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## Woman ends life at Madhapur due to health issues

Hyderabad: A woman died by suicide at her house in Madhapur in the city on Saturday night.

According to the police, the woman T Anantha Laxmi (39), a resident of Madhapur, stayed along with her husband at a rented house. On Saturday evening, she returned home from work and went into a room in the house. She latched the main door of the house and hung herself to the ceiling fan. The husband of the woman told the police that Anantha Laxmi was facing some health issues and due to it slipped into depression, and the woman is suspected to have ended her life. The police registered a case and are investigating.

## Telangana to present strong arguments in SC to oppose Polavaram expansion

From Our Staff Reporter

Hyderabad, Jan 4

Ruling out any compromise on Telangana's rightful share of Godavari river waters, the state government is gearing up to present strong arguments in the Supreme Court to oppose the expansion of the Polavaram project by Andhra Pradesh.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday held discussions with senior legal experts to prevent the Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar project proposed by Andhra Pradesh on the Godavari river.

The state government has recently approached the Supreme Court opposing the project. The writ petition filed by the government is scheduled to come up for hearing in the apex court.

The Chief Minister and the Irrigation Minister met senior Supreme Court advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi in Mumbai. They instructed the legal experts to present strong and effective arguments on behalf of the state.

Irrigation department officials were also alerted to keep all necessary documents and evidence ready, according to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

The Telangana government recently filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court seeking a halt to the expansion works being undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh government to link Polavaram with Banakacharla or Nallamala Sagar without obtaining the mandatory statutory approvals. The petition urged the Supreme Court to immediately direct the Polavaram Project Authority to stop these works, citing multiple legal and procedural concerns. It clearly stated that the Polavaram project should be executed strictly in accordance with the originally approved design and that undertaking any expansion works is not legally permissible. The petition also objected to the Central government examining the pre-feasibility reports of the Nallamala Sagar project without taking Telangana's objections into account. The state sought clear directions to the Central Water Commission, the Ministry of Jal Shakti, and the Godavari River Management Board in this regard. It further pointed out that the Andhra Pradesh government is proceeding with the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) in violation of Central Water Commission guidelines and sought an immediate halt to these actions. The petition also requested directions to deny environmental clearances and to ensure that no financial assistance is extended by the Centre for the expansion projects proposed by Andhra Pradesh.



## Second phase of Indiramma houses will be sanctioned soon: Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy

From Our Staff Reporter  
Hyderabad, Jan 4

Telangana's Revenue Minister, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, announced that the government has initiated development projects worth Rs. 14 crore in Pedda Thanda since coming to power. Speaking to the media after laying the foundation stone for new developments in Chenna Thanda, Temple City, within the Edulapuram municipality of Khammam Rural, Reddy highlighted the government's commitment to enhancing welfare for the underprivileged.

Reddy accused the KCR-led government of providing insufficient food to hostel students, contrasting it with the provisions made during their Indiramma government, where both mess charges and cosmetic allowances were significantly increased. He asserted that their administration is prioritising development and welfare as essential components of governance, unlike the previous BRS government, which he claimed



merely made empty promises.

He confirmed that the second phase of Indiramma housing schemes is set to be sanctioned in April, reiterating that their government is committed to fulfilling every promise made to the people.

## Pawan Kalyan narrowly escapes electric shock in Kondagattu

From Our Staff Reporter  
Jagital, Jan 4

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan narrowly escaped an electric shock in Kondagattu on Saturday.



After laying the foundation stone for developmental works at Kondagattu, Pawan Kalyan attended a Jana Sena party workers' meeting at a resort. While returning, he climbed atop his vehicle to greet fans gathered outside the resort. Noticing a low-hanging electric wire, he immediately tilted backwards, thereby avoiding contact. Thousands of crores lost by senior citizens to online fraud, says CJI.

It may be recalled that Pawan Kalyan had suffered a mild electric shock in 2009 during the launch of a political campaign by his brother and Tollywood actor Chiranjeevi.

Meanwhile, tight security arrangements were made for Pawan Kalyan's visit to Kondagattu. District police officials deployed around 1,200 personnel to ensure his safety.

## Telangana Governor visits INS Himgiri, Kalvari-Class Submarine in Visakhapatnam

From Our Staff Reporter

Hyderabad, Jan 4

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma visited Indian Naval Ship (INS) Himgiri, an indigenously built advanced stealth frigate of the Eastern Fleet, and a Kalvari Class Submarine at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on Saturday.

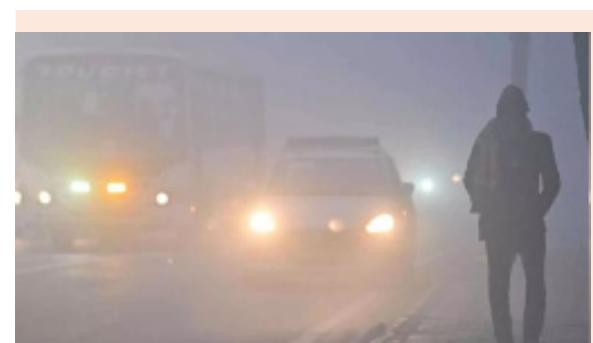
During his time onboard the frontline platforms, Varma was briefed on the unit's sophisticated multi-mission capabilities, cutting-edge stealth design. He was also briefed about the platform's integrated advanced combat systems to conduct effective maritime surveillance and maintain a dominant presence across the full



spectrum of modern maritime warfare.

The Governor was apprised of the extensive use of indigenous technologies in the Indian Navy. This focus on "Atmanirbharata" underscores the Indian Navy's commitment to building a future-ready force through domestic innovation and industrial partnership.

The Governor appreciated the pivotal role played by the Eastern Naval Command and the Eastern fleet and lauded their dedication to maintaining persistent maritime surveillance and their success in safeguarding the nation's strategic interests within the vital Indo-Pacific region.



## Cold Snap Continues in Telugu States with Forecast for Fog

From Our Staff Reporter  
Hyderabad: Jan 4

The Telugu states are currently experiencing a cold snap, with several districts reporting single-digit temperatures at night. Although the intensity of the cold has slightly diminished over the past two days, weather experts anticipate a resurgence of colder conditions around the time of Sankranti, followed by a gradual warming trend in the final week of January.

The Meteorological Department has issued an important statement, indicating that while there has been a decrease in temperatures in some areas, no significant changes in minimum temperature recordings are expected.

According to the Amaravati Meteorological Centre, northeasterly and easterly winds are influencing the lower troposphere over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, and Rayalaseema. The weather forecast for Andhra Pradesh for the coming three days predicts:

\*Weather Outlook for North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema:\*

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### America turns inward—what Trump's new National Security Strategy means for the world, and India

I just finished reading all 33 pages of America's latest National Security Strategy, published on December 4 and formally submitted to the US Congress. This annual document is not just a routine bureaucratic exercise; it is a window into how Washington sees the world and how it intends to engage with it. Read against the backdrop of the intense geopolitical churn of the past year, the document clearly signals a recalibration — if not a quiet retreat — of American global ambitions under the Trump administration.

At the outset, one striking conclusion emerges: the United States appears to have adjusted itself to a transformed geopolitical environment. The tone is pragmatic, transactional, and inward-looking, markedly different from earlier strategies that spoke the language of global leadership, a rule-based order, and collective responsibility. A region-wise reading of the document — covering the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia — reveals how Washington's priorities have shifted. The most pronounced focus of the strategy is the Western Hemisphere, particularly Latin America. Here, the US identifies three primary threats: illegal migration, drug trafficking and transnational crime. This emphasis aligns closely with President Trump's domestic political narrative and explains his recent remark, on December 19, that he does not rule out the possibility of war with Venezuela. The document also sends a clear warning to "non-hemispheric competitors" — a thinly veiled reference to China — to stay out of the region. In invoking this stance, the US appears to be dusting off an old doctrine with modern intent: Latin America is once again being defined as America's exclusive strategic backyard. This reassertion suggests that Washington's global engagement will now be selective, beginning with the protection of its immediate neighbourhood rather than distant theatres. Europe occupies an interesting and somewhat unexpected space in the strategy. The document makes an explicit reference to the Monroe Doctrine, first articulated in 1823 by President James Monroe, which warned European powers against interference in the Americas while promising reciprocal restraint by the US in European colonies. The historical recall is telling: it signals a desire to redraw boundaries of responsibility. Equally significant is Washington's acknowledgement that lasting peace in Europe requires addressing Russia's security concerns. This realism explains President Trump's apparent willingness to accommodate some of President Vladimir Putin's demands in the ongoing Ukraine negotiations. The message to Europe is unmistakable: the US wants European nations to stand on their own feet and assume primary responsibility for their defence. Notably — and perhaps surprisingly — the strategy makes no territorial claims on Greenland or Canada, despite earlier rhetoric suggesting otherwise. This restraint reinforces the impression that Washington is narrowing its strategic focus rather than expanding it. In Africa, the shift is conceptual but consequential. The new strategy advocates moving away from an aid-centric relationship to one driven by trade and investment.

### CBI books Delhi man who claimed to have 'blessings of PM Modi' to pitch military projects to PSUs and US Navy



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on December 29 booked a self-proclaimed textile engineer from Vasant Kunj in Delhi for allegedly misusing the names of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Principal Secretary P K Mishra to pitch an indigenous military jet engine project to top defence public sector undertakings (PSUs) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) labs.

In his complaint, A K Sharma, Assistant Director, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), filed with the central agency, said the accused also allegedly approached United States Navy Vice Admiral George M Wikoff.

"It flagged emails sent by one Nisheeth Kohli, a resident of Vasant Kunj, who claimed he sought to help government of India explore development of an indigenous military jet engine and explicitly stated he had the blessings and best wishes of PM Modi to proceed, with credentials validated by Mishra," the FIR said. An inquiry uncovered a series of emails, sent by Kohli, and it has been revealed that he allegedly approached the managing director of Premier Explosives Ltd and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) as well. "In his emails, he introduced himself as a textiles chemistry engineer from TITS Bhawani, of the 2002 batch. On December 8, he even reached out to US Navy Vice Admiral George M Wikoff after sending an email," an official said. After reviewing the facts, the PMO found this to be a misuse of the names of PM Modi and Mishra for professional purposes. They later decided to file a complaint with the central agency which registered the FIR. Further investigations are in progress.

### Amendment to 160-year-old law, plan to save MSMEs, one-time settlement for disputes



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The year 2025 marked a phase of renewed policy engagement between the Punjab government and industry, with several long-pending issues witnessing movement, even as key structural concerns continued to weigh on industrial growth. According to industry bodies, the government took several notable steps during the year to strengthen the industrial ecosystem and improve the ease of doing business, though much more remains to be done to restore Punjab's competitive edge. "One of the significant developments during the year was the formation of sectoral committees formed by Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora, comprising representatives from large industries, medium enterprises and MSMEs. These committees were constituted to facilitate structured dialogue with the government and are expected to play a key role in shaping the new industrial policy proposed for January 2026. Industry views this consultative approach as a positive departure from earlier one-size-fits-all policymaking," said Pankaj Sharma, president of the All Traders and Industrialists Union (ATIU).

The government also amended the Right to Business Act, 2025, to streamline approvals and clearances across departments, including the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) and the Forest Department. The amendments were intended to reduce procedural delays and address industry complaints about regulatory bottlenecks, though their on-the-ground impact has yet to be fully realised. Another notable reform came with the amendment to the Society Registration Act, 1860, marking the first change to the legislation since its enactment over 160 years ago. Industry bodies have described the reform as a historic step towards simplifying compliance and improving governance of registered bodies. In a long-awaited decision, the Punjab government announced a one-time settlement scheme for the industry to settle long-pending dues with the Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC), providing relief for pending allotment-related dues that had remained unresolved for nearly three decades. The move was welcomed across the industrial sector, as it helped resolve legacy disputes and offer closure to hundreds of

entrepreneurs. Amendments were also made to the Industrial and Business Development Policy (IBDP), 2023, providing substantial relief by allowing stamp duty exemption incentives to be secured through a first charge on the concerned property until the commencement of commercial production. This change removed the requirement of bank guarantees, easing financial pressure on investors during the initial stages of projects, added Sharma. Additionally, the abolition of the 0.25 per cent duty levied by the Punjab government on the total loan addressed a long-standing industry grievance and helped reduce the overall cost of doing business in the state, said Sharma. However, this decision was taken in the last week of October 2025. Throughout 2025, the government reiterated its intent to attract fresh investment, and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann even visited Japan and other parts of India to secure investment. Industry leaders, however, believe that while intent and policy announcements are important, consistent execution and administrative efficiency will ultimately determine outcomes. Despite these initiatives, several core issues continue to trouble Punjab's industrial sector. According to Pankaj Sharma, industry remains concerned about the pace, transparency and efficiency of departmental functioning, particularly in matters related to approvals and inspections.

The delay in operationalising Halwara Airport remains a major setback, especially for Ludhiana's industry, which already faces locational disadvantages as a border-state economy. Industry believes that, once operational, the airport could significantly improve connectivity and revive investment momentum in the region. Another major challenge is the over 50,000 industrial units operating in mixed-use areas, whose relocation deadline is September 2026. Industry, meanwhile, is seeking an OTS to remain at its location, as relocation is not possible for so many units due to limited industrial land outside the city and associated costs. Another major pain point is the delay in GST refunds, which has caused growing resentment among entrepreneurs. Punjab Tax Bar Association president Anil Sarin has flagged this issue multiple times. Industry has called for urgent reforms to simplify refund procedures, as the Punjab CM repeatedly announces increases in GST collection. The functioning of the Punjab Pollution Control Board remains a source of concern, with entrepreneurs alleging excessive procedural complexity and harassment. Industry bodies have repeatedly sought comprehensive reforms to make the regulator more facilitative rather than punitive. Rising industrial land costs have emerged as a critical constraint on growth. Industry leaders stress the need to develop new industrial areas and create dedicated industrial zones for MSMEs, supported by robust infrastructure and handholding mechanisms. They argue that the lack of affordable industrial land has significantly impacted Punjab's industrial growth compared to other states.

### After UGC orders 'dog-free' campuses following SC warning, Pune universities say 'it is really difficult'



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

After the University Grants Commission (UGC) directed all higher education institutions across the country to ensure stray dogs are kept off campuses, several universities in and around Pune said that their large open campuses, staff crunch, and people's affinity towards canines make it challenging to implement the order. In its notice, UGC also directed, in December last year, that the name of the nodal officer responsible for keeping stray dogs away should be prominently displayed at the campus entrance and notified to the local municipal or jurisdictional body. "The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, noting a significant rise in dog-bite incidents in institutional areas, has issued stringent and time-bound directions to all States/UTs and the Union of India to secure educational institutions and other public places from stray dog ingress vide order dated 7th November, 2025..." the UGC notice said.

A senior official at Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), which spans a 400-acre campus on Ganeshkhind Road, said visitors are allowed in freely, and there is regular vehicular traffic on the premises. "It is an open campus. Barring COVID, it has remained open. Even during COVID, I had a lot of trouble keeping the doors shut. It is a public state university, you cannot stop it as well... This (directive) will

not work," Professor Nitin Karmalkar, who served as the vice-chancellor of SPPU from 2017 to 2022, said. "I have stayed at the campus as VC, and basically all the people who come for an early morning walk are pet lovers, and they feed the dogs. Once I tried to stop them, but they did not like it," added Karmalkar. He also pointed out that there is a shortage of manpower at SPPU. "There is a lack of resource persons for teaching... Where will they get this person?" The Indian Express has reported on SPPU's staff shortage, with 62 per cent of the government-sanctioned faculty positions vacant as of September 2025. Vacancy amongst non-teaching staff remains high as well. Not just the central university but also affiliated and autonomous colleges are facing staff shortages due to a state government hiring freeze that has lasted over five years. Current SPPU Vice Chancellor Suresh Gosavi could not be reached for a comment. Professor Manohar Chaskar, Vice Chancellor, Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded, also said that in a campus spread across 600 acres, it isn't easy to control the movement of dogs.

"We don't have a walled compound. As per the government instructions, we will take precautions, but they (dogs) can't be stopped 100 per cent," Professor Avinash Moharil, Principal, Sir Parashurambhau College, Pune, said they have started restricting people from entering the campus, "but it is not an easy task to convince them." "It is really difficult (to get the dogs off campus) in the sense that they are staying here for a long time. People walk on our campus. We issue passes at a nominal fee, especially to senior citizens. They feed the dogs as well," said Moharil. He said they are trying to follow the Supreme Court orders, adding, "It is really difficult". "We have appointed a professor for the task, but to pick up dogs is not really something we can do. It is difficult to catch a dog. We need trained people for that," he said. "Even if we catch them, people are really attached to the dogs. In our college, we have a professional security agency as well, but they are also not able to catch the dogs," he added.

### Rs 8 crore drug bust: How a global syndicate used students and 'tea' parcels to flood Bengaluru with khat

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Investigators say the syndicate operated across 20 countries, routing over 550 parcels through international courier networks disguised as commercial goods. The NCB has seized 160 kg of khat worth Rs 8 crore in Bengaluru, the largest such haul in Karnataka since the drug was banned in 2018.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said Wednesday it has busted a major international syndicate involved in the illicit trafficking of khat leaves following a sustained intelligence-driven operation, and seized approximately 160 kg of the drug valued at around Rs 8 crore from Bengaluru. This is the largest seizure of khat in Karnataka since its inclusion as a psychotropic substance under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in 2018. NCB officials said their preliminary investigation indicates that the contraband was smuggled into India through an international route originating from Ethiopia via Kenya, pointing to the involvement of a well-organised transnational drug syndicate operating across more than 20 countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, and the Middle East. The Bureau said the syndicate sent over 550 parcels weighing approximately 2,100 kg to North America, Europe, the Gulf countries, and the Middle

East. Further investigation revealed that the syndicate was using the international postal and courier system to import bulk consignments of khat, camouflaged as routine commercial items such as tea. The network operated through multiple layers, using storage and distribution points within Bengaluru to break the bulk and distribute smaller quantities. According to NCB officials, the syndicate comprised predominantly foreign nationals, assisted by local facilitators, with several members residing in India under the guise of students and those on medical visas.

### Delhi Police register case in death of Class 11 boy who fell from mall roof

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Kumar was rushed to Pentamed Hospital, where he was declared dead by the doctors. Kumar was rushed to Pentamed Hospital, where he was declared dead by the doctors. The Delhi Police have registered a case against unknown people in connection with the death of a Class 11 boy after he fell from the roof of a mall on Sunday.

According to the police, Kavin Kumar, 16, allegedly climbed onto the fragile roof of North Gate Orbit Plaza Mall to create reels with his friends. The police said that Kumar, in an attempt to impress his friends, tried to cross over the domed roof a second time and fell through an ill-maintained fibreglass panel, leading to his death. The police have launched an investigation into the incident.

The mall has been in an abandoned state since 2012, and its structure was not properly maintained, the police said. Kumar was rushed to Pentamed Hospital, where he was declared dead by the doctors. However, Kumar's family members alleged that they suspected foulplay in the boy's death. "We received a call from a family friend that Kumar had met with an accident. Her son, who is also Kumar's friend, had seen the crowd and police at the mall. He saw the boy lying there on the floor," alleged Munit Kumar, the boy's paternal uncle. "All his friends had run away. The police were called by the staff of a restaurant inside the mall," said the boy's uncle.

### MC flags illegal occupation of footpaths, public passages, asks police to register cases



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

MC flags illegal occupation of footpaths, public passages, asks police to register cases Chandigarh MC has reported widespread illegal occupation of footpaths, pavements and public passages by vendors placing stalls, rehris and tables. The Enforcement Wing of the Municipal Corporation (MC) has reported widespread illegal occupation of footpaths, pavements and public passages by vendors placing stalls, rehris and tables, causing inconvenience to pedestrians and disrupting public movement across Chandigarh. These activities have been observed predominantly in Sectors 15, 17, 19, 22, 41 and Manimajra. Despite repeated challans and seizure of vending material, many vendors continue to resume unauthorised vending, showing disregard for civic regulations, the corporation said in an official statement on Wednesday.

Officials noted that during enforcement and anti-encroachment drives, some vendors have created disturbances, obstructed official duties and, at times, resorted to abusive behaviour and physical altercations, raising law-and-order concerns. To deal with the issue firmly, the MC has asked Chandigarh Police to register cases against illegal vendors under relevant provisions of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, based on complaints from the corporation, citizens or otherwise. The civic body has intensified its drive against unauthorised vending to ensure smooth pedestrian movement and maintain civic order. At the same time, the Engineering Wing has been directed to strengthen civic infrastructure within designated vending zones by providing proper lighting, adequate water supply, installation of paver blocks and clear demarcation of vending sites for registered vendors, thereby enabling lawful and organised vending. Appealing for public cooperation, the MC said the initiative is aimed at enhancing civic amenities, ensuring public convenience and enforcing compliance with municipal laws in the larger interest of the city.

### Approach has to change, all pollution sources need to be tackled

National Clean Air Programme, Delhi Air Quality Index, delhi aqi. Delhi air pollution, Delhi air quality, air pollution, air pollution level, Delhi severe air quality, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs AQI in Delhi-NCR repeatedly slipped into 'Very Poor' and 'Severe' categories.

This winter, despite anti-pollution curbs being in place and a dip in farm fires — lowest in five years — the air quality index in Delhi-NCR repeatedly slipped into the 'Very Poor' and 'Severe' categories.

The year saw the most visible public outcry in the recent past over the pollution crisis. Starting from the November protest at the India Gate, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta being met with "AQI, AQI" chants at an event hosting the football player Lionel Messi to the mounting petitions landing up in the Supreme Court seeking that the crisis be declared as a national public health emergency.

Even when the source apportionment study that the Capital relies on is seven years old and requires update, studies have underlined that the air pollution crisis is not limited to winter. Residents of Delhi-NCR are exposed to a mix of emissions from traffic, industry, waste burning and household fuels, along with dust from roads and construction sites. The challenge for 2026 is whether the region can move beyond short, winter-heavy emergency responses to year-round, measurable reductions across sectors. Under the National Clean Air Programme, certain cities, including Delhi, are expected to achieve a 40% reduction in PM10 levels by 2026. However, an assessment by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found that Delhi reduced PM10 by only about 12% over six years since the programme's launch.

## Politics, power and personalities, all served with a generous pinch of salt



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

No matter what the Opposition may say, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann never misplaces a punchline. When the BJP began distributing sindoor after Operation Sindoor, Mann wondered aloud if the nation was heading towards "one nation, one husband". In July, he took aim at the prime minister's foreign tours, rattling off destinations like "Magnesia", "Galveaisa" and "Tarvesia", each seemingly smaller than a Punjab town. And when asked about the lone BJP vote in his native Satgi village, Mann deadpanned, "The investigation is on. We have two suspects." No prizes for guessing this one. Former Haryana DGP OP Singh wins the title hands down. Known for innovation in his earlier stints, Singh took charge when the force was reeling from two suicides in quick succession and FIRs naming a clutch of senior officers. The state was spinning with whataboutery when he stepped in. And lo, the narrative shifted within days, if not hours.

For the next three months, Singh kept up a blistering pace, conducting surprise nocturnal checks from Panchkula to Gurugram. He also addressed press conferences freely, a largely uncharted territory for his mostly reclusive predecessors. Haryanvis suddenly awoke to a DGP who was not just visible but audible, several times a day. From crackdowns on goondas to updates on his gym schedule, every interaction was broadcast. For once, people felt part of a police bandobast long shrouded in mystery behind fortified offices and opaque procedures. Singh simply reminded everyone that a cop is a public servant first, sahib later. Whether it was cosmic alignment or a renewed commitment to fitness, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring was unusually articulate this year. Unfortunately, articulation and interpretation refused to get along. An emotional reference to late home minister Buta Singh snowballed into a complaint before the SC/ST Commission. No sooner had fire been doused with legal buckets, than two young boys took offence to his playful "too, too". Last heard, Warring has resolved to weigh every word. But who will provide the weighing scale. Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav likes to lead from the front. Unlike many bosses who duck when it comes to taking blame for a misstep, he takes it on his chest. Be it the Col PS Batti assault case where the cops dragged their feet for as long as they could before registering an FIR against police officers involved or the Lawrence Bishnoi interview when he stoutly defended his force (until proven wrong) this police chief guards his men like a Punjabi sher, with a stiff upper lip instead of a roar. All this while studying the backward and forward linkages to bust transnational gangs. Like a large-hearted leader, he is also quick to reward his foot soldiers. This was quite evident after the shaheedi Diwas commemoration at Anandpur Sahib when he rewarded 110 officers and two constables. Even officers caught on the wrong side are roundly upbraided and quickly rehabilitated so that harsh words and stinging media reports don't dent their morale. Little wonder that those in other arms want a boss like him. As the ditty goes, Accha boss kaisa ho, Gaurav Yadav jaisa ho. A salute to the never-say-die spirit that shone during the floods, when villagers chose action over waiting. Punjabis were at their jugaadi best, fashioning boats out of boards and bundhs out of sand, proving yet again that help, when needed most, often comes from next door. While Chandigarh experiments with garbage segregation, consultants and PowerPoint presentations, Kharar has adopted an elegant three-step waste policy: collect, ignite, repeat.

Environment? Pollutants? Technicalities. Even a 250 lakh fine by the NGT hasn't dulled Kharar's romance with fire. Smoke rises faithfully every day, adding character to Mohali's fog and giving meteorologists fresh excuses. Ever wondered why Chandigarh wakes up to clear skies while Mohali peers through haze? Forget climate change. Follow the smoke.. If democracy is the art of disagreement, Punjab Congress deserves an Oscar. Its members, ever mindful of free speech, exercise it with gusto, particularly against one another. A party insider described it best: "We're not a crowd of workers, we're a constellation of leaders — each one brighter than the sun." True enough: Punjab being the land of "sawa lakh," every leader, by definition, outnumbers his followers. In the end, one wonders if this is politics or a reality show titled Who Will Disagree Next? If calamities had a preferred officer, Sakshi Sawhney would be on speed dial. Floods in Patiala? She's there, baby in official vehicle, wading through water. Op Sindoor chaos in Amritsar? Sleepless nights, steady hand. Majha floods? Back in the water, hugging elders and briefing media. As floods reached areas previously untouched, public admiration quietly shifted from Sawhney to the photographers tailing her everywhere. As one villager asked, eyes wide: "Inni baarish ch, camera charge kithon karde ne?" Once upon a time, Chandigarh's roads were so silky smooth they inspired civic smugness. Potholes were a misfortune that befell lesser cities. Cut to the present. The City Beautiful is now running neck-and-neck with Mohali and Panchkula in a spirited competition titled Who Dug That? The craters come in all shapes and moods, ensuring drivers experience everything from gentle rocking to spinal realignment.

Just as we were about to etch an epitaph for Chandigarh roads, the administration sprang to life. The stretch dividing Sectors 22 and 23, for instance, is suddenly smooth and civilized. Officials blame the rains, with impressive unanimity. Fair enough. But how does one explain the still-pristine roads in some sectors? Are the rain gods selectively annoyed? Or is divine intervention subcontracted to certain contractors? When it comes to squeezing every last drop out of technology, nobody beats the Punjab Police. From bandobast for rural games and college festivals to elections and the occasional personal rest and recreation, conference calls are their weapon of choice. Senior officers leave nothing to chance. Instructions are delivered, repeated, rephrased and then repeated again, just in case a DSP blinked. Feedback is demanded. Instantly. It is little wonder artificial intelligence is trying to learn from them. Some scammers have even managed to mimic senior officers and their subordinates syllable by syllable. But our Punjab police officers remain unfazed. They simply press mute, unmute, and speak on, one conference call at a time.

When the Bhakra waters began behaving like an uninvited guest who refuses to leave, Punjab discovered its calm centre in Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains. While others speculated, panicked or vanished briefly from signal range, Bains appeared twice a day with water-level updates

delivered in language so simple that even WhatsApp forwards paused to listen. Morning briefing. Evening briefing. Same calm face, same reassuring tone. Opposition leaders trusted him. Villagers trusted him. Urban residents trusted him. At one point, it seemed people trusted Bains more than the actual dam. Having established himself as Punjab's unofficial weather channel, he then seamlessly shifted gears to the 350th martyrdom anniversary events at Anandpur Sahib and back to education matters, teacher protests included. Floods, faith, files, Bains handled them all with the air of a man who never misplaces the remote. If consistency were a railway track, Ravneet Singh Bittu would be the scenic route. The Union Minister began the year clashing with police outside the Punjab CM's residence, insisting he was merely trying to deliver his demands and not stage a drama — though the optics suggested otherwise. A vocal critic of Rahul Gandhi, Bittu then surprised friend and foe alike by supporting parole for Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh, whom he had previously criticised with great enthusiasm during the Lok Sabha polls. Public heads tilted collectively. Last week, his social media juxtaposition of Veer Bal Diwas with Christmas greetings added further layers to the puzzle. As one Ludhiana resident remarked with admirable restraint, this was politics of convenience. Others simply reached for popcorn.

AAP's Punjab president Aman Arora has mastered two arts: answering media questions before they finish being asked, and wearing kurtas that can be spotted from across the Secretariat lawn. Policy discussions, employee unions, protest management, Arora handles them all with conversational ease. Then he turns up in a jacket so vibrant that it briefly distracts from the actual issue being discussed. Fitness, clearly, is part of the plan. Arora carries his colours confidently, proving that while politics may be grey, there is no constitutional ban on bright turquoise. Declared politically fossilised by social media, Sukhbir Singh Badal responded the only sensible way, by winning. SAD's strong showing in zila parishads and block samitis startled commentators who had already written the obituary. During floods, Badal was seen distributing cash to farmers on the spot, proving that dinosaurs, when necessary, can move quite fast. His swift responses to issues ranging from land pooling to delayed salaries and viral audio clips have nudged public acceptability back into fashion. Invoking the legacy of Parkash Singh Badal with increasing regularity, Sukhbir appears keen to remind voters that nostalgia, when deployed correctly, still works wonders. For 400 days, Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal marched together, spoke together and protested together. Then the protests were lifted, and the duo developed a curious talent for parallel existence. They now announce programmes on similar issues, on similar days, in similar tones, just not together. There is no public disagreement, no visible fallout, no dramatic statements. Just a polite distance that has become impossible to ignore. Among the masses, the question floats gently but persistently: is this coordination by coincidence, or separation with manners? If statements earned frequent flyer miles, Pargat Singh would be boarding international flights weekly. The Jalandhar Cantt MLA ensured that no issue, be it local pothole or global geopolitics, went without commentary. State governance, national democracy, Punjabis stranded abroad, global peace — everything received prompt attention. His statements were timely, relevant and plentiful, travelling far beyond constituency limits.

In Hoshiarpur, time is measured not in days but in press releases. Dr Raj Kumar Chabbewal, AAP MP, ensured that no visit, review or observation escaped documentation. Accompanied by son and MLA Dr Ishank Kumar, every inspection, big or small, reached the media with remarkable efficiency. If an event occurred at noon, chances are the press release was dispatched by tea time. Development, meanwhile, proceeded at its own dignified pace, unconcerned with deadlines. In Kapurthala politics, the Rana family does not merely contest elections, it expands. When ticket arithmetic intervened in 2022, Rana Gurjot Singh secured the Congress ticket from Kapurthala, while son Rana Inder Pratap contested Sultanpur Lodhi as an Independent. The result was a political arrangement where the family competed not just with rivals, but with its own party. Navtej Singh Cheema, Congress's defeated MLA, emerged as the principal opponent. In Kapurthala, alliances may wobble, parties may sulk, but the family footprint only grows. Politics, after all, is best kept in the family.

Dismissed constable Amandeep Kaur has managed something few influencers can only dream of. While most people gain followers through diligent skincare routines and inspirational quotes, Kaur's numbers shot up courtesy an NDPS case. Arrested in April with a respectable 30,000 followers, she emerged on bail to find her digital constituency had nearly tripled to 81,000. YouTubers queued up like guests at a wedding buffet, microphones ready, and the resulting interviews caused considerable squirming within police circles. It is now widely believed that her growing fame of the inconvenient kind prompted the Punjab Vigilance Bureau to add a disproportionate assets case to her collection. Proof, perhaps, that in the age of reels, notoriety too comes with numbers. Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, once among the most industrious ministers in the Punjab Cabinet and later shown the door in 2025, has found new purpose, and an appreciative audience, online. Recently appointed AAP spokesperson, he treated followers to a video of buffaloes enjoying a shower at his home, an image that radiated calm pastoral bliss. This was the same Dhaliwal who once warned of action against Sukhbir Singh Badal's luxury resort and spoke sternly about reclaiming land from former MP Simranjit Singh Mann. These days, however, he informs Facebook that he is using his free time to assist his wife with livestock management. From cabinet files to cattle care, it has been quite the journey.

Navjot Kaur Sidhu has once again lobbed a verbal grenade, declaring that Rs 500 crore is what it takes to become Punjab's chief ministerial face. The statement changed little for her, but sent husband Navjot Singh Sidhu scurrying between Punjab and Delhi like a man who has misplaced something important. Sidhu was expected to clarify matters with the Congress high command but failed to secure an audience. His wife, meanwhile, calmly met Union Minister Nitin Gadkari regarding an Amritsar development project. The episode upset BJP leaders back home and revived whispers that the Sidhu household might be packing its political bags. One speaks, the other explains. Such is marital teamwork. Sonia Mann, model-actor-turned-politician and AAP incharge of Rajasansi, has taken to public life with cinematic enthusiasm. During floods, she conducted rescue operations with the camera rolling, later becoming a meme sensation for a reel explaining how to plug a breach. During the Zila Parishad elections, she stood alone among AAP leaders in accusing Congress and Akalis of beating up her supporters and rigging polls. The allegations came generously garnished with filmi dialogue, leaving viewers unsure whether they were witnessing a political complaint or an audition tape.

## She saved her children in a deadly crash — and went missing. Two weeks on, her family struggles for answers



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Kumar said his wife was heading to Noida on a bus with their two children, Prachi (12) and Sagar (8), when the accident occurred due to dense fog around 4 am. In a matter of minutes, 13 vehicles, including eight buses, erupted into flames. Twenty people were killed, several of them charred beyond recognition. While the children managed to escape, pushed out by Devi, the family has no idea what happened to her. The case has been complicated by the fact that all bodies have been identified — Devi was not among them. Her eldest son, Aakash (22), who works as a labourer in Noida, recounted the harrowing ordeal: "My mother, along with my younger brother and sister, were coming to visit me when the accident occurred... She was injured... Thick smoke had filled the bus, making it hard to breathe. She managed to get Sagar out first, and then Prachi escaped."

Looking for Parvati Devi: Two weeks after Yamuna expressway crash, a husband searches for missing wife. Twenty people were killed in the 18-vehicle pile-up on the Yamuna Expressway. (PTI) He said his sister was screaming, pleading with several people to help rescue their mother when the bus suddenly caught fire following an explosion. Govind and Aakash have now been criss-crossing police stations and administrative offices in Mathura, trying to convince officials that Devi was among the passengers on the ill-fated bus. Aakash said police told the family that the matter is under investigation but have shared no concrete updates. "They called us four times and collected blood samples, hair strands, and nail clippings from Prachi and me for DNA testing. We don't know the results of these tests," he claimed. "Do haftey key baad bhi hum log latkey huey hai... Gaon waley baatey bana rahey hai. Yeh sab se bachney key liye, sab log Noida mai mere pass reh rahey hai. (It's been two weeks and we have been left hanging...)

People in the village are spreading rumors. To avoid any kind of public humiliation, my entire family has left the village and is now staying with me in Noida," he added. Police said they are verifying if Devi was travelling on the bus; a police officer was also sent to Hamirpur to check records and gather additional information. Aakash said two days ago, a sub-inspector visited his village and recorded statements of local residents. "The officer also met my cousin, Jaipal, who had accompanied my mother and siblings to help them board the bus. He even recorded the statement of the rickshaw puller who dropped them....," he said.

17 killed in pile-up on Yamuna Expressway A firefighter douses a charred bus after a fog-hit pile-up involving buses and cars sparked fires on the Yamuna Expressway. PTI When contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police, Mathura (Rural), Suresh Chandra Rawat, said police have initiated an inquiry. "We are trying to ascertain whether she [Devi] was in the vehicle at the time the accident occurred. We are also examining CCTV footage." He said police are analysing call detail records and recording statements of passengers who were travelling on the bus and managed to escape. Rawat added that when the police reached the accident site, no one informed them that a woman had managed to get her children out but remained trapped inside the bus.

Mathura District Magistrate, Chandra Prakash Singh, said 20 people had lost their lives in the incident. He added that all the bodies recovered from the accident site have been identified, and in 15 cases, the identities were confirmed through DNA testing. DM Singh further said one claimant is yet to take custody of the body that has been identified. He also said two families have approached the administration claiming their family members had died in the accident, but their bodies have not been traced so far. "We are examining their claims and conducting an inquiry into these allegations," Singh said. Aakash said the administration's decision to conduct an inquiry into his statement — that his mother was travelling in the bus and had died in the accident — made him feel as if officials suspected them of making a false claim just to seek compensation. The government had announced a compensation of Rs 3 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased person. "Adhikar jo aspatal aaye they boley they 72 ghatay mai sabki pahchaan ho jayegi. Aur ab do hafta ho gaya mera kuch nahi hua (A day after the accident, senior officials from the district administration and police had assured the families that the identities of missing persons would be established within 72 hours. Two weeks have now passed and there is still no resolution)," added Aakash.

## School shutdowns not the answer, NEP needs evidence-based review



delhi School shutdowns, Delhi schools, Delhi schools shut, Delhi schools model, National Education Policy, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs The year saw schools shutting down or moving online due to rising pollution. Every year, schools in Delhi-NCR face a recurring problem — they are either shut or shifted to online as well as hybrid mode due to extreme weather conditions, winter pollution, even intense rainfall, steadily reducing functional teaching days. Those affected are the children, mainly the young learners and those from lower economic groups, as recurring disruptions widen learning gaps.

The year 2025 also witnessed another kind of disruption, with parents of students studying in private schools coming to the streets to protest fee hikes. This led the Delhi government to pass the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill, aiming to curb arbitrary fee hikes, provide parents with a voice in the fee-

fixation process, and introduce strict penalties for violations. How the Act is implemented on the ground remains to be seen. In higher education, the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) — particularly the four-year undergraduate programme — has led to an increase in the number of courses, credits, exams and internal assessments. Many students and teachers report academic overload and constant evaluation cycles that leave little time for sustained learning or specialisation.

At the school level, experts believe policy responses must move beyond blanket school shutdowns to ensure there is no learning loss. Latika Gupta, faculty at Department of Education, Delhi University, said, "We need to think seriously about how education can remain exciting and meaningful despite disruptions... Instead of shutting down schools and pushing classes on to hybrid mode, schools should be promoted to upgrade their infrastructure with air purifiers, among others." On private schools arbitrarily hiking fees, she said, "Fee regulation alone will not fix private schooling. We need wider conversations involving parents, schools, legal experts and civil society to understand what private education has become." In higher education, experts believe an analysis of NEP performance in the last five years is the need of the hour. "There has to be a serious, evidence-based review of NEP. You cannot keep reforming higher education without asking students and teachers how it is actually playing out in classrooms," said Gupta. "Higher education needs fewer courses and deeper engagement. Specialisation cannot be replaced by constant assessment and flexibility without intellectual cost," she added.

## Focus on preventive care, plus accessible, affordable screening



water, and accessible public spaces for physical activity are as important as medical treatment," Dr Guleria said. A major focus area should be aggressive screening to ensure early detection and timely intervention in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory illnesses, and cancer, which are becoming increasingly common in urban populations, particularly in the economically weaker sections. Screening camps will help, he said, because "Preventive health is not just about awareness but also about access." A pressing structural issue is the overwhelming pressure on tertiary hospitals. "Even patients with minor ailments end up at tertiary hospitals, waiting for hours due to massive patient loads," Dr Guleria said. The solution, he said, lies in strengthening primary healthcare centres, from where they are referred to higher facilities only when necessary. The elderly population in Delhi, like in the rest of India, is rising. Hospitals must become more elderly-friendly, with easier access, shorter wait times, and better mobility support, Dr Guleria said. He also flagged outreach and home-based care models for senior citizens: "

## Car gutted in fire at Abdullapurmet

Hyderabad: A car was gutted down when fire broke out in the vehicle at Abdullapurmet on Thursday. According to reports, the cab had dropped passengers at Ramoji Film City and the driver parked the vehicle at the designated parking place outside. As soon as the driver moved out of the car fire broke out in the vehicle. The local people tried to douse fire but sensing it is a difficult task the fire department was informed.

## Saini meets Modi, union ministers in New Delhi; Amit Shah to visit Haryana



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, on Thursday, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several union ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs) in New Delhi. After the meeting, Saini announced that Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be coming to Haryana on December 24. "He will be the chief guest at the passing out parade of 5,000 newly recruited Haryana Police personnel," Saini said. Talking to media persons in New Delhi, Saini also accused the Opposition of "spreading misinformation and failing to address real issues".

Criticising the Congress, the Chief Minister said that the party has "no constructive agenda". "They don't have a single scheme that isn't mired in corruption, and their programmes never take shape on the ground. Instead of spreading baseless allegations like vote rigging, they should present a clear vision for the country and focus on development. People do not take their claims seriously," he said. Highlighting the role of Modi, Saini said that "under the Prime Minister's leadership, the poor have progressed and become stronger. If the common people have hope today, it is because of the Prime Minister. The Congress never did anything for the common man. Since independence, Modi is the leader who has truly cared for the common man".

During his meeting with MPs from Haryana and Union Minister of Power, Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar at Haryana Bhawan in New Delhi, Saini held detailed discussions on the ongoing development works in the Lok Sabha constituencies of Haryana's MPs. With the MPs, Saini also discussed their demands related to their respective constituencies and deliberated on the development projects. Briefing the media about his meeting, the Haryana CM said, "the purpose of the meeting was to further accelerate development works so that the general public can reap maximum benefits from government schemes". The BJP MPs who attended the meeting included Lok Sabha members Dharambir Singh and Naveen Jindal, and Rajya Sabha's Ramchander Jangra, Subhash Barala, Rekha Sharma, and Kartikeya Sharma. From Haryana, Saini went to Sonipat where he launched the second phase of

Mukhyamantri Antyodaya Parivar Utthan Yojana. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "The Antyodaya Mela is not just a platform to share information about schemes, but a confluence of development, participation, and enthusiasm. The hope on the faces of every family here is the true measure of our efforts". Explaining the scheme, the CM said, "It was started to increase the income of poor families and provide them with equal opportunities, skill development, employment, dignity, and better living standards. In the first phase, Antyodaya Melas were organised at 166 locations, and in the second phase, these fairs will be held across the state in a phased manner". "The scheme focuses on developing the capabilities of families through loans, training, and skill development, helping them become self-reliant. This initiative provides new opportunities in employment, self-employment, education, and health. Services from departments such as pensions, BPL, ration cards, self-employment loans, women's empowerment, agriculture, and animal husbandry are being offered on the spot." "Eligible beneficiaries are provided immediate solutions to their problems. The government aims to increase the annual income of the poorest families to at least Rs 1,80,000 under this scheme. Families are being linked to loan schemes, skill development programmes, daily wage employment opportunities, and other facilities. The scheme integrates 49 programmes from 19 departments, and a dedicated portal has been created to provide information, eligibility criteria, benefits, and online application facilities." Saini added. Referring to the Deendayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana, the CM said "this scheme was launched to provide economic and social security to women. So far, Rs 258 crore has been disbursed to over 7 lakh women and girls in two instalments". Giving updates on the Chirayu Yojana, Saini said, "Ration cards have been created in an automated manner for more than 41 lakh families. Under the Chirayu Yojana, free medical facilities are being provided to BPL families. Through the Ayushman Bharat-Chirayu Yojana, free treatment worth Rs 4,126 crore has been provided to 25.39 lakh patients. In the first phase of the Nirogi Haryana Yojana, health check-ups have been conducted for 96.72 lakh beneficiaries from Antyodaya families, along with 5.60 crore free lab tests. Similarly, in Dayalu Yojana, a financial assistance of Rs 1,456 crore has been provided to 38,671 families, so far. Poor women are being provided LPG cylinders at just Rs 500 per month, benefiting approximately 14.70 lakh families across the state". A government spokesperson said that the CM also allocated flats to 509 beneficiaries from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) under the EWS Housing Scheme and handed over keys to 20 people on the spot. "The beneficiaries included 16 nomadic families, 79 widowed women, 186 Scheduled Caste families, 156 families with an income of less than Rs 1 lakh, and 72 families with an income of less than Rs 1.40 lakh. A waiting list of 127 applicants was also released," the spokesperson added.

## CM unveils Magh Mela logo in Gorakhpur

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The government issued a statement saying the logo reflects the spiritual significance of chanting, penance, and Kalpas at the Sangam during the month of Magh. Featuring the seven energy chakras based on the constellation positions of this period, the logo captures the sacred Akshaya Vat symbolising eternal merit, the cosmic journey of Surya Dev and Chandra Dev with the 27 constellations, along with the Sanatan flag representing the expansion of Sanatan Dharma, and elements of environmental harmony. "The inscription 'Maghe nimajjanam yatra papam pariharet tatah' highlights the belief that bathing in the month of Magh absolves one of all sins," the statement said.

"Designed by consultants Ajay Saxena and Pragya Ajay on behalf of the Mela Authority, the logo was formally released in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Gorakhpur. Its design also mirrors the astrological positions of the Sun and Moon during Magh," the statement said. "Indian astrological calculations state that the Moon completes its cycle across the 27 constellations in about 27.3 days. The dates of the Magh Mela are determined



based on these exact celestial movements. The month of Magh begins when the Sun enters Capricorn, and the Moon aligns with the Ashlesha-Purva Phalguni constellation on the full-moon day," it added. The Magh Mela in Prayagraj, scheduled to begin in January, is likely to attract around 12-15 crore pilgrims during its one-and-a-half-month duration, the chief minister had earlier said.

## Mumbai airport among 30 global airports to secure top carbon accreditation



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

It is now among just 30 global airports to receive the highest carbon management accreditation. Mumbai Airport has been awarded the top ACA Level 5 rating for achieving net-zero emissions in its direct operations and outlining a verified long-term carbon reduction plan. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai has been awarded Level 5 of the Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) programme, placing it among 30 airports worldwide and among four in India to receive the highest rating for carbon management. Besides Mumbai, the three other Indian airports which have been awarded ACA Level 5 are Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport, Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad; and Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport.

The accreditation confirms that the airport has achieved net-zero emissions for its direct operations (Scope 1 and 2) and has a verified plan to reduce indirect Scope 3 emissions by 2050. ACA Level 5 assesses long-term decarbonisation strategies, data accuracy and actual reductions achieved. According to Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL), the operator of CSMIA, the airport's reduction has been driven by its shift to 100 per cent renewable electricity since August 2022, upgrades in energy systems, and a full transition to an electric vehicle fleet. CSMIA reported Scope 1 emissions of 566.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in FY2025 and zero emissions under Scope 2. A spokesperson for MIAL said the accreditation reflects the airport's effort to integrate sustainability into operations and its intent to continue expanding low-carbon systems. Stefano Baronci, Director General of ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East, said the airport's progress aligns with the sector's net-zero

goal for 2050, noting that seven airports in the region have now reached ACA Level 5. Mumbai airport's carbon strategy is overseen by a cross-functional committee and supported by its updated ESG policy introduced in May this year. The airport has reported more than a 98 per cent reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions since FY2022, largely due to energy efficiency measures and the replacement of older equipment with electric or low-emission alternatives. In December 2024, Mumbai airport also became the first airport in India to receive Level 5 accreditation for Airport Customer Experience from Airports Council International.

## Telangana likely to hold EAPCET 2026 in first week of May

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Hyderabad: In all likelihood, the Telangana Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (TG EAPCET) 2026 will be conducted in the first week of May. The Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) is exploring possibilities of holding the entrance tests for admissions to undergraduate engineering, agriculture and pharmacy programmes in the State from May 4 or 5. Towards this, the Council has prepared a preliminary schedule, which will be sent to the State government for approval. After a nod from the government, the schedule will be released, a senior official said. In addition, the TGCHE is exploring the possibilities of holding EdCET, LAWCET, ICET, PGECET, ECET, and PECET in the month of

May. Notifications for these entrance tests will be released in February next year. JNTU-Hyderabad will continue to oversee the conduct of TG EAPCET 2026, while the other CETs may be conducted by different universities.



## How blood stains spotted by domestic helped uncover brutal murder by stepson in Vasai



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

both then wiped the blood stains from the house. To cover up the murder, Amir called his younger brother Salim and also contacted Vasai-based doctor R R Garg, who allegedly agreed to provide a death certificate which said Khusro died a natural death. The family then secretly transported the body to a burial ground in Vasai west and performed the last rites, without the knowledge of the neighbours.

The incident came to light when a domestic help arrived for work, noticed blood stains in the house, and found her employer missing. She alerted police inspector Samir Ahirrao, incharge of the Mira-Bhayander Vasai Virar crime branch unit. A special team was formed and within 12 hours, Imran and Amir were taken into custody. While they initially denied their involvement during interrogation, they confessed to the crime when both of them were questioned separately, said police officer Samir Ahirrao. After both the father-son duo confessed to the crime, police then picked up Imran's uncle Salim and Dr Garg. A murder case was registered at the Vasai police station and all four were arrested in the case under the charge of murder, along with other relevant sections. Assistant Commissioner of Police Nemnath Ghogre became the investigating officer and following court order, Arshiya's body was exhumed and sent to the JJ hospital for post mortem. Police also seized Dr Garg's clinic and started examining whether he had been involved in similar cases. Imran had long been addicted to a multiplayer online game and had repeatedly sought money from family members for in-game purchases. Arshiya had helped him in the past but she refused to give him money. It is a case of digital addiction, greed, and cold planning," said Ahirrao who was then incharge of the Unit 2 MBVV crime branch. The reconstruction of the crime scene was conducted and police collected evidence from the burial site as part of evidence, said police.

## From 85,477 in 2024 to 11,52,671 in 2025: 13-fold increase in traffic violation cases in Surat city, tickets for not wearing helmets rose 60 times

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

From January, when police launched a drive, to the current month, the police registered 11,52,671 cases for traffic violations in the city, far higher than the 85,477 cases registered last year. The department has issued 28,340 challans for traffic violations in just 11 days ending Monday (November 28 and December 8), majority of them for overspeeding. Of this, the maximum number of tickets was issued in the areas known as the diamond and textile hubs in Surat where the traffic density is high. Of this, the highest number of 11,200 challans were issued in Region 1, that includes the areas of Varachha, Kapodara, Sarthana, Laskana, Udhna and Limbaya. These areas see a surge in two-wheeler traffic in the morning (9 am-11 am) and around 5-6 pm coinciding with the factory shifts in diamond and textile units. Jayanti Patel, a resident of Hirabaug society in Varachha, who works in a diamond factory and hails from Amreli, goes to work around 8 am on his bike. He describes how tough the ride gets due to traffic rush.

"While returning at 6 pm, we have to make a stop at different traffic signals, which are at short distances, and it takes a long time to reach home. So people just jump the red light. Also several roads are constricted because of the ongoing work on the Surat Metro Rail," Patel says. As per the data, 2,139 cases were registered for wrong-side driving and 7,328 for traffic signal violations during the 11 days – in both cases, nearly half of the challans were issued in Region 1. Of 9,616 cases registered for over speeding during the period, 53% are in the region. Region 3 which covers the suburbs of Vesu, Dindoli, Sachin, Althan and the areas of Athwa, Umra, Kathodara, and Bhestan saw 84% challans issued for not wearing helmets, of the total 585 handed out during the 11 days.

The traffic department has registered 7.97 lakh cases for helmet rule violations (against 13,379 cases in 2024), followed by 1,20,296 for traffic signal violations (16,633 in 2024), 1,85,145 for over-speeding (55,465 in 2024), and 50,230 cases of wrong-side driving in Surat so far this year. The penalty for not wearing helmet while riding is Rs 500 per offence, while overspeeding penalty ranges between Rs 3,000 and Rs 5,000, depending on the size of the vehicle. Deputy Commissioner Police (traffic), Sector 1, Ms Anupam said, "We have been regularly carrying out traffic awareness drives in the city to develop traffic sense among people. This year, we have been strict against traffic rule violators, and because of that the number of cases has gone up in comparison to last year. We are registering more cases with an aim: people should obey traffic rules."

According to Anupam, the traffic police with the help of the Regional Transport Office has cancelled driving licences of those who received 50 or more challans and had

not paid the penalty amount. "Apart from wrong-side driving, we will also take strict action against vehicle riders who are honking unnecessarily in the coming days. Two days ago, our team caught a couple of bike riders honking regularly at the traffic signal. They were using imported bike horns." A traffic brigade personnel told The Indian Express: "It is difficult to work in Region 1, people mob us if anyone is caught for traffic violation. People argue with us and use abusive language. I have been working in Region 1 for the last five years. For instance, three days ago, a bike rider, who was caught by a woman traffic brigade personnel for jumping the traffic lights, had a heated exchange with her. The offender was so abusive that my colleague has gone on leave". "There are around 300 traffic brigade personnel in the city and 94 of them are women serving in the Sector 1 area. When we catch a person for violating traffic signals, the person puts blame on others. They even make videos of us and share on social media. We are helpless, but we have to work for our family, so we carry on," he said on condition of anonymity. Surat police have installed 2,300 CCTV cameras across the city. The Surat city traffic area has been divided into four regions. Region 1 has Varchha, Kapodara, Sarthana, Laskana, Udhna and Limbaya, Region 2 comprises Salabatpura, Puna, Mahidarpura, Sari, Algate, Katargam, Chowk Bazaar, Singhapore, Region 3 has Athwa, Umra, Kathodara, Vesu, Althan, Dindoli, Pandesara, Bhestan, Sachin and Region 4 has Amroli, Utran, Adajan, Jehangirpura, Pal, Rander, Ichhapore, Hazira Dumas. Meetings have also been held with the diamond bodies to tackle the traffic problem during peak morning and evening hours. Surat Diamond Association president Jagdish Khunt told The Indian Express that in a meeting of diamond factory owners and the Surat city police, a plan to stagger the closing hours of the factories was discussed. "Over 5 lakh workers are employed in various diamond factories. The factory owners have accepted the proposals and started closing their factories at 10 to 30-minute intervals," Jagdish Khunt said.

## 'If your names are struck off, use your cooking equipment': Mamata's clarion call to women amid SIR stir in West Bengal

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

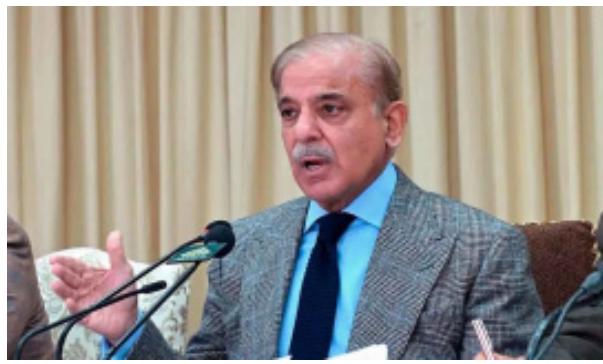
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday escalated her confrontation with the Election Commission and the BJP over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list, issuing an unusually sharp call to women to use their cooking equipment to fight it out if their names are struck off. Speaking at a Trinamool Congress rally in Krishnanagar, Banerjee framed the SIR as a targeted political exercise, alleging that the review was being conducted selectively in Opposition-held areas.

"You want to snatch the rights of mothers and sisters in the name of SIR? They will bring police from Delhi during the election and intimidate mothers and sisters," she said. "Mothers and sisters, if your names are struck off, have things at your home; the ones you use for cooking? Do you have strength in your soul? If they strike off your name, will you catch them? You won't let it pass if your names are cut, right? The women will fight from the front and the men will be behind them. I want to see your strength. Bengal wants to see your strength," she said. The Chief Minister repeatedly attacked Union Home Minister Amit Shah during her speech. "There is a Home Minister here, both his eyes are terrifying. Seeing him gives a feeling of impending disaster. There is no task he cannot do. He has Duryodhana in one eye and Dushasana in the other," she said. Responding to Shah's statement in Parliament on Wednesday — "If you stand by infiltrators, you will be wiped



out from Bengal" — Banerjee countered: "There will be no NRC in West Bengal, nor will there be detention camps. Rest assured. I will not let anyone be driven out from Bengal. And if they are driven out, we know how to bring them back." She also alleged that District Magistrates were being pressured to remove "one and a half crore names" from the rolls. "You succeeded in Bihar. I will not let you do it in Bengal," she said. Accusing the BJP of influencing the draft voter list, Banerjee said, "Are you planning to conduct the election with a voter list prepared by the BJP's IT cell? Do whatever you want. You won't be able to do anything." The Trinamool Congress chief once again warned against "vote-splitting conspiracies". "Whenever elections come, the BJP comes with money to split votes.

## Pak PM Shehzad Sharif launches governance reforms under IMF lens



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Islamabad: Prime Minister Shehzad Sharif has launched economic-governance reforms to address the vulnerabilities identified in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Governance and Corruption report. The 186-page Governance and Corruption Diagnostic report launched late last year highlighted massive economic leakages due to bad governance and corruption.

Under the IMF conditions linked to its ongoing USD 7 billion bailout package, Pakistan was required to publish "governance action plan based on the recommendations of the Governance Diagnostic Assessment" to address critical governance vulnerabilities by December 31. The Express Tribune reported that the 142-point reform plan launched on Wednesday envisaged undertaking national risk assessment on corruption, making rule-based appointments in key institutions, including the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and improving its credibility in the eyes of the public. Shehzad said that the recommendations of the international institutions have been incorporated in his reforms' plan but it is fundamentally the government's home-grown agenda to "shift from crisis management to institutional building". Shehzad said that under his governance plan, there are 59 priority actions and 83 complementary actions. This brings the total tally of these required actions to 142 that have to be implemented over a period of next three years. The prime minister said that the government's focus would now shift from crisis management to institutional building. He said that people of Pakistan have paid a very heavy price during the past two years and "we cannot return to business as usual".

## Zohran Mamdani sworn in as New York City's first Muslim mayor

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

New York: Zohran Mamdani has taken the oath of office as the new mayor of New York City in a historic midnight ceremony held at a decommissioned subway station in Manhattan, becoming the first Muslim to lead America's largest city. Mamdani placed his hand on a Quran as he was sworn in, marking a first in the city's political history. "This is truly the honour and the privilege of a lifetime," Mamdani said moments after taking the oath. The 34-year-old Democrat was sworn in by New York Attorney General Letitia James, a close political ally, at the old City Hall subway station, one of the original stops on the city's earliest underground line. The station, renowned for its ornate arched ceilings and historic significance, served as the backdrop for the ceremony, with Mamdani's wife, Rama Duwaji, holding the Quran during the oath. Mamdani is set to be sworn in once again later in the day in a larger public ceremony at City Hall at 1 p.m. local time. That event will be administered by US Senator Bernie Sanders, one of the new mayor's political inspirations, and will be followed by a public block party organised by the incoming administration.

The celebration is planned along a stretch of Broadway known as the "Canyon of Heroes", a location traditionally associated with ticker-tape parades. Following the ceremonies, Mamdani and his wife will move from their one-bedroom, rent-stabilised apartment in an outer borough to the official mayoral residence in Manhattan. He now begins what is widely regarded as one of the most demanding roles in American politics, stepping into office as one of the most closely watched political figures in the country. Born in Kampala, Uganda, in 1991, Mamdani is the son of ac-

## U.S. imposes sanctions on four Venezuelan oil firms, four more tankers in Maduro crackdown



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The U.S. on Wednesday (December 31, 2025) imposed sanctions on four firms operating in Venezuela's oil sector and designated four additional oil tankers, which the U.S. accuses of being part of a shadow fleet serving Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government, as blocked property. The action is part of the Trump administration's month-long pressure campaign on Mr. Maduro. U.S. forces also have seized two oil tankers off Venezuela's coast, are pursuing another and have conducted a series of deadly strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

A set of strikes announced Wednesday increased the death toll from the attacks to at least 110 people since early September. And in a new escalation marking the first known direct operation on Venezuelan soil, the CIA carried out a drone strike last week at a docking area believed to have been used by drug cartels. The latest sanctions from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control target ships called Nord Star, Lunar Tide, Rosalind and Delta, and their registered ownership companies.

"Today's sanctions continue President Trump's pressure campaign on Maduro and his cronies," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said in a statement. "The

While speaking at the occasion, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the governance plan is based on three core streams: growth-oriented fiscal and public investment governance, enhancing market confidence and simplification of regulations and building trust in legal processes. The Finance Ministry will act as the secretariat to implement the action plan, while the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) will provide technical support. After the ceremony, the Finance Ministry released the 240-page Economic Governance Reforms report, detailing every aspect that could help improve poor governance and address critical corruption-related vulnerabilities. Among the major steps, Pakistan has committed with the IMF to publish SIFC (Special Investment Facilitation Council) annual report by June 2027. The draft annual report will be submitted in December 2026 and the final report to be submitted in March 2027. SIFC is a military-led body aiming to revive the economy by focusing on investment.

By June 2026, the government will also conduct National Risk Assessment on corruption and within three months it will form the national anti-corruption task force. The government will also identify top 10 agencies with high corruption risks by June 2027. And by June 2028, it will publish annual reports of the identified 10 highest risk agencies and will report on demonstrated reduction of risks. According to the new action plan, by June 2026, the government will conduct legislative review of the Anti-money Laundering Act (AMLA) to remove ambiguities. It will also finalise and submit amended Anti-Money Laundering Bill for review by parliament. By June 2027, these amendments will be notified. Within one and a half years, Pakistan will also build the capacity of judges through implementing training plans regarding the AMLA. The IMF has also given a one and a half year's timeline to strengthen accountability and integrity of the civil servants. It will deploy a computerised system to generate risk-based cases for verification. By June 2027, the government will notify Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) rules that should codify the entire process of appointment of chairman, commissioners and policy board members of the SECP. It will also review the appointment process for the NAB chairman by June 2027 and would increase the public credibility of NAB as an anti-corruption agency, according to the published plan, according to The Express Tribune.



claimed filmmaker Mira Nair and scholar-activist Mahmood Mamdani. His personal journey reflects the convergence of multiple diasporas. Along with being New York City's first Muslim mayor, he is also the first mayor of South Asian origin, the first to be born in Africa, and, at 34, the youngest person to hold the office in generations. Mamdani's family moved to New York City when he was seven years old, and he grew up in the city in the years following the September 11 attacks, a period during which many Muslims felt unwelcome. He became an American citizen in 2018 and went on to work on political campaigns for Democratic candidates across the city before seeking elected office himself. In 2020, he won a seat in the New York State Assembly, representing a district in Queens. Running a campaign that helped push "affordability" to the forefront of the political debate, the democratic socialist pledged to deliver sweeping changes aimed at easing the cost of living in one of the world's most expensive cities.

The celebration is planned along a stretch of Broadway known as the "Canyon of Heroes", a location traditionally associated with ticker-tape parades. Following the ceremonies, Mamdani and his wife will move from their one-bedroom, rent-stabilised apartment in an outer borough to the official mayoral residence in Manhattan. He now begins what is widely regarded as one of the most demanding roles in American politics, stepping into office as one of the most closely watched political figures in the country. Born in Kampala, Uganda, in 1991, Mamdani is the son of ac-

## Bulgaria becomes 21st eurozone member

Sofia: Bulgaria officially adopts the euro as of the first day of 2026 and becomes the 21st member of the eurozone. This happened exactly 19 years after the country joined the European Union.

Until the end of January, the lev will remain a legal means of payment alongside the euro, and from February 1, the euro will become the only official currency. Until August 8, 2026, prices will continue to be displayed in both euros and leva. Throughout January, people will be able to make cash payments in retail outlets using both leva and euro, while retailers will be obliged to give change entirely in only one of the two currencies – euros, or, in case of a temporary lack of availability, in leva. Retailers are free to decide whether to accept mixed payments in two currencies within a single transaction, but this decision must be clearly indicated in a visible place in the store.

## Trump says he's dropping push for National Guard in Chicago, LA and Portland, Oregon, for now



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

U.S. President Donald Trump said he's dropping — for now — his push to deploy National Guard troops in Chicago, Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon, a move that comes after legal roadblocks hung up the effort. Mr. Trump said in a social media post Wednesday that he's removing the Guard troops for now. "We will come back, perhaps in a much different and stronger form, when crime begins to soar again — Only a question of time!" he wrote.

Troops had already left Los Angeles after the President deployed them earlier this year as part of a broader crackdown on crime and immigration. They had been sent to Chicago and Portland but were never on the streets as legal challenges played out. The President has made a crackdown on crime in cities a centerpiece of his second term — and has toyed with the idea of invoking the Insurrection Act to stop his opponents from using the courts to block his plans. He has said he sees his tough-on-crime approach as a winning political issue ahead of next year's midterm elections. In November, U.S. Northern Command had said it was "shifting and/or rightsizing" operations in Portland, Chicago and Los Angeles, but there would be a

"constant, enduring and long-term presence in each city." Mr. Trump's push to deploy the troops in Democrat-led cities has been met with legal challenges at nearly every turn.

The Supreme Court in December refused to allow the Trump administration to deploy National Guard troops in the Chicago area as part of its crackdown on immigration. The order was not a final ruling but was a significant and rare setback by the high court for the president's efforts. In the nation's capital, District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwalb sued to halt the deployments of more than 2,000 guardsmen. Hundreds of troops from California and Oregon were deployed to Portland, but a federal judge barred them from going on the streets. A judge permanently blocked the deployment of National Guard troops there in November after a three-day trial. California National Guard troops were removed from the streets of Los Angeles by Dec. 15 after a court ruling. But an appeals court had paused a separate part of the order that required control of the Guard to return to Gov. Gavin Newsom. In a Tuesday court filing, the Trump administration said it was no longer seeking a pause in that part of the order. That paves the way for the California National Guard troops to fully return to state control after Trump federalized the Guard in June. California Attorney General Rob Bonta called the development a "major litigation victory" in a press release Wednesday. "For six months, California National Guard troops have been used as political pawns by a President desperate to be king," Bonta said. "There is a reason our founders decided military and civilian affairs must be kept separate; a reason that our military is, by design, apolitical." Mr. Trump also ordered the deployment of the Tennessee National Guard to Memphis in September to combat crime, a move supported by the state's Republican Gov. Bill Lee and senators. A Tennessee judge blocked the use of the Guard, siding with Democratic state and local officials who sued.

## Army's animal contingent to make historic debut at Republic Day parade

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

This Republic Day, Kartavya Path will witness a rare and stirring spectacle as animals of the Indian Army march in step, embodying endurance, sacrifice and India's unmatched high-altitude military capability. According to the Army, for the first time ever, a specially curated animal contingent of the Remount & Veterinary Corps (RVC) will be showcased at the Republic Day parade, highlighting the indispensable role played by animals in securing India's most challenging frontiers. The contingent will feature two Bactrian camels, four Zanskar ponies, four raptors, 10 Indian-breed Army dogs and six conventional military dogs currently in service. Together, they represent a unique blend of tradition, innovation and self-reliance within the Army's operational ecosystem.

Leading the formation will be the hardy Bactrian camels, recently inducted for operations in the cold deserts of Ladakh. Exceptionally adapted to extreme cold, thin air and altitudes above 15,000 feet, these camels can carry loads of up to 250 kg while traversing long distances with minimal water and feed. Their induction has significantly strengthened logistical support and mounted patrolling capabilities along the Line of Actual Control, particularly in sandy terrain and steep gradients, the Army added.

Extraordinary endurance The Army further informed that marching alongside them will be the Zanskar ponies, a rare indigenous mountain breed from Ladakh. Despite their small size, these ponies are known for extraordinary endurance, capable of carrying 40 to 60 kg over long distances at altitudes exceeding 15,000 feet and in temperatures plunging to minus 40 degrees Celsius. Inducted in 2020, they have served in some of the harshest terrains, including the Siachen Glacier, supporting logistics and mounted patrols that can cover up to 70 km in a single day. Adding a dimension of aerial vigilance will be four raptors, employed for bird-strike control and surveillance, showcasing the Army's innovative use of natural capabilities to enhance operational safety and effectiveness. A major highlight of the parade will be the Army dogs, often referred to as the "Si-

"lent Warriors" of the Indian Army. Raised, trained and nurtured by the RVC Centre and College in Meerut, these dogs play a vital role in counter-terrorism operations, explosive and mine detection, tracking, guarding, disaster response and search-and-rescue missions. Over the years, several Army dogs and their handlers have been honoured with gallantry awards for acts of exceptional courage in combat and humanitarian operations.

Indigenous dog breeds In line with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India, the Army has increasingly inducted indigenous dog breeds such as Mudhol Hound, Rampur Hound, Chippiparai, Kombai and Rajapalayam. Their presence on Kartavya Path will underscore India's growing self-reliance in defence and the successful integration of native breeds into specialised military roles. As the animal contingent marches past the saluting dais on Republic Day 2026, it will serve as a poignant reminder that India's defence strength is built not by machines and soldiers alone. From the icy heights of Siachen to the cold deserts of Ladakh and disaster-hit civilian areas, these animals have quietly shared the burden of duty, courage and sacrifice. They will march not merely as support elements, but as warriors on four legs — living symbols of resilience, loyalty and the Army's unwavering resolve to protect the nation under all conditions, the Army added.

## Fresh snowfall ushers in New Year at Kashmir tourist hotspots



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Kashmir rang in the New Year amid fresh snowfall at popular tourist resorts and higher reaches of the valley, with the meteorological department forecasting an improvement in weather later in the day, officials said on Thursday (January 1, 2026). Tourist resorts including Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg received fresh overnight snowfall that continued till Thursday morning, drawing large numbers of revellers, they said.

Several higher reaches — Tulail Valley in Gurez, Razdan Top in Bandipora, Macchil and Sadhna Top in Kupwara, and Zojila Pass — also received fresh snowfall, officials said. They said there was a possibility of light rain/snow showers in some areas as the trailing part of a prevalent western disturbance moves away by the evening, leading to gradual improvement in weather. A brief spell of light rain or snow may, however, occur at isolated places on Friday (January 2, 2026). Due to a cloud cover, the night temperatures remained higher than the seasonal average and settled above the freezing point at most places, officials said. Despite the fresh snow, the valley continues to experience an unusually warm winter, with temperatures hovering 1.2 to 6.3 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average, officials said. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of 2.2 degrees Celsius, which was 4.6 degrees Celsius above the normal for this time of year, they said. Gulmarg remained the coldest location in the region with the mercury settling at minus 5.5 degrees Celsius, 2.5

degrees below the previous night, officials said. In south Kashmir, Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, 6.3 degrees above the normal temperature, and Qazigund, the gateway town of the valley, saw the mercury settle at 2 degrees Celsius, five degrees above normal. The region is currently going through 'Chilla-e-Kalan', a 40-day period of extreme cold. During this phase, night temperatures typically drop several degrees below the freezing point. However, current readings show a departure from normal patterns. During this period of extreme weather, the chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum as well. However, the plains of the valley have not received any snowfall so far this season.

## Zelenskyy says he won't sign weak deal that will only prolong war

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in his New Year address to the nation, ?said late on Wednesday (December 31, 2025) that Ukraine wanted the war to end, but ?not at any cost, adding he would not sign a ?weak? peace agreement that would only prolong the war.

Seated ?in his office, with a festive tree in the background, Mr. Zelenskyy said Ukrainians were exhausted from nearly four years of war — longer than the German World War Two occupation of many Ukrainian cities. But they were not prepared to give up.

?What does Ukraine want? Peace? Yes. At any cost? No. We want an ?end to the war but not the end of ?Ukraine,? Mr. Zelenskyy, wearing a dark green embroidered Ukrainian shirt, said in the 21-minute address issued just before midnight. ?Are we tired? Very. Does this mean we are ?ready to surrender? Anyone who ?thinks so is deeply mistaken.? Mr. Zelenskyy said any signature ?placed on weak agreements only fuel the war.?

## A puzzling industrial credit-growth disconnect in FY17-FY19



The Indian banking sector plays a critical role in industrial growth. It channelises household savings to provide funds to firms at affordable rates. A review of the growth of credit to industries shows four facts and a puzzling observation. Fact 1: The share of industrial credit in total bank credit has declined from 42% in 2013 to 23% in 2024 as shown in the below chart. Such a decline is unprecedented in half a century. Credit to the services sector has benefited at the expense of industrial credit. This is largely driven by personal loans, which surpassed industrial credit share recently.

Fact 2: The nominal growth of Industrial credit has been abysmal in the last decade. During 2014-24, the compound annual growth rate was 4.1% as shown in the below chart. Growth was 16% during 1974-90, 14% during 1990-04, and 23% in 2004-14. This pattern holds if we exclude the post-COVID-19 pandemic years. Growth was 4.1% for 2014-19. Fact 3: This observation holds if we disaggregate the growth rates based on regions. The three most industrialised regions – western, southern, and northern – saw lesser growth than the India average. The higher than average growth for the central and northeastern regions as shown in the below charts is likely on account of their lower industrial credit share. This pattern holds when we look across industry groups. None of the broad industry groups saw credit growth in double digits in 2014-24 (Chart 4). Compared to

this, 2004-14 saw the credit growth of each industry group in double digits.

Fact 4: The bank credit as a proportion of India's GDP, a measure of financial deepening, increased impressively during the late 1990s (about 20%) and the early 2010s (over 50%). Since then it has hovered between the 50%-55% range. A higher credit/GDP ratio is not unheard of: Japan (about 1.2), China (about 1.9), South Africa (about 0.9) and Brazil (about 0.75). This stagnancy, when seen with the declining share of industrial credit does not paint an optimistic picture. The puzzle: The below chart illustrates a consistent co-movement between industrial GDP growth and the growth of the formal manufacturing sector (GVA-ASI). However, these two metrics diverged during the three-year period between 2016-17 and 2018-19. While industrial credit slowed and GVA-ASI showed an expected downturn, industrial GDP remained puzzlingly constant. This decoupling represents a significant anomaly. The historical relationship between industrial credit and industrial growth has been remarkably consistent. Over the last four decades (1981-2024), the correlation between industrial credit and ASI-GVA growth stood at 0.45. In more recent decades, this bond has only tightened: rising to 0.56 between 2000 and 2024, and 0.63 since 2004. Most notably, in the pre-pandemic window (2004-2020), the correlation reached a striking 0.82. So, under normal economic conditions, bank credit and industrial output move almost in lockstep. It is against this backdrop of long-term stability that the 2016-2019 decoupling becomes so significant. This pattern provides some credence to an overestimation of industrial GDP in the current NAS series (2011-12), as has been argued by some economists. The team working on the new revision may take note of this, especially in light of the IMF downgrading India's GDP estimates to 'C' status. The causes of the decline in industrial credit growth in the last decade require a deeper probe. The writer teaches at the School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat. The comments by Professor R. Nagaraj and Prof. A. Kalaiyaran are acknowledged.

## Financial system faces near-term risks from external uncertainties: Report

Though the Indian economy, despite persistent global challenges, continues to grow strongly on the back of robust domestic demand, it and the financial system faces near-term risks from external uncertainties - geopolitical and trade related, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in the Financial Stability Report (FSR), its half yearly publication, which was released on

"These factors could increase exchange rate volatility, dampen trade, reduce corporate earnings, and lower foreign investment. A sharp correction in U.S. equities could influence domestic equities and tighten financial conditions," the central bank cautioned in the report. In the foreword of the FSR, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the outlook for 2026 and beyond was shrouded in uncertainty as the contours of policies that were reshaping the global economic landscape remained fluid and untested.

"The global financial system in this challenging backdrop remains vulnerable to stretched valuations of risk assets, expanding public debt and growing interconnectedness among banks and Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NBFI),," he flagged. "Alongside, the financial landscape is evolving rapidly, driven by profound technological advances and the continued rise of non-bank financial intermediation. While they bring immense opportunities, they are also adding new layers of risks, such as the rise of stablecoins and private credit," he emphasised. Stating that though the year 2025 was challenging as geopolitical conflicts, trade tensions, and persistent policy uncertainty cast a shadow over the global economy and the financial system, he said amidst these developments, the world economy had proven to be more resilient than anticipated and the financial system remained steady. He said the Indian economy and the financial system remained robust and resilient supported by strong growth, benign inflation, healthy balance sheets of financial and non-financial firms, sizeable buffers and prudent policy reforms. "Despite a volatile and unfavourable external environment, the Indian economy is projected to register high growth, driven by strong domestic consumption and investment. Nonetheless, we recognise the near-term challenges from external spillovers and continue to build strong guardrails to safeguard the economy and the financial system from potential shocks," he stated. In the FSR the RBI said Banks and NBFI remained healthy, bolstered by strong capital and liquidity buffers, robust earnings and improved asset quality. "Stress tests also endorse the resilience of banks and non-banking financial companies. Financial markets, however, remain susceptible to global spillovers," it pointed out.



The FSR which has been prepared with contributions from all financial sector regulators, presents the collective assessment of the Sub Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council on current and emerging risks to the stability of the Indian financial system. In the global context risks to the outlook remain skewed to the downside due to still elevated uncertainty, high public debt, and the risk of a disorderly market correction as per the FSR. "Financial markets appear strong on the surface but show growing underlying vulnerabilities. Sharp rise in equities and other risk assets, high hedge funds' leverage, expanding opaque private credit markets and growth of stablecoins all heighten global financial system fragilities," it said. "Ample liquidity is supporting risk-on sentiment across asset classes, but a sharp correction - especially if AI optimism fades - could spill over to the broader financial system, given rising interconnectedness," it cautioned.

It said though a sharp correction in U.S. equities could influence domestic equities and tighten financial conditions, the economy and financial system could withstand adverse shocks due to strong buffers, it stated. As per the FSR the health of the Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) remains sound with strong capital and liquidity buffers, improved asset quality and robust profitability. "Macro stress test results affirm the resilience of SCBs to withstand losses under hypothetical adverse scenarios and maintain capital buffers well above the regulatory minimum. Stress tests also confirm the resilience of mutual funds and clearing corporations," it said. "Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) remain robust supported by strong capital buffers, solid earnings and improving asset quality. The insurance sector continues to display balance sheet resilience and the consolidated solvency ratio remained above the minimum threshold limit," it concluded.

## Bharat Sundar's nagaswaram-inspired 13-minute Abheri alapana was the high point of his recital

The most essential tool necessary for a vocalist is a flexible voice, sharp musical mind and a diligent sense of proportion. Bharat Sundar's concert for The Music Academy had all these, topped with fine raga bhava. Purvikalyani, Abheri and Kalyani were his main ragas. A brisk Thodi varnam 'Era napai' was followed by M. Balamuralikrishna's 'Ganasudha' in Nattai and the accompanying swaras. The Purvikalyani alapana was well-sketched staying within its perimeter. 'Satru vilagidum pillai' by Gopalakrishna Bharati in Rupakam is an evocative Nandanaar song that Bharat and violinist M. Rajeev handled sensitively, especially at the niraval at 'Bhakthiyil karai kandavan'. Swaras following the niraval were optimised for the clock.

'Sri tyagaraja' in Sree raga (Muthuswami Dikshitar) in vilambita kala skirted slowness and was cleverly augmented with deft taps from Patri Satish Kumar on the mridangam. Bharat Sundar did not treat even the filler 'Sarasa samagana' in Kapi Narayani lightly — the swara korvais with janta prayogas livened it up. Abheri was a masterpiece of nagaswara chakravarthi T.N. Rajarathnam Pillai. That was Bharat's reference guide for the alapana encapsulated in 13 minutes — short phrases, impactful sustains and korvais in an unhurried tempo got both the vocalist and the violinist plenty of appreciation.

Mysore Vasudevacharya's epochal kriti 'Bhajare re manasa' demands an extended scale range across the octaves and Bharat passed the test. The niraval at 'Pavana japtham' was interesting even though slightly curtailed. Rajeev again came to the fore with brevity. The RTP in Kalyani was a total package, washed with ragarasa. The alapana start in nishadham was not just unusual, but seemed to mirror the Pallavi which also starts with a Ni and



swarakshara. 'Nee dayai puriya thamadama saravanabhava' set to Khanda Chapu, tisra nadai. Bharat and Rajeev rendered four kalams within one cycle, a mark of good laya control. The request to the audience to refrain from clapping was understandable. 'Kuyilar', the Kalki Krishnamurthy composition with attractive lyrics set in Mandu, got the serene treatment and pace the song demanded. Rajeev played subtly, producing intelligent sequences and landings, and his sense of proportion allowed the concert to flow like a stream. Satish Kumar calibrated his normal style a bit, adding further subtlety to kritis such as 'Satru vilakidum' and 'Sri

Thyagaraja'. Guruprasad on the ghatam lent his weight in fast-paced swara korvais and in the tani. The concert was also a good demonstration of balancing time, mood and variety. However, Bharat needs to play his middle overs cautiously to exploit his strengths fully.

## Indore water contamination: Official dismissed, two others suspended as death toll rises to 10; probe panel formed



An official was dismissed from service and two others suspended even as the death toll climbed to 10 in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh where more than 2,000 people have fallen ill after consuming contaminated water supplied by the municipal corporation, officials said on Wednesday. The deceased include a six-month-old child, who passed away on Wednesday (December 31, 2025), and six women. More than 100 people from Indore's Bhagirathpura area have been admitted to hospitals in the past one week after drinking water from a municipal supply line.

While the authorities are yet to release the official death toll, a senior officer in the district administration said that the figure has crossed 10. In-charge sub-engineer Shubham Srivastava of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department of the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) was terminated while zonal officer Shaligram Sitole and assistant engineer Yogesh Joshi were suspended on the instructions of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

"Till today, 7,992 houses were surveyed in which about 39,854 people were examined, out of which about 2,456 suspected patients were found, who were given first aid on the spot. Till today, 212 patients were admitted in hospitals, out of which 50 patients have been discharged. Currently, the number of patients admitted in hospitals is 162, and the number of patients admitted in ICU is 26," a statement from the office of Chief Medical and Health Officer said. A three-member committee has also been formed to investigate the tragedy in Bhagirathpura area. The panel is headed by IAS officer Navjeevan Panwar, and consists of superintendent

engineer Pradeep Nigam and associate professor at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Medical College Shailesh Rai. The panel will also investigate the delays in completing a tender issued in August for a fresh supply line in the area, a senior government official said. Cabinet Minister and Indore-1 MLA Kailash Vijayvargiya termed the incident "unfortunate" and said the numbers of patients admitted to healthcare facilities were increasing constantly. "It was increasing yesterday [Tuesday] but has reduced today," he said. While Mr. Vijayvargiya remained deputed in the area, the Chief Minister also visited multiple hospitals to meet the patients. IMC Commissioner Dileep Yadav told The Hindu that the three officials were responsible for clean water supply in the area but failed to detect the leakages in time. "A main leakage from a toilet drainage over the main supply line has been repaired and the toilet has been dismantled. Various other leakages were also found and repaired. We will test the water supply tomorrow and check for any leakages and water quality. The supply will be resumed once everything is fine," Mr. Yadav said. He said that over 100 water tankers have been sent to the area for water needs of residents.

Madhya Pradesh HC seeks status report Meanwhile, the Madhya Pradesh High Court also issued notices to the State authorities and sought a status report on the matter by January 2. Hearing two petitions, the High Court also directed for free-of-cost treatment of patients after a petitioner, a resident of Bhagirathpura, alleged that the private hospitals were refusing treatment without money.

The petitioner's lawyer, advocate Abhinav Dhanodkar, said: "We have also requested the court to form a probe committee headed by a retired High Court judge to ensure such incidents are not repeated." When asked about delays in opening tenders for fresh supply line in the area, IMC Commissioner Mr. Yadav said the project was to be undertaken through the AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) package and that funds were awaited to start the work. Meanwhile, the State Congress party has formed a five-member fact-finding committee to probe the tragedy. The committee consists of former Ministers Sajjan Singh Verma and Jaivardhan Singh along with three MLAs, and it will submit a report to the party leadership by January 5.

## No third party mediation during Operation Sindoor: government officials refute intervention claims by China and U.S.



The Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) channel, and no other country had played a role in the outcome.

"Please refer to our responses made earlier," said another official, referring to the MEA's statement on May 13 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's telephone call with Mr. Trump on June 17, where Mr. Modi said that "at no point ... was there any discussion, at any level, on an India-U.S. trade deal, or any proposal for a mediation by the U.S. between India and Pakistan". Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had however thanked the U.S., China and Saudi Arabia for their peace efforts at the time. In his speech on Tuesday (December 31, 2025), Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had praised China's peace efforts to end a number of conflicts. "To build peace that lasts, we have taken an objective and just stance, and focused on addressing both symptoms and root causes. Following this Chinese approach to settling hotspot issues, we mediated in northern Myanmar, the Iranian nuclear issue, the tensions between Pakistan and India, the issues between Palestine and Israel, and the recent conflict between Cambodia and Thailand," Mr. Wang said, while delivering a keynote address at a symposium on the "International Situation and China's Foreign Relations" looking back at Chinese diplomacy in 2025. He also said that China-India relations "showed a good momentum" during the year, referring to Mr. Modi's visit to Tianjin for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meet and bilateral summit with China's President Xi Jinping. Reacting to Mr. Wang's remarks, Congress MP and general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh criticised Mr. Modi for his "silence" on the issue. "Given that China was decisively aligned with Pakistan [during Op Sindoor], Chinese claims of having mediated between India and Pakistan are concerning — not just because they directly contradict what the people of our country have been led to believe, but because they seem to make a joke of our national security itself," Mr. Ramesh said in a social media statement, adding that "the people of India need clarity on what role China played in the abrupt halt to Operation Sindoor".

## Gig workers' strike reveals intolerable working conditions

On New Year's eve, one of the most lucrative days for app-based platforms, tens of thousands of platform workers across India chose to log out. For workers who live off daily earnings, shoulder debt, and have invested heavily in vehicles, fuel, and phones, this decision is not merely symbolic. It is existential. When workers struggling to meet basic needs give up a peak-demand day, it signals two clear things: how intolerable working conditions in the platform economy have become, and how heroic their collective act of resistance is. The strike signals the arrival of a conscious and organised platform workforce with a new commitment to take the fight for platform regulation head-on and sustain it in pursuit of rights, safety and dignity.

Decisive shift Across the world, the trajectory of platform work is shifting slowly but decisively. On December 18, the New York City Council passed legislation against unfair ID deactivation with a whopping majority — 40 votes in favour and just five against, making it veto-proof. Widely recognised as one of the strongest laws on the issue, the legislation establishes clear standards of due process, requiring platforms to demonstrate just cause before cutting workers off from their livelihoods. In effect, it recognises that algorithmic decisions cannot substitute for evidence, transparency, and accountability. Crucially, this regulatory momentum is not confined to the Global North. Over the past year, the federal government of Mexico passed legislation ensuring that a vast majority of platform workers are treated as employees, entitled to minimum pay standards, paid leave, health and safety protections, bonuses, and even profit-sharing. In Colombia, platform workers are to be classified as

employees based on the degree of control exercised by platforms — a direct challenge to the fiction of "flexibility and freedom" in tightly managed app-based work. In Brazil, even as the Supreme Court leaned towards classifying platform workers as independent contractors, it simultaneously affirmed their rights to health, safety, and social security, and awarded damages to a delivery worker fired without substantive evidence. In Chile, the Supreme Court recently upheld a transport authority decision to treat platform-based drivers as employees. Earlier, New York City had already imposed minimum wage/pay requirements and capped the number of platform vehicles on city streets. In response to a complaint filed against Uber by the International Alliance of App-based Transport Workers, the Dutch National Contact Point has reprimanded the company and urged it to meet higher standards of evidence and governance. Taken together, these developments point to a clear global movement: to discipline platform companies and bring them under stronger regulation — particularly on the questions of employment, minimum wage/pay, algorithmic decision-making, grievance redressal, health and safety, and unfair ID deactivation. These international trends also make clear that the debate is not merely about classification — "gig workers," "independent contractors", or something else — but about recognising that they are, first and foremost, workers. Under the International Labour Organization's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, all workers are entitled to basic labour protections, irrespective of contractual form. The New Year's eve strike exposes how far India has drifted from this principle and lags behind these global regulatory shifts taking place in the favour of workers.

## Smell-based repellent among several innovations to tackle leopard menace at agri trade fair in Pune



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

At the bustling Kisan Agri Show at Moshi in Pune, Pestosys LLP Wednesday unveiled 'Animal Out', a natural smell-based repellent pitched as a game-changer against the rising leopard attacks terrorising Maharashtra farmers and populace alike. Its organic formula, developed to repel predators, claims to offer protection without harm. Sprayed on field boundaries or animal paths, it triggers an unpleasant odour to feline senses, deterring incursions while remaining safe for humans, the environment, and wildlife, the company claimed. Leopards straying from forests into farmlands near villages have long menaced crops and human lives in Maharashtra. Lately, the incidents of human-leopard conflicts have risen sharply in Maharashtra, with deaths reported in the rural areas, along with the presence of leopards.

Subsequently, in a first, several exhibitors at the ongoing Kisan show at Moshi, who earlier offered solutions aimed at predators like nilgai, boars and others, showcased innovations to tackle the growing leopard menace. A start-up displayed solar-powered alarm systems that emit light and sound to deter wildlife entry at night, while a few others demonstrated motion-sensor fences minimising human intervention. Another product was a night torch with a sound button that users could press if they suspected a wild animal nearby. The button would then emit a powerful sound to scare the creature away. An AI-driven camera-trap solution that tracks animal movements in real time also drew attention for helping forest officials and farmers respond swiftly. Alongside these, various NGOs held awareness campaigns stressing coexistence strategies and early

warning networks. Together, the stalls reflected a newly discovered unified call for a technology-driven approach to protect farmlands, forests, and, most importantly, lives. Developed by founder Avinash Salunke, a 25-year veteran in pest management, Animal Out turned out to be one of the more popular stalls, thronged by visitors. Much of this could be due to recent procurement orders for the product from the Maharashtra Forest Department, which underscored the product's credibility. The Chakan Range has approved 10 litres of the repellent on December 1 for man-leopard conflict mitigation, followed by identical procurements in Junnar, Ghodegaon, Khed and Shirur. "As leopard threats persist, herbal breakthroughs like Animal Out spotlight human tech bridging human habitats and wild frontiers," said its founder, Salunke. "Our goal is to make farmers feel secure without harming wildlife," said Om Patil, co-founder of Pune-based start-up showcasing solar-powered alarm systems at the event. "The light-and-sound devices we've developed automatically detect movement at night and trigger deterrents, helping farmers sleep peacefully while keeping animals at bay in an eco-friendly way." Deputy Conservator of Forests, Pune, Mahadev Mohite, confirmed that farmers across the affected regions are increasingly adopting various preventive measures, such as solar-powered lights, blinkers, nylon nets, and fencing channels, to protect their fields. "Many have also started using sound-based equipment to deter wild animal attacks," he added. "Preventive measures such as these certainly help deter animals from entering human territories, but they do not address population control," said Aditya Paranjape, Wildlife Warden, Pune District Forest Department. "Deterrents alone will not bear fruit in the long run. Effective management of leopard-human conflict requires a balanced approach combining population control, deterrent use, and scientific conflict mitigation. These methods offer only temporary relief, as wild animals are intelligent creatures that eventually recognise and adapt to deterrents," he added.

The 35th edition of KISAN Agri Show, which opened on December 10 at the Pune International Exhibition and Convention Centre (PEC), Moshi, is one of the country's foremost platforms for agricultural innovation. Spread across 30 acres, the five-day event is expected to draw thousands of farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, and innovators, who will engage with over 600 exhibitors under one roof.

## Early Post-Operative Prosthesis to be introduced in all armed forces hospitals: Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAfMS), said in Pune on Thursday that plans are underway to introduce Early Post-Operative Prosthesis (EPOP) in all armed forces hospitals. "The Artificial Limb Centre (ALC), in coordination with the office of senior consultant (surgery), is introducing EPOP in all AFMS hospitals. By fitting EPOP as early as two days after amputation, patients can benefit from faster recovery, improved morale and significantly better functional outcomes," Surgeon Vice Admiral Sarin said.

She was speaking at the inaugural function of 'Continuing Rehabilitation Education-2025' at ALC, Pune, on the theme 'Improving Outcomes in Amputee Rehabilitation'. Early prosthetic fitting and independent ambulation are major objectives of the physical and psychosocial rehabilitation of the amputee, with early walking playing a vital role. At ALC, a premier medical institute of the Indian armed forces, comprehensive rehabilitation care is provided to help amputee patients (disabled soldiers, veterans and civilians) progress from hesitant first steps to confident strides. "A technically perfect amputation is only the beginning. The real measure of success, however, lies in the quality of rehabilitation that follows, a domain in which ALC excels," Surgeon Vice Admiral Sarin said.

Brigadier C N Satish, Commandant, ALC, explained that it is scientifically proven that the longer the person is without a limb, the poorer the outcome. "Usually, it takes a month or two after an amputation for a patient to get a limb and walk. Hence, EPOP is a new innovation where a temporary artificial limb can be made and fitted to the patient as early as two to three days after the amputation. The advantage is it boosts morale, and the healing process starts sooner," he told the media after the inaugural event. "AFMS at crossroads of trauma care, rehab, and national security"

In her speech, Surgeon Vice Admiral Sarin said that across the world, there has been a rise in the number of people living with limb loss due to road trauma, diabetes and conflict. "For the armed forces, this challenge is even more acute. Modern warfare increasingly produces survivable yet disabling injuries. At AFMS, we stand at the intersection of trauma care, rehabilitation, and national security. Our responsibility is two-fold: to return the wounded soldier to duty as soon as possible and to ensure that those who cannot return continue to lead purposeful, dignified, and productive lives," she added. The AFMS has greatly strengthened battlefield medical readiness through the Yodha Rakshak Doctrine and the BACHAAV protocol, preparing every frontline soldier to be a capable first-responder, the DGAfMS said. She added that training centres across India impart the intensive two-day Yodha Rakshak capsule, equipping combatants in modern methods of rapid haemorrhage control, damage-mitigation, resuscitation and early evacuation to maximise life and limb salvage. "This covers all aspects of the acronym BACHAAV, that is, bleeding management, airway management, circulation, hypothermia, analgesia and antibiotics, atirikta karvaiye (additional procedures), and vyakti karna or documentation, and usage of the Yodha Rakshak Kit. The Artificial Limb Centre fits perfectly into this continuum," Surgeon Vice Admiral Sarin added. She also inaugurated the Additive Manufacturing Lab that can enable precise, patient-specific prosthetic designs for better comfort and fit. "This facility is a more specialised form of 3-D printing. The conventional method to manufacture an artificial limb takes longer, and the chances of a precise fit may not be that good, and there may be difficulty in replicating a good prosthesis. In 3-D printing, we scan stumps into a computer, which is used to print multiple sockets and replicate them later if required," Brig Satish explained. Plans to make ALC a national centre of excellence for 80 years, the Artificial Limb Centre (ALC) has represented excellence in amputee rehabilitation—combining innovation, technology and compassion for battle casualties, veterans, and civilians, Surgeon Vice Admiral



Arti Sarin said on Thursday, adding that a proposal to make it a National Centre of Excellence will be submitted. "Current collaborations are there with DEBEL [Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory] on exoskeleton development for spinal-cord-injured patients, and apart from the state-of-the-art Gait and Balance Lab and Upper Limb Training Lab, ALC has also expanded into additive manufacturing and formal academic training," Surgeon Vice Admiral Sarin added. "The ALC has also played a decisive role in the victories of the Services Paralympic Team, whose athletes hold national and international records. Murlikant Petkar, India's first Paralympic gold medallist, whose life inspired the film Chandu Champion, was rehabilitated at this very centre," she said. "Looking ahead, our aim is to collectively elevate ALC into a National Centre of Excellence for amputee rehabilitation. This will include structured training programmes, strong research collaborations, national registries and data systems, innovation hubs linked to academia and industry, indigenous, affordable, high-performance prosthetic designs and tele-rehabilitation platforms and augmented Artificial Limb Service Centres for remote care," she said.

"Need to make accessibility truly seamless" In her virtual keynote speech, Sminu Jindal, Managing Director of Jindal SAW Limited and Founder-Chairperson of Svayam, an accessibility rights organisation, spoke about her challenges. At the age of 11, she was involved in an accident while travelling from Jaipur to New Delhi that resulted in her needing a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Jindal set up Svayam and, for the last 25 years, has dedicated herself to reshaping societal perspectives about individuals with reduced mobility. "Everyone deserves equal access to the built environment, and over the years, there have been changes. However, there is still a need to make accessibility truly seamless. Accessibility should be viewed as an investment rather than an expense," she said, adding that the role of the armed forces is significant in collaborating to improve lives.

## Days after resident doctor at Lucknow's KGMU booked for sexual exploitation, intern faces similar charges



GNS News Agency, Jan 4  
A week after a King George's Medical University (KGMU) doctor faced an FIR of sexual exploitation promises

## Oppn walks out of Maharashtra Assembly over 'anomalies' in cotton, soybean procurement; ruling MLAs too slam Marketing Minister Jaykumar Rawal



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Opposition members on Thursday staged a walkout from the Maharashtra Assembly in protest against the Mahayuti government's 'apathy' towards cotton and soybean farmers and alleged irregularities in the procurement of yields. They highlighted the rising mismatch between the purchase price and the guaranteed price of the produce. The Opposition members were dissatisfied with the minister's token replies to their questions over the non-initiation of official cotton procurement centers in many parts of the state and the failure to provide Minimum Support Price (MSP) for soybean. Besides, certain legislators from the ruling parties also expressed displeasure over the reply by Marketing Minister Jaykumar Rawal during Question Hour, after which Speaker Rahul Narvekar assured to hold a meeting of concerned legislators at his chamber. Congress Legislative Party leader Vijay Wadettiwar accused the government's response of being a "mockery of the

farmers". During the Question Hour, Wadettiwar highlighted that cotton procurement is hit by the restrictions imposed by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and the low procurement limit.

He further criticised the government for removing the import duty on cotton, which was previously 12%, which would result in a sharp drop in cotton prices in India. Wadettiwar and other Opposition members claimed that soybeans are not being procured at the designated MSP of Rs 5,300 per quintal at procurement centers and asked the minister to visit fields to understand the true situation. The minister also failed to give a proper reply to Wadettiwar's question on blanket procurement of soybeans, given that 70 per cent of the produce is being turned away at centres, and whether the government would follow up with the Central Government regarding the cotton import duty. Amid the Opposition uproar, the Speaker directed a meeting to be held to resolve the issue, a demand rejected by the Opposition. They instead wanted the government to make a statement in the House. From the ruling front, NCP's senior MLA Prakash Solankhe said that the minister has no ground knowledge of happenings, while BJP MLA and former minister Babanrao Lonikar highlighted the problems on the ground. With no positive response from the government, Opposition members such as Wadettiwar, Nana Patole, Rohit Pawar, Siddharth Kharat, while those from the ruling side, including Arjun Khotkar and Daulat Daroda, entered the well of the House and raised slogans against the government's stance on farmers' issues. Despite CM Devendra Fadnavis' intervention and assurance to find a way out, the ruckus continued, and Opposition members walked out of the Assembly.

## 3 arrested for 'assault' on non-veg patty vendor during Gita Path event in Kolkata



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Three people have been arrested in connection with the alleged assault on a chicken patty seller who was "humiliated" for selling non-vegetarian food during the Gita Path event at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground. Police said that after the video went viral, the accused were identified from the footage and arrested based on two complaints filed at Maidan police station. The 'Paanch Lokho Konthe Gita Paath' (Gita recitation by five lakh voices) event, organised by Sanatan Sanskriti Sansad, was taking place on December 7 when the alleged incident happened. The victim is a resident of Arambagh in Hooghly district. "Those arrested have been identified as Soumik Golder (23), Swarnendu Chakraborty (32) and Tarun Bhattacharya (51). They were arrested this morning," said an official on Thursday. Police said the three have been booked on charges of voluntarily causing hurt, mischief, unlawful assembly and deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class. Soumik Golder is the main accused who had allegedly asked the vendor his name and forced him to hold his ears. All three will be produced in court on Thursday.

The vendor, Sheikh Riazul, has been selling patties in Kolkata for the last 23 years. The viral purported video showed Riazul surrounded by people attending the event. Some of them asked who had allowed him to sell chicken during the Gita Path. The victim is seen being asked his name, made to do sit-ups holding his ears, and beaten. The vendor was seen requesting the crowd to let him leave while the mob continued abusing and assaulting him. They later threw away all the patties he was carrying. "They asked me my name," Riazul said. "As soon as I told them Sheikh, they started hitting me. They told me to squat. Threw my food... For the last 23 years I have been doing this, I never saw Kolkata in this way."

The incident triggered a political debate, with the TMC and other Opposition parties accusing the BJP of trying to impose a "mob-lynching culture" and dictate the food habits of Bengali residents. On Thursday, CM Mamata Banerjee raised the issue from a rally in Nadia. She said, "A hawker went to sell his items. This is seen in all meetings. It maybe didn't cross his mind that 'I will sell this, I won't sell that'. They caught him and beat him. I got all of them arrested. This is Bengal, not Uttar Pradesh." Addressing the people present, she said, "Will you vote for the BJP? They don't allow people to eat fish and meat. They impose vegetarianism." Kunal Ghosh, TMC state general secretary and spokesperson, strongly condemned the alleged assault. "Don't buy it if you don't eat non-vegetarian food. But why beat up the seller?" he said. "They earn money by selling various things there. I condemn this incident." Meanwhile, the BJP questioned the vendor's intention behind selling non-vegetarian food near a religious gathering. BJP leader Debjit Sarkar said, "Can Gita Path be done after eating chicken patties? During Gita Path, if a man is entering with chicken patties, it shows how reluctant they are."

## In 30 months, Siddaramaiah booked an aircraft for travel every 5 days; Rs 47.38 crore spent



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Siddaramaiah, in a written response to the unstarred question, noted that payments for the use of 48 aircraft/helicopter was made in the 2023-24 fiscal. The cost incurred for the flights was 12.23 crore. Siddaramaiah, in a written response to the unstarred question, noted that payments for the use of 48 aircraft/helicopter was made in the 2023-24 fiscal. The cost incurred for the flights was 12.23 crore. Siddaramaiah, in a written response to the unstarred question, noted that payments for the use of 48 aircraft/helicopter was made in the 2023-24 fiscal. The cost incurred for the flights was 12.23 crore. (File Photo) In his two-and-a-half-year tenure as the Karnataka Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah hired a helicopter or an aircraft every five days to travel with his Cabinet col-

leagues to various parts of the state or to New Delhi. According to data shared in response to a question in the Legislative Council, aircraft or helicopters were booked 181 times for Siddaramaiah's travel.

Data shows that the total expense incurred for these flights was Rs 47.38 crore, starting from May 26, 2023, days after Siddaramaiah became CM, until November 11, 2025. The details were provided in response to a question by BJP MLC N Ravikumar. Siddaramaiah, in a written response to the unstarred question, noted that payments for the use of 48 aircraft/helicopter was made in the 2023-24 fiscal. The cost incurred for the flights was 12.23 crore. Subsequently, in the 2024-25 fiscal, bills were cleared for the rental of aircraft or helicopters 85 times, costing the state exchequer Rs 21.11 crore. In the current fiscal year, bills for renting 48 aircraft/helicopters over six months were Rs 14.03 crore. Data also shows that 180 of the 181 flights were booked through GMP Air Charters, while the remaining flight was booked through GoJets Aviation. In his query, Ravikumar sought details on the reasons the CM has hired aircraft over the past two-and-a-half years. Siddaramaiah, in his response, noted that renting out aircraft/helicopter for the official trips of the Governor, CM, and Chief Justice was exempt from the provisions of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act.

that he would marry her. However, she said the accused refused to marry her when she started asking to do so. He started issuing threats to circulate her intimate photos on social media, she alleged. The Lucknow police said the victim's statement would be recorded before the magistrate, and the accused would be summoned to the police station for questioning. When contacted, KGMU spokesperson Dr K K Singh told The Indian Express the police have not informed the university administration about the case so far. Singh said that as the victim does not belong to this campus, the university administration will initiate action if the police officially send documents confirming the charges against the intern in the investigation. Last week, a resident doctor was booked on charges of sexual exploitation of a colleague on the pretext of marriage, and forcing the victim to convert. The doctor has been suspended.

## Civil society group raises 6 issues over Karnataka Hate Speech Bill: definition of 'hate speech' is vague and emotion-based



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

JD(S) youth wing president Nikhil Kumaraswamy said Friday that the Bill amounted to "murder of democracy", and the regional party would also mount a legal battle over the issue. JD(S) youth wing president Nikhil Kumaraswamy said Friday that the Bill amounted to "murder of democracy", and the regional party would also mount a legal battle over the issue. The Campaign Against Hate Speech (CAHS) has raised concerns about the various aspects of The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill 2025, calling for wider public consultations before the proposed legislation is passed by the Assembly and the Council.

In a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Home Minister G Parameshwara, IT/BT minister Priyank Kharge, and Law and Parliamentary Affairs minister H K Patil, CAHS has flagged six key issues pertaining to the Bill. It has also sought amendments to the proposed legislation to "squarely address the concerns and strengthen the law to curb hate speech." The Bill falsely equates hate speech and hate crime, the letter said, noting that the definition of "hate crime" excludes a range of hate crimes which lead to bodily and psychological harm apart from

the harm to democracy. "This legislation does not see a hate speech that 'calls for a mob lynching' any different from committing the actual crime of 'mob lynching'. It also does not recognise hate crimes of punitive demolitions, social and economic boycotts," the letter said. The definition of "hate speech" is vague and emotion-based, and there was no separate punishment for the act, it said, adding that there was no clarity on the one-to-seventeen year imprisonment range for the offences committed. Highlighting Section 4 of the Bill, which provides for "preventive action to be taken by the law-and-order machinery", CAHS said the section delegated excessive power to the executive, which was likely to allow for arbitrary state action. On the power to censor on the "mere accusation of Hate Crime material", the civil society group argued that this would empower the executive "to censor without the accused being afforded the opportunity to explain his intention and statement." While the Bill has the potential to address the endemic of hate, "it also has the potential for restricting the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 (1)(a). Considering that the proposed law is in the domain of regulating speech and has criminal consequences, we urge the State to engage with the public in the broadest possible manner before passing such a law," the group urged the government. JD(S) youth wing president Nikhil Kumaraswamy said Friday that the Bill amounted to "murder of democracy", and the regional party would also mount a legal battle over the issue. The Congress government, he said, was out to rob the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by the Constitution. "With the proposed Bill, the government wants to suppress opposition parties and journalists," he alleged. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also opposed the Bill, and said Thursday that it would mount a legal battle against it, as it curtails freedom of speech and liberty. The party is expected to express its reservation when the proposed legislation is taken up for discussion next week.

## 15 schools in Amritsar get bomb threat emails; police launch probe to trace sender

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Fifteen prominent private schools in Amritsar received bomb threats via email on Friday, prompting the deputy commission to announce a holiday for all affected institutions. The incident sparked panic in the city, even as police teams, bomb disposal squads, and fire brigade units conducted extensive searches to rule out any danger. Authorities confirmed that a single email had been copied to all the targeted schools.

The sudden announcement of school closures triggered chaos among parents, who received urgent messages to collect their children. Scenes of anxiety were witnessed outside school gates as parents rushed to retrieve students, while school vans were quickly summoned to facilitate the evacuation. The Amritsar police have launched an investigation into the source of the threats. According to Alam Vijay Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Law and Order, an officer has been stationed at each school to oversee security measures, and rigorous anti-sabotage checks are currently underway. "There is no need to panic. The police are alert and fully vigilant," Singh stated, noting that previous incidents of this nature often turned out to be pranks by mischievous students. The investigation has been handed over to the cyber cell, which is currently tracing the IP address and origin of the threat email to identify the culprits. The incident triggered political responses. Amritsar MP Gurjeet



Singh Aujla urged Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to coordinate with central agencies to apprehend the accused quickly, while appealing to parents not to panic.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Manoranjan Kalia criticised the state's security preparedness, alleging that while "100 police personnel have been given to Arvind Kejriwal," the state's safety is being neglected. In response, AAP spokesperson and MLA Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal termed the threats "satanic acts" and assured the public that the Punjab government is closely monitoring the situation. He affirmed that the police are tracking the email source and that those attempting to disrupt the state's law and order will be arrested soon.

## Karnataka forms team for rapid implementation of Mekedatu project



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Following a reprise from the Supreme Court on the implementation of the Mekedatu project, the Karnataka Government has issued a directive to form a team under the director of the Karnataka Engineering Research Station (KERS) for the rapid implementation of the balancing reservoir project at Mekedatu. The team will include a deputy chief engineer and supporting staff, and will operate from Ramanagara in Bengaluru Rural district. The order dated December 11 states that a dedicated project office for the

Mekedatu project will be established in Ramanagara.

On November 18, Deputy Chief Minister and Irrigation Minister D K Shivakumar chaired a meeting on the project's implementation. This came days after the SC rejected Tamil Nadu's plea, which opposed the Mekedatu project. During the meeting, it was decided to establish an office headed by a chief engineer and another by a supervising engineer for the swift execution of the Mekedatu Project. However, approval from the Finance Department is required for the establishment of new offices and creation of posts, which would take considerable time. Therefore, the government has entrusted the responsibility of implementing this project to the KERS director, said a release from Shivakumar's office. KERS has been instructed to form a team consisting of its existing officers and staff to execute the Mekedatu project. The team includes one executive engineer, three technical assistants, six assistant engineers, and one assistant administrative officer, among others. The Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Limited (CNNL) will make the necessary arrangements for the project office building. This team will function under the managing director of CNNL, and the maintenance of the office, basic infrastructure, and other expenses will be borne from CNNL funds, the order said.

## Pune Municipal Corporation launches 'Footpath Repair Campaign'

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) launched 'Footpath Repair Campaign' to mark the Pedestrian Day on Thursday. Aniruddha Pawaskar, Chief Engineer, PMC, said, "The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has been organising Walking Plaza on Laxmi Road on Pedestrian Day on December 11 for the last few years. However, it was not organised this year as the civic body has undertaken a drive to repair all the city roads, including designing streets for the upcoming international cycle event."

Pawaskar also informed that a badly damaged footpath near Shri Lalji Mhatre Hospital under the Nanapeth ward has been constructed afresh as per the Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG) and opened for public use. According to a Road Asset Management System (RAMS) study of Pune city, about 42 km of footpaths were identified as needing repairs, the PMC chief engineer said, adding that the Road Department of the civic body has un-

dertaken the phased repair of these footpaths. Due to various utility works being carried out by the Pune Police and other departments, extensive digging has also been done in several parts of the city, especially in the old city areas, affecting roads and footpaths and causing inconvenience to citizens. The main objective of the (Footpath Repair) Campaign is to repair damaged, broken and encroached footpaths and provide citizens with safe, clean and obstruction-free walking spaces. Under this initiative, repair work on faulty footpaths in various parts of the city will be undertaken," said Pawaskar. Meanwhile, Pune-based Parivar and a host of other organisations have started mobilising citizens to ensure that the government takes action to fix footpaths.

When contacted, Ranjit Gadgil, Programme Director, Parivar, told The Indian Express that PMC has largely turned the Pedestrian Day into a one-day event without making any substantive improvements for pedestrians.

## UP businessman who filed complaint against village head killed in hit-and-run; pradhan arrested for murder



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Circle Officer Ashok Kumar Mishra. He added that two other wanted accused — Manish's nephew, Sujit Yadav (son of Mehlal) and another uncle, Munnalal Yadav — are still absconding, and raids are being carried out to trace them. The FIR has been lodged under sections of murder and criminal conspiracy. The victim, Kamal Kant, a resident of Dhaskari village, is survived by his wife and children. The incident took place on the evening of December 10. According to police, they received information that an elderly man had been struck from behind by a speeding car while returning home after closing his shop. The driver fled the scene with the vehicle. The victim was rushed to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. Police personnel reached the spot and examined footage from CCTV cameras at the spot besides recording statements of local residents on the relationship between the deceased and the village pradhan. Based on their inquiry, police said they found the vehicle belonged to Sujit. Police also learned that the victim had submitted an application to the District Magistrate and other senior officials requesting an investigation into the pradhan's actions. Acting on this complaint, the District Magistrate had ordered a probe into the pradhan's financial authority and suspended those powers.

Besides the pradhan, Manish Yadav (35), his uncle, Mehlal Yadav (35) has also been nabbed, said Bhadohi

## Pune Zilla Parishad partners with Serum Institute of India, Jivika Foundation for roll out in Jan 2026

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Jivika Foundation has already supported the administration of over 45,000 HPV vaccine doses through support of corporates across the country. Jivika Foundation has already supported the administration of over 45,000 HPV vaccine doses through support of corporates across the country. The Pune Zilla Parishad, in collaboration with the Serum Institute of India (SII) and the Jivika Foundation, will start an HPV vaccination program among rural girl children in the district beginning January 2026. Gajanan Patil, Chief Executive Officer, Pune Zilla Parishad, told The Indian Express that HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer will commence in all schools in Pune district. "This is a process, and the parents will be counselled about the importance of vaccination against cervical cancer. This is an ambitious exercise, and the magnitude of this crisis requires coordinated efforts from corporates and community-based organisations. Hence, we have collaborated with key partners for this campaign," Patil added. Jivika Foundation has already supported the administration of over 45,000 HPV vaccine doses through support of corporates across the country. "We have been recognised as an implementation partner by the Government of Maharashtra and have been entrusted with working across 11 districts to drive awareness, reach adolescent girls and administer vaccination," Jignesh Patel, Chairman, Jivika Foundation, said. He added that in Pune district, Jivika Foundation has signed an MoU with the Pune Zilla Parishad to collectively work towards making the district cervical cancer-free. "Alongside vaccination, the program is also focused on creating strong awareness around screening for adult women and ensuring patient hand-holding for those who test positive, support-



ing them through diagnosis and continuity of care. These efforts are aligned with the WHO's 90-70-90 strategy for cervical cancer elimination," Patel further said. "We began our journey in Pune with a strong belief that equitable and quality healthcare must reach the most underserved communities. To be able to contribute to making Pune a cervical cancer-free district is a deep responsibility to strengthen awareness, vaccination and screening efforts. "We are looking at a target population of 50,000 school girls (age 9-14) at Baramati, Indapur and Daund initially. Two doses will be given each six months apart — Serum has committed one lakh doses which will be sent to ZP, and we will be taking up the implementation program," Patel said. According to World Health Organization data, one in every five women globally suffering from cervical cancer is from India. With 25 per cent of global cervical cancer deaths occurring in India, often due to late diagnosis, experts have also called for stepping up preventive screening strategies.

## Nursing shortages hit Chandigarh's PGIMER, top govt hospitals; vacancies cross 550

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

A Central Government reply presented in the Parliament reveals significant vacancies in nursing and paramedical posts across three major Chandigarh Institutions, the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) Sector 16, and Government Multi-Speciality Hospital (GMSH) Sector 32 — even as the administration remains firm on the services being managed with the available staff. (Express Photo) Despite the shortages, PGIMER told the Centre that it is "working beyond its optimal capacity in all the patient care areas so that the services are not adversely affected."

A Central Government reply tabled in Parliament has revealed significant vacancies in nursing and paramedical posts across three major Chandigarh institutions — the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) Sector 16, and Government Multi-Speciality Hospital (GMSH) Sector 32 — even as the administration maintains that services are being managed with available staff. The reply, furnished by Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav, shows that PGIMER has 247 vacant nursing posts against a sanctioned strength of 2,597, and 120 paramedical vacancies against 856 sanctioned posts.

GMCH-16 has 281 nursing vacancies out of 1,264 sanctioned posts and 86 paramedical vacancies out of 330. GMSH-32 has 30 nursing vacancies out of 154 and 70 paramedical vacancies out of 233. While GMCH and GMSH have reported "no delay in promotions", PGIMER attributed its stagnation in nursing promotions to an ongoing restructuring exercise and a judicial restraint. The minister stated that PGIMER's "3rd Cadre Review" for various non-faculty posts, including nursing, had been carried out. However, the Central Administrative Tribunal, Chandigarh, in OA 751 of 2022



(Hemant Kumar and others vs PGIMER), had on July 17, 2025, restrained PGIMER from conducting its Departmental Promotion Committee for the post of Assistant Nursing Superintendent until certain compliances are met, which must be completed within six months. Despite the shortages, PGIMER told the Centre that it is "working beyond its optimal capacity in all the patient care areas so that the services are not adversely affected." GMCH and GMSH said OPD, emergency, and trauma care continue to be managed with the available workforce. The reply also confirms that all three hospitals routinely engage nursing and paramedical staff through outsourcing based on "functional requirement," and that filling newly created and vacant posts is an "ongoing administrative process." Reacting to the data, Chandigarh MP Manish Tewari, who raised the query, said staffing optimisation was essential for the smooth functioning of tertiary-care institutions. "All pending vacancies must be immediately filled, and the arbitrariness intrinsic to outsourcing processes needs to be proscribed by the administrations of all these hospitals immediately," Tewari said. He added that adequate staffing in public hospitals was not only a governance imperative but a prerequisite for patient safety and service quality.

## Ozempic launched in India with prices starting at Rs 8,800 per month

New Delhi: Novo Nordisk on Friday launched its blockbuster weight-loss drug Ozempic in India, beginning at Rs 8,800 a month or four weeks. Ozempic — a once-weekly injectable formulation of semaglutide — is approved in India for adults with uncontrolled type 2 diabetes, along with diet and exercise. The drug is available in three dosage forms — 0.25mg, 0.5 mg, and 1mg — in a single-use pre-filled pen Novofine Needles designed for painless subcutaneous injection, the drug maker said.

The 0.25 mg, which is the initial dose, is priced at Rs 8,800, followed by Rs 10,170 for 0.5 mg and Rs 11,175 for 1 mg. Each pen contains four weekly doses. "Bringing Ozempic to India is a major milestone. Backed by global trust, proven clinical excellence, and world-class quality, reinforced by a

robust supply chain, Ozempic offers Indian doctors an effective treatment choice," said Vikrant Shrotriya, Managing Director, Novo Nordisk India. "Our goal is to provide patients with an innovative and accessible therapy that offers improved glycaemic control, meaningful weight management, and long-term heart and kidney protection — all delivered through a simple, easy-to-use pen device."

This once-weekly treatment demonstrates Novo Nordisk's ongoing commitment to better health outcomes and chronic disease care," Shrotriya added. Ozempic was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2017 for type 2 diabetes. Since then, it has been widely used off-label for weight loss due to its appetite-suppressing effects.

## Remembering Batukeshwar Dutt, the forgotten comrade of Bhagat Singh



On April 8, 1929, the Hindustan Times in Delhi rushed out a special evening edition, while The Statesman in Calcutta cabled its story to London to evade colonial censorship. That afternoon, two young men had thrown harmless bombs into the Central Assembly Hall, now Parliament, raising slogans of Inquilab Zindabad (Long Live the Revolution) and Samrajyavad ka Nash Ho (Down with Imperialism). They scattered red pamphlets titled 'To Make the Deaf Hear'. Reporters caught the words, and newspapers across India and abroad carried dramatic headlines. One international paper proclaimed: 'Reds Storm the Assembly!' The two young men were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. Both were arrested, tried, and convicted. While Bhagat Singh went on to become one of the most iconic figures of the Indian freedom struggle, his comrade Dutt gradually faded from public memory, remembered only occasionally, and rarely honoured with the dignity he deserved. A revolutionary's journey

Batukeshwar Dutt was born on November 18, 1910, in the Burdwan district of Bengal. Convicted in the Delhi Assembly Bomb Case on June 12, 1929, he spent nine years in prisons across India — Multan, Jhelum, Trichinopoly, Salem, and even the Andamans. In each jail he resorted to hunger strikes, twice fasting for over a month, demanding humane treatment for political prisoners. When Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were executed in Lahore on March 23, 1931, Dutt was languishing in the Salem jail. That night he dreamt of Singh in chains, a vision that haunted him. Released in 1938, Dutt was rearrested during the Quit India movement of 1942 and spent another four years in jail. After his release, he married Anjali, a school teacher, and settled in Patna with their daughter Bharti, who later became a Professor of Economics at Patna College. But life after independence offered little stability. The Bihar government allotted him a coal depot, but it proved financially unviable. President Rajendra Prasad intervened, urging the State to extend due consideration to him. The gesture resulted only in a token nomination to the Bihar Legislative Council — for the remainder of an existing member's six-month term. Despite such neglect, Dutt remained respected by many political leaders. His health, however, declined in the mid-1960s. Afflicted with bone cancer, he was admitted to AIIMS, New Delhi, where he endured eight months of suffering. Leading orthopaedist Dr. Vig told his comrades that treatment could only ensure a "painless death". Plans to send him abroad were abandoned after the Indian High Commission in London reported that Delhi offered care equal to Europe's. Dutt passed away on July 20, 1965. Honouring his last wish, he was cremated at Hussainiwala in Punjab, alongside Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev. The site, which remained in Pakistan until

1965, had only recently come under Indian control for the construction of a memorial to the martyrs.

**Neglect and recognition** For a brief moment after his death, the nation honoured Dutt. His funeral procession was massive, attended by the President, Prime Minister, central ministers, the Lok Sabha Speaker, and the Punjab Chief Minister. The funeral drew vast numbers of people along the streets. Yet today, few remember that the farewell accorded to him rivalled those of the most revered leaders of his time. Ironically, the Parliament building where he and Bhagat Singh had staged their act of defiance still does not display their portraits. In contrast, the portrait of V. D. Savarkar, once an accused in Gandhi's assassination case (though later acquitted), hangs prominently opposite Gandhi's. In 2014, MPs including Dharamvir Gandhi and Sitaram Yechury protested this omission, but the demand to include Bhagat Singh — and by extension Dutt — was ignored.

The story of this neglect was first documented by Chaman Lal Azad, a fellow revolutionary who later became a journalist. While caring for Dutt at AIIMS, Chaman Lal Azad wrote a series of articles in the Urdu daily Pratap. These were later compiled as *Bhagat Singh aur Dutt ki Amar Kahani* (1966), one of the most authentic, if scattered, accounts of the revolutionary movement. The book contains Bhagat Singh's letters, court statements, and postcards — some published for the first time — along with Gandhi's letter to Dutt and rare photographs of him with Nehru and Indira Gandhi in 1963. The book also records Dutt's conversations about fellow revolutionaries. In it, he spoke of Hari Kishan Talwar, who was hanged in 1931 for shooting Punjab's Lieutenant Governor, and of his comrade Ehsan Ilahi, who migrated to Pakistan, became a musician, and died penniless despite Chaman Lal Azad's attempts to help him. Dutt also disapproved of films made on Bhagat Singh in the 1950s, which he and other comrades protested against. Only Manoj Kumar's *Shaheed* in 1965 won their approval, with the actor personally consulting Dutt. Equally touching are accounts of his bond with Bhagat Singh's family. Mata Vidyawati, Bhagat Singh's mother, spent long periods with Dutt in his final days. She even sold a Hindi epic poem on Bhagat Singh, gifted to her by poet Sri Krishan Saral, to raise funds for Dutt's treatment. Revolutionary comrades such as Shiv Verma, Sadashiv Malkapurkar, and Jatin Das' brother Kiran Das remained constantly by his side. Leaders including Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda, Defence Minister Y. B. Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Swaran Singh, and Dr. Sushila Nayyar also visited him in hospital, though such respect was rarely extended while he was alive and struggling. Ode to the forgotten soldier Chaman Lal Azad used his book to underline Bhagat Singh's intellectual legacy — his ability to rise above religion and envision socialism as the foundation of India's future. Dutt himself remarked that Singh was far-sighted, always with a book in hand, reading wherever he went. Despite having a shared vision of India's future, history has not treated Dutt kindly. He remains absent from memorials, textbooks, and the national consciousness. While newer works such as Justice Anil Verma's *Bhagat Singh ke Sahyogi: Batukeshwar Dutt and Bhairav Lal Das's Viprli Batukeshwar Dutt* (both post-2007) have attempted to reclaim his place, Chaman Lal Azad's earlier book, rich with first-hand memories, is nearly lost. Its Hindi translation, commissioned years ago by the Government's Publications Division, still lies unpublished due to copyright hurdles.

## Attribution science: the tricky task of linking climate disasters to emitters

On November 12, Delhi's air became distinctly unbreathable. A thick blanket of smog enveloped the capital, which recorded an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of over 400, and the pollution was categorised as "severe". On November 9, Delhites, aware of the possible respiratory ailments this relapsing crisis could lead to, protested at India Gate. Many were detained. Meanwhile in April, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, released a three-decade long study that established that rainwater, in several parts of the country, was becoming increasingly "acidic."

In August, there was another environmental disaster, this time in the Himalayas: flash floods inundated Uttarkashi, washing away people and buildings, reportedly caused by a glacial lake burst. While it was small in scale, it was reminiscent of the 2013 Kedarnath tragedy, when over 6,000 people died after an avalanche ruptured the banks of the Chorabari Lake, causing it to burst and release 262 million litres of water within minutes. This was the worst environmental disaster in the country after the 2006 tsunami. But can we authoritatively attribute these environmental catastrophes to human-induced climate change? Put another way, while the irrefutable fact is the earth has warmed by more than 1°C since pre-industrial times thanks to human-generated greenhouse gases and there are local events that result in local environmental disasters as well, how sure we can be that climate change made a cloudburst or a cyclone more likely? This is where climate attribution science comes in. This field is concerned with estimating how the probability of events or their intensity, duration or frequency are altered by climate change. "Models try to create a world where climate change didn't happen and look at the real world where events happened," earth system scientist Raghu Murtugudde explained. "Models are imperfect, and depending on which of these changes you try to estimate, you can get different answers. An event may have occurred naturally but attribution may say its intensity was made stronger or that its probability was increased and so on," he told The Hindu. In general the attribution of heat waves is more accurate than the attribution of extreme rain events, J. Srinivasan, honorary professor at the Divecha Centre for Climate Change, said. "When a major heat wave strikes Europe or Asia, scientists try to estimate the contribution of increase in carbon dioxide to that particular heat wave. Their attribution will be accurate if the model is good at simulating the past heat waves in that region," Prof. Srinivasan said. For instance, acid rain in Visakhapatnam has been associated with fossil fuel emissions from a power plant and a shipping yard, among other activities in the vicinity. Delhi's extreme pollution has been linked to the city's many vehicles spewing carbon dioxide and, seasonally, to crop residue burning in neighbouring States (which release organic aerosols), the unchecked use of firecrackers during Diwali, and particular wind patterns.

Identifying point sources Earlier this year, researchers at Utah State University reported studying the 2013 Kedarnath floods and finding through attribution analysis that northern India has received increasingly large amounts of rain in June since the late 1980s due to more greenhouse gases and aerosols in the atmosphere. There are two forms of emission attribution, Amit Garg, professor at the Indian

## Decoding the NDA's landslide win in Bihar



Many factors contribute to the landslide victory of a political party or an alliance. This holds true for the recent victory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar as well. The victory conveys two messages — that there was an overall approval of the work done by the incumbent NDA government under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and of the voters' continued faith in the promises made by the NDA during its campaign. The results also point to the vital role of women voters in Indian elections. Not only did women voters turn out to vote in much larger numbers in 2025 as compared to all the previous elections, but they also seemed to have voted decisively in favour of the NDA, giving the alliance a significant lead. The results

These results are a major setback for the Mahagatbandhan (MGB). But despite a rout in terms of seats, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) emerged as the single largest party in terms of votes polled. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav led the campaign from the front. He managed to consolidate his core voters — mainly Yadavs and Muslims — but failed to attract voters from other communities. Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) party polled just over 3% of the votes. However, one should credit Mr. Kishor for leading the campaign on the issue of job opportunities for residents in Bihar, rather than on the issue of migration of labour to industries outside Bihar. This message later resonated in the campaigns of other parties. The JSP appeared to attract large crowds and generated significant buzz. This created the popular perception that Bihar was heading for a three-cornered contest. However, the contest was essentially a bipolar one, as was the case in previous elections. The NDA won 202 seats and polled 46.6% of the votes, while the MGB managed to win 35 seats with 37.7% of the votes. This is the second best performance of the NDA; in the 2010 Assembly elections, it won 206 seats. Together, the two alliances polled roughly 85% of the vote, with other parties receiving a much smaller share compared to earlier elections. A large number of voters made up their mind about which party to vote for during the last few days of the campaign. Evidence from a survey suggests that 42% were late deciders, choosing who to vote for one or two days before voting or on the day of voting. Most of these late deciders voted either for the NDA (47%) or for the MGB (36%), while the JSP (3%) was not seen as a party that was likely to win or play a role in government formation. Success of the NDA campaign

The NDA's strategy of pitching its election campaign on large, State-level issues rather than on local issues seems to have helped it in a big way. The NDA campaigned on the need for a double engine sarkar (Nitish-Modi government) for faster development of the State. About half of the voters in Bihar believed it was necessary for the party in

power at the Centre to also be in power in the State, while a little over one-third (37%) did not agree with this view. The NDA conveyed the message that this election was not about electing an MLA or Chief Minister, but to ensure that Bihar moves ahead on the path of development. It also warned the voters that if the MGB won, it could result in a return to 'Jungle Raj' — a reference to the poor law-and-order situation between 1990 and 2005 during Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi's leadership. This message seems to have appealed to a large segment of voters, especially women, who faced major challenges on account of the poor law-and-order situation.

**Countering anti-incumbency** One major reason why the NDA government was able to overcome anti-incumbency was the high level of voter satisfaction with both the State and Central governments. Data show that nearly three-fourths of voters expressed satisfaction with the performance of both, creating a favourable environment for the NDA's campaign. Voters also reported notable improvements across key public services and infrastructure. More than three-fourths of the respondents said that the availability of electricity had improved, and nearly seven of every 10 believed that the conditions of roads had improved. They also said that there were improvements in social sector services. More than six of every 10 voters felt that the condition of government schools had improved, and a similar share reported better access to drinking water. A little over half (54%) believed that government hospitals were functioning better, while nearly half the respondents (48%) perceived an improvement in law and order. Crucially, more than three out of every five voters said they wanted to give the Janata Dal (United) or JD(U)-led NDA government another chance in Bihar. The welfare schemes specifically targeting women also seem to have helped the NDA in mobilising women voters in bigger numbers in 2025 as compared to previous elections. Women had supported Mr. Kumar in earlier elections as well, due to his policy of shabab bandi (alcohol prohibition), policy of giving cycles and school uniforms to schoolgirls, and the Jeevika Didi scheme. Initial evidence suggests that women voters seem to have played an important role in NDA's victory. The MGB was unable to generate confidence among voters of its ability to provide better governance if elected.

It also appeared much weaker than the NDA in mobilising support. While in the NDA, alliance partners drew voters from different castes and communities, the MGB largely reinforced support within its existing base and failed to bring in additional voters. Within the NDA, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attracted a large chunk of upper caste voters, the JD(U) brought in Kurmi votes, Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) was instrumental in securing Koeri votes, and both the Hinduja Aawaam Morcha and the Lok Jan Shakti Party (R) attracted a large segment of Dalit votes. It is important to note that the core base of the MGB was much smaller than that of the NDA. The alliance partners in the MGB — mainly the RJD, Congress, Vikasheel Insaan Party, and the Left parties — more or less have the same core support base, which includes Yadavs, Muslims, and poorer segment of voters. While the alliance of these parties helped in consolidating the core supporters of the MGB, it appeared unable to attract non-committed voters. Evidence suggests that over seven of every 10 (70%) of Yadavs and Muslims voted for the MGB in this election. But the alliance failed to win over voters of other communities.

## Why COPD is no longer just a smoker's disease



To be physically active in an area with severe pollution is worse than to be physically inactive. Although, in principle, people perform physical activities (such as running, cycling, yoga, etc.) to decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases, exercising in a location with a high AQI (air quality index) appears to be harmful to the lungs. During deep-breathing exercises,

Until recently, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) was a common diagnosis for persons who'd spent their lives smoking, since tobacco smoke is the biggest contributor to the condition. However, of late, COPD cases among non-smokers have been on the rise, leading to a recalibration of how we understand respiratory disease risks to our lungs. Environmental and genetic factors are affecting an increasing number of individuals who have never smoked a single cigarette, but who are experiencing shortness of breath, chronic cough, wheezing and throat issues. It's in the air

To be physically active in an area with severe pollution is worse than to be physically inactive. Although, in principle, people perform physical activities (such as running, cycling, yoga, etc.) to decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases, exercising in a location with a high AQI (air quality index) appears to be harmful to the lungs. During deep-breathing exercises, the inspiratory flow rate significantly increases to maximise the intake of fresh air and oxygen. As a result, fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) and toxins that may be found in polluted air, is inhaled, causing stress to the distal air sacs of the lungs (alveoli). Over a period of time, chronic inflammation and oxidative stress in the lungs from these factors lead to irreversible lung disease, and an increased risk of cardiovascular problems in an otherwise

healthy non-smoker. Our homes, considered a sanctuary, can be a reservoir of lung irritants. In many parts of the world, particularly developing regions, the use of biomass fuels (wood, coal, crop residue and also fuel made out of cow dung) for cooking and heating in poorly ventilated spaces is a leading cause of COPD, especially among non-smoking women. But the threat is also present in subtler, everyday items. Products such as mosquito coils, insect sprays, air fresheners, scented candles and the like, release fine particulate matter and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that irritate the airway lining. Furthermore, fumes from outdated gas appliances, old furnaces, and certain strong household cleaning products can linger, causing chronic, low-level inflammation that steadily chips away at lung function. Genetic predispositions Most non-smoking COPD cases result from factors, genetically or early in life, that one can identify and define well before they cause problems during adulthood. Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency most commonly causes undiagnosed COPD. The deficiency exists as a hereditary condition. In this condition, the liver does not produce enough of the protein AAT. This protein protects the lungs from destruction with naturally-occurring enzymes. This deficiency results in the gradual destruction of lung tissue, causing structural changes associated with COPD and leading to emphysema, which often presents in patients during their 30s or 40s. Childhood asthma that is not well controlled can also cause structural airway changes. These changes may continue into adulthood. This may cause COPD that occurs early. The airway calibre may be altered, relative to lung size. This is known as dysanapsis. Healthy non-smokers then have little "breathing reserve" and are more likely to develop obstructive lung disease with increasing age or small environmental exposures. These airway disorders are obstructive. Another important cause is infections such as tuberculosis that can heal but leave behind significant lung damage, leading to COPD-like clinical conditions. The risks are real: adopting proactive strategies focused on minimising lung stress and maximising efficiency however, can offer crucial support. Apart from quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke — the single most impactful action that can be taken — individuals should focus on environmental control and lifestyle adjustments. This includes actively improving indoor air quality, ensuring excellent ventilation, and dusting/vacuuming regularly to remove indoor pollutants. Maintaining good posture is also a simple yet powerful 'trick', as sitting or standing tall provides the lungs with maximum space to fully expand. Practicing good nutrition and hydration is also generally known to support the body through natural detoxification and cleansing. Dietary support mainly detoxifies against oxidative stress and inflammation. Consuming antioxidant-rich foods that are high in vitamin C such as berries and citrus fruits and anti-inflammatory spices such as turmeric and ginger can help. Diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as fatty fish or walnuts, in addition to food that packs dietary fibre might help improve lung function by promoting general health in people who are already suffering from COPD.

Controlled coughing may assist lung clearance: this special technique of coughing helps clear mucus. Steam therapy may assist in lung clearance as it loosens the mucus. Lastly, maintaining hydration is vital, as sufficient water intake keeps the protective mucus lining thin and easier for the body to expel, thereby supporting long-term respiratory health.

## IndiGo chairman denies claims that airline engineered crisis; says board was engaged on FDTL rules for 'many months'



In his first public statement since widespread operational disruptions hit IndiGo last week, the chairman of the airline's board Vikram Singh Mehta rejected allegations that the crisis was engineered and that the airline tried to influence the government over the revised Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules. Mehta also said that claims that the airline's board was not engaged on the FDTL issue are "not correct". The IndiGo chairman announced that the airline's board will involve an external technical expert to work with the management and help determine the root causes and ensure corrective action, "so that this level of disruption never occurs again". Apologising for the disruption that impacted tens of thousands of passengers, Mehta said that while he had been urged to make a statement on the issue, he chose to wait because the airline's board felt that its first duty was to support IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers and his team, restore operations, and help passengers who were affected. With the airline's operations now stabilised, Mehta said that he felt it was the right time for him to speak.

"The disruptions of last week did not happen because of any deliberate action. They happened because a combination of internal and unanticipated external events including minor technical glitches, scheduled changes linked to the start of the winter season, adverse weather conditions, increased congestion in the aviation system, and implementation of and operation under the updated crew rostering rules. This is not an excuse. This is simply the truth. Clearly this combination of events pushed our systems beyond their limits," Mehta said in a video message released by IndiGo on Wednesday evening.

According to Mehta, IndiGo has followed the FDTL rules as they came into effect and did not attempt to bypass them. The new FDTL rules stipulate more rest for pilots and rationalisation of their flying duties—particularly late night operations—in a bid to better manage pilot fatigue, which is a key risk to aviation safety. These new norms, which were stipulated in January last year were delayed in their implementation, and took effect in two phases—from July 1 and November 1—with the second phase rollout hitting IndiGo considerably. The new norms meant that airlines either had to have more pilots to maintain their schedule, or curtail their schedules in line with the new requirements. On questions raised on the airline's board, Mehta said, "There has also been a claim that the board was not engaged. This is not correct. The board has been closely involved with this matter for many months. Both the board and the (board's) risk management committee have received relevant information from the management on the implementation of the rules."

Some aviation sector experts and former bureaucrats had questioned the effectiveness of the airline's high-profile

board and whether it did enough in the months leading up to a massive operational crisis that brought the country's aviation system to its knees. While Mehta mentioned that the board was involved and had received the necessary information about the new crew rest rules from the airline's management, he did not say whether the board was aware that IndiGo was underprepared for the new rules and whether it made any intervention in the run-up to the rollout of the second phase of the FDTL norms from November 1. Mehta is the Chairman and Non-Executive Independent Director of IndiGo, and was the Chairman of the Shell Group of Companies in India between 1994 and 2012. Other members of the airline board include the airline's co-founder, promoter and Managing Director Rahul Bhatia in an executive role, India's former G20 Sherpa and retired IAS officer Amitabh Kant as a non-executive non-independent director, former SEBI chief M Damodaran as a non-executive director, and former administrator of the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Michael Whitaker as a non-executive independent director. The board also includes former Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa and Pallavi Shroff, Managing Partner of Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, as non-executive independent directors.

"Following the first day of the disruptions, we held an emergency board meeting and set up a crisis management group. Since then, Board members have been in continuous contact with the management team. The crisis Management team has been meeting every day. Our collective focus has been clear: restore operations, support passengers, communicate transparently, prevent this from happening again. The results are tangibly positive," Mehta said, noting that the airline's operations have normalised earlier than what was initially anticipated. In a statement on Tuesday, IndiGo announced that its operations have stabilised and normalised. IndiGo operated over 1,800 flights on Tuesday, operating to all destinations on its network, and its on-time performance (OTP) is back at over 80 per cent. The airline expects to operate around 1,900 flights on Wednesday. Friday was the worst day of the disruption with over 1,600 flight cancellations, but the situation has steadily improved since. As per the regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), IndiGo informed it that the disruptions "have arisen primarily from misjudgement and planning gaps in implementing" the second phase of new FDTL rules, with the airline accepting that the actual crew requirement for the new rules exceeded what it had anticipated. The massive disruption at IndiGo—India's largest airline that commands over 60 per cent of the domestic market share—threw commercial flight operations out of gear all over the country. The DGCA has allowed IndiGo some temporary exemptions from the new FDTL rules in order to help it get its act together, while also starting a probe into the disruption. IndiGo is also doing a root-cause analysis to identify the exact cause or combination of causes that led to this unprecedented disruption, which Mehta described as a "a blemish on the airline's pristine clean record".

"We owe answers to our customers, to our Government, to our shareholders and equally importantly to our employees. We assure you that we will examine every aspect of what went wrong and we will learn from it. The Board has decided it will involve an external technical expert to work with the management and help determine the root causes and ensure corrective action. So that this level of disruption never occurs again," Mehta said.

## 466 SEZ units shut in last 5 years, shows official data



As many as 466 units have closed in the last five years till FY25 in seven special economic zones (SEZs) across the country, according to data shared by the Commerce and Industry Ministry in written response to a Lok Sabha question. This comes against the backdrop of the US tariffs resulting in consecutive months of decline in goods exports in September and October. The official data showed that 100 units shut shop in FY25 alone, most after FY22 when Covid-19 resulted in the closure of 113 units. The employment in SEZs also declined to 31.77 lakh in FY25 compared with 31.94 lakh during the previous financial year.

SEZs enjoy various tax benefits, including duty-free imports and domestic procurement and employ over 31 lakh people in various labour-intensive sectors. SEZs in China became a prominent engine of growth, resulting in China's manufacturing prowess. However, this model has not resulted in similar success for India. To be sure, exports from the SEZs in the export units during the last 5 years have shown an upward trend. Exports have doubled to Rs 14.63 lakh crore in FY25 compared to Rs 7.59 lakh crore in FY21. Meanwhile, investments have also shown a slight

upturn as they picked up to Rs 7.82 lakh crore in FY25 from Rs 6.17 lakh crore in FY21. This comes even as SEZs are facing low investments in Research and Development (R&D) and tight competition from other countries. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been working on SEZ reforms for the last 3 years and is expected to announce reforms going forward. Responding to a question on possible measures planned to aid SEZs, the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Jitin Prasada, said the government undertakes various measures from time-to-time to remove operational challenges in SEZs in consultation with different stakeholders. "Such measures, including policy initiatives like permitting reverse job work and regulatory changes are a continuous process and introduced in the administration of SEZs as and when needed," Prasada said. According to a survey by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER): "Some of the reasons behind low FDI in Indian SEZs are the lack of investment protection agreements, unlike countries like Vietnam; negative perception about the SEZs and limited marketing and brand building to address those perceptions." The ICRIER survey added SEZs have been facing productivity-related challenges. Before 2019, there were around 500 gems and jewellery units in SEZs.

However, in recent years, many gems and jewellery units exited SEZs and during FY22, there were close to 360 gems and jewellery units in Indian SEZs, the report stated. "During FY21, the share of gems and jewellery in total exports from SEZs also declined to 15.7 per cent. This is because of multiple reasons, including better non-fiscal incentives received by firms in other competing countries, withdrawal of fiscal benefits in India, pandemic-related demand and supply disruptions and SEZ-related policy uncertainties," the report stated.

## FinMin revises bank recruitment results sequence to reduce attrition

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry has undertaken several initiatives aimed at streamlining the timelines for recruitment examinations for the public sector banks and declaration of their results. This includes recruitment to State Bank of India (SBI), Nationalised Banks (NBs), and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), the Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance said in a statement on Thursday.

Additionally, these initiatives seek to enhance transparency in examinations conducted by the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS). The recruitment in SBI, NBs, and RRBs is conducted through the IBPS process, in accordance with the mandates of the respective banks, it said. Typically, examinations for RRBs are administered prior to those for NBs and the SBI. The results are subse-

quently announced in a similar sequence, it said. "Nevertheless, a notable trend has emerged wherein newly recruited candidates frequently transition from RRBs to NBs, and subsequently to SBI. This migration has resulted in significant attrition within the banks and has posed operational challenges," it said. Taking cognisance of the above issue, it said the DFS reviewed the comprehensive process of recruitment examinations and the pattern of result declarations, advising the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to implement a standardised and logical sequence for announcing recruitment results across all three categories of banks.

Consequently, it said, a revised framework has been established, which stipulates that results will now be announced first for the SBI, followed by NBs, and subsequently for RRBs.

## 'I think my parents...': Kareena Kapoor Khan on what she learned about avoiding setting expectations for her kids from her upbringing



like I have two boys. The only thing I push them for is a little more of an outdoorsy kind of sport and stuff. Tough in Mumbai, just push them a little bit more like, you know, cricket or football."

She added that the only other gentle nudge is related to music, "Yeah, and the only thing I've said, it'll be nice if you guys play an instrument because your father loves the guitar. If you wish to pick it up, if you don't, that's also fine." Guidance versus autonomy Psychologist Rasshi Gurnani tells [indianexpress.com](#), "Kareena's example reflects an authoritative style, where children are offered support but not control. The key is to provide exposure, not direction." She continues, "Parents can introduce opportunities, like showing what exists in the world, while letting the child decide what to pursue. Autonomy-supportive parenting encourages curiosity without demanding performance, which helps children feel they are choosing for themselves, not living out their parents' goals."

How autonomy impacts motivation, confidence, and long-term success in children Children should engage in activities because they find personal value in them, not because they fear failure or seek approval. Gurnani notes that when children feel they have control over their choices, their self-efficacy grows, making them more confident in their abilities. "Self-determination theory builds internal motivation, which sustains learning, performance, and overall emotional well-being," states Gurnani. How parents can introduce activities without turning them into expectations To avoid invisible pressure, Gurnani suggests that parents watch for behavioural cues: sudden resistance, anxiety before practice, or doing something only to please adults are signs that external pressure is taking over. "When children feel they can quit without disappointing anyone, they engage more freely and develop interests that genuinely belong to them," concludes the expert.

## Masaba Gupta recalls getting an 'acidity attack' after wearing tight corset for *Kesari* Chapter 2's burlesque number: 'Was two days after my wedding'



Masaba Gupta, 36, went down memory lane, opening up about her childhood, shows, and her professional work in a chat with former Tennis champion Sania Mirza on the latter's podcast. Talking about her item song in *Kesari Chapter 2*, in which she is seen in a black corset, the fashion designer shared, "This one is very recent. I am at my fittest. This was two days after my wedding. I did an item song in the film *Kesari 2*. I was doing a burlesque number. I was very excited. I was wearing this corset. It was so tight that I had an acidity attack. So, I want to let you all know. I was chugging Eno and pretending to be hot." Taking a cue from her revelation, let's understand how tight clothing can give you acidity.

Dr Aniket Mule, consultant, internal medicine, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, said a very tight outfit, especially around the waist, puts extra pressure on the stomach. "When that happens, stomach acids can move upward, creating a burning sensation in the chest or throat. Many people think acidity only comes from food choices, but physical compression plays a big role, too. When the stomach doesn't get enough room to expand, even normal digestion becomes stressful for the body," said Dr Mule. Dr Mule noted that the stomach naturally produces acids to break down food. "When the abdominal area is squeezed for too long, this acid can rise toward the food pipe. The food pipe isn't built to handle acid,

so even short bursts can cause discomfort, sharp burning, nausea, or a sour taste. Someone already dealing with long working hours, irregular meals, or stress becomes even more sensitive to such triggers," said Dr Mule. An acidity attack can happen to anyone, even without food being the villain. The body reacts strongly when it's compressed, strained, or pushed beyond its comfort zone.

Not always, said Dr Mule. "The issue starts when the outfit is too tight, worn for long hours, or used during activities that demand a lot of movement. "Occasional use generally doesn't cause long-term issues, but frequent compressive clothing can make acidity episodes more common," said Dr Mule. Dr Mule said that a sudden heaviness or sharp burning in the upper abdomen is the most common one. "Some people feel discomfort while breathing or talking because the chest feels tight. Others may feel bloated, excessively burpy, or unusually tired. If the discomfort continues even after removing the outfit, that means the pressure has already triggered irritation," said Dr Mule.

What should one do when such acidity hits?

Loosening clothes or changing into something comfortable usually brings instant relief. "Sipping water slowly helps settle the stomach. Some people find that walking for a few minutes eases the burning sensation. Resting upright, not lying flat, also prevents acid from rising again. Spicy or oily food should be avoided for the rest of the day because the stomach is already irritated," advised Dr Mule.

How can someone prevent such attacks in the future?

\*Choosing outfits that allow some movement around the waist makes a big difference. \*Eating on time, not skipping breakfast, staying hydrated, and avoiding long gaps between meals help the stomach stay stable. \*Stress management plays a big role, too, since stress often triggers acidity even without food involvement. \*If someone must wear a tight outfit for work or performance, short breaks in between and mindful meal timings reduce the risk of discomfort," said Dr Mule.

## Raghav Chadha's favourite go-to vacation place in India is...

Raghav Chadha recently revealed his favourite holiday destination during Curly Tales's short interview series 59 Seconds, in which celebrities answer as many questions as they can within 59 seconds. Chadha's favourite destination is a South Indian paradise with beautiful backwaters, luscious tea plantations, gorgeous beaches, and a cultural extravaganza. Any guesses? "In India, it is Kerala," the politician admitted his love for the "God's own country" promptly. Known for its serene beauty, rich traditions, and soulful cuisine, this South Indian state has long been a favourite among tourists. Approximately 2.22 crore (22.2 million) tourists visited Kerala in 2024, as per the state's official tourism records. Chadha's prompt response clearly show Here are seven must-visit destinations in Kerala: Kerala Sadhya is a grand, traditional vegetarian feast from Kerala, served on a banana leaf, especially during festivals like Onam and weddings (photo: pixels)

### 1. Munnar – The Hill Station of Dreams

Munnar is located at about 1,600 meters above sea level in the Western Ghats and is known for its signature rolling green hills. Its tea plantations are popular for producing some of India's finest tea varieties. Its cool, misty mornings make it a year-round retreat. Another tourist attraction is Eravikulam National Park, which turns pink once every 12 years when the flower blooms. What not to miss here: Eravikulam National Park, Kolukkumalai Tea Estate, Mattupetty Dam, Top Station, Tata Tea Museum

### 2. Alleppey – Venice of the East

Kerala Alappuzha is the official Malayalam name of Alleppey, which is the anglicized version used during British rule that became popular internationally (photo: pixels) Alleppey is famous for its enchanting backwaters, canals, and lagoons, many of which also offer houseboat cruises. As the boat glides past paddy fields, coconut groves, and village life, tourists get a closer look at the true essence of Kerala. Alleppey's coir industry, handwoven mats, and the Nehru Trophy Boat Race are also popular.

What not to miss here: Houseboat cruise on Vembanad Lake, Nehru Trophy Boat Race, Pathiramanal Island, Alappuzha Beach, lighthouse visit

### 3. Kochi – A Blend of Cultures

Kochi is one of India's oldest port cities with the old-world charm of the Arabs, the Dutch, and the Portuguese. The colonial-era bungalows and European churches add to the nostalgia. The city has a rich maritime legacy and is a seafood paradise, with delicious prawn curry and karimeen pollichathu on the menu. Kochi International Airport is also India's first fully solar-powered airport. What not to miss here: Fort Kochi Beach, Chinese fishing nets, Mattancherry Palace, Jew Town, Kochi-Muziris Biennale

### 4. Wayanad – Nature's Hidden Gem

Kerala In Frame: Scenic Road through Wayanad's Lush Tea Estate (photo: pixels)

Wayanad stands out with its lush forests, waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, and coffee estates. The landscape is perfect for trekking and exploring caves like Edakkal, which feature ancient petroglyphs dating back 6,000 years. India's largest Earthen dam, Banasura Sagar, is also found in Wayanad. What not to miss here: Edakkal Caves, Soochipara Falls, Pookode Lake, Banasura Sagar Dam, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

### 5. Thekkady – For the Wild at Heart

Home to the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Thekkady offers thrilling boat safaris and jungle safaris where you might spot elephants, deer, and exotic birds. A spice paradise, Thekkady is also famous for its cardamom, pepper, and cinnamon plantations, which often offer guided tours. What not to miss here: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, spice plantation tour, bamboo rafting, Mangala Devi Temple, Kathakali show6. Varkala – Cliffs and Calm Seas

Kerala A Kathakali show is a vibrant South Indian dance-drama from Kerala, known for its elaborate costumes, intricate makeup, and expressive mudras, telling stories from epics

## Can the big stars, from India's cricket teams to Lionel Messi and D Gukesh, defend their crowns?



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

India have a golden opportunity in their hands to match what West Indies did in the 1970s, and Australia did in the 2000s; Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi will be giving what could be their final push for a FIFA World Cup. India have a golden opportunity in their hands to match what West Indies did in the 1970s, and Australia did in the 2000s; Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi will be giving what could be their final push for a FIFA World Cup

West Indies, Australia... India?

In the last three men's ICC events, India have been head and shoulders above the chasing pack. While they won two tournaments, staying unbeaten, their only loss in the 2023 home World Cup came in the final. In a month, they will gear up for another World Cup at home, this one in the T20 format. No team has ever before defended the title. While it speaks about the magnitude of the challenge, India also has a chance to do what no Indian side has done before. For a team that is spoken about as the best, they haven't won two successive World Cups. With a dominant squad on paper, India have a golden opportunity in their hands to match what West Indies did in the 1970s, and Australia did in the 2000s. Getting to do it at home would make it all the more special. Even in the immediate aftermath of India finally breaking the barrier to win the ICC Women's World Cup, Harmanpreet Kaur's perspective didn't leave her. She said this should just be the start, not a one-off: India must make this a habit now. The 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup starting in England from 12 June, would be the first op-

portunity to show the world if India can convert the magical triumph in Navi Mumbai into the foundation of a cricketing dynasty. It gives India the perfect chance, in conditions where they actually have fared well recently, to go from strength to strength. But mind you, after being dethroned from both their thrones in white-ball cricket, Australia would be gunning for it just as hard, if not more.

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have cast football in their image this century, enriching and embellishing the sport. Their World Cup journey would conclude next year. Ronaldo is 40, Messi is 38. There wouldn't be the mind and legs of another campaign. The Argentine has already realised his dream of lifting the World Cup in Qatar. The dream has remained elusive for Ronaldo. The 2026 edition would be his last shot. Their intertwined destinies could twine for one last time. Portugal and Argentina could potentially meet in the quarterfinals in Kansas, provided they top their group and win the knockouts. One of the two great careers could end in tears. It would be both cruel and fitting, but an irresistible watch. If you don't want Novak Djokovic to win his record 25th Slam in 2026, you can't be a true tennis fan. But can the 38-year-old break the Sinner-Alcaraz duopoly? If you doubt the Serb you can't be a true tennis fan. After a Slam-less year, Djokovic is re-constructing his team to further push his already stretched aging body.

Joining it is Dr. Mark Kovacs, a new-age holistic sports coach whose website calls him a "performance expert in the area of optimising human performance through the application of cutting edge, evidence-based information". Djokovic's biggest challenge is to play 7 best-of-five Slam matches. So if modern science can help his body last the distance, the mind can do the rest. The Serb has hinted that the Australian Open could be his last Slam. If you are a true fan, you know those are just mind games.

For the past year, 19-year-old Gukesh has spent his time on the world champion's throne with a target on his back. There has been little to celebrate, even as Gukesh has tried to experiment and wander out of his comfort zone of classical tournaments. But come 2026, and the world of chess (and Gukesh too) will narrow their focus on the world championship, likely to be held in the November-December window. The Candidates tournament from March 28 to April 16 will throw up a challenger. And while Gukesh has looked vulnerable all year, beating the boy who is one of the most thorough preparers in classical chess over a 14-game world championship will not be easy for anyone. Mondo Duplantis, the pole-vault superstar with 14 world records to his name, gives a clue when he is in the mood to raise the bar further. Out of his kit bag he pulls out a special pair of spikes, intimidatingly called the 'claw', with one spike protruding from the front for extra grip. At this year's World Championships final in Tokyo, Duplantis wore the spikes when he successfully soared over 6.30 metres, the fourth time he rewrote his own world record in 2025. A reason he does not use the 'claw' for every jump is because he could nick himself when he twists and turns through the air, though the pointed edge has been rounded to prevent an untoward incident.

## Recovering Pat Cummins, Tim David, Josh Hazlewood included in Australia's provisional T20 World Cup squad



EMS News Agency, Jan 3

The recovering trio of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Tim David all feature in Australia's provisional squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup that was announced on Thursday. With the tournament taking place in India and Sri Lanka, and Australia playing all their group stage matches in the latter nation, they have gone spin heavy, with Adam Zampa being joined by Matthew Kuhinemann, Cooper Connolly and all-rounders Glenn Maxwell and Matthew Short.

Chairman of selectors George Bailey said that the injured players are recovering well and will be fit in time for the World Cup. "The T20 side has enjoyed a long run of recent

success which enabled the panel to choose a balance of players across the variety of conditions Sri Lanka and India may present," Bailey said. "Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Tim David are tracking well and we are confident they will be available for the World Cup. This is a preliminary squad so should changes need to be made they will ahead of the support period."

Even though Mitchell Starc has retired from the format and Spencer Johnson is being ruled out with injury, Australia haven't decided to go for a left-arm pacer. Instead, they have included Xavier Bartlett in the squad. Australia will be facing Pakistan in a three-match T20I series before the tournament but are yet to name a squad for that. They are placed in Group B along with co-hosts Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Ireland and Oman. Australia start their tournament by facing Ireland on February 11 and then face Zimbabwe on February 13, both matches in Colombo. They then move to Kandy where they face Sri Lanka on February 16 and Oman on February 20.

Australia provisional squad for 2026 T20 World Cup: Mitchell Marsh (c), Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Matthew Kuhinemann, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Marcus Stoines, Adam Zampa

## AIFF asks clubs to confirm participation in delayed ISL

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Wednesday asked the clubs to confirm their participation in the delayed season of the Indian Super League (ISL) and the proposed format within a day so that it can inform the continental body the exact number of matches to be played in the competition. With the ISL 2025-26 yet to start, it is certain that the clubs will not be able to play the mandatory 24 matches in the season — including top division league and domestic cup — to be eligible to feature in the AFC Champions League 2.

In that regard, the ISL clubs had urged the AIFF to request the Asian Football Confederation for a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches so that they can play in the ACL 2. The representatives of the clubs and a committee formed by the AIFF have had five meetings since December 24 on how to hold the 2025-26 ISL season. ... the meetings held on 28th December 2025, wherein the ISL Clubs requested the All India Football Federation to take up the matter with the Asian Football Confederation regarding a one-time relaxation in the minimum requirement of 24 matches," the AIFF said in a letter to the ISL clubs. "AIFF asks ISL clubs to confirm participation and the proposed competition format in ISL 2024-25 by January 1, 2026. The AFC, the Sports Ministry and the Supreme Court will be informed accordingly.

"Considering the urgency of the matter, it would be highly appreciated if the above confirmation is received by tomorrow, i.e., 1st January 2026. We trust you will appreciate the seriousness and time-sensitive nature of the situation." The AIFF also said it is required to submit the out-

## Fan experiences, lack of a Test No. 3, political instability – the messes, on and off field, that need cleaning up



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

I hope the suits who run sports remember this: the game does not breathe in boardrooms, it breathes in the stands. In 2025, two moments laid bare how far fans have slipped down the priority list — both ending in tragedy: a stampede in Bengaluru, then chaos in Kolkata. There were other times when the disregard was less dramatic but just as telling. In Ahmedabad, those trying to catch the India-South Africa T20 action chased water instead. In Delhi, they were lathi-charged for wanting to see Kohli. At the India Open, badminton was watched from broken, filthy chairs. The list is endless. Sport survives because people call in sick at work, spend their last rupee on costly flights and match-day tickets (laying hands on them is another task) and raise their voices from the stands. The least they deserve is drinkable water, clean toilets, sturdy seats and dignity.

No more fiascosWith the hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in the pocket, and an active bid for the hosting rights of the 2036 Olympics, India is actively trying to place itself as a favourable sporting destination. However, the memories of the last time India hosted a big international event in the form of the 2010 Commonwealth Games remain fresh. A recent incident at the World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, where two coaches were bitten by a stray dog led to further embarrassment. The Messi GOAT tour fiasco in Kolkata only added to that, effectively implying that there are visible gaps when it comes to India's management of big-scale events. The 2026 Badminton World Championships are scheduled in August and will be hosted in New Delhi; one can only hope that there is no moment there that turns into another tale of embarrassment.

A World Cup for the world?

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be the biggest till date with 48 teams, but with the Donald Trump administration imposing partial or total travel bans on citizens of several participating countries, there is uncertainty over who would be allowed in, whether they are fans or officials of national football federations. People from Iran and Haiti, two countries that have qualified for the tournament, are banned from entering the United States. Others like Senegal and Ivory Coast face additional travel restrictions. This will be the first World Cup co-hosted by three countries — the US, Canada and Mexico — which don't see eye to eye on all matters. How they and individual US host cities, as well as the federal government, welcome the world would be looked at with

interest. A team that had not been beaten at home since 2012 has been whitewashed twice in two years (New Zealand 3-0 in 2024, South Africa 2-0 in 2025) in their backyard. Although there have been sparkling moments when the inexperienced side managed to square the series in England, the disappointing series against South Africa raised questions about the health of Test cricket in the country. India failed to reach the WTC Final last year and are placed 6th on the table in the current cycle. Four Tests in Sri Lanka and New Zealand, and one at home against Afghanistan, will be plenty to show if India can improve to be as good in whites as they are in blues. For 27 years since 1996, India's premier Test batting greats at No. 4 were guarded with utmost surety by their immediate predecessors. Grafters of assured mind, wrists and feet, the likes of Rahul Dravid and Cheteshwar Pujara, were products of the domestic game that now lies in bits and pieces. Devoid of a dependable system, the Ranji Trophy cannot immediately produce a clone to fill India's great No. 3 void anymore.

Even as the top Test nations grip with the falling standards of the No. 3, India seems the least equipped in their transition. They have drafted four men in their last nine games under a new captain, and the most recent home debacle only protracted this specific woe. With a largely dormant first semester ahead, India will have time on their hands to prepare and zero in on a No. 3, but will one resounding name emerge from India's domestic wilderness? This one is less looking forward to, more watch in mild amusement. Nothing screams the confluence of the American political right and a combat sport that caters to that spectrum wholeheartedly more than a bevy of mixed martial art title fights on the lawn of the White House. The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), whose president Dana White campaigned for Donald Trump, will be holding a fight event with some of the best fighters in the world clambering over each other to be a part of the event under the eyes of the American president. In a year filled to the brim with a FIFA World Cup, a T20 World Cup, a Commonwealth Games, and an Asian Games, as well as multiple World Championships, nothing like a little break from serious sport to watch modern-day gladiators appear their ruling overlords in 2026. When Kedar Jadhav, former India batter, screamed "Ghar ma ghusi ne maris" in Gujarati when his former team Chennai Super Kings beat Gujarat Titans a few years back in the IPL final in Ahmedabad, it brought a smile. Hope floated that the cricket commentary in various regional languages would also take the next step beyond amusement and offer insightful commentary. They — be it Tamil or Bhojpuri — have certainly catered to the people who aren't that comfortable with English or Hindi, but the real letdown has been the English and Hindi commentary over the years. Will 2026 change that? Some of the players who joined the commentary world in the last decade have been more or less disappointing. It's time they move beyond parochialism and mind-numbing clichés. This is not to say that they need to get too serious and 'boring'. A look at Pakistan's A Sports, fronted by Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, can be a good example of how to marry fun with insight.

## Rishabh Pant fails to fire as Delhi suffer big defeat at the hands of Odisha



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

India keeper Rishabh Pant's indifferent form coupled with Delhi's leading batters failing to fire saw their unbeaten run being interrupted by Odisha, who carved out a huge 79-run victory in a fourth-round Group D match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday. With the national selectors set to announce the squad for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand in first week of January, it was the charismatic India keeper-batter and Delhi skipper Pant, who was the focus of attention. But the feisty cricketer could score only 24 as the much-vaunted Delhi batting imploded, managing just 193 in 43.3 overs in the chase of an immensely gettable 272/8 scored by Odisha after being sent in to bat first.

Delhi's innings have largely been built around one solid batting performance so far this season. But the absence of one on Wednesday cost them not just the match but also their top position on the points table, which could come back to haunt them as the tournament progresses. Odisha went top of the table with 12 points and a healthy net run rate (NRR), while Delhi, despite being on the same number of points, slipped to fourth, with even Railways and Haryana getting ahead of them on better NRR. It was also the first time so far this season that Delhi could not cross 200, something which looked so easy when Virat Kohli slammed a century against Andhra in the opener, and opener Priyansh Arya scored a fine 78 in the previous game against Saurashtra. Pant, following scores of 5, 70, 22 could only manage 24 off 28 balls before he was dismissed by pacer Debabrata Pradhan (3/28), who along with young right-arm pacer Sambit Baral (3/34), hastened Delhi's collapse. Odisha's competitive total was built around veteran skipper Biplob Samantray, who scored a 74-ball-72 after they lost three wickets before their score crossed the 100 mark. Odisha's lower rung made small but useful contributions to frustrate the Delhi bowling attack, led by India players Navdeep Saini and Nitish Rana, though off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen returned excellent figures of 4/27 in his 10 overs. Delhi's batters were off to an awful start losing openers Priyansh Arya and Sarthak Ranjan on single-digit scores to be two down for just six runs on the board. Pant's dismissal saw Delhi teetering at 50/3 in the 11th over, which quickly became 55/5.

A recovery from this stage was next to impossible but due credit to Harsh Tyagi (43) and Hrithik Shokeen (32) for delaying the inevitable with some gritty batting. Meanwhile, Saurashtra defeated Andhra by 74 runs with right-arm pacer Ankur Panwar taking a five-for and dismissing the rivals for 180 in the chase of 255.

Red hot Sarfaraz smashes 14 sixes in 75-ball-157 as Mumbai beat Goa by 87 runs. Sarfaraz Khan ended 2025 with a magnificent 75-ball 157 studded with 14 sixes as Mumbai inched closer towards knock-out with a 87-run victory over Goa in a group C game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday. Sarfaraz, who was also in prime form during the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, hit a 56-ball century, his third in List A as Mumbai posted an insurmountable 444 for 8 and then restricted Goa to 357 for 9. This is Mumbai's fourth successive win in the group league stage and one more win out of the remaining three games will almost ensure a smooth passage into the quarter-finals.

On a day when Yashasvi Jaiswal (46) made his comeback after being laid low by gastritis during the opening week of the National One Day Championship, Sarfaraz owned the stage at the Jaipuria Vidyalaya ground where he made a mincemeat of the Goa attack with nine fours and 14 sixes. A many as 10 out of his 14 sixes were hit off-spinner Lalit Yadav (2/93 in 9 overs) and left-arm spinner Darshan Misal (3/98 in 9 overs). He hit Lalit for four sixes, while Misal was dispatched for half-a-dozen maximums. Legendary Sachin Tendulkar's son Arjun was hammered for 78 runs in eight overs. While Sarfaraz was dismissed in the 42nd over when he was looking good for his maiden double hundred in List A cricket, Mumbai didn't lose the tempo with more than 100 runs coming off the last 8 overs. Musheer Khan (60 off 66 balls), wicketkeeper Hardik Tamore (53 off 28 balls), Shamsul Mulani (22 off 15 balls), Tanush Kotian (23 not out off 12 balls) and skipper Shardul Thakur (27 off 8 balls) wielded the long handle to good effect as the winners hammered 35 fours and 25 sixes. In reply, Goa were never in the chase but Lalit Yadav (64), Abhinav Tejwana (100) and Deepak Gaonkar (70) did bat well during the middle overs but it was never going to be enough. Skipper Shardul Thakur (3/20 in 6 overs) once again showed his wares on a flat deck, while Yashasvi Jaiswal, bowling his leg-breaks, got smashed for 52 in just 3 overs but got a couple of wickets in the bargain.

## Kohli celebrates new year with Anushka, continues ODI resurgence

New Delhi: India's charismatic batter Virat Kohli stepped into the new year 2026 with his wife and Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, posing a photo on social media. The former India captain shared a photograph on Instagram featuring the couple wearing masks, with Kohli's playful Spiderman-style mask adding humour to the frame.

Taking to Instagram, Kohli wrote, "Stepping into 2026 with the light of my life." The post instantly garnered views and was flooded with comments from fans and followers wishing the couple good luck ahead of the new year. After retiring from T20I and Test cricket, Kohli has been in the best form of his life in ODI cricket. The 35-year-old returned to India's top domestic one-day tournament for the first time in 15 years and made a strong comeback by scoring 131 and 77 consecutively, showing his desire to play at this level.

## Spirit first look: Prabhas' lean-mean physique, wounded back reminds fans of Animal; Katrina Kaif, Bobby Deol react



Prabhas' physical transformation, comparing his lean and mean avatar to how ripped he was in 2016 while filming SS Rajamouli's blockbuster fantasy epic franchise Baahubali. "We're getting peak prabhas physique in 2026," wrote an X user. However, many also pointed out how the first look is eerily similar to Animal's second half, when Tripti meets and takes care of the wounded protagonist, played by Ranbir Kapoor. Her subservience to Prabhas (lighting up his cigarette) reminds them of the controversial scene when Ranbir's Rannvijay Singh asks Tripti to kiss his shoes in order to prove her loyalty to him. "I thought it was Ranbir Kapoor from Animal (crying emojis), expected better from you Vanga," commented a user. "Same look BTW," wrote another user, sharing a GIF of Ranbir smoking in Animal. "Another Animal (magnifying glass and fire emojis)," said a third person on X. The fact that Tripti starred in both the films doesn't help the film's case either. An X user also claimed that Tripti looks like a better choice for the film than Deepika Padukone. She was initially attached to star opposite Prabhas, but opted out of the project months later because of her demand for an eight-hour work shift among other logistical concerns from the makers. Vanga was quick to offer the lead role to Tripti, who came onboard readily since she got her breakthrough with Animal. Vivek Oberoi also has a key role in the film, which is slated to be released this year. It is a collaboration between Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Vanga's Bhadrakali Pictures. Last year, in October, on Prabhas' birthday, Sandeep Reddy Vanga shared the film's audio teaser in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam, revealing Prakash Raj and Vivek as key cast members. The audio teaser suggested that Prabhas portrays an IPS officer who is currently behind bars. "Right from childhood, I have one bad habit," the teaser ended with Prabhas' line. Vivek, who will reportedly be seen as an antagonist, expressed excitement about the film via a post on X.

The response to the Spirit first poster on the internet has been quite polarizing. Several fans were in awe of

## Dilip Kumar cut ties with his sister after she eloped with Mughal-e-Azam director: 'I cursed him, told him he'd die for this sin'



Dilip Kumar was one of the most respected actors of his generation, and while the current generation might not be very familiar with his work, most of the younger audience still know him as Salim from the magnum opus Mughal-e-Azam, where he and his then-girlfriend, actor Madhubala, played star-crossed lovers. It is well known that the actors broke up while filming, and while shooting some of the most romantic scenes of the film, the two were not even on talking terms with each other. This must have been painful for the two as at one point, they had started discussing marriage with each other. But, what further broke Dilip Kumar's heart, was the deception by Mughal-e-Azam director K Asif.

Dilip Kumar had once considered Asif to be a confidante, and had stuck by his vision for nearly a decade as he completed Mughal-e-Azam with utmost care. So when Dilip learnt that K Asif, a married man, was in a relationship with his younger sister Akhtar, who was half his age, he was shocked. So much so that Dilip decided to cut ties with his sister and Asif, and decided to never see them again. When Dilip Kumar played the role of Emperor Akbar's son Salim in Mughal-e-Azam, it was said that this was one of the best performances he had ever delivered. This was after he had appeared in films like Devdas, Naya Daur, Madhumati among others. He was playing the prince who rebelled against his emperor father for a woman who was seen as lesser than him in the social hierarchy. But, when Dilip was first trying for this role in the late 1940s, he was told by K Asif that he was "too young" to play Prince Salim. "You have the royal bearing of a prince but I want an older look," he was told. Asif then started making another film with the character of Prince Salim, but had to shelve it midway because of financial constraints. However, a few years later, when he put Mughal-e-Azam together, he approached Dilip again, who, by now, was a star, and for Asif, he now looked perfect for the part. K Asif and Dilip Kumar developed a strong friendship during the making of Mughal-e-Azam. The friendship deepened as Dilip was going through a rather terrible break up with Madhubala, and Asif was trying to balance everyone's temperaments on set. It was during this time that Asif's visits to Dilip's residence increased and unbeknownst to the star, his director and sister Akhtar fell in love with each other. The alliance might not have been a problem otherwise but here, K Asif was a twice married man. He had married Sitara Devi, gotten divorced, and then married his Mughal-e-Azam actor Nigar Sultana. He was also twice Akhtar's age.

In his memoir 'Dilip Kumar: The Substance and the Shadow', Dilip Kumar shared that Akhtar had pursued her education seriously, and had even moved to the US to study back in the 1950s, all with Dilip's support. "I was not aware that love was blossoming between Akhtar and Asif and that they had decided to marry without my consent, knowing full well that I would not approve of my most accomplished sister marrying a twice-married man who was much older and had contrasting views and thoughts and a totally different lifestyle," he shared and added, "Akhtar disappointed and disillusioned me and I distanced myself from her and Asif for some years." K Asif was married to Sitara Devi when he started working on Mughal-e-Azam. Through the course of the film, he first married Nigar Sultana, who was an actor in the film. Later, he and Akhtar eloped and this broke Dilip Kumar's heart. Sitara Devi, in

## Rajinikanth greets fans, shares 'Muthu' clip to welcome New Year

Chennai: Superstar Rajinikanth on Thursday greeted and wished his fans who had gathered outside his residence a happy new year even as he shared on social media, a video clip that contained an iconic dialogue from his film 'Muthu' as part of his new year greeting. Continuing the practice of meeting fans every new year, Superstar Rajinikanth on Thursday greeted loyal fans who had turned up in front of his residence, braving inclement weather.

Taking to his social media timelines, the actor shared a video clip from his superhit film 'Muthu'. In the clip that the actor shared, Rajinikanth is seen riding a chariot with actress Meena seated next to him. Meena asks Rajini, "The route we are taking is correct, isn't it?" To this Rajinikanth replies, "Who knows? I never bother about the route I take. I put my burden on God and take the path my vehicle picks, chanting 'Shiva'!" The actor went on to write "Wishing you all a very happy new year 2026. God Bless" on the clip. On the work front, Rajinikanth next has director Nelson's eagerly awaited action thriller 'Jailer 2' gearing up for release. In fact, the actor had celebrated his most recent birthday on December 12 on the sets of the film while shooting for it. Sun Pictures, the production house producing the film, had taken to its X timeline to post a video clip of the cake cutting celebrations that took place on the sets. Sharing the clip, the production house had said, "Happy Birthday Superstar @rajinikanth! From the sets of #Jailer2." The clip showed Rajinikanth leaving his caravan to the cake cutting venue, where he was wished by the core unit members including director Nelson. After a brief cake cutting celebration, during which period Rajinikanth fed cake to director Nelson, the actor was seen returning to his caravan.

'Jailer 2' has triggered huge interest, thanks to the phenomenal reach of the first part of the film, which went on to emerge a huge blockbuster, raking in around Rs 650 crores.

## Dhurandhar makers asked to mute 'Baloch' by I&B Ministry; 50% screens given to Ikkis with Jio Studios intervention



(Digital Cinema Package) and play only the updated one from Thursday. The second setback for Dhurandhar is more of a strategic move by its production house, Jyoti Deshpande-led Jio Studios. The studio has a long-standing partnership with Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films. The trade source believes that an understanding between both led Vjian to push the release of Ikkis by a week from Christmas, December 25, 2025 to the New Year's Day.

"Dhurandhar was still going strong and breaking records at the box office throughout all of December. So, Jio Studios didn't want to compromise on its historic run. Delaying the release of Ikkis by a week was a great move because look what happened to Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri," adds the source. The romantic comedy, starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday, and backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions, managed to earn only Rs 28.82 crore within its opening week, thanks to the box office dominance of Dhurandhar. Also, the source mentions that it must've been an understanding between Maddock Films and Jio Studios to release Ikkis on January 1 so that it gets more screens as Dhurandhar has begun to slow down at the domestic box office now. Ikkis is also distributed by Jio Studios, which is now okay with the idea of making Dhurandhar take a back seat. The film has already become the highest grossing Bollywood film domestically, earning Rs 722.75 crore. However, now entering its fifth week since its release on December 5, 2025, Ranveer's film is now hovering around the Rs 10 crore mark every day this week. It's the first Indian film ever to earn in double digits consecutively till its fourth week, but given the number of screens have been halved now, it may soon slip down to single-digit daily earnings starting next week on Monday, January 5. While some single-screens will continue to play Dhurandhar, Jio Studios has ensured Ikkis gets a showing of around 30-40%. It's also positioning the film strategically, pushing for more evening shows than morning on New Year's Day given the occasion and the fact that a film like this will benefit from word of mouth slowly and surely. Based on the story of martyred Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, it marks the theatrical debut of Amitabh Bachchan's grandson Agastya Nanda and the swansong of late legendary actor Dharmendra.

## Jennifer Lopez calls out trolls criticising her outfits at 56, four marriages: 'If you had this body, you'd be naked too'



body suit with a fringed bottom when she admitted she laughs off the potshots aimed at her wardrobe.

Lopez didn't even spare herself at the concert as she took a potshot at the number of times she's been married. Looking back at her maiden Las Vegas residency show back in 2016-2018, called All I Have, Lopez said on stage, "That went by in a blink, didn't it? For those of you who were there on opening night 10 years ago. At that time, I had only been married twice." She then joked that she got confused how many times she'd been married by a particular point in life. Lopez laughed and added, to another round of cheers from the live audience, "It's over and we just, boom, and it's fine. It's all good. The good news is that I'm learning and I'm growing. We're in our happy era right now."

Earlier this year, Lopez officially divorced her fourth husband, longtime partner, and actor-filmmaker Ben Affleck. The superstar pairing married in July 2022. Lopez filed for divorce in August 2024. The filing said they had separated more than a year earlier. It was their second stint as a couple. In the early 2000s, they met, fell in love, got engaged and starred together in the infamous Gigli and Jersey Girl in 2004. They split up that same year, blaming in part the pressure of the public eye. Earlier this year, Lopez admitted her separation from Affleck the second time was extremely challenging, especially because it took place during the filming of her movie Kiss of the Spider Woman. "It was a really tough time. Every moment on set, every moment I was doing this role, I was so happy, and then it was like, back home, it was not great. And it was just like, 'How do I work inside of this?'" Lopez told CBS Morning America. She was previously married to actor-producer Ojani Noa for a year in 1997-98, to actor Cris Judd from 2001 to 2003, and to singer-actor Marc Anthony from 2004 to 2014, with whom she has 17-year-old twins Maximilian "Max" David Muniz and Emme Maribel Muniz.

## Bobby Deol reacts to Esha Deol's New Year's Eve post as she misses father Dharmendra: 'Love you papa'



As everyone welcomed 2026 with excitement and celebrations, it was an emotional New Year's Eve for Esha Deol. The actor had low-key celebrations in Dubai, as she missed her late father, legend Dharmendra. While stargazing in a beautiful cityscape, Esha marked the special occasion with a heartwarming moment. In fact, her half-brother, actor Bobby Deol, also reacted to her social media post. Taking to her Instagram handle on Wednesday night, she posted two photos from her New Year's celebration. In one of the pictures, Esha can be seen gazing at the moon in Dubai, with Burj Khalifa in the background. She was wearing a black-gold outfit along with a black jacket, and pointed towards the sky. In another image, she just wrote, "Love you, papa." Her half-brother Bobby Deol commented under the post with red heart emojis. His reaction comes amid reports earlier suggested the sidelining of Esha's mother, Dharmendra's second wife, Hema Malini. The two families even hosted separate prayer meets in Mumbai and Delhi. Veteran icon Dharmendra took his last breath at the age of 89, on November 24. He is survived by his wives – Prakash Kaur and Hema Malini, and his six children, including Sunny Deol, Bobby Deol and Esha Deol. After his demise, the Deol family hosted a prayer meet in Mumbai, which was attended by many celebrities, including Salman Khan. But, Hema Malini and her daughters Esha and Ahaana hosted a separate service for Dharmendra in Delhi, with the presence of several high-profile politicians. Dharmendra's last film Ikkis is set to hit the theatres today. In the film, the actor will be seen playing the role of Brigadier Madan Lal Khetarpal (Retd.), father of Arun Khetarpal. Directed by Sriram Raghavan, the film also features Agastya Nanda, Jaideep Ahlawat, Simar Bhatia and Rahul Dev.

In her latest New Year post, Esha Deol remembered her late father, actor Dharmendra. Her half-brother Bobby Deol also reacted to the picture with heart emojis.