



Union Minister Kiren Rijiju celebrates Holi with office staff and security personnel in New Delhi



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann along with his family pays his respects at Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of Holi Mahalla



A traffic police personnel conducts breath test of a commuter on Holi festival, in Gurugram



Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin with Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu during the first day of the Budget 2025-26 session in Chennai

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Veteran Bollywood actor Hema Malini performs Odissi dance during Vrindaban Mahotsav 2025, in Bhubaneswar, on Friday

Ganja worth Rs 6.2 crore seized in MP from Delhi-bound truck; driver held

**MORENA (MP):** At least 30 quintals of ganja worth Rs 6.2 crore was seized from a Delhi-bound truck in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, and its driver was arrested, police said on Friday. The vehicle coming from Maharashtra was intercepted near Savitapur located under the Civil Lines police station area of Morena late Thursday night, Superintendent of Police Sameer Saurabh told PTI. "The police had received a tip-off that a huge consignment of ganja was being transported secretly in a truck from Nashik (in Maharashtra) that was going to the national capital," he said. The contraband was concealed under sacks of fodder and being smuggled to Delhi, he added.

T'gana tunnel collapse: 'Autonomous hydraulic powered robot' deployed to speed up search

**NAGARKURNOOL (TELANGANA):** An 'autonomous hydraulic powered robot' equipped with special machinery, has been deployed to accelerate the search operation for seven persons trapped inside the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel here. The equipment includes a 30 HP capacity liquid ring vacuum pump and a vacuum tank machine, which are helpful in quick removal of soil and other works inside the tunnel, an official statement said. Instead of manual digging, autonomous hydraulic-powered robo is being used to remove soil with speed. About 620 cubic metres of soil and muck can be shifted out of the tunnel in an hour by using a conveyor belt, it added. The use of machines with latest technology would help in carrying out the operation efficiently.

Man, teenage girl jump in front of train in UP

**HAPUR:** A 22-year-old man and a 17-year-old girl allegedly killed themselves by jumping in front of a train in the Garh Kotwali area of this Uttar Pradesh district early on Friday, police said. The bodies were discovered on the tracks near the Syana Road railway gate. The incident occurred around 5:30 am. Personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the local police arrived on the scene and identified the dead. SHO Neeraj Kumar told PTI that it appeared to be a case of suicide stemming from a love affair. The reasons behind the decision remain unclear, he added.

# India rejects Pak's 'baseless' charges

## Calls it 'epicentre' of global terrorism

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** India on Friday trashed Pakistan's allegations of backing terrorism against that country following the Balochistan train attack and said Islamabad should look inwards before shifting the blame on others for its "failures".

### TERRORISM CHARGE

India also said the whole world knows "where the epicentre of global terrorism lies". On Thursday, Pakistan accused India of "sponsoring terrorism" without directly implicating it in the Balochistan train attack that killed 21 passengers. "We strongly reject the baseless allegations made by Pakistan," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, responding to media queries on Islamabad's allegations. He also said, "The whole world knows where the epicentre of global terrorism lies."

"Pakistan should look inwards in-

stead of pointing fingers and shifting the blame for its own internal problems and failures on others," he added. Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, at a weekly press briefing, was asked several questions about the deadly attack on Tuesday, which led to a hostage situation lasting for more than 24 hours. Terrorists were in direct communications with Afghanistan-based planners throughout the incident, he said, adding Islamabad has repeatedly asked Afghanistan to deny the use of its soil for terrorist groups like the Ba-

lochan Liberation Army (BLA) for their attacks against Pakistan.

"We urge Afghanistan to hold the perpetrators, organisers and financiers, of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and cooperate with the government of Pakistan to bring all those who are concerned with this attack, including the real sponsors of terrorism, to justice," Khan had said. When asked about any change of policy because India was blamed in the past for any activity by the BLA while this time the finger was pointed towards Afghanistan, the spokesman said there was no change in the policy. "There is no shift in our policy. And again, the facts have not changed. India is involved in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan," the spokesperson alleged without providing any evidence. To another question, he claimed that India has been trying to destabilise its neighbouring countries and running a global assassination campaign.

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## Centre cheated us: Tamil Nadu FM

**AGENCY, CHENNAI:** A day after there was a furore over the Tamil Nadu government replacing the rupee symbol with a Tamil letter in its budget document, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu had some very critical comments about the Central government in his speech while presenting the fifth budget of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government on Friday.

In tune with his leader M K Stalin's tirade against the Central govt over the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), Minister Thennarasu accused the Union govt of "cheating us by not releasing 2,152 crores to the State for not accepting NEP which encourages the three-language system."

He added: "Though the Union Government didn't release required funds, State government is allocating its own funds for the welfare of government school students for teacher

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— **Thangam Thennarasu, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister**

salary and other expenses. Even in the time of challenging situation after losing 2,000 crores we stand beside CM on the two language policy."

"Under the 'Samagra Shiksha' scheme, the State Government has been successfully implementing various student welfare schemes for the past seven years," he said.

The budget has political significance since it would be the last full one before the State goes to assembly polls next year.

## Former Cong MLA shot at in Himachal

### Manhunt launched to nab assailants



Former Congress MLA Bamber Thakur is being brought for treatment at a hospital after he was shot at by unidentified people at his residence in Shimla, on Friday

**PTI, BILASPUR:** Former Congress MLA Bamber Thakur was allegedly shot at by unidentified assailants at his home in Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur, police said on Friday and added a manhunt had been launched to nab the accused.

Thakur and his personal security officer were injured in the attack. Thakur, who suffered a bullet injury in his leg, was referred to the Indira Gandhi Medical College in Shimla while his personal security officer was admitted to AIIMS, Bilaspur.

Taking serious note of the attack, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said in a video statement, "I spoke to Bamber Thakur and urged him to go to AIIMS but he wished to be treated at the Indira Gandhi Medical College ... The deputy commissioner has been instructed to do the needful."

Directions have been issued to erect road barricades to nab the accused, he added. Thakur and several others were sitting in the courtyard of his wife's government accommodation when four people came in and opened fire. According to a witness, the attackers fired about 12 rounds.

Superintendent of Police Sandeep Dhawal told PTI a manhunt had been launched to catch the culprits who allegedly ran towards the main market after attacking Thakur.

### MYANMAR CYBER SCAM

## 8 arrested for trafficking 24 from Telangana

**PTI, HYDERABAD:** The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau has arrested eight people involved in the trafficking of 24 individuals from the state, who were among hundreds of Indians lured by fake job offers and trapped in cyber scam operations in Myanmar.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, India has repatriated 549 citizens in two military aircraft after securing their release from cyber-crime hubs along the Myanmar-Thailand border.

Among them, 24 were from Telangana and returned to Hyderabad from Delhi on March 11 and 12, Telangana Police said in a statement on Saturday.

Following their return, TGCSB launched an investigation to identify those responsible for trafficking the victims under the pretence of lucrative overseas jobs.

TGCSB Director Shikha Goel said nine cases were registered at various Cyber Crime Police Stations across the state.

So far, 15 agents and mediators have been identified, of whom eight have been arrested, while the remaining suspects are absconding. Five of them are currently abroad, and efforts are underway to track them down and take necessary action, she added.

## Gujarat: 'Drunk' driver kills woman, injures 4 others

### Heard to scream 'another round? another round?'



(Left) Rakshit Chaurasiya, driver of the car; (right) mangled remains of the car he was driving

**PTI, VADODARA:** A woman was killed on the spot and four others sustained injuries when a speeding car driven by a 20-year-old law student crashed into their two-wheelers in Gujarat's Vadodara city in the early hours of Friday, police said.

The accident occurred around 12.30 am near Muktanand cross roads in the Karelbaug area following which the driver, Rakshit Chaurasiya, was arrested, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Panna Momaya.

It could be a case of drunk driving as eyewitnesses, who caught Chaurasiya at the scene, told the police that he appeared intoxicated and was screaming "another round, another round" after coming out of the car, the official said.

The deceased woman has been identified as Hemali Patel, who was riding her scooter at the time of the accident.

Chaurasiya, who originally hails from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, is a law student and lives in a PG accommodation here, Momaya told reporters.

"The car belonged to his friend Mit Chauhan, who was sitting in the co-driver's seat when Chaurasiya rammed the car into some two-wheelers at full speed while going towards Muktanand circle," she said.

Efforts are being made to track down Chauhan, the official said.

In a video captured by an eyewitness, Chauhan comes out of the car, with a wrecked front portion, and

starts blaming Chaurasiya for the crash.

Chaurasiya, who appears incoherent, keeps shouting, "Another round? Another round?". The video shows Chaurasiya getting thrashed by bystanders, who subsequently handed him over to the police.

In CCTV footage accessed by media, the speeding car can be seen hitting two scooters, knocking down the riders and dragging them along before coming to a halt.

"Primarily, the car was over speeding. This can also be a case of drunk driving. We will conduct his medical test to determine whether he was under the influence of alcohol," said DCP, adding that Chaurasiya does have a driving licence.

### CONSTITUENCY DELIMITATION

## Kerala CM terms Centre's proposal 'hasty'

**PTI, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday opposed the central government's 'unilateral' move to carry out a parliamentary constituency delimitation, terming it as 'hasty' and announced his support for the conference organised by Tamil Nadu against it.

Tamil Nadu CM and DMK supremo, M K Stalin, has organised a conference on March 22 in Chennai against the "unilateral parliamentary constituency delimitation attempt" by the BJP-led central govt and Vijayan conveyed his solidarity with the event.

The Kerala CM expressed his support through a statement titled "Constituency Delimitation: Unity Against the Unilateral Move."

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Holi was celebrated largely peacefully around the country amid tight security as the festival of colours coincided with the second Friday prayers of the Islamic holy month of Ramzan.

In Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district, where heavy security was deployed, Holi and Friday prayers passed peacefully. The traditional 'chaupaai kaa juloos' (procession) was also taken out in Sambhal city.

Heavy security was also deployed for the prayers in the Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid. The time for 'Jumma Namaz' was extended by an hour to 2:30 pm because of Holi.

Personnel from the Rapid Action Force, Provincial Armed Constabulary and the local police remained fully alert. Surveillance was also conducted through drones.

Sambhal has been tense after riots broke out on November 24 following a survey of the Mughal-era mosque.

In Shahjahanpur, some chil-

dren allegedly threw a stone at 'Laat Sahab' during a procession but the police chased them away.

The tradition involves dressing a person as 'Laat Sahab', blackening his face and making him sit on a buffalo cart and throwing shoes and slippers at him.

Superintendent of Police Rajesh S said five to six children threw 'gulaal' and shoes at 'Laat Sahab' and then a stone before being chased away by police at the spot. He also denied claims that there was a baton-charge.

Holi and the Friday prayers coinciding, security — including increased patrolling and picketing — was beefed up in several states.

In Delhi, more than 25,000 security personnel were deployed. Police closely monitored about 300 sensitive areas with CCTV cameras and drones.

Around the country, homes and streets wore a colourful look as the revellers splashed colours and feasted on traditional delicacies. Public transport did not ply in the morning in most major cit-



A tourist takes part in Holi celebrations in Bikaner, on Friday

ies while metro services started functioning from noon.

Prime Minister Modi had on Thursday greeted people on Holi eve, wishing the festival further deepened the colour of unity among the citizens. President Droupadi Murmu also conveyed her greetings on Holi eve, saying the festival of colours nurtured the spirit of unity and brotherhood and reflected the values of

unity in diversity.

Political leaders cutting across party lines also greeted people, with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday describing Holi as a "messenger of unity".

In a post in Hindi on X, he said, "...The festival of Holi is the messenger of unity, which inspires us to walk on the path of 'sadbhaav (amiability)' with love and 'sau-

haard (harmony)."

Later, addressing the traditional Narsingh Shobhayatra in Gorakhpur, he said no country and religion had such a rich tradition of festivals as Sanatan Dharma and asserted that India moved forward through festivals. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati urged people to celebrate Holi "traditionally with full enthusiasm, peace, mutual brotherhood and harmony".

In West Bengal, where people celebrated Doljatra, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee prayed for the bond of love among citizens to grow stronger. Her political rival and senior BJP leader Suvenud Adhikari conveyed his "heartiest love, greetings and best wishes".

Holi was celebrated in Haryana and Punjab with great fervour. In Punjab, devotees thronged the Shri Durgiana Temple in Amritsar. There was also a rush of Sikh devotees for the Holi Mohalla festival at Anandpur Sahib.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wished the state's

people a colourful and prosperous Doul Utsav.

In strife-torn Manipur, the majority Meitei community celebrated a low-key Holi for the second successive year.

Holi was also celebrated with enthusiasm across Rajasthan. Several foreign tourists were seen celebrating in Jaipur, where more than 5,000 police personnel were deployed, and Pushkar.

In Telangana, children and youngsters revelled in the celebrations in Hyderabad and other towns. North Indian communities in Hyderabad had organised 'Holika Dahan' on Thursday. Gair, a vibrant Rajasthani folk dance, was performed by natives of the state. The police imposed certain restrictions in Hyderabad, prohibiting the movement of vehicles in groups and throwing colours on unwilling persons, drawing an angry response from BJP MLA Raja Singh.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his predecessor YS Jagan Mohan Reddy extended Holi greetings.