Goma.

## US C-17 plane carrying 30 Punjabis among 104 deported Indians lands in Amritsar

**Agencies :** A US Air Force C-17 Globemaster aircraft landed at the Air Force base in Amritsar on Wednesday, carrying 104 Indian nationals who were deported from the United States under its new immigration policy. Among the deportees, 30 were from Punjab, 33 each from Haryana and Gujarat, and the remaining from other states. The group included children and women. After their arrival, the deportees were provided with medical assistance and food due to the uncomfortable journey. Individuals from Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh were sent home by road, while the others, including the majority from Gujarat, were sent home via flights. Police officers from the respective police stations of the deportees' residential areas arrived at the airport to take custody of the deported individuals. They may question them or collect basic details. If no serious criminal involvement is found, they will be handed over to their families. Among the five deportees from Amritsar, three had recently reached the US. Akashdeep Singh from Rajatal had been out of contact with his family for 15 days. His father stated that the police informed them of his return. The family spent Rs 60 lakh to send him to the US and expressed relief that he has returned safely.



## Punjabi youth continue to flock abroad despite risks

**Agencies :** The commencement of deportation of illegal immigrants by the USA government and scores of Indians returning from Russia after serving in the Russian Army as helpers have highlighted the desperation of Punjabi youth to go abroad. Among the 104 deported to India by the USA, 30 are of Punjab origin. Despite adverse conditions abroad, Punjabi youth are eager to migrate to Western countries. Ignoring the harsh realities of cost-of-living crises and internecine conflicts, they are drawn to the promise of greener pastures. Many have lost their lives or sustained injuries in the process. The case of Tejpal Singh, a 28-year-old from Amritsar, is a tragic example. He was killed fighting for Russia in its war against Ukraine on March 12, 2024. Singh had previously travelled to Cyprus twice on a study visa and had met his future wife there. Other youngsters from Punjab have also been lured by advertisements on social media to serve in Russia as food delivery personnel, cooks, and helpers. Many have returned safely, but others have not been so fortunate. According to Kamal K Bhumla, who operates an overseas educational company in the Doaba region, approximately 1.4 lakh students, 70,000 students.

## No ownership rights for rehab scheme beneficiaries: Centre

**Agencies :** In a setback to thousands of occupants of houses allotted under the rehabilitation scheme in the city, the Union Government has made it clear that there is no provision to give ownership rights to them. Raising the issue during the Budget Session of Parliament, Chandigarh MP Manish Tewari today asked the Home Minister about the total number of houses built under various rehabilitation schemes in Chandigarh since 1980; whether the Union Government is aware of any survey conducted by the Estate Office of Chandigarh to ascertain the ownership rights of houses under various rehabilitation schemes in Chandigarh, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor? He further asked whether the Union Government plans to grant ownership rights to allottees of rehabilitation homes in Chandigarh; if so, whether the government also plans to uplift the ban on property conversion from leasehold to freehold through General Power of Attorney (GPA) in Chandigarh; and if not, the reasons does the Government have for not providing ownership rights to the allottees of rehabilitation homes? In response to the questions raised by Tewari, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai stated.

## Local bodies' polls on March 2, model code of conduct comes into effect

**Agencies :** The State Election Commission (SEC) of Haryana has announced the election schedule for local bodies, covering eight Municipal Corporations, four Municipal Councils and 21 Municipal Committees. With the announcement, the model code of conduct (MCC) has come into effect in the respective jurisdictions. Polling for seven Municipal Corporations, four Municipal Councils and 21 Municipal Committees will be held on March 2. This includes Municipal Corporations of Faridabad, Gurugram, Manesar, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak and Yamunanagar and four Municipal Committees — Ambala Sadar, Pataudi Jatauli Mandi, Thanesar and Sirsa. Additionally, bye-election will be conducted for two mayoral seats in Ambala and Sonepat and three Municipal president seats in Sohna, Assandh and Ismailabad. For the Panipat Municipal Corporation, elections will be held separately on March 9, with nominations open from February 21 to February 27. The counting of votes for all local bodies is scheduled for March 12.



## Delhi ex-CM Kejriwal booked over Yamuna poisoning allegations

**Agencies :** A case has been registered against former Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal and other members of the AAP at Shahabad police station on the directions of the court. The complaint, filed by advocate Jagmohan Manchanda, alleges that Kejriwal made provocative and false statements accusing the Haryana BJP government of "poisoning" the Yamuna. Manchanda stated that he was aggrieved by Kejriwal's remarks, which he saw in a viral video. He alleged that the AAP leader deliberately made misleading and inflammatory statements against the Haryana Government and the ruling BJP for electoral gains in Delhi. "The statements appear to be made in conspiracy with other AAP members with an ulterior motive to incite unrest in Delhi and Haryana and influence voters," said Manchanda. He further added that Kejriwal, being a former CM, is well aware of Delhi's water supply mechanisms and yet chose to spread falsehoods. As president of Markandeshwar Mahadev Shiv Mandir in Shahabad Markanda, Manchanda also expressed concern that Kejriwal's remarks were deliberately timed during the ongoing Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj, where millions of Hindu devotees are taking a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, including the Yamuna.

## Saini's 'sop opera': Squatters on panchayat land to get ownership rights

**Agencies :** On the day the State Election Commission (SEC) announced municipal poll in Haryana, the Saini government unveiled a bonanza for thousands of illegal squatters, who have been living in houses built on panchayat land across Haryana for at least 20 years. With an eye on the forthcoming March 2 poll, the Cabinet, which met here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today, effected a major amendment to the Haryana Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act, 1961. Terming it a major "pro-people" decision aimed at benefiting the common man, Saini claimed that thousands of people would get ownership rights following amendment to the Act. The owners of the houses built on land up to 500 square yards would be eligible for rights under the new regime. The house owners would get the ownership rights at the collector rates prevalent in 2004.



## BJP alleges favouritism in Vidhan Sabha appointments

**Diary Times Desk :** Alleging favoritism in 14 appointments made recently in the Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, the BJP has demanded cancellation of these appointments with immediate effect. "Five of the 14 individuals appointed against these posts hail from Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldeep Pathania's home district, five from Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's district and two from Vidhan Sabha Deputy Speaker's district. The BJP strongly opposes this favouritism, and demands that these posts should be filled afresh," claimed BJP's chief spokesperson Randhir Sharma in a press conference here today. Rejecting the allegations, Vidhan Sabha spokesperson Hardayal Bhardwaj said the appointments were made as per the past practices with all fairness and transparency. Sharma, however, questioned whether any qualification and reservation criteria was kept for filling up these posts. "And if these criteria were there, how come individuals only from these three districts were found eligible for these posts in the entire state," said Sharma. Incidentally, two appointees hail from the districts of Lahaul and Spiti and Mandi.

## 3 Kullu women to represent India in Asian Winter Games

**Diary Times Desk :** In an inspiring achievement, three women from Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh have been selected to represent India at the 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China. Tanuja, Sandhya from Palchan, and Aanchal Thakur from Burua, Solang Valley in Kullu district, have earned the honour of competing in the prestigious event, which will be held from February 7 to 14. The three players have undergone rigorous training in Italy, specifically for the Slalom Skiing competition. The Centre has fully supported their training expenses, which were carried out at an international level, enhancing the athletes' skills and preparations for the upcoming competition. Aanchal Thakur, who has previously represented India in skiing competitions abroad, has already made a name.

## Light snow in higher reaches of Lahaul & Spiti, Chamba, Shimla & Kinnaur districts



**Diary Times Desk :** Light snow was witnessed in the higher reaches of Lahaul & Spiti, Chamba, Shimla and Kinnaur districts from Tuesday evening. A few centimeters of snow has been recorded at Narkanda, Kharapathar and Kufri as well, in Shimla district. Many places in the middle and lower hills received light rain. Shimla received intermittent rain throughout Tuesday night. Due to snow, roads in upper Shimla have become slippery for traffic. As per the weather department, light to moderate rain, accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning, is very likely to occur at a few places in the districts of Chamba, Bilaspur, Solan, Shimla, Sirmour, Una, Hamirpur, Mandi and Kangra today. There's a possibility of light to moderate snow at many places in the districts of Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur and higher hills of Shimla, Kullu, Chamba, Mandi and Kangra.

## Education, healthcare core focus areas, reforms will continue: CM

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today reiterated that education and healthcare were the core focus areas of the present government and the reforms in these sectors would continue. Chairing the MLAs Priority Meeting here today, the Chief Minister said that while the previous government prioritised opening of new institutions for political gains without providing adequate facilities, his government was modernising the healthcare sector by integrating advanced technology and addressing staff shortages. "These initiatives would yield positive outcomes in the near future," he said. The Chief Minister further said that the government was fostering industrial growth while preserving the natural beauty of the state by implementing progressive policy reforms. "The state is actively promoting tourism, dairy farming, IT and data storage, food processing and other environmentally sustainable industries," he said. The Chief Minister announced the allocation of funds for the Kurpan drinking water scheme and directed the Jal Shakti Department to complete the project by April 30. He also instructed the Agriculture and Forest Departments to explore the potential for bamboo-based industries in Gagret. He also sought suggestions from the MLAs.

## Rs 421 crore approved for BJP MLA constituencies in 2 years: Sukhu

**Diary Times Desk :** Continuing his attack on the BJP for skipping the MLA Priority Meeting for the 2025-26 state budget, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today claimed that half of the BJP MLAs wanted to attend the meeting but could not do so due to the stubbornness of Jai Ram Thakur, Leader of Opposition. "Fifty per cent of the BJP MLAs told me that they wanted to attend the meeting but had to boycott because of the stubborn attitude of Jai Ram Thakur," said the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister said that Rs 421 crore had been approved through NABARD for the Assembly constituencies of the BJP MLAs in over the last two years. Meanwhile, the BJP stuck to its stand that they boycotted the meeting because their priority projects were not being considered and DPRs were not being prepared. In a press conference here today, BJP's chief spokesperson Randhir Sharma alleged the projects submitted by the BJP MLAs in MLA priority schemes had not received funding from NABARD in the last two years. "The schemes mentioned by the CM and the amount disbursed for these is not true.

## Fresh snow in Himachal tourist destinations; Met issues thunderstorm warning

**Diary Times Desk :** Fresh snow was recorded in the higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh, with the Met office issuing a 'yellow' alert for thunderstorm and lightning in some districts on Wednesday. Isolated places in Shimla, Kullu, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti, and Chamba districts received snow, according to the Met office. Snowfall was also recorded in the famous tourist resort towns of Narkanda and Kufri in Shimla district, Dalhousie in Chamba, and Manali and adjoining areas in Kullu. There were also reports of snowfall in parts of Mandi district, including Seraj, Prashar, Shikari and Kamrunag. The snowfall kindled hope among hoteliers of an increase in tourist footfall. It also brought cheer among horticulturalists worried by a dry spell plaguing the state. Snow is considered good for apple cultivation. However, the precipitation was insufficient to bring the dry spell to a complete stop. The Met office said Kothi received 33 cm of snow, followed by Gondla (11 cm), Keylong (9 cm), Kukumseri (8.3 cm), Bharmour (8 cm), Manali (7.4 cm), Jot (6 cm), Kalpa (7.3 cm), and Shillaroo and Khadralla (5 cm each). Shimla town received sleet while adjoining Kufri received 4 cm of snow. Saloni was the wettest place in the state, receiving 44.3 mm rainfall, followed by Kasol (30 mm), Karsog (24.3 mm), Bhuntar (21.4 mm), Jogindernagar (19 mm), Banjar (18.2 mm), Shimla (16.2 mm) and Gohar (16 mm). Thunderstorms hit Shimla, Jubbarhatti, Kangra, Jot, Bhuntar, Palampur and Sundernagar while shallow fog was observed in Bilaspur and Mandi.



## What kind of question is that? Rohit Sharma stunned by reporter's 'Hitman' jibe in Nagpur



**Agencies :** Rohit Sharma has faced numerous tough spells as an opening batter in cricket. However, the Indian cricket team captain did not expect the kind of bouncer he encountered early in the press conference in Nagpur, held on the eve of the ODI series opener against England. A reporter asked Rohit Sharma if he was prepared for the challenge in ODI cricket after experiencing a lean patch in Test cricket. The question carried a jibe-like undertone that did not sit well with the skipper, who fielded several tough questions with composure. The India captain was also not impressed when he was asked to clarify media reports speculating about his future after the Champions Trophy. Rohit said it was not appropriate to discuss his future in the lead-up to a crucial one-day series and the Champions Trophy, starting February 19. "The reports (about my future) have been going on for a number of years, and I am not here to clarify those reports," Rohit said. Rohit returns to lead the ODI team after facing intense scrutiny over his leadership and batting form in Test cricket. Rohit's place in the Test side was questioned after India lost the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 3-1 in Australia. Rohit managed just 31 runs in three Tests before dropping himself from the XI for the series decider in Sydney.

## Abhishek up to No. 2 in T20I batting rankings; Varun joint-second among bowlers

**Agencies :** India batter Abhishek Sharma moved up a whopping 38 places to go second in the ICC rankings for men's T20I batters after his blazing knock of 135 from just 54 balls in the 54-ball 135>fifth T20I against England in Mumbai. Abhishek's knock saw him get to 829 rating points, as he replaced his team-mate Tilak Varma in the second spot. Abhishek had also started the series against England on a high, bashing 79 off only 34 balls to power India's modest chase of 133 in Kolkata. Although he didn't cross 29 in the next three innings, he lit up the stage in the fifth and final T20I. Abhishek smashed seven fours and 13 sixes during that record innings, thus setting the base for India's 150-run victory. While Travis Head leads the T20I batting charts, Phil Salt and Suryakumar Yadav round off the top five batters in the rankings. Meanwhile, mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who finished as the highest wicket-taker in the series against England, moved up three spots to go joint-second in the T20I bowling charts. Varun's 14 wickets in the five games came at an average of a meagre 9.85.

## Nitin Menon, India's ICC elite panel umpire, decides against travelling to Pakistan; opts out of Champions Trophy

**Agencies :** Nitin Menon, India's only representative in the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, on Wednesday opted out of the impending Champions Trophy, which will begin on February 19. He decided against travelling to Pakistan for personal reasons. On Wednesday, the ICC revealed the names of 15 match officials, including three match referees and 12 umpires, for the Champions Trophy. The tournament will be played at three venues in Pakistan—Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi—while India will play all its matches in Dubai. The fixtures are slated to commence on February 19, with the final on March 9. Australian legend David Boon, Sri Lankan great Ranjan Madugalle, and Zimbabwe's Andrew Pycroft were named match referees for the tournament.

## "Mohammed Shami Far From Ready, No Great News On Jasprit Bumrah": Doubts Over India's Champions Trophy Squad

**Agencies :** India have a number of question marks on their 15-man Champions Trophy 2025 squad, even with just two weeks remaining till the start of the tournament. India's biggest concerns lie in the form of their pacers' fitness, with no final news yet on Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami still looking rusty. In the midst of this, former India cricketer-turned-pundit Aakash Chopra believes that a different pacer will likely get added to the Champions Trophy squad, and revealed that he hasn't heard positive news regarding Bumrah's comeback. "I am not hearing great news about Bumrah's fitness. However, I won't believe in hearsay, and won't share what I heard either," Chopra said, speaking on his YouTube channel. Bumrah picked up a back injury during the fifth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, and chief selector Ajit Agarkar has revealed that Bumrah had been advised five weeks of complete rest.

## Varun in Champions Trophy contention as India keep options open

**Agencies :** Rohit Sharma, the Indian captain, suggested that if Varun Chakravarthy does manage to impress in the upcoming three-match ODI series against England, he could be in consideration for a place in the Indian squad for the Champions Trophy, which is set to begin later this month. Even though he is yet to make his ODI debut, Chakravarthy has been in impressive form with the ball since IPL 2024, picking 31 wickets in 12 T20Is. He was even the Player of the Series in the recently-concluded five-match T20I series against England, which India won 4-1. India have picked four spinners in the 15-member squad for the 50-over mega-tournament already, with three of them offering additional skills with the bat. However, only two days ahead of the England ODIs, India drafted in Chakravarthy for the three-match series which should serve as a preparation for the Champions Trophy. "We just wanted to have an option and see what we can do with him," Rohit said ahead of the first ODI. "Clearly, during the series, it presents us an opportunity to play him at some stage and see what he's capable of. Right now, we are not thinking about whether we're going to take him or not. But definitely, he will be in contention if things pan out really well for us and he does what is required. Then definitely, there is something that we need to think about." India have gone with only three frontline pace bowling options for the Champions Trophy. While Jasprit Bumrah is still recovering from his injury and uncertain when he can join the team.

## Cummins, Hazlewood in doubt for Champions Trophy

**Agencies :** Pat Cummins is "hugely unlikely" to be fit for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy while there's also doubts surrounding the fitness of Josh Hazlewood, according to Australia head coach Andrew McDonald. Both Cummins and Hazlewood were named without riders in Australia's provisional 15-man squad, with Cummins named as the designated captain, but injury concerns to both of them have thrown a curveball at selection plans. Patty [Pat Cummins] is hugely unlikely which is a bit of a shame and we've also got Josh Hazlewood who is battling at the moment," McDonald told SEN radio. "Medical information will land over the next couple of days. We'll be able to sure that up and let everyone know the direction. Cummins did not travel with the team to Sri Lanka as he is attending the birth of his second child but he had also been managing an ankle issue during the five-Test series against India. Now it seems that the recovery might take longer than Australia thought, forcing them to look at a fast bowler and a stand-in captain of the side. Hazlewood, on the other hand, suffered a side strain during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and was later ruled out of the series with a calf strain, but there is little clarity at the moment about his current condition.

## 'I've spent the last few months learning from Arjun' games': Praggnanandhaa

**Agencies :** Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu spent the last couple of months focusing on tweaking his mentality and found inspiration in a friend. The 19-year-old had a quiet and somewhat forgettable 2024 and realised his approach perhaps needed an overhaul. A greater degree of ambition, for one. "I've spent time looking at a lot of Arjun's (Erigaisi) games," Praggnanandhaa told HT in an interview, "I tried to learn how he plays and take away something from his games. Being ambitious doesn't have to mean crossing the line. You can be objective. I found many such examples in the games Arjun played last year. He pretty much won everything he played or at least finished in the top three. His style is something that I wanted to incorporate into mine, to find the right balance between my style and his, and try to be universal. That's what I'm trying to do." The work he put in on his mentality and game fetched him the biggest tournament win of his career, last weekend in the Dutch coastal village of Wijk aan.