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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ Tuesday, 09 December, 2025 UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Indigo crisis raised in Parliament, demands for answers

New Delhi

The issue of the IndiGo operational crisis was raised in Parliament's winter session today. Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, citing the inconvenience faced by passengers due to the disruption in IndiGo operations, said the government should state from the floor of



Parliament what steps it is taking to resolve the crisis. Raising the IndiGo issue immediately after the Question

Hour ended, Gogoi said the government should state what measures the Aviation Ministry is taking to

address the crisis. Speaker said the minister will respond later. Speaker Om Birla assured Gogoi that the Union Civil Aviation Minister would come to the House and respond. He was not present in the Lok Sabha today. The Lok Sabha then began a discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande

Mataram, which was initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Following PM Modi, Gogoi also spoke on the topic. Tamil Nadu MP's question in the Rajya SabhaThe issue of the aviation operational crisis was subsequently raised in the Rajya Sabha. Responding to questions about the dire

situation at Delhi airport due to the AMSS malfunction and IndiGo's operational crisis over the past week, Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Ramamohan Naidu stated that the government supports the entry of more companies into the sector. M. , an AIADMK MP from Tamil Nadu.

CM Rekha pays obeisance at the Golden Temple along with cabinet colleagues



New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with her cabinet colleagues, today paid obeisance and performed seva at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Chief Minister said that merely visiting this sacred site brings a feeling of immense peace. The Chief Minister stated that the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) is not just a heritage site, but a divine center of spiritual energy and service, where faith transforms into action and devotion shapes character. She said that she offered prayers for the welfare of all and prayed for the happiness, health, and well-

being of all. The successful organization of the grand gathering dedicated to the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji at the Red Fort in Delhi is a testament to the infinite grace of Waheguru Ji and the immense blessings of Guru Sahib. The Chief Minister said that today we have come to thank Guru Sahib, who gave us the privilege of serving at the Red Fort and blessed us with the successful organization of the gathering dedicated to the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib. He said that when the decision was made across the country to commemorate the 350th martyrdom day.

Congress has torn Vande Mataram into pieces: PM Modi

New Delhi

New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking the 150th anniversary of the song Vande Mataram, compared it to the flow of a river. He said that Vande Mataram carries with it a current of inspiration and, after independence, will lead us to prosperity. Initiating the discussion on Vande Mataram in the Lok Sabha on Monday, the Prime Minister said that the song had been treated unfairly in the last century. In his speech, he cited Gandhiji's statement that Vande Mataram had become so popular that it should be made the national anthem. He said that today there is a need to understand the circumstances that overpowered this revered sentiment and dragged it into controversy. The



The Constitution was strangled during the Emergency: PM Modi

We should seize the opportunity of completing 150 years and restore the nation's pride. He said that at the 50th anniversary, the country was enslaved, and at the 100th anniversary, it was going through the Emergency. Describing the challenge posed by Vande Mataram to British rule, the Prime Minister said that it demonstrated India's strength to the foreign regime that was spreading inferiority complex in the country.

Prime Minister presented the history of the song, its emotional awakening and inspiring context, and facts to the House. He also accused the Congress of doing injustice to the song. He also called on public representatives to partici-

pate in the discussion, saying that this is an opportunity for us to acknowledge this debt. The Prime Minister targeted the Congress and former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for appeasement. He stated that the Congress reviewed the

The fight for the resolve to restore a great culture

The fight is not for power or land but a resolve to re-establish a great culture. The Prime Minister said that the British implemented their policy of divide and rule in India out of fear of the Vande Mataram song. They partitioned Bengal. Even during such times, the Vande Mataram song resonated like a rock in every street. Then the British even banned its singing, speaking and printing. He said, there was a time when the intellectual power of Bengal guided and inspired the entire country.

song after the Muslim League's opposition. He added that Nehru, following Muhammad Ali Jinnah's statement against the song in 1937, described the song as irritating to Muslims. He men-



After the huge success in the Bihar Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Bihar NDA MPs in Parliament

Why the debate on Vande Mataram today: Because the Bengal elections are coming up: Priyanka

New Delhi

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, elected to the Lok Sabha from Wayanad in Kerala, also participated in the discussion on Vande Mataram. She underscored its role in nation-

building and said that this discussion in Parliament was held at this time because of the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal. Priyanka Gandhi further stated in Parliament that Vande Mataram is not just a

sentiment, but a symbol of the strength and morality of the country's freedom struggle. She said that this song forced even the British Empire to surrender. Priyanka said that the mere mention of Vande Mataram evokes memo-

ries and courage of the freedom struggle. Amidst the ongoing debate on Vande Mataram in Parliament, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi questioned the need for it. She said that this song has been a part of the nation's soul.

Babri Masjid issue in Bengal part of a well-planned strategy: Giriraj

New Delhi

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh said that the Babri Masjid issue in West Bengal is part of a deliberate strategy. Singh made this statement in response to a media question on Monday in the Parliament House complex. Responding to the question of suspended Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir laying the foundation stone for the Babri Masjid in West Bengal,

the Union Minister said, "This entire scheme was orchestrated not by Humayun Kabir, but by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. She is deliberately creating controversy in the name of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. This Babri Masjid issue has been raised as part of a well-planned strategy." He warned that Mamata Banerjee will face opposition and punishment not only in Bengal but across the country for this act.

Giving photocopies of Aadhaar will be stopped

New Delhi

You need to check into a hotel, open a bank account, take out a loan, enroll your children in school or college, etc. Not only this, but you also need an Aadhaar card for many other purposes. Aadhaar cards are issued for Indian citizens by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). The Aadhaar card contains your biometric and demographic information, such as name, address, date of birth, and fingerprints. Amidst all this, you may have



noticed, or you may have done it yourself: you provide a photocopy of your Aadhaar card to check into a hotel or at many other places. But this is about to stop, as the UIDAI may soon implement a new rule regarding this. So let's find out about this new rule. What does

the new rule say? In fact, the practice of providing a photocopy of your Aadhaar card will soon be discontinued, as the Aadhaar agency is introducing a new rule that will prevent anyone from taking or storing a physical photocopy of your Aadhaar card. Currently, in many

places, people are required to provide a photocopy of their Aadhaar card, which has been deemed illegal by the UIDAI. The government believes that paper-based Aadhaar card verification is not only against the law but also poses a significant threat to cardholders' privacy. Therefore, this new rule is being introduced.... UIDAI has approved a new framework for this new rule, after which any organization wishing to perform offline Aadhaar verification will first have to register.

Our true strength lies in the soil of our villages: Textiles Minister

New Delhi

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh said on Monday that our true strength lies in the soil of our villages, which is nurtured by the skills of artisans and the heritage of ancient art. Singh made this statement at the launch of the National Handicrafts Week, which began today. The main objectives of this special week are to boost the economy, preserve art,

honor women power, and respect and promote India's rich handicraft heritage. He wrote in an X-post, "This week is dedicated to celebrating the unique skills of Indian artisans, centuries-old traditions, and the country's cultural identity. All citizens should celebrate this week as 'Handmade India' and prioritize products made by artisans in their lives, home decor, and upcoming festivals."

CM Yogi met the citizens who came for Janta Darshan

Lucknow

Despite his busy schedule, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a public meeting on Monday. For the welfare of every section of the state, Chief Minister Yogi directly addresses the public through public meetings. Through this, he listens to everyone's problems and resolves them. In this vein, CM Yogi met every citizen who came to the public meeting with their grievances on Monday.



He listened to their concerns and directed officials to resolve them. The Chief Minister said, "You can go home with peace of mind; every problem will be resolved appropriately. "Request for Financial Assistance Forty-two people

attended the public meeting with their concerns. Five of them submitted applications to the Chief Minister, requesting financial assistance for treatment. The Chief Minister asked the hospital to prepare an estimate. Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath stated that the government has been providing medical assistance since the very first day. Lack of funds will not affect anyone's treatment. The government will always stand by anyone in need in the state who needs financial assistance for treatment. Instructions for action on complaints regarding police, housing, and illegal occupation People also reached Janta Darshan with complaints regarding police .

Court refuses urgent hearing on IndiGo's recent crisis

New Delhi

The Supreme Court has refused to grant an urgent hearing to a petition seeking intervention in the matter of inconvenience caused to millions of passengers due to the cancellation of a large number of IndiGo flights. A lawyer mentioned the matter before the Chief Justice, requesting an early hearing. Chief Justice Surya Kant said that the Government of India has already taken cognizance of the matter. Timely action has been taken. Let the government handle it. There is no need for an urgent hearing in this matter.

C-130J Super Hercules aircraft to be repaired in India

New Delhi

Tata Advanced Systems and Lockheed Martin will establish a defense maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility for C-130J Super Hercules aircraft in India. This facility will build on the two companies' long-standing industrial partnership, significantly enhancing domestic support for the Indian Air Force, while also providing opportunities for



greater regional and global collaboration. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026, and the first aircraft is expected to be delivered for MRO opera-

tions in early 2027. The two companies announced this on Monday in Bengaluru, following a ground-breaking ceremony attended by senior Air Force officials.

Briefs

BENGALURU

Karnataka vows to bring back IPL

Despite recommendations by a judicial commission not to hold any event at the Chinnaswamy Stadium until crowd control measures were put in place, both Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and newly elected Karnataka State Cricket Association President Venkatesh Prasad have vowed to bring back IPL and International matches.

KOLKATA

IndiGO: Didi slams BJP government

West Bengal CM Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slammed BJP and mentioned that the saffron camp only knows how to capture institutions. "BJP is not bothered about the country's matters and also doesn't care for the people. We care for the people. The BJP government is only concerned about elections and how to capture votes, the Election Commission, the EVMs and the agencies."

CHANDIGARH

Juvenile among 6 held with pistols

Punjab police on Monday dismantled a Pakistan-operated cross-border arms smuggling module with the arrest of its six operatives, including a juvenile, and recovered six sophisticated pistols from their possession in Amritsar. Stating that the accused have been identified as Gurbir Singh alias Sonu, Gurpreet Singh alias Gopa, Gorka Singh alias Gora, Rajwinder Singh alias Raju, all residents of Tarn Taran; Jaspal Singh alias Jass, a resident of Amritsar and a 16-years-old juvenile, Director General of Police (DGP), Punjab, Gaurav Yadav.

KOLKATA

AIMIM rules out tie-up with Kabir

The AIMIM on Monday ruled out any electoral understanding with suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir, dismissing his overtures as politically suspect and ideologically incompatible, days after his controversial mosque foundation ceremony in West Bengal's Murshidabad district.

PATNA

Man drags stretcher with mom's body

Three men and a woman were seen pushing a stretcher with a body on it in the dead of night in Bihar's Nawada district. The body, wrapped in a pink blanket, was the mother of one of the men pushing the stretcher. He had to drag her body for nearly two kilometres from a health centre to his home after he was allegedly denied an ambulance.

LUCKNOW

UP likely to remove 3 cr names in SIR

More than three crore names are expected to be removed from the voter list in Uttar Pradesh under the ongoing Special Intensive Revision campaign. Reports from several districts indicate that over 20% of voters are falling under the categories of absent, shifted, duplicate or deceased.

SAFFRON ARSENAL | Trinamool accused of indulging in 'cultural outrage' to deflect attention from 'a decade of systemic defilement of Bengal's heritage'**TMC-BJP brouhaha rocks Parl**

The TMC, it seemed, was waiting for "it" to happen. Even as PM Narendra Modi referred to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay as "Bankim da", the TMC jumped into the "ring" and keeping the forthcoming poll season in mind, its party MPs turned on the rhetoric of "Bohiragoto" (outsider tag) on the Saffron party, an issue which was highly in circulation during the 2021 Assembly polls in West Bengal



TMC MPs Mahua Moitra, Dola Sen and others protest over pending Central dues to West Bengal, in New Delhi

Will implement FDTL, says Aviation Minister

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

NEW DELHI

With the Opposition attacking the Centre in Parliament on Monday over the "unprecedented crisis" involving Indigo airlines, Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu claimed that the crisis occurred due to problems in the "crew rostering and internal planning systems" of the airlines and not due to the aircraft maintenance and scheduling system.

He added that "the government has capped fares and created four pricing slabs, taking strict action against non-compliance."

On the implementation of the Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL), the Minister said the Centre was ensuring that it is "properly implemented and there has been no compromise on that front."

BJP'S TURN

Asserting that the BJP was "a party of Bengal", Malviya cited Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee as a true son of Bengal's soil and said over 2.3 crore Bengalis had voted for the BJP in the 2024 elections. "Are they aliens too?" he asked, adding that "the real impostors are those who quote Tagore on stage while running a regime defined by recruitment scams, cut-money and communal appeasement."

GROTESQUELY ALIEN

Accusing BJP of being "grotesquely alien" to Bengal's cultural consciousness...TMC alleged it had repeatedly betrayed ignorance while invoking Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

and said the latest controversy followed backlash over alleged attempt to ban Vande Mataram in Rajya Sabha. TMC said referring to Chattopadhyay as "Bankim da" was a "clumsy, performative display of cultural cosplay" and "Bengal does not casually slap suffix 'da' onto figures it venerates".

MAMATA SPEAK

"Vande Mataram originated from Bengal just like our National Anthem. I also heard that some individuals in the BJP do not like Netaji, Gandhiji and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Who exactly do they like? How come such people reach the forefront when they do not even know the History of India? Are they aware of Bengal's contribution?"

Parl clears bill to levy cess on pan masala mfg units

NEW DELHI

Parliament on Monday approved a bill seeking cess on manufacturing units of pan masala to augment expenditure on national security and public health.

The Rajya Sabha returned the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025, to the Lok Sabha. The

bill was approved by the Lower House on Friday. The cess will be over and above the GST, and will be levied on the production capacity of machines in pan masala manufacturing factories.

Replying to the debate on the bill, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the cess is intended to serve the cost of national and health security.

SIDELIGHTS**'100-metre criteria for Aravali hills poses risks'**

Congress party's Rajya Sabha member Ajay Maken on Monday warned that the 100-metre criteria to define the Aravali hills and ranges risks destroying the green wall which prevents northern and northwestern India from turning into a desert.

8 cr vacancies mobilised on NCS portal: Mandaviya

Minister for Labour and Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya, informed Parliament on Monday that 8.17 crore vacancies have been mobilised for all the job-seekers (including women, SC/ST and EWS) on the government's National Career Service (NCS) portal till November 20 this year. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister also stated that as on November 20, more than 6.02 crore jobseekers, (including women, SC/ST and EWS categories), and more than 54.27 lakh employers are registered on NCS portal since inception.

Congress calls PM Modi a 'master distortian'

The Congress on Monday dubbed Prime Minister Narendra Modi "master distortian" after he accused the party of breaking the national song Vande Mataram into pieces, and demanded that he apologise for "insulting" the country's founding fathers, including Rabindranath Tagore. The party also slammed the prime minister for accusing Jawaharlal Nehru of following appeasement politics. "The Master Distortian has repeated his insult of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore today in Parliament," AICC general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

Citizens, not illegal migrants, have right to resources: Yogi

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that the citizens of the state have the first right over public resources and not illegal migrants. In a letter addressed to the people of Uttar Pradesh, he referred to a recent Supreme Court observation that the country cannot lay out a red carpet for infiltrators and asserted that such elements would not be accepted at any cost.

Yogi Adityanath wrote that the state government has launched strict and decisive action against Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals staying

illegally in Uttar Pradesh. He said that security of the state, social balance and a strong law and order system remain the highest priorities of his administration.

All urban local bodies have been instructed to identify suspected foreign nationals and prepare lists. He said that illegal occupants put a burden on public resources and hamper welfare benefits meant for the poor. A special document verification campaign is underway to detect infiltrators and send them to detention centres for further legal action. Detention facilities are being established in every division to support the process.

Absconding club owner 'appears' on Instagram

Relatives stand around funeral pyres during the cremation of victims of the Goa nightclub fire at Nigam Bodh Ghat Crematorium in New Delhi on Monday

PANAJI

Saurabh Luthra, one of the owners of the North Goa nightclub where a Saturday blaze claimed the lives of 25 people, used social media on Monday to express "profound grief" and vowed to provide assistance, support and cooperation to the victims' families in "every possible form".

The social media post comes at a time when police teams have been sent from Goa to Delhi to arrest the management of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' club, located at North Goa's Arpora area.

Saurabh has been named in the FIR related to the fire along with co-owner Gaurav Luthra.

"The management expresses profound grief and is deeply shaken by the tragic loss of lives resulting from the unfortunate incident at Birch," the owner said in his post on Instagram.

He said the management further affirms that it shall extend every possible "form of assistance, support and cooperation to the bereaved and affected individuals, as they navigate through this period of immense anguish and adversity."

Punjab Cong suspends Navjot Kaur Sidhu

CHANDIGARH

Navjot Kaur Sidhu, former Punjab legislator and wife of cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu, a former Punjab Congress chief, was suspended from the primary membership of the Congress on Monday, days after she reportedly remarked that "one who gives a suitcase of Rs 500 crore becomes the chief minister".

The announcement about her suspension came from state party chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring on X in which he shared the party's official letter about it.

Her remark had whipped up a political controversy on Saturday when she reportedly alleged that "one who gives a suitcase of Rs 500 crore becomes the chief minister". She stated this while replying to a question during her interaction with newsmen after meeting Punjab governor Gulab Chand Kataria over the issue of the law-and-order situation in the state.

The said comment was lapped up by the rival political parties which targeted the



Congress over its "internal functioning" ahead of the 2027 assembly polls.

However, sources held that the party took a serious note of her remarks which seemed to be aimed at the state leadership with the state rural polls - Zila parishad and Panchayat Samiti election - being around the corner.

This despite her statements on Sunday that she was shocked to see the twist given to a straight comment. Stating that their Congress party had never demanded anything from them and that on being asked about Navjot becoming a chief minister face from any other party, she had stated that they did not have money to offer for a CM post.

She was responding to a question on Navjot Singh Sidhu's return to active police when she also said that he would only contest again if the party declared him its CM face for 2027.

Trai rejects DoT view to hike satcom spectrum charge to 5%

NEW DELHI

Telecom regulator Trai on Monday rejected the Department of Telecom's view, suggesting a 5 per cent annual spectrum fee to be charged from satcom (satellite communications) players instead of 4 per cent, and let go of a Rs 500 fee per connection in urban areas.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) sought some changes in the recommendation of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on satellite communications spectrum allocation methodology and charges for

companies such as Elon Musk-led Starlink, Bharti Group-backed Eutelsat OneWeb, and Jio SES that are in fray to start their services in the country.

The DoT had asked Trai to reconsider its recommendation to levy a 4 per cent annual spectrum charge, and instead consider the idea of levying a 5 per cent annual spectrum charge with a provision of 1 per cent discount if 5 per cent customers of the company enrolled in a year are from tough terrains in border and remote hilly area, and let go Rs 500 per customer charge if they meet the target.

"...the Authority reiterates

its recommendations... However, the Government may adopt any additional schemes to take advantage of FSS (fixed satellite services) for faster and economical expansion of broadband services in identified hard-to-connect areas, including but not limited to hills, border areas and islands, particularly addressing affordability of user terminals," Trai said.

Trai has said that if DoT's views are adopted to encourage satellite connections in border and tough terrains, then a lot of people in rural areas will be left behind in accessing satellite connectivity.

₹1.3 cr raised so far for 'Babri Masjid' in WB

KOLKATA

Donation boxes kept for the proposed Babri Masjid-style mosque by suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir in West Bengal's Murshidabad district are nearly full, with cash-counting machines whirring through the night as donations continue to pour in both physically and online.

At least Rs 37.33 lakh in

cash has been counted so far from four donation boxes and one sack, while online contributions through QR codes have touched Rs 93 lakh, taking the total past Rs 1.30 crore with seven more sealed boxes yet to be opened, people close to Kabir said on Monday.

Eleven large stainless steel donation boxes were placed at the venue, with Kabir appealing for public contributions for the mosque's

construction.

Since then, supporters have continued to arrive with cash and even bricks for the structure, locals said. Cash-counting began at 7 pm on Sunday and continued till midnight, carried out by a team of 30 people using special machines.

The remaining seven boxes are scheduled to be opened from 5 pm on Monday, with the same team overseeing the process. To

ensure transparency, the counting was live-streamed, Kabir said.

Kabir claimed the response had "exceeded all expectations", with donations allegedly also coming in from outside India.

Arrangements are being made to shift the collected money to a secured room with CCTV surveillance, and discussions are underway with banks regarding its safe handling, they added.

PARIVARVAD? JD(U) now wants Nitish's 'son rise'

PATNA

Bihar chief minister and JD (U) president Nitish Kumar has been a harsh critic of dynastic politics from the beginning but now he is caught in a piquant situation as his party workers' demand for his son joining the party is getting louder day by day.

The fresh signs of it



appeared on Monday when the JD (U) workers erected posters featuring Nitish and his son Nishant. The posters

read, "Nitish ka sevak... Nishant ki mang... Ab party ki sambhalen Nishant Bhai. (Nitish's followers demand Nishant... Now Nishant Bhai should take command of the party)." These posters congratulate Nitish on being sworn in as chief minister for a historic 10th time and contend that Nishant is the future leader of the JD (U).



District Magistrate holds meeting with representatives of recognized national and state political parties regarding the Special Intensive Revision Program

Prayagraj

District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma held a meeting with representatives of recognized national and state political parties in the Sangam Auditorium on Monday regarding the Special Intensive Revision Program of electoral rolls for Assembly constituencies. He reported that approximately 91.37 percent of voter enumeration forms have been collected and digitized by BLOs so far. He informed the political party representatives about the progress of the Assembly-wise SIR and informed them that voters who are not found during the door-to-door survey, are deceased, are duplicates, have completely moved, or are refusing to return the enumeration forms are being verified and included in the ASD list prepared by the respective BLOs. The updated



ASD list is being shared daily with representatives appointed by political parties and BLAs, booth-wise. The ASD list includes the voter's serial number, EPIC number, name, and the reason for inclusion. He stated that if a voter is incorrectly marked in the updated ASD list by the BLO, the objection should be submitted to the concerned BLO or ERO, so that the voter's name can be rolled back. He urged political party representatives to complete and submit the remaining forms as soon as possible, without waiting for the December 11th deadline, so that the remaining voters do not face any technical or other problems in the final days. The

District Magistrate requested the political party representatives' cooperation. He directed all political party representatives to activate their booth-level agents to ensure the remaining voter forms are filled and provided to the BLOs. The District Magistrate said that the work of SIR is very important, it has to be completed on priority basis within the stipulated time period. He told the voters that if you are facing any difficulty in filling your form, then you can contact your BLO and call center number 1950 and 0532-2644024. Apart from this, the facility of filling the form is also available online at <https://voters.eci.gov.in/>.

Grand Inauguration of MP Sports Competition with Marathon Run in Etah

Etah

The grand inauguration of the MP Sports Competition was held on Saturday with the flag-off of a marathon race and ceremonial lighting of the torch. The event was organized by the District Sports Office, Etah, under the aegis of the Government of Uttar Pradesh Lucknow, under the guidance of District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh and the supervision of Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Satyaprakash. The competition was formally inaugurated by the Convenor of the MP Sports Competition and Member of Parliament Naveen Jain. Prominent dignitaries present as chief guests included BJP District President Pramod Gupta, Sadar MLA Etah Vipin Verma David, former District President Dinesh Vashishtha and Chairperson of Etah Municipal Council, Sudha Gupta. The chief guests formally launched the Kabaddi and Volleyball competitions after an interaction with participating teams. Chief Development Officer Dr. Nagendra Narayan Mishra, District Youth Welfare Officer and Deputy Sports Officer hon-



ored the MP and other guests with bouquets, shawls and mementos. The event was also attended by the District Inspector of Schools, Regional Youth Welfare Officer and the Principal of Avinashi Sahay Inter College. In the 5-kilometre marathon, 80 boys and 25 girls participated. In the boys category, Naveen, Govind, Sonu Rajput, Vivek, Akash and Aakash emerged as winners, while in the girls category, Jyoti, Ronak Yadav, Dolly, Rani, Ujala and Gauri secured top positions. In Boys Kabaddi (Senior category), eight teams participated with Etah Yodha winning the final 13-03 against DAV Sakit, which finished as runner-up. In the Junior category, 12 teams and in the Sub-Junior category, 18 teams participated with semifinals and finals scheduled for December 7, 2025. In Girls Kabaddi (Senior category), six teams competed, where Rashtriya Inter College,

Mirhchi defeated S. Adam World School 23-14 to claim the title. In the Junior category, Rashtriya Inter College, Mirhchi won 29-09 against Ganesh Inter College, Kasganj. In the Sub-Junior category, Kendriya Vidyalaya defeated Kasturba Gandhi, Marhara 9-7 to win the title. In Boys Volleyball (Senior category), K.A Inter College, Kasganj emerged winners, while U.B.G.H Academy, Kasganj finished as runners-up. In the Junior category, Marhara Club won the title, while K.A Inter College, Kasganj secured second place. In the Sub-Junior category, Q.H Inter College, Patiali won the final, while the Stadium team finished as runners-up. In Girls Volleyball (Senior category), Stadium, Etah emerged champions and Sangam Club, Etah finished as runners-up. In the Junior category, S.V.M Inter College won the title, while Brightland School.

Tight Security Arrangements as SSP Leads Extensive Flag March in Aliganj



Aliganj

With the aim of maintaining a strong law and order situation in the district, the police administration remains on high alert. As part of these preventive measures, an extensive foot flag march was conducted in the Aliganj area under the directions of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shyam Narayan Singh. The SSP personally flagged off the march from Kotwali Aliganj and carried out an on-ground inspection of security arrangements. The flag march passed through major routes of the town including Dak Bungalow, Gandhi Chauraha and Nagla Padav. During the march, the SSP closely reviewed the deployment of police personnel, the condition of security points and preparedness in crowded areas. He also inspected the functioning of CCTV cameras installed along the route and issued strict instructions to ensure that all cameras remain fully operational at all times. Emphasizing heightened vigilance ahead of December 6, the SSP directed police personnel to intensify patrolling and made it clear that any negligence in duty would not be tolerated. He further instructed officials to maintain special surveillance in sensitive areas and ensure swift action in case of any untoward incident. The flag march witnessed the presence of Circle Officer Aliganj Nitish Kumar Garg, Kotwali Aliganj In-charge Vipin Kumar, Jethara Police Station In-charge Ritesh Thakur, Jasrathpur Station House Officer Vijay Singh.

Grand Inauguration of “Tejas-3” Annual Sports Meet at TD Public School, Aliganj

Etah

The three-day annual sports meet “Tejas-3” commenced with great enthusiasm and vibrant energy at TD Public School, Aliganj, on Friday. The event, scheduled from December 6 to December 8 was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Jagmohan Gupta, through a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The programme began with a warm welcome by the students, who presented a melodious welcome song and a traditional Ganesh Vandana, followed by captivating cultural performances that delighted the guests and parents alike. The Chief



Guest was felicitated with a bouquet by School Manager Vivek Yadav and Principal K.C. Kumavat. In his address, SDM Jagmohan Gupta highlighted the importance of sports in students' lives, stating that sports are essential not only for physical development but also for nurturing discipline, teamwork and self-

confidence. He encouraged students to maintain a healthy balance between sports and academics. On the first day of the competition, the school campus witnessed an electrifying sporting atmosphere. Students from Classes 4 to 11 participated in a wide range of events including Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Volleyball,

Badminton, Shot Put, Long Jump, Chess and sprint races of 50, 100 and 200 meters. The participants displayed remarkable enthusiasm, energy and competitive spirit. Special sports events were organized for younger children as well.

For Nursery to LKG students, Frog Race, Balloon Race, Sack Race, Musical Chair and 50-meter race were conducted, filling the campus with laughter and joy. Similarly, students from UKG to Class 1 participated in Lemon Race, Frog Race, Sack Race, Balloon Race, Musical Chair and 50-meter race, showcasing their coordination and excitement.

Instructions given to BLOs to expedite work: ADM City Hiralal Saini

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Tharwai. On Sunday, ADM City Hiralal Saini inspected several schools to expedite SIR work. He visited Primary School Jagdishpur Pure Chanda and conducted a detailed review of the work progress. During the inspection, 94 percent of the work was completed at booth number 374, 82 percent at booth number 375, and 96 percent at booth number 376. He thoroughly examined the work by



asking the BLOs present for details and directed them to complete the pending tasks promptly. He stated that negligence of any kind would not be tolerated in the special revision campaign and directed that the work be com-

pleted within the deadline at all costs. Tehsildar Soraon Rajesh Kumar Pal, Headmaster Atul Kumar Maurya, Karuna Pandey, Supervisor Subhash Patel, and all the staff were present on the occasion.

The delegation made a cultural and educational tour of Banaras Hindu University



Varanasi

Delegates from the Kashi Tamil Sangamam 4.0 conducted a cultural and educational tour of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University, on Saturday. They explored the rich heritage of South Indian art and culture, particularly the renowned Chola bronzes, the magnificent Nataraja statue and the exquisite crafts tradition of South India. Delegates also visited the Malaviya Gallery, where they studied rare records,

photographs and artifacts related to the life, work and national contributions of Madan Mohan Malaviya. The gallery introduced them to the founding of Banaras Hindu University, its spirit and the visionary work of the great man. The delegates also visited the special exhibition "Ganga-Kaveri Sampravah" currently being organised.

He visited the Banaras Hindu University, where he studied rare archives, photographs and arti-

facts related to the life, work and national contributions of Madan Mohan Malaviya. This gallery introduced him to the founding, spirit and visionary work of the great man. Additionally, they witnessed the rich textile and weaving traditions of Kashi and Tamil Nadu. The beautiful Gandaberunda sculpture on display in a Banarasi sari further brought to life the shared artistic heritage of North and South India. The entire tour was an inspiring and experience of art.

Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas Held Across All Three Tehsils of Etah District

Etah

In accordance with the directives of the state government, Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas was organized on the first Saturday of the month across all three tehsils of Etah district—Sadar Etah, Aliganj and Jalesar. The main programme at Tehsil Sadar Etah was presided over by District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh. Additional Commissioner (Judicial), Aligarh Division, B.K. Singh and Additional District Magistrate (Finance & Revenue) Lalita Prasad Shakya were also present on the occasion. During the programme, public grievances related to various departments were heard seriously and concerned officials were directed to ensure quality and time-bound disposal as per government guidelines. The District Magistrate clearly instructed that no complaint should remain pending beyond the prescribed time limit. He emphasized that officers



must personally visit the sites to assess the situation and ensure effective resolution so that complainants are fully satisfied. He further informed that continuous feedback is being taken directly from complainants at the government level through telephone calls. The District Magistrate directed Lekhpals, beat constables and Panchayat Secretaries to regularly visit villages and resolve problems at the local level itself. He warned that strict action would be taken against any official found negligent in this responsibility. He also stressed accelerating development works in rural areas and strengthening sanitation arrangements. Keeping in view the increasing cold weather, District Magistrate Prem Ranjan Singh and

Additional Commissioner (Judicial) B.K. Singh distributed blankets to needy persons in the tehsil parisar. Instructions were issued to ensure regular operation of bonfires at various locations in the district for protection against cold waves, timely distribution of blankets to the needy and proper management of night shelters. Urban local bodies were directed to regularly monitor these arrangements. A total of 13 complaints were received at Tehsil Sadar, out of which two were resolved on the spot. At Tehsil Jalesar, seven complaints were received with one disposed of immediately. Similarly, at Tehsil Aliganj, 22 complaints were registered, of which five were resolved on the spot.

Pushpa Yadav category and represent Uttar Pradesh on wrestling team

Varanasi

Selection trials for the Senior Women and Men National Championships were held in Nandini Nagar on Saturday. The Uttar Pradesh team comprises 10 female wrestlers representing Uttar Pradesh. Mansi Yadav, a resident of Varanasi, secured a spot in the 55 kg category. Freedom Yadav was selected in the 65 kg category. Kashish Yadav in the 62 kg category and Pushpa Yadav in the 59 kg category will represent Uttar Pradesh on the Uttar Pradesh wrestling team. On being selected in the Uttar Pradesh wrestling team, National President of Indian Wrestling Association Sanjay Singh "Bablu", President of Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Association Karan Association The official inspected the wrestling of all the wrestlers and the team.

Information

It is informed to the general public that the applicant's educational certificate mentions Rudra Narayan, son of Ramsevak Mishra, which is correct and true. However, the applicant's Aadhaar number, 734257846295, indicates the applicant's name as Rakesh Kumar Mishra, son of Ramsevak Mishra, which is incorrect. The applicant should be known and registered as Rudra Narayan, son of Ramsevak Mishra.

Applicant
Rudra Narayan, son of Ramsevak Mishra
Village Dharwan, Pura Post, Purba Nara, Tehsil Soraon, District Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

Editorial

Voter turnout during Phase 4?

Temperatures are rising and it is amid this unpleasant weather that India is heading to the second phase of its general elections. The Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases, with the counting of votes on 4 June. Extreme heat is being blamed for the low voter turnout in the first phase of polling on 19 April when 102 Lok Sabha seats spread across 21 states and Union Territories voted. A dip of 4.4 per cent was recorded in these seats, as the voter turnout stood at 65.5 per cent this year from 69.9 per cent in the 2019 general elections. As 13 states and Union Territories go to polls on 26 April in the second phase, will the heatwave impact the voter turnout?

Which states are going to poll?

The 4th phase of polling will cover 89 constituencies in 12 states and one Union Territory. Kerala's all 20 Lok Sabha seats, 14 in Karnataka, 13 in Rajasthan, eight seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, seven in Madhya Pradesh, five each in Assam and Bihar, three each in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh and one each in Tripura, Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir.

Are there heatwave predictions?

There is a heatwave warning for parts of four states – West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka – going to polls in the second phase. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, hot and humid weather is expected in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Konkan, Goa, Coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe. “Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions likely to prevail in some pockets over Gangetic West Bengal and in isolated pockets over Odisha; heatwave conditions in isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam, Rayalaseema, Telangana and interior Karnataka,” as per the IMD. Speaking to NDTV, Dr Naresh Kumar, senior scientist at the IMD, said that the weather agency has issued a red alert for West Bengal for the next three days.

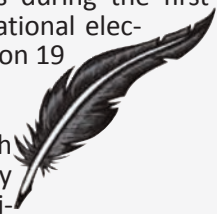
“Temperatures in Bihar will exceed 40 degrees Celsius. A heatwave is expected in eastern Uttar Pradesh after 24 hours and in western Uttar Pradesh after two days. The temperature will remain hot and humid in Kerala too,” he said. The IMD previously warned that heatwaves lasting 10 to 20 days, unlike the normal four to eight days, are expected between April and June. Heatwaves lasting 10 to 20 days, unlike the normal four to eight days, are expected between April and June. AP File Photo Gujarat, central Maharashtra and north Karnataka are most vulnerable to heatwaves, followed by Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, north Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, as per the IMD.

What is the EC doing?

A day back, the IMD Director General, Mrutunjay Mohapatra, assured the Election Commission of India (ECI) that heatwave is not a major concern for the second phase of elections. The ECI Monday (22 April) formed a task force consisting of officials from the IMD, the poll body, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to assess the impact of heatwave and humidity five days before each phase of polling. This came after the election commission held a meeting with the IMD and representatives of the Union Health Ministry to comprehend the developing weather situation and discuss mitigation measures. India general elections: People crowd a polling booth to vote just before the polling ends during the first round of polling of India's national election in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on 19 April 2024.

AP File Photo

The EC has asked the health ministry to issue “necessary instructions to health authorities in states to prepare for and extend assistance.



The remarkable rise of Biharis in Delhi: From cheap labour to influential vote-bank



The emergence of the Purvanchalis/Biharis as the most influential electoral community is a story of a long journey of struggle and perseverance. During the watershed Assembly election in Delhi in 2013, the then Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit was looking forward to a fourth term. The confidence emanated from the development overhaul she carried out during the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Though the Congress government at the Centre was mired in allegations of corruption, Dikshit felt assured of steering clear of it. However, then Congress member of Lok Sabha from West Delhi, Mahabal Mishra, had warned Dikshit about an impending defeat and had suggested to her that she could gamble by giving a large chunk of tickets to the party workers from Purvanchal (migrants from east UP and Bihar). Dikshit, who was never comfortable with Mishra, saw it as a ruse on the part of the Purvanchali leader to create a claim for himself as a rival to her. As the results came out, she was dismayed that her development drive was drowned in the cacophony let loose by the Anna Hazare movement, whose product is the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The arrival of Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP marked the beginning of a new

genre of politics. During the past three decades, Delhi has undergone a deep demographic change. The migrants arriving in the city, which is North India's El Dorado, have given a new character to its social and cultural life. From being poor tenants in the unauthorised colonies, they are now proud holders of plots but have been fighting with successive governments for the assertion of their civic rights. Their struggle has not been limited to the recognition of their housing plots. They eke out a living fighting various forces of corruption aka government. The Congress and the BJP all those years instead of holding their hand depended on poll malpractices, exploiting their poverty to get their mandate. The migrants from the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and some districts of Madhya Pradesh bordering these areas for

long looked for a role in the politics of the national capital. When Kejriwal, during the campaign in 2015, said to accept liquor and money from the Congress and the BJP but vote for him, he showed that he had his ear to the ground. In that poll, the AAP had put up Purvanchali candidates in 15 out of 70 seats and they all romped home. Today, Mahabal Mishra is AAP's candidate from West Delhi. His son Vinay is an AAP MLA from their traditional Dwarka seat. For the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, for which voting is scheduled in Delhi on May 26, the BJP has fielded one Bihari candidate Manoj Tiwari, the sitting MP from the North East Delhi seat. AAP-Congress has fielded three Biharis – Kanhaiya Kumar from North East Delhi, Somnath Bharti from the New Delhi seat and the veteran Mahabal Mishra from the West Delhi seat.

While Kanhaiya Kumar and Manoj Tiwari are imports into the capital's politics, Mahabal Mishra and Somnath Bharti have grown politically in the national capital. One may recall that Mahabal Mishra was the first Bihari to win an electoral battle, winning a seat as a corporator from Nasirpur in Outer Delhi in 1996.

Though before him, a Purvanchali, Lal Bihari Tiwari had won Assembly polls from the East Delhi seat of Ghonda and become a minister in the state BJP government. Later, Tiwari won three consecutive Lok Sabha polls in 1997 (bypoll), 1998 and 1999. However, there is a marked difference in the politics of Tiwari and the present-day Bihari politicians in the capital – from meek submission to that of aggressive assertion. According to the data released by the Election Commission, Delhi has a total of 1,47,42,145 voters – 79,98,652 male, 67,42,330 female and 1163 from the third gender. This is up by about 6.5 per cent from 1,38,46,482 in 2019. According to estimates, 33.5 per cent of the total 1.48 crore voters across the seven Lok Sabha constituencies are Purvanchalis. Their presence varies from 24 per cent in Chandni Chowk to 41 per cent in East Delhi. On the

North East Delhi seat, they constitute 40 per cent of the votes, while they account for 37 per cent of votes in New Delhi, 34 per cent in West Delhi, 31 per cent in North West Delhi and 27 per cent in South Delhi. Today, there isn't a constituency in Delhi where the 'Chhath' festival of Bihar is not celebrated.

But will the Biharis vote as a bloc or would have ideological preferences depending on their allegiance in the home state? This is something which the political parties, especially the BJP, would be accountable for. There are two other crucial seats – New Delhi and West Delhi, where the BJP needs to crack the Bihari pot to sail through.

The selection of Bihari candidates for the Lok Sabha polls from Delhi by both the major formations – Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party–Congress alliance clearly indicate that Purvanchalis, rather Biharis, have become a major political entity in the national capital. Today, they are not just at par but more influential than other major electoral blocks like that of Punjabis, Vaishyas, Gujjars, Jats and minorities. Numerically, the two formations together have fielded two Vaishyas, two Gujjars, two Punjabis, one Jat, three Scheduled Caste (two from reserved seats).

Why Iran, Israel avoided crossing red lines

Rewriting the rules of engagement is challenging, but undoubtedly both Iran and Israel have made a symbolic statement and managed the escalation cycle wherein they have played to the gallery as far as their domestic audience is concerned. On April 14, Iran launched its first direct military offensive against Israel. The attack consisted of over 300 Shahed drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles. The launch was detected immediately, and the Israeli forces on high alert had approximately two hours of response time before the drones reached Israeli airspace.

The strike was then taken apart as it moved across the Middle East by members of the US-led Middle East Air Defence Alliance, which included jets from the RAF, the Jordanian Air

Forces, and the US Air Force. Most of the surviving munitions were then intercepted by Israel's Air Defence Systems, which include the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow 2 and 3. At least five penetrated through these defences and struck targets in and around an Nevatim Air Base in the Negev Desert. These five hits resulted in no casualties and caused only structural damage. The world was on edge, and there was danger that a threatened Israeli retaliation would result in a regional, if not wider, conflict. Crude prices spiked, markets dropped across the globe, and gold reached new heights. For India, one of the major dangers of escalation was the blocking of the Straits of Hormuz, as it would result in disruption of both crude and

natural gas. The Israeli reaction took place within the week. On April 19, they struck a military airbase near the city of Isfahan, and Iranian officials also claimed to have shot down small drones near the northern city of Tabriz, but this was downplayed. Isfahan Province, in the centre of Iran, is home to significant Iranian military infrastructure, including a large air base, a major missile production complex, and nuclear facilities. As per reports in the Jerusalem Post, the Israelis were targeting an air defence radar site near Isfahan that's part of the protection of the Natanz nuclear facility. The choreography of missile strikes once again ensured that there were no casualties and, moreover, no targeting of Iranian nuclear facilities.

‘Mind your own democracy’

When prejudiced opinion posts masquerade as journalism, it violates one of the four foundational pillars of democracy. As mainstream media is pivotal in shaping popular perceptions and helps the voter make informed choices in an election year, much of the Western observers' anti-India blitzkrieg must be discounted by the discerning voter due to its inherent bias and colonial mindset. A free, fair and thriving multiparty democracy is at work at the scale of 970 million, as Indians ready to exercise their franchise in the general elections. Stunningly ignoramus and half-informed foreign scribes that write for global media outlets, West's India watchers, activists and NGOs are on overdrive to undermine the integrity of the Indian democratic process.

The woke brigade of journals who anoint themselves as upholders of liberal democracy are completely disconnected from the vox populi of the voting nation. Their feedback loops are through proxy, based on what they hear and perceive, and not by touring the expansive electoral terrain. The voter-on-the ground, primarily comprising rural and urban middle classes, neither read the likes of The Economist, New York Times, UK Guardian, Chatham House, Le Monde France, La Croix International Catholic News etc., nor hear the views on BBC, CNN or Bloomberg. Besides, in a country with 80 per cent of the population comprising Hindus, the resurgence of Hindu nationalism renders the opinions of the elitist Western collective as redundant and powerless to influence or impact India's electoral outcomes. For too long, international institutions of the West have held sway in determining the pecking order of 170 nations, whether it is in determining their sovereign credit ratings or democratic credentials. In proportion to India's growing heft, and being the

largest democracy, it is a step in the right direction that India has set in motion the process of redefining the codes for an alternative 'Global Standard for Elections', and creating its own metrics of gauging the democracy ratings index in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation. Much has transformed during Modi's decadal tenure. India has indeed emerged as the nation of the decade, and a critical player in just about every issue pivotal to playing peace-maker on geo-political tensions, or issues facing the planet. India's inclusive economic growth under Modi and its expanding global ascendance has made it a formidable global power. It is therefore no surprise that Modi as the front runner is poised for a successive third term, and is expected to return in a stronger avatar in 2024. Should that happen, the pace of economic reforms and saturation of flagship schemes is expected to accelerate. An industrial prime minister helming the fifth largest economy is an intimidating prospect for the US and Western nations, as the more the axis of economic power steadily shifts towards India, one expects negative news blitzes from foreign soil to further intensify.

Why West fears a stronger India

This is exactly what the Western mainstream media in cahoots with India's opposition parties, and external lobbyists are striking at. They would prefer an electoral outcome that throws up a rag-a-tag coalition with a weakened prime minister, one who would be subservient to their business and political interests in preference to a strong, assertive and nationalist PM who would pursue nation-first interests, undaunted by the US or the Western powers. We are living through a period of tumultuous change, as the global order crumbles, and the writ of multilateral institutions is ineffective in controlling geopolitical tensions.

Planting trees is a simple solution to counter air pollution

Planners and designers are reimagining cityscapes with verdant green corridors and tree-lined boulevards, weaving greenery seamlessly into the urban fabric. Image: Wikimedia Commons

As Delhi grapples with yet another harrowing bout of air pollution caused by Ghazipur landfill fires, the city, especially its eastern part, finds itself ensnared in a blanket of toxic smog, pushing its air quality index to alarming levels again. With readings skyrocketing to several times the World Health Organization's recommended limit, the severity of the situation has prompted drastic measures, including school closures and restric-

tions on construction activities. This onslaught of pollution not only poses immediate health risks but also casts a long shadow over the residents' quality of life, with projections suggesting a staggering reduction of 10 years in life expectancy. Health experts equate breathing this hazardous smog to smoking a staggering 14 cigarettes every day. Laden with nanoparticles capable of infiltrating the lungs and bloodstream, this lethal smog poses a grave threat, fueling respiratory ailments and health complications. In the face of this crisis, the urgent need for effective solutions to combat air pollution has never been more evi-

dent. It is no news that the scourge of pollution has seeped into every facet of our lives - the water we drink, the soil we rely on for sustenance, and the very air we breathe. This dire reality confronts millions in bustling metropolises across the globe, where densely packed populations are disproportionately exposed to harmful contaminants. As these pollutants infiltrate our environment, they accumulate, magnifying in intensity as they ascend the food chain. With urbanisation advancing at breakneck speed and our demands on natural resources escalating, we stand close to tainting the very essence of our existence.

Clean air to fill our lungs, uncontaminated food to nourish our bodies—these are not luxuries, but fundamental necessities for our survival. Can we, in good conscience, stand idly by as our cities succumb to this relentless march of degradation? The time for action is now.

What is pollution?

Before we unpack why pollution occurs or how to mitigate it, it is vital to ask, what do we exactly mean by pollution in our cities. Pollution occurs when high concentrations of substances persist in the environment due to human activities or natural events, which have harmful effects to the environment.

Briefs

VARANASI

Bioinformatic
s Workshop
Begins at BHU

A three-day Bioinformatics workshop, sponsored by the IoE, commenced at BHU's Institute of Medical Sciences. Nodal officer Prof. Royana Singh stated bioinformatics will be the backbone of future medical research. Experts delivered lectures on NGS, genomic data analysis, and computational tools. Participants are receiving hands-on training at the workshop, which will continue until December 10.

KANPUR

Elderly Father
Weeps for
Justice

A tragic case of alleged police apathy emerged in Kanpur as an elderly father, Santosh Kumar Choudhary, broke down at the police station. His son, Bharat, died on December 1 after being brutally assaulted on November 30. Despite daily visits since December 4, the father claims police have not filed an FIR, only stating "investigation is ongoing." The accused are reportedly roaming freely, causing public outrage.

LALITPUR

Mock Drill
Held for
Disaster
Management

A mock drill for disaster management was organized by the Civil Defence department on its establishment day. Under ADM Ankur Shrivastava, departments like Fire, Health, NCC, and volunteers participated. Students and volunteers were trained in fire-fighting, rescue procedures, and CPR. The drill aimed to create awareness about dos and don'ts during emergencies like fires and accidents.

LALITPUR

Women
Informed of
Legal Rights,
Helplines

Under Mission Shakti Phase-5.0, Lalitpur police conducted a campaign to inform women and girls about their legal rights and safety. Teams distributed pamphlets at bus stands, markets, schools, and rural areas, detailing self-defence, cyber safety, and government welfare schemes. They publicized key helplines like 1090, 181, 112, and 1098, and advised against sharing OTPs for cybercrime prevention.

BALLIA

MLA Angry
Over Poor
Road
Construction

MLA Hansu Ram conducted a surprise inspection of the Telma-Tirnai road after complaints about substandard construction by the Irrigation Department. He found issues like lack of proper cleaning, careless emulsion spraying, and weak gravel bonding. The MLA warned officials against compromising on standards, emphasizing transparency and quality in public works. Locals termed the inspection a positive step.

AYODHYA

PAC personnel
reunite lost
child

PAC personnel of the 37th Battalion from Kanpur, deployed in Ayodhya's Ram Janmabhoomi red zone, reunited a lost 2-year-old girl with her parents. The javans found the crying child during patrol, used loud hailers for announcements, and located her parents from Bihar's Aurangabad district.

SIR | CM reviews progress, stresses zero tolerance for incorrect entries

No wrong votes this time: CM
tightens voter list monitoring

MORADABAD



Up to 30 million names may be deleted from voter list

Early SIR reports indicate over 20% of voters may fall under absent, shifted, or deceased categories statewide. Sources suggest deletions may reach 25-30% in districts like Lucknow and Ghazalabad. Three districts—Auraiya, Azamgarh, and Etah—have already completed 100% SIR verification

During a review meeting in Moradabad, the Chief Minister directed public representatives and officials to ensure the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process is completed with full accuracy. He stressed that no lapses would be tolerated in updating the voter lists and asked party workers to conduct door-to-door outreach to verify genuine voters and remove incorrect entries.

District in-charges and party leaders presented updates on development projects and SIR progress. The Chief Minister reiterated that SIR is a critical public process and asked teams to support both BLO-1 and BLO-2. He instructed representatives to ensure that the names of deceased, shifted, and fake voters—particularly those recorded under older lists such as 2003—are removed promptly. He also emphasised

preventing any ineligible individuals from being added as voters.

The Chief Minister stated that with panchayat elections scheduled for next year followed by the Assembly elections, the organisation's

groundwork must remain strong. Teams were instructed to inform citizens about ongoing central and state schemes during voter-list outreach.

Meanwhile, preparations were in place to show the Chief

Minister the under-construction War Memorial in the city, where arrangements including a red carpet had been made. However, due to unspecified reasons, the visit did not occur, leaving the preparations unused.

Government seeks
accurate voter rolls
ahead of next year's
Panchayat
electionsVIP delays slow
SIR work in
Lucknow

In Lucknow, SIR progress has been affected by delays in VIP households submitting forms. BLOs report repeated visits, entry restrictions, and reluctance from retired officers. Despite 94% digitisation, only 34 Assembly constituencies have completed work, prompting closer monitoring through seven control rooms overseeing 65 sectors across the city.

SIT targets drug
mafia across UP

LUCKNOW

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh have constituted a state-level Special Investigation Team to investigate the alleged supply of toxic cough syrup in multiple districts. The SIT will function under an Inspector General—rank officer, senior officials confirmed during a briefing on Monday.

According to the DGP and the Principal Secretary (Home), no deaths linked to the cough syrup have been reported so far. However, the state has intensified action against illegal drug networks involved in the distribution of the product. A total of 128 FIRs have been registered against individuals connected to the supply chain, including licensed stockists who allegedly

Illegal cough syrup
trail reaches Nepal
and Bangladesh

edly diverted medicines for unauthorized sale.

Officials stated that five key accused had been identified, of which three have been arrested. Preliminary inputs suggest that the same syrup was being smuggled into Bangladesh and Nepal. Investigators are examining the financial trail of the involved firms and individuals to establish the scale of the operation.

Authorities said that no offender would be exempted and added that extradition proceedings would be initiated against accused persons who fled to Dubai.

Vande Mataram Is not anyone's
property: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW

Debate on 150 years of
'Vande Mataram'
sparks sharp
exchange in Lok Sabha

A special discussion in the Lok Sabha on the 150th anniversary of 'Vande Mataram' saw strong remarks from multiple parties on Monday. The session began with the Prime Minister opening the debate, calling the moment "historic" as the House reviewed the legacy of the national song.

Following this, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi shared his views, after which Samajwadi Party president and MP Akhilesh Yadav delivered a pointed response. Yadav said that Vande Mataram had united the country and infused energy into the freedom struggle. He added that the song was not meant only for singing but for following in spirit. He accused the treasury benches of

attempting to claim ownership of ideas and contributions made by national icons. According to him, "Some try to take credit for everything, even for those who did not belong to

them." He further said that people who never participated in the freedom struggle could not fully understand the value of Vande Mataram. During the discussion, the Prime Minister stated that Vande Mataram had inspired the nation during crises, struggles, wars, and national movements. He said the spirit behind the song would continue to support the vision of a strong and developed India by 2047.

BJP rallies
workers for
100% voter
revision

BADAUN

A meeting was conducted at the Budaun BJP office to mobilize workers for the Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls campaign. Addressing the attendees, MLC and State Vice President Santosh Singh emphasized that achieving a transparent and error-free voter list is crucial for strengthening democracy. He urged party members to carry out extensive door-to-door outreach to help every eligible citizen complete the necessary revision forms. District President Rajeev Kumar Gupta characterized the campaign as a "mission to empower democracy," rather than merely an administrative task.

Beurcartaic Shakeup: 20 officers
get major career boost

LUCKNOW

Promotions
Effective From
January 1 After
DPC Approval

The Uttar Pradesh administration has approved a major reshuffle in the state bureaucracy, with four IAS officers of the 2001 batch being promoted to the rank of Principal Secretary. The Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC), chaired by the Chief Secretary, reviewed the service records and cleared the promotions, which will take effect from January 1.

Officials confirmed that Shashi Bhushan Lal Sushil, Ajay Kumar Shukla, Aparna U., and S.V.S. Rangarao are the officers selected for elevation. All four have completed the mandatory 25 years of unblemished service required for promotion to the Principal Secretary level.

In addition, 20 IAS officers of

the 2010 batch have been recommended for promotion from Special Secretary to Secretary. Most officers of this batch are currently serving either as Special Secretaries or holding positions with Secretary-level responsibilities.

The DPC also considered cases from subsequent batches, including one officer from the

Food
commissioner
Anamika Singh
seeks VRS

IAS officer Anamika Singh (2004 batch), currently serving as the Food Commissioner in



Uttar Pradesh, has applied for Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). Citing personal reasons, the officer has requested to step down despite having service remaining until 2038. Singh was recently appointed Commissioner of Bareilly Division in September

2013 batch for Selection Grade and one officer from the 2017 batch for Administrative Grade Pay.

CHCs to offer 150+ blood
tests and ultrasound services

LUCKNOW

New facilities
expected to reduce
patient load on
district hospitals
from early next year

The Uttar Pradesh government has released ₹25 crore to upgrade diagnostic facilities across 975 Community Health Centres (CHCs). The allocation aims to ensure that all CHCs can conduct comprehensive blood investigations along with ultrasound services, which until now were largely unavailable at the local level.

According to the government order issued by Joint Secretary Anand Kumar Rai, the funding will support the procurement of essential reagents and testing materials. Health Director General Dr. Ratan Pal Singh Suman stated that more than 150 types of blood tests are typically available in a standard pathology setup, enabling early detection of a wide range of diseases. Strengthening pathology services, he said, will directly improve treatment outcomes.

Until now, limited testing capacity at CHCs often forced patients to visit district hospitals, leading to crowding and delays. With new pathology and ultrasound facilities expected to become operational from early next year, patient load at district hospitals is projected to reduce significantly.

UP bets on MSMEs
with subsidies

LUCKNOW

Schemes for youth,
women, and artisans
aim to broaden
entrepreneurial base

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector in Uttar Pradesh, comprising over 96 lakh operational units, is witnessing policy-driven interventions aimed at simplification and targeted support. The state's MSME Promotion Policy 2022 provides capital subsidies ranging from 10% to 25% in backward areas, with additional benefits for SC/ST and women entrepreneurs. This is part of broader efforts to enhance the sector's role in the state's economy.

Administrative processes have been streamlined through digital platforms like the Nivesh Mitra portal and the MSME One Connect portal, which have collectively issued over 19 lakh licenses and facilitated applications for various certifications and loans. In the financial year

2025, loan disbursements to MSMEs reportedly reached approximately Rs 2.48 lakh crore. Specific schemes target key demographics: the Chief Minister's Youth Employment Scheme has facilitated loan subsidies worth around Rs 1200 crore for young entrepreneurs, while the Vishwakarma Shram Samman and ODOP schemes focus on traditional artisans.

Trials for
Lucknow
premier league
begin Dece. 26

LUCKNOW



The Cricket Association Lucknow (CAL) announced that trials for the inaugural Lucknow Premier League (LPL) will begin on December 26. This season will feature first-ever day/night white ball trials. Former India cricketer Gyanendra Pandey is the event's brand ambassador. Online registration is open until December 20 for players aged 14 to 30, with an exception for former state players over 30.

No one should return
disappointed: Maurya

LUCKNOW

Deputy CM Directs
immediate
redressal of public
grievances at
Janata Darshan

At the Janata Darshan held at his Lucknow camp office on Monday, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya heard grievances from hundreds of people representing over two dozen districts. Individuals from different age groups, including women, elderly citizens, and youth, presented issues ranging from land disputes and revenue matters to medical assistance, pensions, housing concerns, road and electricity complaints, and cases related to policing, education, and employment.

The Deputy CM instructed officials to ensure prompt and effective disposal of all cases, emphasising that no negligence or delay would be tolerated. He stated that Janata Darshan remains a key platform for direct public communication,

providing a clear picture of on-ground realities. Officials were directed to conduct field inspections whenever required and provide time-bound relief. He reiterated that eligible citizens must receive full benefits of government schemes and that ensuring justice for every individual is a priority.

initiative

Small Question, Big Change: College led revolution

LUCKNOW



While anaemia remains a silent crisis across India, it takes on an especially urgent face in Uttar Pradesh. According to recent data from the Anaemia Mukh Bharat initiative, 67.1% of children aged 6-59 months and 50.1% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years are anaemic (DHS Program; Press Information Bureau; UNICEF). In Uttar Pradesh, 52.9% of adolescent girls and 50.6% of women of reproductive age are affected. Yet, the real challenge, experts say, lies not only in the scale of

the problem but in how communities choose to respond to it.

In Majhigawan village of Sandeela, teachers at Gandhi Inter College became a vital link between classroom learning and community behaviour. Their engagement helped transform awareness about

nutrition into practical action. Among them, Dr. Ravendra Singh stood out for his patient, human approach — one that turned small classroom interactions into lasting lessons about health.

When he noticed students' limited understanding of their

Teachers in
Majhigawan turn
classroom lessons
into life-changing
nutrition awareness

own health, Dr. Singh began ensuring regular haemoglobin (Hb) testing for every adolescent. He used simple, clear explanations to teach why iron tablets matter, why they shouldn't be taken with milk, and how ordinary food can boost haemoglobin levels.

One day, he saw a boy dozing off during class. Instead of reprimanding him, Dr. Singh gently asked, "Why are you sleepy? Did you check your blood level?" The student hesitated, then admitted feeling tired often. Tests later showed his Hb level was just 7.3. The teacher's

calm explanation of how low haemoglobin causes fatigue and poor concentration resonated deeply with the class — sparking curiosity and conversation among peers.

That small moment led to a deeper transformation. For Dr. Singh himself, the experience became personal when he got his own Hb tested for the first time.

UP's ethanol boom fuels Rs
30,000 Cr investment inflow

LUCKNOW



Uttar Pradesh has produced 182 crore litres of ethanol by November 2025, marking its highest output to date and solidifying its position as a leading ethanol producer in the country. Of this, 105.25 crore litres were sold within the state and 40.96 crore litres were supplied to other states, establishing UP as a significant supply hub for the biofuel. This production surge is backed by substantial investment interest in the state's alcohol-based industrial sector. According to Excise

Commissioner Dr. Adarsh Singh, 125 investment agreements worth Rs 30,735 crore have been signed. The current project pipeline includes 43 ready-to-launch projects with land allotments involving Rs 6,898.88 crore, and 19 projects under the Invest UP initiative with over Rs 2,900 crore investment, which are expected to generate more than 4,800 jobs.

No Palestinian state, declares Netanyahu

ISRAEL

Israel will not allow the creation of a Palestinian state, since its true purpose is the destruction of “the one and only Jewish state,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said.

Netanyahu made the remarks on Sunday in Jerusalem during a joint press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. While Merz reaffirmed Berlin’s commitment to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, Netanyahu openly disagreed with him, claiming that such an entity would be “committed to our destruction at our doorstep.”

“They already had a state in Gaza, a de facto state, and it was used to try to destroy the one and only Jewish state,” Netanyahu stated, referring to the Palestinian enclave that has been effectively run by the militant group Hamas.

Israel believes that there’s “a path to advance a broader peace with the Arab states” and to “establish a workable peace with our Palestinian neighbors” that does not involve the creation of an independent entity, he added.

Israel’s prime minister has repeatedly rejected the two-state solution proposed by the UN Security Council. The scheme entails the creation of a Palestinian state

Palestine is the only solution: Pope

A two-state resolution is the only option that can guarantee justice for Israelis and Palestinians, Pope Leo XIV has said. He made the remarks while flying from Türkiye to Lebanon on Sunday for the second leg of his first international trip as pontiff. The Vatican formally recognized Palestinian statehood in 2015, and the Holy See has repeatedly backed a two-state solution. His comments on the flight, however, marked his strongest call yet for official international recognition amid the war in Gaza.

within the armistice lines that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The original UN plan for partition in 1947 envisioned separate Jewish and Arab states, but a series of subsequent wars allowed Israel to seize most of the land which had been allocated to the Palestinians.

Netanyahu noted that the occupation of the West Bank, considered to be illegal under international law, remains a subject of discussion, yet signaled that the status quo is expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

RUS-UKRAINE PEACE PLAN | Stalled talks strain Trump–Zelensky diplomacy over Ukraine peace proposal

DISAPPOINTED WITH ZELENSKY, SAYS TRUMP

WASHINGTON DC

Trump said he’s disappointed that Zelensky still hasn’t read his latest peace plan for ending the Ukraine war. The remark comes after days of stalled talks and Moscow’s rejection of key parts of the US proposal. Scroll down for more.

US President Donald Trump said Sunday (Dec 7) that he was “a little bit disappointed” with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for not engaging with or reading his proposal aimed at ending the war with Russia. Speaking to reporters on the red carpet at the Kennedy Centre Honours, Trump said he had been in touch with both Vladimir Putin and senior Ukrainian officials while expressing his disappointment with Zelensky.

Talking to the press, the POTUS said, “So we’ve been speaking to President Putin and we’ve been speaking to Ukrainian leaders -- including Zelensky. President Zelensky -- and I have to say that I’m a little bit disappointed that President Zelensky hasn’t yet read the proposal, that was as of a few hours ago.”

The comment came after several days of talks between US and Ukrainian officials wrapped up on Saturday (Dec 6) without any major breakthrough. Zelensky,



US NOT IDIOT WITH CHEQUEBOOK

Donald Trump Jr warned that President Trump may abandon the Ukraine war, calling the US “not the idiot with the chequebook” and accusing Kyiv’s elites of fleeing while ordinary citizens fight. He said Zelensky was prolonging the conflict for political survival and criticised European sanctions as ineffective. His remarks, though unofficial, reflect rising frustration within pro-Trump circles over continued US support for Ukraine.

8 WARS

US President Donald Trump again claimed he “ended eight wars in ten months,” arguing that his tariff-driven strategy strengthened America’s economy and national security. Speaking at the Kennedy Center Honours, and later on Truth Social, he said tariffs now replace military force in resolving global conflicts. Trump insisted that countries trust US authority to settle crises, calling his trade-focused approach a key reason behind what he describes as multiple war settlements.

WESTERN EUROPE FEARS US EXIT

Western European leaders are alarmed that the US may pull back from the Ukraine conflict, Bloomberg reported. Concerns grew after Trump’s envoys met Putin and Washington’s new strategy accused Europe of “unrealistic expectations.” Officials fear a worst-case scenario of full US withdrawal, loss of intelligence sharing, and limits on weapons use. The EU’s struggle to unlock frozen Russian assets has deepened anxiety over future support for Kiev.

ZELENSKY’S TOUGH CALL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held a “difficult” call with US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner over Russia’s territorial demands, Axios reported. The US is searching for ideas to bridge Kyiv’s rejection of withdrawing from parts of Donbass, though the sides made progress on possible US security guarantees. Zelensky called the talk “long and substantive,” as Washington signals Kyiv may eventually need to concede territory for peace.

US BILL KEEPS \$400MN FOR UKRAINE

US defense budget includes \$400M for Ukraine, despite President Trump’s opposition. Lawmakers say the assistance supports Kiev’s defense while military spending is \$901B.

however, did agree to continue discussions in the hope of moving closer to what he

called “real peace.” This effort follows a meeting in Moscow earlier in the week,

where US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner held talks with Putin.

Musk equates EU to Fourth Reich

WASHINGTON DC

The US-based tech billionaire is engaged in a bitter spat with the bloc after his platform X was fined for lack of “transparency”

Tech mogul Elon Musk has labelled the EU a new iteration of Nazi Germany following a massive fine imposed by the bloc on his social media platform X.

Musk flung a series of fiery messages at the EU over the weekend after it fined X some €120 million (\$163 million) for “breaching its transparency obligations” under the 2022

Digital Services Act, which enforces standards for content moderation and accountability.

The EU Commission deemed the platform’s advertising not transparent enough and its blue checkmark “verified account” system to be deceptive.

Musk reposted a message reading “The Fourth Reich,” accompanied by an image of the EU flag peeling off and exposing the flag of Nazi Germany. “Pretty much,” Musk commented.

Earlier, Musk branded the EU a “bureaucratic monster,” claiming its leadership has

been “slowly smothering Europe to death.” The billionaire, who has repeatedly accused the EU of excessive regulation, called for the dissolution of the bloc altogether.

“The EU should be abolished and sovereignty returned to individual countries so that governments can better represent their people,” he wrote.

Musk has been backed by top US officials, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio condemning the EU fine as an “attack on all American tech platforms and the American people by foreign governments.”

Go to Mars

Radoslaw Sikorski has mocked the tech mogul’s space ambitions, after the latter called for the bloc to be abolished on X. Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski has told Elon Musk to “go to Mars” after the billionaire called for the abolition of the European Union. Sikorski, a renowned neo-liberal Russia hawk, was responding to criticism posted by the American tech entrepreneur on his X platform.

Trump flags Warner takeover

WASHINGTON DC

US President Donald Trump has warned that Netflix’s proposed \$83 billion acquisition of Warner Brothers Discovery may face major regulatory hurdles.

Speaking in Washington, DC, Trump said the combined company’s expanded influence in the streaming market “could be a problem,” noting Netflix already holds a significant market share.

The deal, announced Friday, would bring Warner Bros’ major film and TV franchises under Netflix’s control, but it still requires approval from US antitrust regulators. Trump said he expects to play a direct role in reviewing the merger.

India buys profitable fuel, Putin’s top aide

MOSCOW

Moscow said India will continue purchasing Russian energy wherever it finds it beneficial, reaffirming its independent trade policy.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called President Vladimir Putin’s recent India visit “very successful,” adding that New Delhi will keep prioritising its economic interests.

“India, being and remaining a sovereign state, carries out foreign trade operations and purchases energy resources where it is beneficial for India,” said Peskov. After talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Putin said Russia remains a reliable energy supplier for India and will ensure uninterrupted fuel deliveries.

Both leaders reviewed their strategic partnership and signed multiple agreements covering trade, security, finance, and cultural cooperation.

Israel Prez Herzog slams NYC mayor Mamdani

ISRAEL

Israeli President Isaac Herzog strongly condemned New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani for what he called “outrageous” and harmful remarks against Jewish communities. Speaking at Yeshiva University, Herzog said Mamdani’s comments questioning Jews’ right to move to Israel

Vance faces backlash over mass migration remarks

WASHINGTON DC

US Vice President JD Vance is facing intense criticism online after his recent remarks describing mass migration as a “theft of the American Dream.” His comment, posted on X on December 7, triggered a wave of reactions, with users pointing out that his own wife, Usha Vance, is the daughter of Indian immigrants. Many also referenced Erika Kirk while mocking the Vice President’s stance.

Vance was responding to a post claiming that immigration crackdowns benefit American workers. He argued that those who support the “old system” profit from it, while ordinary Americans suffer. However, his critics quickly highlighted what they view as hypocrisy, given that Usha Vance is the first Asian American and first Hindu American Second Lady of the United States.

Social media users accused Vance of inconsistency, with



Vice President JD Vance and his wife Usha Vance

some sarcastically suggesting he “send his wife and kids back to India” if he truly opposes immigration. One user wrote, “Wait, isn’t your wife Indian from an immigrant family?” Another commented, “Lead by example—buy the plane tickets for your wife, her family, and your biracial kids.” The backlash intensified as some users connected the controversy to recent viral rumors about Vance’s hug with Erika Kirk. These speculations had earlier fueled chatter about tensions in his marriage.

Addressing the rumors, Vance recently said that he and Usha find humor in such gossip and remain strong as a couple. “Our marriage is as strong as it’s ever been,” he said, adding that Usha has adapted well to her public role. He acknowledged that political life brings challenges but also “very good things.”

As the debate over immigration continues to dominate US political discourse, Vance’s comments—and the reactions they sparked—highlight the deep divides surrounding the issue.

France opposes seizing Russian assets in private banks

PARIS

France has pushed back against proposals to use frozen Russian state assets held in its private banks to fund Ukraine, the Financial Times reported on Monday. While Paris supports the European Commission’s broader plan for a “reparations loan” to provide Kyiv with €90 billion over the next two years, it rejects any move that would require commercial banks to transfer Russian funds into an EU-backed loan mechanism.

French officials argue that private banks operate under different contractual obligations than Euroclear, the Belgium-based clearinghouse that holds the bulk of frozen Russian assets and whose profits the EU hopes to tap. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen last week outlined two options: EU-level borrowing backed by the bloc’s budget, or a reparations loan financed through income generated by immobilized Russian assets.

For more than two years, Paris has refused to identify the private banks holding an estimated €18 billion in Russian state funds, citing client confidentiality—a stance that has frustrated several EU governments. France has also withheld details on how interest generated from these funds is being handled.

Across Europe, France reportedly hosts the second-largest pool of frozen Russian assets after Euroclear’s €185 billion. The remaining €25 billion is split mainly between commercial banks in France and Belgium. The plan faces resistance from multiple EU members. Belgium has warned that outright seizure could trigger legal and security risks. Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Slovakia also oppose confiscation.

Meanwhile, the US is reportedly urging some EU countries to block the reparations-loan proposal, insisting frozen Russian funds should remain leverage for eventual peace talks.

Prince Harry compares royal childhood to ‘Downton Abbey’ in humorous LA speech

LOS ANGELES

Prince Harry offered a light-hearted yet revealing glimpse into his royal upbringing during an address at the British American Business Council’s annual LA luncheon, drawing parallels between his childhood and the popular British series Downton Abbey. Speaking to a packed

audience, the Duke of Sussex said people often asked him if growing up in the British Royal Family resembled Julian Fellowes’ hit period drama. “Yeah,” he quipped, “but only one of those worlds is filled with drama, intrigue, elaborate dinners, marriages to Americans — and the other is a TV show.”

Harry, who moved to California with Meghan Markle after stepping back from

royal duties in 2020, joked about adjusting to “a new world” in the US where Americans celebrate “independence from my great, great, great, great, great, great-grandfather” every 4 July. The event also honoured Downton Abbey creator Lord Julian Fellowes.

The Duke reflected on the show’s themes — aristocracy, family tensions, and



historic moments — noting that while the series captures grandeur and drama, royal life involved “far more chaos” than television ever showed.

Looking ahead to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, jointly hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico, Harry playfully

warned British fans to “behave, get through customs, and past ICE” to support England and Scotland on American soil, calling their joint qualification “a Christmas miracle.”

Harry’s appearance followed his comedic cameo on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, where he spoofed himself auditioning for a Hallmark-style “Christmas prince” role and joked about

America’s “obsession” with royalty.

The Duke, son of King Charles III and the late Princess Diana, spent years serving in the military, including tours in Afghanistan, before stepping back from royal life. He now lives in California with Meghan and their two children, continuing to balance public engagements with a new chapter of independence.

BB 19 Winner Gaurav Khanna: 'Dil jeete hai isliye show jeeta hoon!'

Bigg Boss 19 winner was announced on Sunday, and the famous television actor Gaurav Khanna won the trophy. exclusively spoke to Gaurav about his victory, his journey in the house and more

Bigg Boss 19 winner was announced on Sunday, and the famous television actor Gaurav Khanna won the trophy. The Free Press Journal exclusively spoke to Gaurav about his victory, his journey in the house and more. While talking about winning the trophy without going below the belt or using abusive language, Gaurav said, "I feel that a trophy cannot be won without winning hearts because this is a public voting show. If someone says that he has only won the trophy, then it would be dishonest. Because without winning hearts, you cannot lift this trophy. So I am very happy that, along with the trophy, I have made a place in people's hearts. And that is because they (audience) have related to me, and they have related to me in person. Not because I am acting or I am playing a character, which a lot of people inside the house tried to run a lot of narratives."

"They (contestants) pointed fingers at me, they put me down in a corner, thinking that I would retaliate, but they forgot that this was a marathon, and I knew when I had to run fast and when I had to run slow. So they lost their breath somewhere in between, but they forgot the stamina a real contender has. They made fun of me; it's their fault," he added.

When we asked Gaurav what he would like to tell the people who would say that he didn't do much in the BB19 house, but still won, the actor said, "I just want to say one thing to them that I was not there to please 15 people inside, I was there to please 150 crore people watching me, and somewhere I have made some mark, I have touched their hearts somewhere, and that's why they have voted for me. And they have voted for me consistently because these guys, these 15 chaps inside, were nominating me every week."

The Anupamaa actor further said, "So they were trying to push me out, but because of you (audience) guys, I was standing in front of them like a rock, and I was standing in a completely dignified manner. I didn't say anything bad to anyone. I didn't get into unnecessary topics, I didn't create unnecessary topics, I didn't break plates, I didn't wear jewellery, I didn't wear designer clothes, I was very normal. I think in a show like this, people want to see normal people, and when they see that a person is normal or is trying to be normal, then they connect with you. Dil jeete hai isliye show jeeta hoon!"

While Gaurav won the trophy, Farrhana Bhatt became the runner-up.

Views



Farrhana Bhatt: 'I didn't play any character'

Actress and peace activist Farrhana Bhatt became the runner-up of the reality show Bigg Boss season 19. The Free Press Journal spoke to her about her journey in the house, not winning the trophy and more



Actress and peace activist Farrhana Bhatt became the runner-up of the reality show Bigg Boss season 19. The Free Press Journal spoke to her about her journey in the house, not winning the trophy and more.

When asked about becoming a runner-up, as no one imagined she would have such a journey, Farrhana said, "It was equally surprising for me also because everything that was going on inside the house had created a perception in my mind that probably things are not going good, people are not liking me, my personality or the way I am carrying myself. But, the twist came in when it was almost like half the season, and I got to know about my followers, people came inside,

and then media interaction, and all. Then I got the confidence that people are actually liking me. There are people out there shouting for me."

"I had kept that thing in my mind, no matter, I win or not, I have earned this support and love, and this is going to stay with me. I am grateful for the support that people have shown towards me. So, if I have not won the trophy, I have earned a lot of love and respect," she added.

When Rohit Shetty hosted Weekend Ka Vaar, he had told Farrhana that she might not win because of her zubaan (abusive language). When we asked Farrhana if she feels that it actually went against her, the Singham Again actress said, "I don't believe it. People have their opinions. If I have not won, maybe because people thought it was correct to support him (Gaurav). But, jo bhi audience ka faisla, woh sar aankhon par. I gave my best, and I tried to be real. I didn't play any character, and didn't play at the back-foot (taunting Gaurav). I did my best. There's no regret."

Murtuza Iqbal and Rashita Sahni

Stand-up comedian Pranit More made it to the top 3 of Bigg Boss 19, but couldn't win the show, and became the second runner-up. The Free Press Journal spoke to him about his journey in the reality show, not winning the trophy, and more...

While talking about his journey, Pranit told us, "I am feeling very good. When I signed this show, I didn't think my journey would be this far, and it would be so special. I never thought that people would support you so much. So I feel very proud."

Further talking about not winning the trophy, Pranit said, "When I reached the top 5, I thought that I had to win now, it would be fun. But Gaurav and I always used to talk that we both have to go in the top 2 and turn off the lights and leave the house. So when I reached the top 3 and came out, obviously, I felt bad. But I had an acceptance that my journey was up to here. And whatever support I got,

Pranit More: 'My opinion was that Gaurav Khanna should win '

people voted for me; I was very happy. After that, my opinion was that Gaurav should win now. And when Gaurav won, it was like Gaurav won, I won, it was the same for me. So I was very happy that Gaurav won."

When Pranit was asked about people's opinion about Gaurav not being a deserving contestant to win the show, he said, "I think that the fans always want their favourite contestant to win, whom they are supporting. Just like I follow cricket, I always think that India should win. But it doesn't mean that if someone else

wins, they are undeserving. Gaurav has done something in the show, and that's why his fans supported him. In the end, people who are watching the show can decide."

"There are some qualities in him that I have always liked. I think he took the stand in his own way. He was funny. He did his work in his own way. He was mature. That's why people used to think that he was playing on his back foot. But it's okay. In the end, I think such a person should win who can inspire people, and he can do that properly," he added.

**Stand-up comedian
Pranit More made it
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Dharmendra's 90th Birth Anniversary

Esha Deol pens an emotional note

"To my darling Papa. Our pact, the strongest bond. 'Us' through all our lifetimes, all the realms and beyond..... We are always together papa. Be it heaven or earth. We are one."

Dharmendra's daughter Esha Deol took to Instagram to pen an emotional note about her father.

She shared a few pictures with the Sholay actor and, "To my darling Papa. Our pact, the strongest bond. 'Us' through all our lifetimes, all the realms and beyond.. We are always together papa. Be it heaven or earth. We are one. For now I have very tenderly, carefully & precious tucked you in my heart... deep deep inside to carry on with me for the rest of this lifetime. The magical precious memories..... life lessons, the teachings, the guidance, the warmth, the unconditional love, the dignity and the strength you have given me as your daughter cannot be replaced or matched by any other (sic)."



Hema Malini: 'You left me heartbroken'

Dharmendra's wife, Hema Malini, penned a beautiful and heartfelt note in his memory. Reflecting on "slowly gathering the pieces" after Dharamji's passing, Hema spoke about reconstructing her life, knowing that her husband will always be there by her side.

Hema Malini wrote, "Dharam ji. Happy birthday my dear heart ." She further added, "More than two weeks have passed since you left me heartbroken, slowly gathering up the pieces and trying to reconstruct my life, knowing that you will always be with me in spirit (sic)."

Recalling some joyful memories, Hema relived the moments she shared with Dharmendra, saying it brought her "great solace and happiness." The actress and Lok Sabha MP further expressed gratitude to God for the precious years spent with Dharamji and for blessing her with two "beautiful girls." Hema added, "happy memories that will remain with me in my heart (sic)."

She went on to pray to God to grant Dharmendra a "wealth of peace and happiness" and shared a couple of pictures, cherishing the "happy together moments (sic)."

Salman Khan gets emotional

Every moment of the Bigg Boss 19 Grand Finale is grabbing attention, but one particular instance stood out when Salman Khan appeared visibly emotional on stage. The host got teary-eyed as he fondly remembered the late veteran actor Dharmendra, leaving the audience touched by the heartfelt tribute.

During the Bigg Boss 19 Grand Finale, a throwback video of Dharmendra was played, leaving host Salman Khan teary-eyed as he paid an emotional tribute to the late veteran actor.

This made the viewers say, "What a heartfelt tribute to Dharmendra."



Ji." The throwback clip showed Salman addressing Dharmendra ji as an "older brother" and a "fatherly figure" to him. Salman said, "Mere sabse favourite hero, like an elder brother, like a father figure, har season mein woh iss show mein aaye hain. And iss season

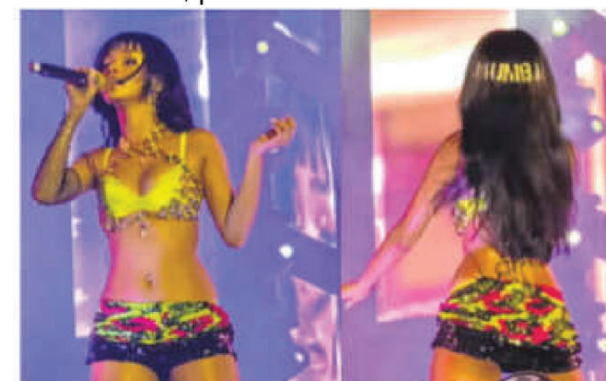
mein he could not be here... (sic)." He then showed all the eliminated contestants a clip of Dharmendra ji enjoying his time on the Bigg Boss stage.

In the throwback clip, late actor Dharmendra says, "Salman ka show ho aur Dharmendra na aaye (sic)." Seeing this, Salman got teary eyes and was visibly emotional while seeing Dharmendra promise that he will come back in the next season.

With his eyes welling up, he said, "Jab aap log andar the, we lost our He-Man, we lost the most amazing man. I don't think Dharam ji se better koi aadmi hai, aur jo unhone apni life jii hai, king size jii hai..." (sic)."

Tyla wows Mumbai at first concert

South African singer writes 'Mumbai' on her hair, puts bindi on forehead



Before she even belted out her first note, Tyla's fashion statement had fans screaming. She opted for her signature silhouettes, featuring a striking neon green bralette layered under a halter-style metallic bejewelled overlay. Paired with shimmering multicoloured sequin shorts, the outfit was equal parts bold and festival-ready.

But what sealed her viral moment was her India-inspired styling. Tyla added a tiny bindi to the centre of her

forehead, blending the delicate detail seamlessly into her glowing glam makeup. For her Mumbai stage moment, she also swapped her short signature hairstyle for long, flowy hair, and the back of it boldly read "Mumbai" in bright white lettering. The detail quickly set the internet on fire, with fans calling her "desi queen" and "desi Tyla." Her hour-long set was a rapid-fire mix of chart-toppers, smooth vocals, and her signature fluid choreography. She kicked off with a warm "Namaste Mumbai," a moment that filled the arena with cheers and set the tone for the night.

Briefs

NEW DELHI

Prasad elected as KSCA Prez



Former India pacer **Venkatesh Prasad** was on Sunday elected as the new president of the troubled Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA). In the polls, Prasad, a former vice-president of the association, went ahead of veteran sports administrator KN Shanth Kumar 749-558 as a total of 1307 members voted. Prasad now will have the onerous task of bringing top-flight cricket back to the state, which got sidelined after the stampede near the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on June 4 in which 11 Royal Challengers Bengaluru fans were killed. Both Prasad and Shanth Kumar, Director of The Printers (Mysore) Private Ltd and one of the Directors on the PTI Board, had vowed to take necessary steps to revive cricket in

ADELAIDE
Smith says nothing against Lyon

Australia's stand-in skipper **Steve Smith** tried to douse the controversy over the exclusion of Nathan Lyon for the second Ashes Test in Brisbane, saying that the decision was taken to strengthen the batting order and there wasn't anything personal against the spin bowling stalwart. Lyon had described his mood as "absolutely filthy" after he was dropped by Australia for the first time in 13 years in a home Test. Australia's chairman of selectors, George Bailey, had described the exclusion as a "one-Test decision" and guaranteed the 38-year-old spinner a place in the XI for the third Test in Adelaide. "It could have gone a few different ways, and it's certainly nothing against Nathan."

ISLAMABAD
Abhishek tops Pak's most searched list

India's **Abhishek Sharma** has pulled off a feat even seasoned diplomats would envy — topping Pakistan's most-searched cricketers list in 2025. Yes, ahead of

PREVIEW | The defending T20 World Cup champions will look to enter this phase with clarity of intent against South Africa

Gill, Hardik return as India begin WC prep

CUTTACK

The return of Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya will lend fresh sheen and much-needed completeness to reigning world champions India when they begin their official march towards the home T20 World Cup with the opening match of a five-game series against South Africa, here on Tuesday.

This series marks the start of India's formal build-up to the February showpiece, where they will play 10 T20Is -- five against South Africa followed by another five against New Zealand -- before opening their title defence against the USA at the Wankhede on February 7. The defending champions will look to enter this phase with clarity of intent as they refine roles, streamline combinations and settle the XI that will carry the weight of expectations in front of home crowds.

India have

losses, including a seven-match streak during their Asia Cup victory in Dubai.

They have not lost a T20I series in this period, and with only minor tweaks needed, they will be hoping to sharpen the edges against the side they defeated in the T20 World Cup final.

Gill's return comes after he missed almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

Teams:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill (vc), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy. **South Africa:** Aiden Markram (captain), Ottniel Baartman, Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock, Tony de Zorzi, Donnovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kwen Maphaka, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Tristan Stubbs.

management will be closely monitored.

But for Gill, who has 837 runs from 33 T20Is at an average of 29.89, this series also doubles up as vital preparation heading into the ICC event.

His reunion with Abhishek Sharma brings back a high-impact opening pair that marries brute force with clean, classical stroke-play.

Abhishek, fresh from a standout tour of Australia where he topped India's scoring charts with 163 runs in the 2-1 victory, has been in monstrous domestic touch.

In the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, the Punjab left-hander hammered 304 runs at an average of 50.66 and a staggering strike rate of 249-plus, including a breathtaking 52-ball 148 against Bengal as Punjab posted 310/5.

Pandya comeback Hardik Pandya's comeback is equally significant.

Out for more than two months after a quadriceps injury during the Asia Cup, the all-rounder marked his return in style with a 42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in the SMAT before bowling four overs at full tilt for 1/52. He arrived here a day ahead of the squad, trained solo at the Barabati Stadium, bowled for 20 minutes and went through an extended physical routine. His presence not only deepens India's batting but restores the balance of a bowling attack built heavily on flexibility.

SKY feels Hardik's return restores team's balance

Ace India all-rounder, who sustained a left quadriceps injury and missed the Asia Cup final, is fully fit now

CUTTACK

India captain Suryakumar Yadav believes Hardik Pandya's return will restore the tactical depth and balance that shaped the team's Asia Cup surge when the world champions take on South Africa in a five-match T20I series starting here on Tuesday.

The ace India seam-bowling all-rounder, who sustained a left quadriceps injury and missed the Asia Cup final, is fully fit and in fine form after making his comeback in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

His timely return ahead of next year's T20 World Cup has brought back the much-needed flexibility and balance, with his new-ball spells offering India the cushion to field three, even four spinners.

"I think what you saw in the Asia Cup also, when he was bowling the new ball, he opened a lot of options, lot of combinations for us with respect to playing XI," Suryakumar said on the eve of the series-opening T20I here.

"That's what he brings to the table. His experience, the way he has done really well in all the matches, all good games also, all bigger games in ICC events.

"I think that experience will count a lot. His presence will definitely give a good balance to the side."

Incidentally, Pandya, who landed a day early in Cuttack and trained solo at Barabati Stadium, skipped the optional session on Monday, but the skipper confirmed that both he and Shubman Gill -- returning from a neck spasm -- are available.

"Right now, both of them look healthy and fit," he said.



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav during a practice session. PTI

I think what you saw in the Asia Cup also, when he was bowling the new ball, he opened a lot of options, lot of combinations for us with respect to playing XI **Suryakumar Yadav**, India skipper

For India, this series is the start of a 10-match run into the home T20 World Cup in February, but Suryakumar said the groundwork was laid long back. "Our 2026 T20 World Cup preparation began right after we won the T20 World Cup in 2024... Our preparation is similar. The preparation started after the T20 World Cup 2024 got over. Since then, we have been trying new things and everything is working for us."

He underlined that India's recent success stems from consistency of selection.

"I feel in the last 5-6 series which we have played, we have tried and played with a similar combination. We have not changed too much... Everything is going well. We wanted to continue the same way."

On the conversation around Sanju Samson and Jitesh Sharma, Suryakumar reiterated

ated that flexibility is key. "In terms of Sanju, yes, when he came into the circuit, he batted higher up the order. Now, the thing is, other than the openers, I feel everyone has to be very flexible... He was ready to bat at any number."

He insisted India will not indulge in needless tinkering.

"We won't be changing a lot of combinations. We won't be trying too many things because things are going really well. So, we want to stick to the process..."

Asked whether Rinku Singh is still in the scheme of things, with the rise of Shivam Dube, Suryakumar said: "Dube is an all-rounder. So, him and Hardik are the all-rounders. So, you can't compare an all-rounder."

"The thing is all the batters from 3 to 7 are capable of batting at any position." On the series, Suryakumar kept the goals simple.

Rise of pickleball in India as a nationwide movement

The Global Sports Pro & Challenger League will be held at Andheri Sports Complex from Dec 16-23

MUMBAI

Pickleball has rapidly evolved into the world's fastest-growing sport, and India has emerged as one of its most dynamic frontiers. Over the past decade, the sport has expanded from a niche activity with limited awareness to a nationwide movement with nearly 100,000 active players.

This surge has been driven by the sport's simplicity, its fun and fast-paced nature, and its accessibility to people of all ages and backgrounds. What began as an experiment in a few urban pockets has now transformed into a sport with thriving communities across the country, backed by a growing infrastructure of dedicated courts and professional setups.

India's rise in pickleball is

closely tied to the development of facilities and competitive platforms that allow enthusiasts to play, learn, and grow. The number of courts has multiplied in both private and public spaces, providing players, coaches and clubs with access to world-class infrastructure.

The expansion of tournaments and leagues has given the sport a professional dimension that was unimaginable a decade ago. Among the key forces powering this transformation is Global Sports, whose contributions have fundamentally shaped the sport's trajectory. By managing and operating nearly 80 courts across India and Dubai, Global Sports has strengthened access to the sport. Its efforts span beyond infrastructure, extending into coaching clinics, school programs, player sponsorships, and

equipment support, creating a strong grassroots pipeline. Platforms like Global Sports Pro & Challenger League have introduced structured pathways for competitive progression. Leagues like the upcoming league in December, which will take place from December 16-23 at Andheri Sports Complex, have built momentum for pickleball to be recognized as a mainstream sport in India, giving both aspiring and professional players a stage to showcase their potential. As more athletes join the sport and more communities embrace it, India stands on the cusp of a pickleball revolution. With sustained development, inclusive initiatives and visionary leadership, pickleball is set to carve its own identity as one of India's most promising professional sports.

Pacer Thakur takes four-for as Vidarbha beat Andhra

Yash ended his SMAT campaign with 18 wickets

LUCKNOW

Vidarbha pacer Yash Thakur halted Andhra in its tracks by grabbing four wickets to guide his side to a 19-run victory in a Group A final-round match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Monday.

Andhra, who have already qualified for the next stage along with Mumbai from the group, failed to overhaul Vidarbha's 154/8, with the 26-year-old right-hand bowler returning excellent figures of 4/22 to restrict the opponents to

Brief scores:

Vidarbha 154/8 in 20 overs (Aman Mokhadde 50, Akshay Wadkar 41; Satyanarayana Raju 4/26) beat Andhra 135/9 in 20 overs (Pyla Avinash 44; Yash Thakur 4/22) by 19 runs.

Kerala 101 in 19.4 overs (Sadek Hussain 4/19, Abdul Aji Kuraishi 2/16, Avinov Choudhury 2/15) lost to Assam 105/5 in 18.5 overs (Pradyun Saikia 41 not out; KM Asif 2/22) by 5 wickets.

135/9. Thakur, who also had a five-wicket haul in an earlier match, ended his SMAT campaign with 18 scalps.

Vidarbha's innings revolved around Aman Mokhadde's 50 and keeper-batter Akshay Wadkar, who scored a

33-ball 41 with Andhra pacer Satyanarayana Raju's 4/26 playing a big role in restricting the opponents to a below-average score. However, Andhra fared even worse when they came out to bat, losing three wickets for 31 runs.

DELHI

Samson seemed the first-choice wicketkeeper for the T20 World Cup but the inclusion of Shubman Gill has changed the dynamics, bringing in Jitesh as a possible finisher Sanju Samson or Jitesh Sharma? This is the lingering question that India will look to find answers as they gear up for the final stretch of 10 T20Is ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning February 7. In what is otherwise a settled team, where anyone apart from the 15 picked for the series making the World Cup squad would come as a surprise, the only point of debate is around who among the two wicketkeepers would make the XI. It is a question that India would hope they find the answers soon and not leave it too far late, as depending on who gets the nod, the batting line-up would invariably go through a combination change.

Samson and Jitesh, vying for the wicketkeeper slot, might seem like a straightforward pick depending on form. But it is beyond that, Samson being a top-order batsman, offers totally a different dimension to this team. Since being a regular of this T20 outfit since July 2024, he has hit three centuries at the top and



Samson and Jitesh, vying for the wicketkeeper slot, might seem like a straightforward pick depending on form

alongside Abhishek Sharma formed the most destructive opening combination at the top. Jitesh, older to Samson by a year, is a middle-order batsman who is known for his finishing skills, a role this team hasn't assigned to anyone, but clearly understands the value of it.

While Samson seemed the first-choice wicketkeeper for the T20 World Cup, the inclusion of Shubman Gill from the Asia Cup onwards has changed the dynamics. Having

started the Suryakumar-Gautam Gambhir tenure as an opener, he had made way for Samson, as India's priority lay on Tests. After a season-best IPL, Gill duly took the spot at the top with his childhood friend Abhishek, with Samson moved to the middle-order in the UAE and Australia before losing the spot to Jitesh by the end of the tour.

For a team that has gone about handing role clarity in the most commendable ways

in T20s, the message to Samson seems clear too. That he would have to bat in the middle-order. "In terms of Sanju, yes, when he came into the circuit, he batted higher in the order. Other than the openers, I feel everyone has to be very flexible. He did really well when he opened the innings. But Shubman had played before him in the Sri Lanka series. So, he deserved to take that spot," Suryakumar said.

Chaos, crowds, new core: India's T20 rush toward T20 World Cup begins in Cuttack

DELHI

It is chaos that India have to embrace for the foreseeable future where the T20 format will occupy everyone's mind till the first half of 2026 that includes a T20 World Cup at home and the Indian Premier League to follow.

Men in khaki and camouflage manning the highway that connects the 45-km stretch between Bhubaneswar to Cuttack highway; barricades placed at regular intervals; ropes put across all the gullies that connect the highway; a tight security cordon all around the Barabati Stadium; people across age-groups patiently waiting



outside their community gates just to have a look at the stars. You don't need any promotion to tell an Odia that the Indian team is here.

When the off-line tickets were opened last week, there were chaotic scenes that re-

sembled scenes from the 90s. Out of 40,000 capacity, word around is that only 10,000 were actually put on sale. At the black market, tickets are being sold at 3x rates, with the police already arresting a few.

It is chaos that India have to

embrace for the foreseeable future where the T20 format will occupy everyone's mind till the first half of 2026 that includes a T20 World Cup at home and the Indian Premier League to follow.

Beginning Tuesday, Suryakumar Yadav & Co have 10 T20Is -- 5 against South Africa and 5 against New Zealand -- to fine tune the combination which will give them the best shot at achieving what no team has done so far -- to defend the T20 World Cup. The closest any team has come is till the semi-finals, which tells the challenge ahead of this team. But there are more reasons to be hopeful. After all, this team isn't in a situation where a group is coming together at the eleventh hour.